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Curating as Civic Engagement or Art without Art for the Undercommons: Reflections on Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, a ‘Useful’ Museum

Miguel Amado

On 3 February 2018, the first-ever permanent presentation of the Middlesbrough Collection – housed by Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art – rotated out. To celebrate it, Streetwise Opera performed a piece inspired by the works on view in the gallery to an audience that represented contemporary Middlesbrough: some students, numerous unemployed workers, various asylum seekers from Northern Africa and the Middle East and a few European immigrants.

On that same day, the critic Ellen Mara de Wachter penned an essay on the subject of curatorial activism for Frieze.com, that mentioned Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art as an example of “practices of civic engagement”. She commented, “Miguel Amado [outlines] an uncompromising curatorial vision for the museum, [suggesting] how its agency can be stretched beyond its comfortable limits and made useful through direct intervention in the political and economic status quo.”

This amalgamation of projects and ideas had shaped the singular character of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, specifically throughout 2017, the first full year to be programmed under its vision of a “useful” institution. As Alistair Hudson, Director between late 2014 and early 2018 had stated, “…the ambition…[is to develop] an institution created by and through its usership, so that the content and function is increasingly less determined by those in power, but rather you redistribute authorship, to make the institution the true manifestation of its community.”

Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, founded by Middlesbrough Council, opened in 2007 as a beacon of regeneration in the town and in the wider Tees Valley, north-east England, in the aftermath of the so-called “Bilbao effect”. This effect supposedly derives from a prestigious building, ideally designed by a “star” architect and associated with a cultural brand (as in the case of Bilbao, Spain, the Guggenheim Museum and Frank Gehry), that creates a touristic landmark for a city. The “Bilbao effect” relies on importing content from an imagined centre – typically, a metropolis from the West – instead of setting up a local infrastructure for producing art and ideas, thus alienating the locale in the process.

Initially the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art applied the model followed by other British institutions, based on the rhetoric of “bringing great art” – necessarily from London, where the intelligentsia is supposedly based – to a given place, as if invested with a “civilising” mission. “Bringing great art” is a principle accompanied by a modus operandi: operating within the framework of art history and the art market, it consequently reproduces the Western canon. This model has turned museums all over the West into territories of exclusion and privilege – instruments of the dominant class and designed to maintain its cultural hegemony.
This phenomenon, called “institutional isomorphism” by critic Morgan Quaintance in a 2014 essay for Art Monthly, makes British museums interchangeable, as if an institution in Middlesbrough could just as easily be in Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham, Margate, Southampton, Walsall, or wherever. The consequence of “institutional isomorphism” is that these museums, which are publicly funded and thus have an obligation to serve the public (which can be understood as “audience” as well as “commons”), end up mostly catering to typical demographics: British, white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, and all the other characteristics that compose the “norm”. In doing so, they leave out of their reach the numerous “others” who also constitute the social fabric.

It was in this context that Hudson proposed his concept of “use value” as the guiding principle for Middlesbrough’s Institute of Modern Art upon his arrival in late 2014. Among other socially progressive references that Hudson had been testing at Grizedale Arts in north-west England before moving to Middlesbrough, this borrows from Marxist thinking and is informed by the legacy of the Mechanics’ Institutes and John Ruskin. A sort of actualisation of Ruskin’s instigation of artists’ involvement in mundane tasks (for example building a road), its implementation has been carried out under the rubric of *arte útil*, or art as a tool, as put forward by the artist Tania Bruguera.

Bruguera and Hudson’s work builds on Ruskin’s proposition of a counternarrative that seeks to overcome art’s autonomy through innovative undertakings locating creativity at the heart of ordinary life. It reacts against the ethos of modernist aesthetics, usually embedded in the Kantian problem of disinterestedness and its aftermaths (and particularly in the critic Clement Greenberg’s formalist viewpoint), by inscribing itself in the subaltern narrative of art as a device for societal transformation. This is what I call “art without art”, an art that does not fit the criteria of modernist aesthetics, and a symptom of a condition that could be called “post-artistic”.

This reimagining of the museum is part of what the theorist Stephen Wright has been referring to as the “usological turn” and perhaps is even the culmination of a new form of institutionalism. The latter encapsulates an understanding of the gallery as an active space that, as expressed by the curator Charles Esche in 2004, is “part community centre, part laboratory and part academy, with less need for the established showroom function”. The former seems to be a proposition predicated on the current increase of user-generated content in the interconnected fields of technology and media. As Wright states at the beginning of Toward a Lexicon of Usership written for Bruguera’s exhibition ‘Museum of Arte Útil’,

> With the rise of networked culture, users have come to play a key role as producers of information..., breaking down the long–standing opposition between consumption and production.

The repurposing of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art included a renewal of its brand, building and programme. In the case of the budget, for instance, the allocation for learning and events is now in parity with that for exhibitions and Middlesbrough Collection displays. Furthermore, acquisitions and commissions, two areas that were not even part of the museum’s expenditure structure before, have been placed on an equal budgetary footing. It was within the programme, however, that the museum’s repurposing was the most effective. I instigated an ethos of research, shifting the focus from artistic production towards ideas to generate content, as a means to destabilise ingrained templates for programme conception and delivery. In doing so, I prototyped a model that applied decolonial thinking, which permits the museum to de–canonise and de–normalise. According to the theorist Walter Mignolo, decoloniality is a form of “epistemic disobedience”; it consists in establishing a subaltern rationale as a means of contesting the “natural” assumption that both Western and European worldviews are universal.

Through a focus on identity and the politics of representation, the vehicles through which audiences identify or not with what the museum signifies, diversity drives the generation of content at the Institute. In efforts to engage with audiences, its strategy considers not only class, as is more common in the British art scene, but also identity. This approach is intersectional, allowing an understanding of the relationship between class...
and identity – as for instance in relation to gender,
ethnicity, sexual orientation and body/neurological
abilities – in the formation of individuals. It thus
enables a connection between the institution and
both disenfranchised and privileged segments of
the population, and pursues interactions between
them.

The Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art
exhibition that has thus far best encapsulated this
programmatic repurposing is ‘If All Relations Were
to Reach Equilibrium, Then This Building Would
Dissolve’. I curated it with Giles Maffett, Assistant
Curator, throughout Spring 2016 and it was staged
in that summer. The exhibition addressed tensions
between free circulation and border control and
examined experiences of displacement. It
presented these as pervasive elements of
contemporary identity, suggesting that the
migratory condition is its key characteristic.

The exhibition had been in gestation since
I had become aware of the “red doors” of
Middlesbrough, during the summer of 2015, after
settling in the town following my appointment
as senior curator at the museum. It was actively
prompted by the unprecedented attention that the
issue received in January 2016 due to an escalating
media outcry. This had begun with an article
published in The Sunday Times entitled “Apartheid
of the asylum seekers on British streets” 7. The
headlines of a few articles in British national
newspapers that followed elucidated the reality:
“Asylum seekers in north-east claim they are
identifiable by red doors” 8; and “Middlesbrough:
visiting the asylum seekers suffering racist abuse
after being housed in properties with identical red
doors”.9

The “red doors” of Middlesbrough symbolise the
discrimination that refugees encounter today.
They encapsulate an anti–immigration sentiment
related to the rise of populism in the West, that
manifests in a revival of a quasi–fascist mode of
living, in which the bodies and imaginations of
the “other” are dehumanised and taken beyond
the realm of citizenship. The red doors are also
part of a binary system of “us” and “others” that
has been employed by Western European states,
through their ideological apparatuses, to shape
negative public opinion towards asylum seekers.
As the theorist Denise Ferreira da Silva suggests,
the assistance to asylum seekers provided by the
European Union is a tool to enhance its “fortress”
status, especially given that, under the pretest of
“protecting” asylum seekers, the EU has actually
been increasing the control of its borders, to
“protect” it from those same asylum seekers. As
she and the theorist Paula Chakravartty stated in
2012,

Because the violence of racial and colonial
subjugation works so effectively at the level
of representation, we need to refuse “ethical
consternation” and recuperate the relationship as a
descriptor of difference, and not commonality. 10

The exhibition was shaped in collaboration with
charities that work with Middlesbrough–based
asylum seekers, and notably with an organisation
named Investing in People and Culture that is led
by Biniam Araia. With him we met various asylum
seekers, often through home visits, and realised
some of their traumas as well as the bureaucracy
they face. This enabled us to understand the
questions at stake, and so to avoid “ethical
consternation”. The exhibition’s title was a work
by the artist Liam Gillick, a text he had originally
proposed as part of a commission for the Home
Office’s new Westminster headquarters in the
early 2000s. The Home Office is the British state
department responsible for immigration, counter
terrorism, policing, drugs policy, and related
science and research. Gillick’s expression suggests
that in a world in which all people are truly equal,
or at least treated equally, the Home Office would
not need to exist.

The exhibition included manifestos, newspaper
articles, reports, films, installations, ceramics
and paintings. Rather than art or archival
materials, exhibits took the form of posters,
banners, press clips, tool kits, videos, diagrams,
objects and documents. In addition to Gillick, the
featured artists, refugees, activists and scholars
included architecture students from Newcastle
University; Babi Badalov, Zanny Begg and Oliver
Ressler, Carolina Caycedo; the collective, Chto
Delat?; clients of Investing in People and Culture;
the Goldsmiths’ research agency, Forensic
Oceanography (part of Forensic Architecture);
Lawrence Abu Hamdan; representatives of
Immigrant Movement International; Ausama
Khalil; Isabel Lima; Daniela Ortiz; Refugees,
Survivors and Ex-detainees; Right to Remain and Firas Shehadeh.

I was inspired by elements of Middlesbrough’s central library and food banks, among other local resources for underprivileged segments of the population, to turn the gallery into a hub for service provision, manifested in a free weekly Community Day. A suite of computers with access to the internet was set up, for example, but it was mostly the discussions and workshops as well as opportunities for convening, such as communal lunches, that brought people together. The Community Day became an autonomous initiative in early 2017, and the cornerstone of the museum’s outreach offerings. It is now a free weekly mix of sessions informed by making and debate – from weaving to conversations that facilitate English-language skills, from film screenings to discussions around philosophical notions – and catering to all demographics so as to support a feeling of personal progression.

In 2017 I also established a dynamic way of programming: the Middlesbrough Collection is permanently on display and is present in most galleries, with special features and thematic hangs in addition to a more general showcase for the Collection. Temporary exhibitions connect with issues and topics relevant to Middlesbrough’s people, including immigration and housing, and often involve commissions. Commissions are driven by collaborations with groups in the town and produced through artistic residencies that stimulate participation. They are exhibited solo and enter the permanent Middlesbrough Collection. In addition, the Middlesbrough Collection has since late 2016 been expanded through acquisitions (mostly externally funded) of works with socially driven subject matter. These have focused on politically-motivated British artists, often from minority ethnic backgrounds, and have also come from international artists with an emphasis on those with non-Western origins.

The foundational basis of museums includes making art accessible to all and centres on education. Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art is carrying these into the twenty-first century by accentuating equality, diversity and inclusivity as core values; turning the building into a sort of community centre; repositioning the Middlesbrough Collection at the core of its existence; acting as a commissioning agency; developing co-curation methodologies and combining art with non-art (text, archival materials, film and objects). It challenges the principles of the “white cube” by showing works in deliberately old-fashioned styles and inserting activities into the galleries.

These are just a few items in a long list of experimental undertakings for which Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art has been recognised by peers, members of the community, politicians and activists. The best endorsement that the museum could have received is from the artist Sonia Boyce, who wrote in The Guardian in early 2018: “Some museums – I suppose the type I am most interested in – . . . forge new relationships between people and art. In my mind, the past never sits still and contemporary art’s job is increasingly about exploring how it intersects with civic life. Institutions such as the Van Abbemuseum...and Middlesbrough Institute for Modern Art . . . are examples of how such ideas can be put into practice.”

P.S.

In her article for Frieze.com, de Wachter remarked that in a presentation at the Institute I had appropriated a statement by the theorists Stefano Harney and Fred Moten who in their book The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study assert that “the only possible relationship to the university is a criminal one”. As she noted, I had however substituted “the museum” in place of “the university”. She wrote also that “For Harney and Moten, it is the work of subversive intellectuals . . . that stands to reinvigorate learning”. In a further substitution, I replace “learning” with “curating”. By following Harney and Moten, I am repositioning curation within an intellectual realm, in an age when it has been hijacked by a neoliberal mode – a way of working that turns the curator into a project manager for whom curating is a business.

In doing so, I look to the ideas of the thinker Antonio Gramsci who coined the expression “organic intellectual”. This term describes the
role that intellectuals play, in the creation of a cultural counter-hegemony, by representing society’s excluded groups which he referred to as “subaltern”. My hypothesis is that, as neoliberalism spreads worldwide, a period in which a sense of “false consciousness” permeates social relations through the forces of capitalism is reappearing. For the theorist György Lukács, “false consciousness” refers to the inability of the dominated classes to realise that the dominant class oppresses and exploits them, due to the systematic misrepresentation of their position within the social fabric. This misrepresentation legitimises oppression and exploitation to the extent that they come to seem “natural”. In this state of mind, the dominated class neither understands the nature of its interests, nor acts politically according to them.

Resistance to false consciousness requires tackling current urgencies, from inequality to colonial histories, that surround the issue of social justice. In this sense, I am looking at the idea of “undercommons” through the lenses of class and identity. The social divide provoked by neoliberalism has created a new group, people to whom civil rights seem not to apply: instead of “commons”, these are the undercommons. But this group has not been marginalised solely in financial terms; markers of identitarianism are also a factor in its creation. Thus, curating as an intellectual practice means aligning with the undercommons and with them, building an alternative to the political and economic status quo, both in the museum sector and in society as a whole.

*Miguel Amado is a curator, researcher and critic and is Director at Cork Printmakers.*

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**Notes**


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Too often, the future is seen as indecipherable or unpredictable, so decisions are based on a tacit assumption that the conditions of the future will be the same as the past. Ironically, the one thing we can guarantee is that our world is changing.

Introduction
Let me acknowledge the obvious – societal change is a constant, it is everywhere and it is inevitable, whether by choice or by having it foisted upon us by external forces. And, as public bodies, museums have seen their purpose and practice in a constant state of evolution in response. The trouble is that change in the past was gradual, so museums could take their time in responding. But change today is happening at a faster rate than ever before – in fact, at web-speed. Most museums are failing to keep up, and/or are not sure how to change, and therefore face the real danger of losing their audiences:

The Columbus Museum of Art ... was at a crossroads ... twentieth-century models relying on passive engagement, outstanding collections, and blockbuster exhibitions would not suffice... if staff and the board did not develop creative solutions for new twenty-first-century challenges, the museum would not survive — a threat that was unimaginable a decade ago but is now a reality for many museums.

We urgently need to rise above our day-to-day challenges, to explore the actions we can and should be taking to retain responsibility for our own foreseeable future. But museums are complex, living organisms, so how do you write a credible narrative on their future – especially when, as Yeoman says (see above), it will not be like today? This paper is my attempt to suggest how to jump-start change, looking at the museum environment and the development of museum spaces and exhibits based on social interaction and participation.

The Challenge: the “Age of Participation”
Welcome to the age of digital media. The invention of the printing press changed the world in two centuries. Digital media have revolutionised it in twenty years. In the digital world the future is now and the present is already past – and this is just the beginning...

The “Age of Participation” refers to the revolution in societal attitudes, expectations and behaviour – personal, social and cultural – that has occurred mainly since the launch of the World Wide Web in 1989. People no longer accept a role as observers – they expect to take part. This revolution was not caused by new technology, but the scale and speed of change would not have been possible without it. And change is only just beginning.

From the 1990s, the use of new technology in an open, participatory and peer-driven manner moved swiftly from business and enthusiasts into society at large. In 2004, Tim O’Reilly coined the
term Web 2.0 to describe a trend in the use of Web technology that aimed to create communities for information sharing and collaboration. In 2006, Jenkins gave the name “participatory culture” to these communities. Here we have people taking part, working together creatively, sharing and contributing freely, supporting each other, feeling a sense of belonging, and believing in the importance of their contributions, to the extent that they would want some say in the way these are used. New technology then supported their creativity, as in YouTube; made possible new levels of collaboration, with Wikipedia a prime example; and drove attitudinal change – hence the “Age of Participation”.

Yet what extended this participatory revolution beyond technology-lovers to affect all of our lives was not the technology itself, but the evolution of early examples of collaborative software into what became known as “social media”, described as:...

...the tools and platforms people use to publish, converse and share content online. The tools include blogs, wikis, podcasts, and sites to share photos and bookmarks. An important component of social media is the idea of social networking...

In practice, technology and media must be viewed together. Thus, the absolutely world-changing event came with the evolution of small hand-held computers with multi-media facilities into powerful smartphones – with the sale of the first iPhones in 2007, the Android operating system following in 2008 and the iPad in 2010. These allowed people on the move “to connect, communicate globally, and customise their experiences to their own preferences and needs, (ensuring) public expectations of participation have taken root in every fertile inch of our human culture – you could connect to your social networks anywhere, anytime, in a media environment unlike anything ever experienced before. This combination of smartphone and social media is now a worldwide phenomenon, ubiquitous in our daily lives – “shaping the ways we think, work, play, experience, communicate and consume”. It has had a profound impact on many aspects of society, including directly on cultural institutions such as museums, and on their audiences. The impact on museums is extensive, including:

- Museums’ reach, and audience, are now global. There is, therefore, potential for museums to achieve a huge increase in access to their collections. But this brings with it an expectation both of immediate access to comprehensive and deliverable information, and of interpretation relating to those collections.
- The internet is not only a means of access to content; it also acts as a forum for creative collaboration.
- The digital revolution brings with it enormous new learning opportunities – building and practicing new skill-sets and democratising creativity.
- Museum users are demanding a much more participative experience – to immerse themselves in the “museum experience”, to explore together, to engage actively with content, to personalise their experiences, to take part, to encounter different perspectives, to decide for themselves.
- Extending the participative approach, younger audiences expect to use collections, not just access images and information on them – and the way that they act is ensuring that the borders between the physical and virtual are gradually disappearing.

In response, museums need to match the innovation seen in technological and software development with an equally innovative approach to the user experience, including by developing new models of engagement.

What we are already achieving: the immersive museum environment

The core societal change in recent decades has been the ongoing rise of the well-educated, well-paid professional classes, reflecting the overwhelming change in the job market in the developed world from industry and manual labour towards services. Their growing affluence and consumerism are the driving forces in developed society, and are underpinned by rising leisure time, expanding educational opportunities, the merger of high with popular culture, the spread of the use of television and then the internet, and the democratisation of travel.

Museums know these professional classes well – they are the baby boomers who, with
their families, have long been the core museum audience. Over time, they have become “new consumers” – affluent, highly informed, well-educated, media-savvy, socially and culturally diverse, more individualistic and extensively travelled – and with increasing choice in how they spend their discretionary leisure time and money. They are the arts audience at home and cultural heritage tourists when on holiday. The result for museums has been growing audiences, but also increasingly demanding expectations of quality, choice, and variety and of new but personalised experiences in which they can take an active role.

The larger museums led the way in creating environments in which those experiences could occur – in which their users could immerse themselves and simply “be there” – with an emphasis on visitor services and on ancillary spaces and activities. Thus, we now see the quality restaurant and shop; the theatre with lectures, film, and live performance; dynamic events programming; evening openings and activities; and the external plaza for promenading and events. The blockbuster exhibition sits alongside these as essential to museums’ offer.

The expectations of users are continuing to grow, now in response to the ambitions of younger audiences – the Millennials and Generation Z – to belong, to get involved. In recent years, a number of museums, including the Ulster Museum, have attracted a regular younger audience through a successful formula that combines social interaction and engagement with collections, through the development of “Late” events. There are now over 8000 of these annually in the UK. Recent research in Northern Ireland, where tickets for a “Late Shift” event cost £10, showed:

- One-third of attendees had never been before to that specific museum prior to the event.
- 68% of attendees said the event had changed their perception of the museum.
- Almost half of attendees were aged 40 and under.
- 86% would attend another Late Shift event in the future.
- Almost half felt that the event encouraged them to find out more about local history.

Transforming display: Social Interaction and Participation

But the environment that museums provide is not enough. Our users also expect a much more dynamic approach to content, which they can experience and interact with together. Museums and galleries are social spaces. Most users arrive for their visit in family or social groups – coming together because they find such places interesting and enjoyable venues in which to share quality time. They expect to engage actively together with what is on offer – to discover something new, to broaden their horizons and/or to engage their children. Such socially-driven learning in museums is a pleasurable, communal, experience. It requires no special training or skills. It is voluntary, exploratory and spontaneous.

With enthusiastic visitors arriving in such a positive frame of mind, museums should be able to use social interaction to promote learning. Yet, on arrival, visitors normally face a 19th century legacy of permanent exhibitions as three-dimensional illustrated lectures, transmitting knowledge from the curator/lecturer to be absorbed by visitors as observers. The problem is that, despite the wide range of types of museum to be found today, most museums still see the didactic permanent display, with its one-way transmission of knowledge in ordered, bite-sized pieces from museum to visitor, as the core of their public provision. There is an alternative. Once the museum recognises that exploring and engaging together is a major contributor to the user experience and to learning, surely it will also realise the need to develop participative display approaches that use social interaction to stimulate and support engagement.

Key to this is recognising the need to design spaces for the audience and for conversation, as well as for the collections and interpretation – spaces that encourage people to pause and reflect, as well as to physically take part. These can include:

- **Flexible spaces**: these make possible small-scale performance/living history, object-handling sessions, spaces for school or family groups to gather, etc., with seating as a fall-back.
- **Conversation and reflection spaces**: comfortable seating in circles, to encourage conversation, with coffee tables holding books, articles
and newspaper cuttings. Other material on surrounding walls/panels. These zones could be expanded to include contributory spaces – where users are encouraged to contribute thoughts and content. They could also double up as object-handling locations.

- **Participative exhibit spaces**: housing exhibits that social groups or families (perhaps even “strangers”) can gather around and engage with together.
- **“Trail” spaces**: stopping points in front of key exhibits for families using museum trails and activity backpacks, with room to sit/lie on the floor.
- **“Pathways” or “Entry Points”**: giving users the chance to observe others participating, contributing, etc. before deciding whether to become more closely involved themselves – vital in helping people feel comfortable and confident in contributing.
- **Social spaces**: designed to support museum activities within social events like Lates programming.
- **External spaces**: open spaces in front of the museum for events and gatherings.

**Analogue participative exhibits**

At the heart of the participative display approach sits the participative exhibit. Whereas the interactive exhibit is still the single voice of the museum, and is normally restricted to one user at a time, groups can engage in the participative exhibit together. It is designed to stimulate social interaction; is driven by the direction that the user or group want(s) to go in; can work on different levels; and the end point is frequently outside the museum’s direct control. Such exhibits can vary from simple additions to the visitor experience to requiring sustained involvement. Simple participatory exhibits have long been a feature of children’s museums and some science museums and can now be found across the field. It is even possible to suggest a draft typology, including “taking part”, “creative response”, “belonging”, “empowering” and “stimulating action”. I look here at participative approaches that do not involve new technology, including simple examples that museums can add to existing displays as a starting point for their participative transformation.

**Taking part**

Participative exhibits that seek to elicit a direct response to collections exist in immense variety, not least for families. They can include:

- **Object handling** – tactile engagement with the “real thing” whilst engaging with museum personnel who share their knowledge and enthusiasm – for example at the National Museum, Dublin – represents the most important difference between a museum visit now and any other form of contact with the past.
- **Trails and activity packs** “transform the otherwise adult spaces of the galleries into family environments”. They give families a sense of purpose that can encourage close observation and discovery.
- **Voting** is a perennial favourite. At Worcester City Art Gallery, curators selected their own favourite forty paintings and asked visitors to vote for their favourites and say why. This in turn allowed further visitors to respond to the comments.
- **The Hunt Museum in Limerick** has had great success with its “caption contests”, where users are challenged to caption museum objects.
- **“Maker spaces”**, where children and adults can “build” items relating to displayed objects, are increasingly popular.
- **“Good goodbyes”** carry on the conversation by ensuring that users leave on a high note and are encouraged to return. These can include, for example, a conversation with a staff member, a display board listing future events, or an opportunity to record a favourite experience of the day. For families, take-aways of completed trails, stickers awarded, drawings done, or photographs taken and forwarded, can encourage further conversation about the visit. For all, opportunities to follow up content or contribute online can be a key means of building a longer-term relationship between the museum and its users.

**Creative response**

This refers to the significant role that museums can play as agents for creativity, in inspiring people to think and act creatively, a critical human resource in the 21st century. Examples include:

- **Art trollies** filled with art materials have enabled generations of children to produce their own “works of art” in galleries.
National Drawing Day, organised by the National Gallery of Ireland, sees a celebration of drawing and creativity across dozens of locations.

**Contributing**
Developing content that encourages users to reflect and then provides opportunities to contribute directly to content. Not only does the making of a contribution convert the contributor into an active participant, it also diversifies content and the range of voices heard in the museum – and shows the value that the museum places on the expertise and understanding of its users.

- For example, the comments varying from pride to in-depth critiques of the whiteness of the artists represented in Queer British Art at Tate Britain.

**Belonging**
Belonging begins with taking part – you take part because you feel you belong – and you feel you belong because you are encouraged to take part. This sense of belonging then moves users towards becoming an active and influential part of the museum community. This requires museums to develop new approaches that support and stimulate users to become more actively and regularly involved. This is most likely to be successful if it combines the social and engagement with museum content. Analogue examples include:

- Membership schemes
- Regular social events such as “Lates” evenings
- “Tate Collective” – Tate’s membership scheme for 16 – 25-year olds, which attracted over 60,000 to join the scheme in its first year.

**Empowering**
A museum committed to audience participation will recognise that people bring their own expertise and experiences with them. The museum will want to empower audience members to unite these skills with museum content to develop their own responses to exhibits, to reflect and construct its own meanings – and to be free to question, debate, collaborate, speculate. For those who wish to become more actively involved, there should be opportunities to question the very ethos of the museum. At the heart of this approach sit opportunities to co-produce content with the museum.

- For example, the Geffrye Museum programme for working and engaging with young people.

**Taking action**
Can participative exhibits targeted at influencing museum visitor behaviour be effective? The underpinning principle of the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles is that “change happens when people are given the space to engage in conversations that move them.” To achieve this sort of challenging dialogue, the Museum seeks first to create a safe environment in which it can occur – this “allows for individuals to take risks while understanding that they will not be penalised for contrary opinions.” When this practice works, participants leave changed, with many motivated to take action on contemporary issues. For example, working with the Ulster Museum in Belfast on its new gallery on the Northern Irish “Troubles”, Deirdre MacBride of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council described the environment required as “… a safe and open space in which dialogue and understanding... can occur... a space in which reflection and possibly reconciliation can emerge even while we are dealing with hurtful living memory.”

**Smart Participation**
Smart activities can be as varied as:

**Taking part:**
- Taking selfies: In 2009, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York asked visitors to submit photographs of themselves beside their favourite works as part of its *It’s Time We Met* project. More than 1,000 photographs were submitted, with two selected to lead a new advertising campaign.

**Creative response:**
- Taking images in response to museum objects: In *Oh Snap!* in 2013, the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, selected and exhibited 13 new works of photography and then invited people to submit their own photographic responses via the internet. Each day the museum printed out new submissions and displayed them beside their inspirations.
- Scanning objects – 3D printing; for example at Karlsruhe Landesmuseum.
- Creating your own apps and blogs, with or without copyright clearance, with ‘Ugly
Renaissance Babies as a literally classical example.

- Developing your own online “galleries” and interpretation, made possible by museums “opening up” their collections, as the Hunt Museum, Limerick has done with the Sybil Connolly Collection.

- Taking part in Hack Days: such as Coding DaVinci, the first German open data cultural hackathon.

**Contributing:**

- Tagging.
- ‘My City, My Sounds’ – an app that allows people to record sounds of the city – then upload.
- Contributing to a museum crowdsourced project.

**Stimulating action:**

- At the Pledge Wall in the US National Holocaust Memorial Museum, visitors can pledge to take part in action against genocide. Within the museum, their written pledges are projected at large scale on to the wall.

**Concluding thoughts**

This paper does not present a solution to the future of museums. At best, the implementation of the ideas it introduces will give your museum a breathing-space while you develop your own vision for that future. I believe you can do so, certain that there is an enthusiastic audience out there if you actively engage with it.

Let me recommend to you the Collins & Porras concept of the ‘Big Hairy Audacious Goal’ and call for a BIG, HAIRY, OUTWARD–FACING, CONFIDENT VISION for the future of museums. This begins by recognising that, in an “Age of Participation”, society is changing in new ways and at web-speed. In response to this new age, the outward-facing museum continues to believe wholeheartedly in the wider relevance of what it has to offer. It responds confidently, enthusiastically and meaningfully to the demands and challenges of a rapidly changing world – seeing these as opportunities, not threats. It actively seeks the views of those beyond its walls, recognising that “real, sustainable change requires understanding that the voices and ideas of others are a critical part of having a broader vision of the world...” And all of this results in an institutional commitment to create a transformed museum for the later 21st century, radically different to its predecessor and underpinned by a new form of partnership between museums and their users.

**Notes**


openaccess.city.ac.uk/17280/1/Ntalla%2C%20Irida-Redacted.pdf. p. 2.


Introduction
The National Museum of Ireland (NMI) believes that museum learning can transform lives. This article discusses how NMI and in particular NMI educators are creating inclusive and relevant learning programmes. It sets out some of the ways in which we use collections and exhibitions to engage the widest possible range of people and examines the meaningful interactions NMI has created to stimulate imaginations and inspire curiosity.

National Museum of Ireland Vision for Democracy, Inclusion and Relevance
The National Museum of Ireland is a social, cultural and political space where individuals, groups and communities can meet to explore what they have in common and to acknowledge and learn about their differences. It is a space where people can develop empathy for what others think and feel. The Museum creates opportunities for intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, providing freedom for people to exchange their stories and perspectives.

The National Museum of Ireland is becoming a more listening and inclusive museum. For example, we are building panels of freelance tour guides to represent the diversity of our communities. Through audience research we are specifically asking people why they are not visiting our museums and are finding out what communities want from us. Through co-creation and co-curation with communities, underpinned by a participant-centred approach, we are striving to be more democratic, inclusive and relevant.

The 2019 Irish Museums Association Conference Platform
In responding to the invitation to speak at the Irish Museums Association conference in 2019, a significant cultural event in the sector’s professional calendar, the NMI’s Education and Curatorial team wanted to give a platform to the voice of the participant. To that end we invited a diverse group of people to reflect on the positive and challenging experiences of engaging with the Museum’s public programmes.

Those who spoke had all participated in National Museum of Ireland programmes. Their engagement had included curation and co-curation of exhibitions and contribution to projects exploring themes including emigration and immigration, local history and the complex nature of cultural and community identity. We wanted those we invited to represent the wide range of people who engage with the Museum, and to reflect the diversity of Irish society, including older and young people, those from urban and rural backgrounds, the Traveller or Mincéir community and Irish citizens who either as refugees or as migrants have recently made this country their home. Speakers on our panel communicated some of the ways in which participants and staff are now engaging with the Museum’s resources.

A Space for Me, and You, and Us: Making Museums Meaningful

Lorraine Comer
A Participant-Centred Approach

For over a decade, NMI has worked with partners and communities to deliver meaningful and relevant programmes; and has reached out to and collaborated with people who would not normally engage with the Museum to address themes reflecting the changing demographics of Irish society. Examples of projects, led by the Education team, include the 2009 Common Threads exhibition of fabric crafts, created by eight women from four different nationalities reflecting themes of migration and diversity; and the Irish Community Archive Network, developed in 2008, which continues to enable local communities to collect, preserve and curate their local cultural history and heritage online.

At the 2019 IMA Conference, Deputy Principal of Larkin Community College Máire O’Higgins chaired a panel discussion on the impact of engaging in recent NMI programmes. The panel explored not only positive but also challenging aspects of their engagement with NMI. In this section I will summarise the panel’s contributions and examine projects in which they have participated.

Migrant Women Shared Experience, curated in 2019 by NMI Curator, Rosa Meehan, provided recent migrants’ accounts of their journeys to Ireland and compared them with stories of 19th and 20th century Irish women’s migration to the UK and United States. As expressed by Rosa in her opening words at the IMA Conference, the exhibition “gave voice and visibility to migrants” and “shed light on contemporary themes related to immigration and diversity”. Rosa’s collaboration with migrant communities enabled the Museum to question how the collections could more accurately reflect demographic changes in 21st century Ireland. Perhaps most critically, Migrant Women Shared Experience gave migrants a public voice. Collaborator Kany Kazadi said at the IMA conference that,

We kind of took a little bit of control of what we wanted to do and say...I felt like I belonged, I could relate with the Museum, I got a platform and my story was told.

In addition to expressing the value of working on Migrant Women, Kany was critical of the short-term nature of these Museum projects. She suggested that museums should plan for sustained relationships with communities and challenged the Museum to reflect more fully on Ireland’s demographic complexity. “When I walk into the Museum of Country Life in Mayo”, she said, “we don’t show the diversity that Ireland and Mayo have, we have to do more”.

Credit: National Museum of Ireland

Over several years, the National Museum of Ireland has developed initiatives to improve visibility for and deepen engagement with Irish Travellers. These have included, in 2017, workshops for young Traveller men given by Master Tinsmith, Patrick Collins at the Museum of Decorative Arts and History in Collins Barracks. In a further set of workshops at Collins Barracks, facilitated by Artist in Residence Róisín de Buitléar, Traveller women shared the craft and heritage of Beady Pockets with women from the majority population. At the end of the project there was a genuine sense of sharing of culture and heritage and respect and understanding between all the women. In the words of one of the participants,

I never knew how to make a Beady Pocket before and it was great to discover that my granny had made some in the past. It is great being here, meeting
all the nice women, mixing with them, going into conversation, and making one. I think it is great to get all of these women together and I think it should definitely continue.

At the IMA Conference, Rosa Meehan spoke about a further Museum of Country Life collaboration with members of the Traveller community to explore aspects of their culture, traditions and crafts. The resulting exhibition and events programme, Travellers’ Journey, featured CAMP, a series of visual artworks created by Travellers with Limerick School of Art and Design students. Led in tandem with NMI by artist Aideen Barry, a Limerick Institute of Technology Lecturer, the purpose of CAMP was to reflect the identities and lived experiences of some Irish Travellers.

IMA Conference panel member and Vice Chair of the Irish Traveller Movement, Oein DeBhaírdúin, spoke about the selection panel that he was part of, to award commissions to the student artists, as a process of giving Travellers “power over their own narrative”. Oein also commented that through such initiatives, the National Museum of Ireland is “opening up a door that’s long felt barred to many people” and “planting real seeds that we need to continue to water”. Like Kany, he...
emphasised the importance of prioritising and sustaining this work within museums, reminding delegates that “no child in this country, be it from a new community or an ethnic community, should ever walk into an institution and not see themselves reflected”.

Building NMI’s relationships with local communities has included working with an increasingly broad range of schools. Anna O’Loughlin is Home School Liaison Teacher at St Gabriel’s, a primary school located in Stoneybatter, a culturally diverse area of Dublin. At the IMA conference, Anna spoke about her experience of working on Stories Between Us, an intergenerational oral history project leading to an exhibition on games and pastimes at the Museum of Decorative Arts and History. In this project, which was co-ordinated by the Museum’s Education Team, students and older adults collaborated with artist and Project Curator Janine Davidson. Anna described the collaborative atmosphere as one of

just pure fun and enjoyment. Where initially there was this age barrier between the young people and the older people – it was just broken down by the reality that everybody likes to play and have fun together, and a real building of relationships...this kind of learning doesn’t happen and can’t happen without the setting of the Museum.

In her presentation, Anna stated that NMI’s unique role in nurturing students’ educational growth makes its investment of time in building and sustaining relationships with the local schools community worthwhile. She stressed the importance of these relationships in helping “to open the Museum up to parents who may not have otherwise brought their children to the Museum”.

This point was also echoed by Aoife O’Connor and Mark Harmon, who had created an exhibition based on their documentary film recording the community living in the O’Devaney Gardens flat complex prior to its demolition. At the IMA conference Aoife and Mark spoke about how, through working on this exhibition at Collins Barracks, their perception of the Museum had become more positive. As a result, they called at the conference for others to “get up and make a difference in their community and get more involved in museums”.

Panel Chair Máire O’Higgins echoed the above points. She highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of NMI’s learning programmes, stating that the projects from which students at Larkin Community College in north inner city Dublin had benefited “just can’t be done in education without museums”. Máire proposed “reimagining education” and “reimagining the cultural centres our young people engage in” and investing adequate resources in sustaining key relationships between schools and museums.

As stated at the outset of this article, becoming an inclusive museum means creating opportunities
for people to develop empathy and respect for what others think and feel. At the IMA conference, Esme Lewis spoke about her participation in Samhain: Shadows, Stories and Song, a 2012–2014 initiative at the Museum of Archaeology. This project brought people from Belfast, Dublin and Mayo together to use the Museum’s collections as inspiration to reflect on the themes of dying, death and loss. With musicians, composers, poets and photographers among them, participants co-created a performance and an exhibition of photographs, soundscape and creative writing. The project generated a social and cultural space where participants from different cultural backgrounds could share ideas and perspectives with one another. Esme talked at the Conference about the value of this type of participative learning in nurturing deep friendships founded upon the sharing of knowledge. Recalling her participation in a workshop in which issues surrounding death had been sensitively discussed, Esme observed that by creating conditions that were inclusive and respectful, the Museum had supported group members in an honest and meaningful sharing of difficult bereavement experiences.

Conclusion
This article has described the National Museum of Ireland as a social and civic space that enables people to respond to societal and global issues that are important to them. It has set out NMI initiatives that have effected positive change in people’s lives, providing evidence that museum engagement programmes can be transformative, can contribute to individual and community well-being, can encourage empathy and can stimulate people’s curiosity and imagination. Through collaborative and innovative programmes, NMI is reaching people who previously would not have engaged with the Museum.

As this article has repeatedly demonstrated though, working with communities requires expertise and taking the time to build trust and respect. Building relationships with communities is labour intensive and requires long term commitment: all the speakers at the IMA conference who are represented in this article voiced their expectations of NMI and highlighted the shortcomings of short term, project-based work. In our role as a listening museum, we are planning to develop a community engagement strategy in 2020 to enable NMI to adopt a more strategic and cohesive approach to how we work with communities. This is one crucial step we are taking to help address some of the challenges outlined in this article.

The last words go to Oein DeBhairduin who at the IMA Conference stated,

*We are on the cusp of a real flourishing in our communities and a real openness and a real understanding of not only Irish history as it’s always been, but actually a telling of a more fuller story ….. not only for the benefit of Travellers, minority groups and new communities, but for the benefit of our wider society.*

*Lorraine Comer is Head of Education at the National Museum of Ireland.*
Living Inside: Six voices from the history of Irish prison reform was an exhibition at Kilmainham Gaol from February to June 2019. Forming part of a five-year Wellcome Trust-funded project, ‘Prisoners, Medical Care and Entitlement to Health in England and Ireland, 1850–2000’, it was curated by UCD Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Dr Oisín Wall and co-curated by the project’s Principal Investigator, Associate Professor Catherine Cox of the UCD Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland, and by visual artist Dr. Sinead McCann. This article discusses the Kilmainham Gaol Museum’s motivation for engaging with the project and how the challenge of presenting the difficult subject of recent prisoners’ histories shaped the exhibition. The article will also discuss how museum partnerships with third-level educational institutions can enable visitors to engage with the latest academic research in a stimulating way.

Founded in 1796, Kilmainham Gaol is among the earliest modern prisons in Ireland, with its 1862 East Wing reflecting nineteenth century ideas on prison reform that continue to cast a long shadow. The Gaol was also a central location for the struggle for Irish independence between 1916 and 1921. Over the last two decades, the Museum has sought to interpret its resulting iconic significance by interweaving this with other stories, to provide a long view on the Gaol’s position in Irish social and penal history. This has included revealing the site as a place where criminal prisoners have been incarcerated. As a result, it now offers unique and at times uncomfortable insights into poverty, social exclusion and transgressive behaviour in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Although the Museum’s particular remit is to focus on the period pre-dating the 1924 closure of the Gaol, its Exhibition Policy explicitly recognises its ‘unique position within the Irish museum landscape as a space where members of this extremely marginalised group can tell their story’.¹ The purpose of this policy is to develop the Museum as a space where people can reflect on contemporary as well as on historical prisoners’ lives. To that end, it has partnered over several years with the Irish Prison Education Service to host exhibitions of art created by both current and former prisoners.

Living Inside was an unprecedented opportunity to build on this work, linking historical and recent prisoner experience through the sustained, rigorous and sensitive scholarship delivered by Catherine Cox and her team. As their partner, the Museum provided expertise on object display, conservation, inter-museum loans and exhibition logistics. Most importantly for Cox’s ‘Prisoners, Medical Care and Entitlement’ project, the Museum provided space for public impact, attracting, as it transpired, approximately sixty thousand visitors while the exhibition was in place. Although the Museum was initially cautious about hosting an exhibition produced by academics accustomed to writing for fellow
schorrs, its concerns were quickly dispelled as the exhibition planning process got underway: it was clear that the UCD team both shared Museum staff commitment to producing a challenging exhibition and had a wealth of prior project experience in successfully engaging diverse participants. A former curator at London’s Science Museum, Oisín Wall’s accessible writing style was complemented by masterful exhibition planning by Ann Scroope and graphic design by Wendy Williams.

The project team were confronted with three challenges concerning the interpretation of the complex subject of recent prison history. Firstly, stemming from the last two decades of revelations resulting from both a growing openness to discourse and from the state’s Commissions of Inquiry, the Irish public is particularly aware of and sensitive to a history of institutional abuse that has impacted prisoners’ lives. Secondly, the theme is inter-connected with a wide range of other potentially sensitive topics, including for example suicide, self-harm, crime, drugs, and the transmission of diseases including HIV.

The third concern arose from the potential for a confrontational audience reaction that might result from the comparisons that the exhibition would draw between historical and contemporary prisoners. While Kilmainham Gaol is treated as an historic artefact, the nearby Mountjoy Prison, which opened twelve years earlier than the East Wing (in 1850) and where similar disciplinary practices were adopted, still operates and is one of the largest prisons within the state. As in the nineteenth century, the majority of the contemporary prison population comes from the most socially deprived sections of society; many struggle with mental health and addiction issues; and the prison system’s ability to reform or rehabilitate remains questionable. Despite these comparisons, visitors to Kilmainham Gaol do not often empathise with contemporary prisoners in the same way as they do with historical figures. While they may feel compassion, for example, for those imprisoned as a result of theft during the Famine or for the executed leaders of the Easter Rising, that compassion may not be extended to victims of modern-day social problems such as those mentioned above.
Focusing on these three challenges when selecting the core exhibition message, the team settled on a foundational idea: that visitors should leave the exhibition knowing that prisoners are human. The resulting exhibition content centred on Wall’s research on the Prisoners’ Rights Organisation (PRO) which campaigned for prison reform during the 1970s and 1980s. Part of the Organisation’s focus was to shift public opinion by moving away from representing prisoners as violent and animalistic, towards enabling their re-conception as normal people, with human rights, whose lives had been shaped by difficult situations. PRO smuggled out prisoners’ letters highlighting the conditions in which they were living; held press conferences with prisoners’ families; supported and publicised court cases taken by prisoners against the state; and took part in, and publicised the reports of, coroners’ inquests when prisoners had died. As a result of the PRO campaign, by the end of the 1970s Irish discourse on prisoners had been transformed.4

During planning meetings, the project team decided that the exhibition would reflect PRO’s approach, by exploring important events in prison history through the stories of individuals. After much discussion the content was winnowed down to the stories of six people whose lives had been entwined with the history of prison reform in Ireland. These were Danny Redmond, a prisoner whose campaign for basic human rights had led to his spending years in military custody in the Curragh Camp; Karl Crawley, a prisoner with severe mental health issues, who petitioned the European Commission on Human Rights alleging that his treatment in the Irish prison system amounted to torture; Derek Cummins, the first person to die of AIDS in the Irish prison system; Margaret Gaj, a well-known restaurant-owner sentenced to a year in prison for campaigning for better healthcare for prisoners; Anne Costello, who has taught in Mountjoy Prison since the 1980s; and Seán Reynolds, a prison officer in Mountjoy from the 1970s to the 2000s.

The team used these human stories and the exhibition’s subjects’ relatable experiences to convey historically significant events. Each was illustrated with contextual and portrait photographs and by objects conveying the ordinary
aspects of prison life. Narrative text included a poem written by a dying prisoner; and there were oral history accounts provided by subjects and their friends. Through their experiences the exhibition explored how the prison system has changed; improvements and mistakes that have been made; and the very real effect that these have had on people’s lives.

If the core message of the exhibition – that prisoners are human – revealed a pre-conception on the part of the project team that the audience’s attitudes to contemporary prisoners would be negative, it appears to have been apposite. Of over 800 respondents who returned feedback forms, 79% said that the exhibition had changed the way that they thought about the treatment of prisoners. In response to a question concerning how the exhibition had made them think differently about prisoners themselves, visitors clearly conveyed the impact of the exhibition’s emphasis. Their answers echoed the words of Danny Redmond: ‘The most frustrating aspect of our few demands is that they are basic human rights, nothing more.’ They included:

I found it engaging because prisoners are human.

Prisoners are human and they deserve to be treated like that.

Prisoners are people too + are entitled to Human rights.

Conclusion
This article has described a recent exhibition in Kilmainham Gaol, made possible by rigorous academic research undertaken by UCD, that has contributed to the Museum’s delivery on its commitment to enabling prisoners and others affected by the Irish penal system to tell their own stories. It has furthermore helped the Museum to fulfil its aim of developing the Gaol’s interpretation to both include and extend beyond the period of the Easter Rising, War of Independence and Irish Civil War. Through its location within the site, Living Inside successfully linked historical prisoner experiences with those of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries; and did so in a way that challenged
visitor preconceptions about contemporary prisoner identities.

*Brian Crowley is Curator of Collections at Kilmainham Gaol Museum, Dublin.*

*Oisín Wall is a historian and curator based in the Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland at University College Dublin.*

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**Notes**


2. www.scroope.com


2018 was the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which granted the vote to all men over 21; and to women aged over 30 who, or whose husbands, occupied land or premises with a rateable value of over £5. Following a long campaign by suffragists and the more militant suffragettes on both sides of the Irish Sea, the Act resulted in the election of the Irish Nationalist, Countess Markievicz as the first female Member of the British Parliament. She never took her seat, becoming instead a founder, and the first female TD, of the revolutionary Dáil Éireann.

Commemorative events, to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising in 2016, had successfully built on public interest in the early twentieth century history of women and children. As the centenary commemorations of the Act fell, like those connected with the Rising, within the Irish Government’s programme to mark the Decade of Centenaries (1912–1922), there were high expectations that events associated with the Act would increase public engagement with the comparatively less well-documented topic of women’s suffrage. Bodies within the Council of National Cultural Institutions, including the National Museum, National Library and National Gallery, contributed to the Oireachtas’ ‘Vótáil 100’ programme, which also delivered centralised educational resources, including timelines, lesson plans, an interactive website and a schools debating contest.

The Irish suffrage movement has until recently been less well-remembered, even in Ireland, than has the British campaign of the Women’s Social and Political Union led by Emmeline Pankhurst. Whereas the British movement remains striking for its green, white and violet ‘Votes for Women’ badges, flags and banners; and for slogans such as ‘Deeds not Words’, by contrast, the distinctive visual culture and messages of the Irish women’s vote campaign had almost been forgotten. An important reason for this is that in Irish public narrative, the theme of women’s suffrage has been overshadowed by that concerning Home Rule, the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and Civil War.¹

Donna Gilligan, Curator of Print, Protest and the Polls at the National Print Museum (May – September 2018; now touring) states that further explanations for the elision of Irish suffrage from public history, include that the movement’s artefacts were ephemeral; and that the collecting policies of museums and libraries have not specifically included them.² Focusing on the build-up to the 1918 Act and the ensuing general election, the exhibition highlights the culture of opposition to the female vote, where through illustrations on postcards and in printed cartoons, suffragettes were ridiculed.³ In a Response Project in partnership with the National Library, the Museum commissioned three contemporary posters from artists Dave Darcy, Jamie Murphy and Mary Plunkett. Bearing the slogans ‘Trust...
Women’ (Darcy); ‘For Men and Women Equally The Rights of Citizenship; For Men and Women Equally the Duties of Citizenship’ (Plunkett); and ‘Trust Dignity Compassion Healthcare Choice Women’ (Murphy), through their inclusion in the exhibition these allude to the continuing relevance of historical rallying cries. The exhibition concludes with its own ballot box where, using a ballot paper that changes each week, visitors are invited to vote on current constitutional issues; one for example concerns whether gender quotas should be introduced in Irish elections.

The National Museum of Ireland exhibition, Votes for Women: Suffrage and Citizenship (July – December 2018) curated by Sandra Heise, was held in an ante-room to the Ceramics Room in its Kildare Street building. This location was especially significant because due to repair works to Leinster House next door, that room was functioning at the time as the Seanad chamber. Objects that Senators as a result had particular opportunity to experience, included a large, fringed banner in green and burnt orange. Bearing the words ‘Irish Women’s Franchise League’ in Celtic Revival print, this visually differentiates the Irish from the British movement. A League lectern-stand was a symbolic centrepiece, its sturdiness hinting at rousing speeches delivered by forthright women and its portability denoting that this was a nationwide campaign.

Another notable object from the National Museum’s collection was the Irish Women’s Franchise League ‘Votes for Women’ badge (the original of which is displayed in NMI’s ongoing exhibition Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising). Taken after his death in 1916 from the coat of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, Rising activist and husband of the suffragette and Irish nationalist, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, the badge has provided a distinctive signifier for the 2018 commemorations. With copies available for visitors to the exhibition at Kildare Street and other ‘Votáil 100’ events, the popularity of the replica badge indicates public hunger for women’s history, and has been a useful gauge of perceptions that gender inequality remains relevant today. Through reference to the lack of female representation in the 2018 Dáil, the NMI exhibition hinted at contemporary parallels.

Since Markievicz’s election a century ago, only 67 women have been elected and the 2016 election resulted in the highest ever proportion of female representatives at only 22%. The National Gallery of Ireland’s Votáil 100 exhibition, Markiewicz: Portraits and Propaganda (October 2018 – February 2019), curated by Donal Maguire, included paintings, photography and caricatures. Reflecting this leading figure of the Irish revolution, and drawn from both National Gallery collections and those of The Hugh Lane Gallery, National Library of Ireland and National Museum of Ireland, the exhibition included works by Markiewicz’ friend Sarah Purser, and an especially poignant painting of Markievicz on her deathbed by her husband, Casimir Dunin Markievicz. Markiewicz’ application of her artistic training, to visually represent herself as a mode of political expression, was particularly evident in photographs depicting her dressed as Joan of Arc and in Celtic Revival costume. By contrast, in her small caricatures, her wit and humour were clear: through these, the exhibition transcended the trope of Markievicz as a revolutionary leader, to depict her as a person of visual sensibility.4

2018 saw a range of other important exhibitions, each themed according to the functions of its delivery body. The National Photographic Archive concentrated on the normalisation of the women’s vote in From Bullets to Ballot Papers; Dublin Castle delivered on its constitutional role in Women in Politics and Public Life; the Little Museum of Dublin concentrated on the social history of women’s work including through contemporary photography by Beta Bajgartova in What’s She Doing Here; and EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum approached the subject through the theme of diaspora in Blazing a Trail. Further developments are now hinting at the success of 2018 in increasing the representation of women in public life. At the National Museum of Ireland’s Museum of Country Life for example, Electric Irish Homes is examining the impact on women’s lives of rural electrification. In A Modern Eye, the National Photographic Archive and Gallery of Photography Ireland are jointly displaying the work of the photographer, Helen Hooker O’Malley.

In conclusion, the work of the Votáil 100 Committee and the cultural institutions that its members represented, have done much to
foster public hunger and enthusiasm for gender equality. The initiative provided an opportunity to examine the connections between historical and contemporary issues and ignited growth in the representation of women in public museums, galleries and libraries.

_Holly Furlong is Events & Engagement Officer at Gaisce – The President’s Award and was involved in the establishment of the Women’s Museum of Ireland._

**Notes**


Creating access for young people through Education and community outreach is a central objective of the Hugh Lane Gallery’s mission. Studies have shown the positive and lasting impact that thoughtful engagement with cultural institutions can have on young people,1 but the question of how to bring in those unfamiliar with museums and art galleries remains a challenge. Youth-led initiatives like the November 2019 climate action strikes are proof that teenagers have a vested interest in voicing their opinions on critical issues that directly impact them – we can see for example the effects that young activists like Greta Thunberg have already had on the global conversation. Teens have a lot of insight to offer in regard to the issues that affect them, and it is clear that they are motivated to share their ideas and take action. It is the responsibility of cultural institutions, then, to provide a space for young people to make their voices heard.

‘Curious Creatures’ (April to June 2019) was a collaborative community outreach project at the Hugh Lane of which I as the Gallery’s Fulbright Scholar was project facilitator. Aiming to engage young people in underserved communities on Dublin’s north side, the project brought students from Beneavin de la Salle College in Finglas and Darndale’s Sphere 17 Youth Centre into the Gallery. The springboard was Our Plundered Planet, a temporary exhibition of works by Mark Dion. Addressing human impacts on the environment and aiming to de-institutionalize knowledge generation, Dion’s work was an excellent opportunity for local teenagers to discuss some of the issues at the forefront of their daily lives.

Young people from Sphere 17 Regional Youth Centre in Darndale viewing The Fisheries by Mark Dion.
Credit: Kimberly Griffith
Active engagement with the exhibition included discussion of selected works on display and creating artworks inspired by it. Many of the participants had never visited the Gallery before so this was an opportunity to become familiar with the space. Before their visits, together with environmental artist Ashleigh Downey I called in to see the students in their learning and after-school environments. In an activity directly inspired by Mark Dion's artistic practice, we introduced the themes and ideas of the exhibition and assisted the young people in creating field notebooks which they later used for sketching and note-taking at the Hugh Lane. These pre-visits helped to establish interpersonal connections with museum staff, fostering a sense of familiarity that allowed them to feel welcome when they entered the Gallery space. In this way they established a sense of ownership vis-à-vis the institution, thus also effectively expanding the Gallery’s stakeholder base and increasing its social permeability.

The jumping-off point for this project, inspired by Dion’s artistic practice, was an exploration of curiosity. Through direct engagement with Our Plundered Planet, participants explored their own natural curiosities, sharing their unique stories and interpretations of the works on display. Their engagement was enabled by our package of kinesthetic learning techniques, that began with a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) tour during which they shared their interpretations on key artworks in the exhibition. These participant-driven discussions, rich in ideas and analyses, were recorded for inclusion in a forthcoming podcast inspired by the teens’ insights. Following this, they participated in artist-led workshops, building on the long-held museum tradition of gallery sketching to create artworks inspired by their interpretations. This was an opportunity both to experiment with new mediums and to allow their minds to work through and develop their discussions on the exhibition’s themes. Through these meaningful interactions with a working artist, their connections to the Gallery were strengthened.

Dion’s 2018 exhibition, Theatre of the Natural World, at London’s Whitechapel Gallery, was a critical meditation on the history of the scientific institutions and bodies of literature that have described and so fixed our understandings of the natural world. In his artworks, Dion endeavours to de-institutionalize the ways in which humans have historically generated and shared knowledge, questioning their authority in claiming to be the last word on the way we understand the world and our place in it. If recent events are any indication, this democratization of knowledge and power will allow humanity to effect positive change on our environment for future generations. Increasingly, cultural spaces like the Hugh Lane Gallery are realizing the benefits of engaging their youngest stakeholders beyond solely getting them through their doors. Young people are the inheritors of our planet and it is up to our cultural institutions to listen to them, learn from them, and work with them in order to create a sustainable model, both for preserving our past, and ensuring our future.
Kimberly Griffith was the Hugh Lane Gallery’s Fulbright Scholar from 2018 – 2019. She is currently on panels of educators at both the Hugh Lane Gallery and the National Gallery of Ireland.

Notes


2. “Drawings are usually tools of the process of making for me.” Mark Dion, quote from artist-led walkthrough of Hugh Lane Gallery Exhibition ‘Our Plundered Planet.’


4. Visual Thinking Strategies is an educational method that is focused on participatory and collaborative learning through looking at images. Founded by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine, the goal of this method is to improve critical thinking skills through inquiry, rather than being given information by an instructor. www.vtshome.org

14 Henrietta Street: A Case Study in Audience-Centred Thinking

Aalia Kamal & Gemma Sexton

The Dublin City Council Culture Company was established in March 2018 to run cultural initiatives and buildings across the city, with, and for, the people of Dublin. One of these buildings is 14 Henrietta Street, a Georgian townhouse on Dublin’s Northside. This article investigates Your Tenement Memories, an oral history programme for the building, as a case study of Audience-Centred Thinking. An approach employed by the Culture Company, this ensures that public engagement is focused on people as opposed to on objects.

Introduction

Dublin City Council Culture Company’s values are Participation, Partnership, Relevance, Quality and Capacity-Building. These are the cornerstone of everything that it does, including both programming and the running of its buildings. Tea & Chats, an ongoing programme of facilitated conversations, is one of the ways in which the Company delivers on these values. Involving travelling all over Dublin and talking to people about their thoughts and ideas on the city and its culture, in the places and spaces where they are, Tea & Chats ensures that the Company is constantly learning about what is important to the people of Dublin. Over a hundred chats take place each year, and all of the Company’s projects and programmes are based on their findings.

It is within this value-led framework that Dublin City Council Culture Company operates 14 Henrietta Street as a visitor experience. In doing so, it aims:

- To Share, by retelling the story of the lives of the people of 14 Henrietta Street and experienced tenement life in Dublin.
- To Engage: By listening and talking, we make connections with visitors, citizens, historians, local residents, former residents and their families.
- To Discover, by continuing to research the house and its occupants, collecting the living memories of former tenement residents and creating a record of the urban and social history of our city.

In 14 Henrietta Street, the stories of the building’s shifting fortunes are told. The phases covered include its establishment in the 1740s as a family home and powerbase; its roles as a courthouse and barracks; and its incarnation as a tenement house: by the 1911 census, over one hundred people lived in the building. The last families did not leave until the 1970s and therefore, the house is a site of living memory.

By conserving and restoring 14 Henrietta Street in preparation for its re-opening as a museum in September 2018, Dublin City Council has peeled back the physical layers of this history; and on a daily basis now, visitors come forward to share their memories. Recognising the need to capture and record these memories, the Company has created an active Collections Policy that is focused on oral histories rather than objects. Delivery on
the Policy is a critical means through which the Company is preserving the folklore and stories of these working class communities as integral to the broader histories and heritage of Dublin; and is contributing to the understanding of the city as a whole and its place within broader European history.

**Your Tenement Memories**

*Your Tenement Memories* is one of the programmes through which the Company is fulfilling the Collections Policy; and involves collecting personal stories of experiences in, and historical accounts of, both 14 Henrietta Street and other tenement buildings in Dublin during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Your Tenement Memories* aims to collect, preserve and share memories that, in many cases, represent themes that have not previously been publicly considered, or relate to stories for which there has been no public platform before.

Where a more object-centred project might have prioritised the collection and management of material culture, *Your Tenement Memories* has been driven by participants’ needs and by their responses to collaborating with the programme. This approach was exemplified in 16 drop-in sessions which began in January 2018. Five of these were in 14 Henrietta Street and other city centre locations, and the remaining eleven took place in Dublin suburbs to which families had moved between the 1930s and 1970s; for example, Ballyfermot, Cabra, Coolock, Crumlin, Drimnagh and Finglas.

In order to create a sense of ownership, the sessions took place in accessible and familiar public spaces, including in libraries and community centres; an especially important step given that many of the former residents are now advanced in years. Holding the sessions in these informal venues, in areas local to the participants, also helped to reinforce the project’s focus on them, their stories, and the importance of their engagement; and furthermore helped to avoid any implication of organisational hierarchy.

In advance of each event, team members encouraged attendance by talking to existing contacts and by going door-to-door around neighbourhoods and shops, spreading the word...
through conversations and by handing out flyers. The non-corporate nature of these invitations, where staff were physically going out to people in their own places and spaces, underlined the team members’ personal commitment to the values of the project and in doing so helped to fulfil its aims. People attending the events were invited to share their memories over a cup of tea, both in groups and in one-to-one conversations with social historians and experienced citizen engagement professionals. In this way, the conversations were both comfortable and private where privacy was required.

Detailed preparation and planning, which was essential to the success of the events, included desk research on best oral history practice, together with consulting oral historians and other experts. Attention was paid to ensuring that all paperwork was ethically sound and GDPR compliant and that the informed consent of interviewees was secured and formally recorded. Interview design, which was founded on the principles of respect and empowerment, included planning to provide sufficient explanation about the project, to make it as easy as possible for people to contribute through accessible language and to use appropriate question formats. Open-ended questions invited the sharing of reflections on the connections between lives in the past and in the present, so enabling participants to contextualise memories while also ensuring that they were in control of the process.

The new phase of *Your Tenement Memories*, which began in June 2019 and which, based on the connections that are continuously being made, will proceed indefinitely, has two components. The first is to return to suburban locations to meet and connect with former tenement residents who were missed during Phase One. The second is to meet again with participants who have self-identified as willing to tell their stories in more detail. Over time, these stories will be developed as exhibitions and through guided tours at 14 Henrietta Street.

Audience-Centred Thinking is at the heart of everything that the Company does at 14 Henrietta Street, and is being delivered through several activities in addition to the *Your Tenement Memories* programme. These include, for example, reminiscence sessions with groups who cannot
easily access the Museum, such as in day-care centres. To these, the team brings everyday items connecting with Dublin tenement life – for example, carbolic soap, Rinso and marbles. These have led to an idea for a ‘mobile museum’ service that will be further developed during 2020.

Conclusion
Using the Your Tenement Memories programme as a case study, this article has shown how Audience-Centred Thinking can be practically applied. It has demonstrated that the approach can be used to outwardly reflect, and to drive, the development of an organisation’s democratic values, leading to deeper and more meaningful community engagement. Founded on the method of offering an open invitation to participate within supportive environments that are ‘owned’ by communities, Your Tenement Memories has enabled the development of relationships that will remain central to Dublin City Council Culture Company activity. Effective in ‘crowd-sourcing’ historical evidence that is generating museum content, it has also invested power in participants, providing them with the means to activate the stories that they want to see told.

Aalia Kamal is Head of Engagement and Gemma Sexton is Head of Visitor Experience at the Dublin City Council Culture Company.
Supported Studios: Crawford Artists in Context

Emma Klemencic, Karolina Poplawska, Louise Foott & Anne Boddaert

Introduction
This article explores the concept of the Supported Studio and examines the history of such studios in Cork. It sets out the extraordinary contribution of Hermann Marbe, an artist facilitator who pioneered provision in the city. With particular focus on the Crawford Supported Studio, the article communicates some of the achievements of studio artists who have exhibited their work across Cork and in Dublin, delivering mainstream learning programmes and working alongside European and global partners. Finally, it gives mention to future work to be delivered by the Crawford Supported Studio.

Supported Studios in Ireland
Supported studios are sustained, creative environments that foster and support the art practice of individuals with health or social needs. They enable marginalized individuals to develop their professional practice, providing technical artistic support, promoting artists in the marketplace and building audiences outside health and social care settings. Irish supported studios are a precious ecosystem, without which many artists would be deprived of the means to make their work. Supported studios in Ireland, including KCAT in Kilkenny and the Arts Ability Studio group in Wexford, enable people with intellectual disabilities to have a meaningful creative presence within the cultural life of their communities. Padraig Naughton, Director of Arts & Disability Ireland, has described in conversation with us advances in supported studio practice as “long fought” and “hard-won” by small groups of dedicated arts workers.

Glasheen Art Studio Programme (GASP)
At the John Birmingham Day Care Centre in Cork, since the early 2000s artist facilitator Hermann Marbe had created a supported studio, the Glasheen Art Studio Programme (GASP). Here, he introduced art techniques and provided a space where people could try them out and identify the media that best brought out their talent. Every morning Hermann would visit each room, inviting its occupants to make some art. The studio door was open to all and residents could come as often as they wished. He patiently encouraged people to build their skills and confidence, discovering their unique creative natures over time.

Hermann met many unique artists among the residents of the day care centre. Ken Daly, a very quiet man, liked to draw portraits from magazines or photo albums. He captured the look of a person in a very caricatured way, adding humour that nobody had ever suspected from him. Siobhan Mullane would be working on a painting, and, if distracted, could not finish the piece that day. She would return the following week and, barely looking at her painting, would mix exactly the same shade of paint and continue to work as if she had never stopped. These are just two of the many talented artists whom Hermann met and supported, but they provide rich examples of how
art reduced the impact of individuals’ physical and psychological conditions on their engagement with the outside world.

Hermann rejected the dominance of disability as a theme in people’s lives, blending away the “special needs” aspect of his work. He believed that we all have special needs and need help in different forms: he was more interested in people’s strengths. Hermann strove to help people to become stronger within their community, shifting their status from day-care residents to self-sufficient artists. He recognized that to do so, people had to come out of the big day-care “bay” rooms in which they sat, to work in the heart of the city alongside other artists, meeting visitors and participating as equals.

By building GASP’s relationships with other organisations, Hermann Marbe impacted visual arts practice across the city as a whole. In the Mayfield Arts Centre, GASP members developed their professional skills and gained accredited arts training. With Meitheal Mara, a community boatyard and training centre, they built and launched a boat, the Friend-Ship, later exhibited in Cork Public Museum and at Cork Educate Together national school. CIT Crawford College of Art and Design provided studio space in the city centre where artists could explore new work, meet and work alongside students, participate in projects and teach classes. Crawford Art Gallery invited two to work as artists in residence, during which time they contributed to the Gallery’s Learn & Explore programme by designing and delivering engagement activities, including for Culture Night.

Over time, GASP artists became increasingly visible, undertaking projects with schools, in restaurants, cafés, a nursing home, in *Irish Examiner* and *Evening Echo* premises and in other local offices. They used the Bank of Ireland’s Workbench exhibition space, established a studio on the Cork–Dublin train, occupied an empty retail unit and exhibited in numerous cafés in Cork and at the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin.

The Crawford Supported Studio
In May 2018, Hermann Marbe passed away. With this, the GASP artists lost a formidable mentor and their greatest friend, but Hermann had seeded love for his project in many people’s hearts. His death coincided with the removal of funding from Cúig (Creativity Unlimited Integrated Group), founded ten years previously by the Mayfield Arts Centre, a vibrant art-facilitating and training centre that is deeply involved in its community. The idea for Crawford Support Studio was born.

The Crawford Supported Studio, established in 2018, is delivered through a partnership of institutional allies, comprising Crawford Art Gallery, CIT Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork City Council’s Arts Office and COPE Foundation. It is itself a legacy project, aiming to carefully hold over ten years’ worth of supported studio practice and sustaining that initiated, nurtured and developed within COPE Foundation by Hermann Marbe.

The Studio’s ethos is embedded in that of Marbe, and centres on recognising and valuing difference and enabling marginalized artists to shape their own cultural identities. Two dedicated facilitators, Karolina Poplawska and Mairead O’Callaghan...
facilitate studio spaces, providing one day a week in each of the Gallery and the College of Art. Set up to provide a space for the GASP and Cúig artists to maintain their art practice, the Studio also continues to build links with organizations, artists, schools, students, community groups and fellow supported studios.

In 2019, the Crawford Art Gallery remains mindful of Hermann Marbe’s insistence that public institutions must enable people to identify as artists rather than as disabled. Through its unique anchoring within both gallery and art college, the Crawford Supported Studio partnership has sought to rise to this challenge by supporting successful applications for Arts and Disability Ireland grants. Through a Mentoring Grant, artist Tom O’Sullivan will work with painter Tom Climent and studio-facilitator Mairead O’Callaghan to explore technique, paint on a larger scale and work more independently. Yvonne Condon’s New Work Grant will be a site-specific project in rural and urban settings identified as suitable and permissible in partnership with Cork City Council. Through a Connect Award, Íde Ní Shúilleabháin, Ailbhe Barrett, Bríd Heffernan and John Keating will develop new processes with Cork Printmakers. Supported and sustained by means of collaboration with a number of varied groups, the Crawford Supported Studio is broadening recognition of the importance of difference.

Exhibitions, Programmes and Partnerships
Crawford Supported Studio exhibitions build on the now long-established presence within the Crawford Art Gallery of GASP and Cúig artists. In 2013 their work was exhibited in Outside In: The Art of Inclusion, a unique, collaborative project at three Cork venues – Crawford Art Gallery, City Hall and the CIT Wandersford Quay Gallery. The outcome of a partnership between Crawford Art Gallery, CIT Crawford College of Art and Design, Mayfield Arts Centre/Newbury House and Cork City Council, the exhibition showcased selected works of over fifty artists, working in supported studio settings, in Cork, Kilkenny, Youghal, Brighton, Amsterdam, New York and San Francisco. With a publication edited by Louise Foyt, the exhibition was accompanied by discussions and workshops with participating artists, continuing through the
Gallery’s Learn & Explore programme and also the CIT Crawford College of Art & Design’s academic programme.

Outside In was followed by the exhibition Perceptions 2016: The Art of Citizenship which showcased the work of over sixty artists working in supported studio settings. Following an open call for submissions, work was selected from supported studios worldwide, including from GASP and Cúig artists. The exhibition, organized by Crawford Art Gallery, Cork City Council and Crawford College of Art and Design and shown in ten Cork venues, sought to place diverse perspectives and marginalized voices in the cultural heart of the city, thereby challenging the still-unrealized 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic to cherish “all the children of the nation equally and oblivious of…differences.”

Perceptions 2016 also showcased outcomes from the Expanding Realities project, a European Erasmus+ funded partnership between GASP Cork, Art in Motion (AIM) Bristol and Debajo del Sombrero Madrid to support the professional development of artists. Expanding Realities was an opportunity for artists to travel and visit each other’s cities, to create new work side-by-side and to exchange ideas and experiences. Perceptions 2016: The Art of Citizenship was noted as important by Irish Museum of Modern Art Head of Engagement and Learning, Helen O’Donoghue, because it exhibited “the quality of work that is happening behind closed doors”. ‘Meet the Artist’ events, tours, school and community workshops, a symposium investigating our understanding of citizenship within the unique context of the exhibition and with a further publication edited by Foott, completed the engagement programme.

Conclusion
This article has set out to establish the importance of the Supported Studio concept, and to consolidate awareness of studio artists, some
examples of whose work are shown here. Aimed at museum professionals in Ireland, it is hoped that the article will lead to further collaborations within the sector. In 2020, the Crawford Supported Studio will embrace an adventurous and ambitious programme, focused on supporting the artists to continue to develop artistically and strengthening key relationships leading to broader creative networks. A 2019 collaborative Open Studio invited staff and students from the School of Visual Arts in New York to Cork, a creative encounter that has led to Crawford Supported Studio artists being offered their own show, in February 2020, at Flat Iron Gallery, SVA, New York. Meanwhile, discussions are ongoing concerning a possible exhibition to be hosted by University of Atypical in Belfast; and students of the Crawford College of Art and Design will experience further open studios there. There is art to be made, people to meet and a world to be explored.

\[Wall vinyl by Cúig artist Frankie Burton. In Outside In: The Art of Inclusion (2013) at Cork City Council.\]

\[Photo: Jed Niezgoda.\]

\[Emma Klemencic leads the Crawford Art Gallery Learn & Explore programme together with Senior Curator Anne Boddaert.\]

\[Karolina Poplawska has been a Supported Studio Facilitator for ten years. She is an occupational therapist who is qualified in Art Therapy.\]

\[Louise Foott is Head of the Department of Arts in Health and Education, Crawford College of Art and Design (CIT).\]

\[Notes\]

1. www.expandingrealities.eu
In the western world, right-wing ideologies have risen to renewed prominence in recent years, but in Ireland, social attitudes have shifted towards the left. A momentous reduction in religious and social conservativism has occurred in just a few decades, accompanying a breakdown in the link between church, state and society that has been associated with a series of abuse scandals. This breakdown has been evidenced by referenda to change the Irish Constitution’s regulation of marriage and sexual reproduction, both of which were formerly based on Catholic teaching. In a country that has been considered as a bastion of Catholic religion and where Catholicism remains integral to national identity, it is difficult to overstate the significance of these events. This period can therefore be regarded as one of social revolution of a kind that requires recording within our national history collections.

The National Museum of Ireland’s Rapid Response Collecting Programme immediately followed the 2018 Referendum on the repeal of the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland Act 1983, which allowed abortion only when the life of a pregnant woman was at risk. The Programme marks a new strategic approach within NMI to managing the contemporary collecting of nationally significant events, and has led to innovative curatorial practices, bringing members of the public into the core of museum processes; and further opening up the ownership of the Museum to them. These practices have included the active collection of curator-identified material of interest; crowd-sourcing of objects; making appeals for donations through online social networks; inviting citizens to curate the incoming collection and suggesting that they organise the preservation of new material that they feel represents themselves.

This article will explore how NMI’s decision to collect Referendum material has exposed significant gaps in the collections, leading to changes in NMI policy and practice that have allowed curators to explore new ways of collaborating with citizens and outside bodies, and so to collect in a more meaningful way. It will examine how citizens have selected objects that commemorate this period of rapid social change in Ireland and will present some of the artefacts that they chose to represent what the Referendum campaign has meant to them. Finally, the article will examine the National Museum’s ongoing efforts to record recent political events and social issues through collecting. These events and issues include, for example, the 2015 Marriage Equality Referendum, LGBTQI+ rights, the question of the Irish border and the identities of border communities within the context of Brexit, and Irish political history which continues to influence and shape contemporary Ireland.

The 2017–2018 sexual and reproductive rights campaign was an Irish grassroots women’s movement that was also part of a global discussion...
on women’s issues following Donald Trump’s inauguration as president of the USA. The movement was notable for its visual element, seen in Ireland especially at the 2017 Women’s March for Choice in Dublin. While participating in these marches for reproductive rights on Dublin’s O’Connell Street, I was struck by their visual similarity to historical marches that had also taken place in that part of the city. The contemporary marches displayed visual echoes of nineteenth-century guild and trade-union banners of which examples are held in the National Museum of Ireland collection, also pictorialized in 1875 by Charles Russell in *The O’Connell Centenary Celebrations* which is in the National Gallery of Ireland. The Repeal the 8th Movement marches surrounding O’Connell Street were marked by the use of banners on both sides of the debate. “No” campaigners’ banners and placards were predominantly professionally-printed and text-based. “Yes” campaigners both created hand-made pieces as individuals and produced banners professionally, through groups such as the Artists’ Campaign to Repeal the 8th, a textile collective led by Alice Maher. The artists had found inspiration in trade banners that they had viewed in NMI’s Irish Folklife division, forging a direct link between the historic collections and the contemporary banners. It was clearly important therefore for the National Museum to acquire these new artworks, both as material culture of the Referendum, and also as a visible continuation of a historical tradition of Irish banner art and messaging.

These new representations came at a fortuitous time, as before the Referendum I had already been researching the NMI’s flag and banner collection with a view to contemporary collecting. As a result,
during the campaign I captured and analysed emergent factual data for the event, including for example the genders and ages of campaigners, and voting predictions for urban versus rural populations. Having gathered ephemera including leaflets and badges produced in the lead-up to the Referendum, I began collecting in earnest on 26th May 2018, on the morning after the vote was held. Given that its posters were already being removed, I was especially concerned to acquire the material culture of the No campaigns and so, using social media, I sought the help of friends to collect them from their areas. Following this, through Twitter on behalf of the National Museum of Ireland, I issued an appeal for banners from both sides of the debate. This elicited a huge response, making it clear that both individual and group campaigners strongly desired and supported the National Museum’s collecting from the event. Soon I had a wide range of material to represent diverse stories, that was truly a collection gathered by an engaged network of citizens, managed by a curator.

The Museum could not accept all offers, and in order to avoid duplication and becoming overwhelmed with material, I selected items to provide broad geographical and gender representation. I also made acquisitions that represented a range of social interests, including those of individual campaigners, community group protesters and professional bodies; seeking material that evidenced a range of media platforms and artistic expression. In order to collect a people’s history along with the material culture, for every item acquired I recorded location used, creator and production details and how and why the creator had been motivated to produce the item in response to the Referendum.

The posters produced by campaign groups illustrate the ideological platforms on which the debate was founded and contain the key symbols and arguments of both the Yes and No campaigns. As no other banners or ephemera were offered to the Museum to represent the No side of the debate, posters have become the primary form of its representation within NMI. By comparison, the Yes campaign’s diversity and creativity will be recalled through, in addition to printed posters, handmade banners, painted umbrellas, and artworks, painstakingly created by women as individuals and as members of community groups.

Many of these items visually evoke early 20th century feminist protest. There are, moreover, new designs, for example Maser’s iconic Repeal logo, now preserved in NMI as a handknitted banner. In the future it will be used to illustrate the banning of Campaign artwork from publicly-funded spaces, one of many stories of controversy surrounding the Referendum.

Objects that I collected from around the country represent the movement’s presence both in major cities and in rural communities. The ‘My Body, My Choice’ dress was paraded by its maker in Donegal, the only constituency to vote against repealing the amendment, as a banner on a mannequin. The ‘Roscommon Farmers For Yes’ family banner represents the county which voted against same-sex marriage equality in 2015 and in favour of abortion rights in 2018; it is therefore both a critical vehicle for interpreting change in Irish social attitudes, and represents the participation of men who campaigned for partners, family members, and friends.

Some of the most moving material has come from the Home to Vote and Be My Yes campaigns in the UK and Ireland. These organizations provided young Irish citizens working abroad with information regarding their eligibility to vote, and encouraged them to make the journey home to do so, just as similar organisations had done in 2015 for the referendum on marriage equality. The London–Irish Abortion Rights campaign was key in raising awareness through peaceful protest. In its 2016 March for Choice, 77 women to represent the 77 who had been travelling from Ireland to England each week for an abortion, walked with wheeled suitcases through the streets of London to arrive in a silent protest outside the Irish Embassy. One of these suitcases is now part of the NMI’s Repeal collection, a physical object to represent both the protest movement and each of the 77 weekly women of whom there would otherwise be no public record. These women’s airport signs and boarding passes, which the Museum has also collected, furthermore reflect the recent diaspora of Irish citizens, often young, who have been displaced by economic depression since 2007.

Collecting the Repeal the 8th Movement has illuminated weaknesses in NMI’s collection, including gaps in the representation of post-
independence Ireland. It has helped to identify the need for a review of contemporary collecting policies in order to collect in a more effective and strategic way. As a result, the Museum has begun to update acquisitions policies to include the coverage of issues facing contemporary Ireland, and to address deficits in current collecting processes. This has led to a more considered approach to collecting recent and current events, combined with a more strategic emphasis on the effective research and display of the collection, both of which will deliver more meaningful public outcomes. Two new policies, including a specific and more fit-for-purpose contemporary acquisitions policy and an updated deaccession policy, will guide curators to collect in a more representative, balanced and proactive way. These policies, informed by strategic insight and a clear vision for the future, are imperative in order to ensure sustainable usage of limited museum resources, and to enable museum staff to better connect with members of the public and to explore and display their histories.

Recent acquisitions that demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach include a dress worn by drag performer and gay rights activist Panti Bliss during her 2014 Noble Call speech about homophobia in Ireland (generally seen as the beginning of the marriage equality campaign); and dresses worn by Katherine Zappone and her wife Ann Louise Gilligan at their Dublin Castle wedding following the success of the 2015 Marriage Equality referendum. These mark a beginning of the representation within NMI of the struggle for equal rights for the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland on which the Museum will seek to build. A further history from which NMI is beginning to collect concerns recent protest against the effect of Brexit on border communities in Ireland.

Due to increased public knowledge that NMI wishes to collect from recent history resulting from the Repeal collecting programme, the organisation is now more highly valued as a repository for Ireland’s story. This has been shown by new offers of important material. An example of this is an acquisition, currently in progress, of the contents of a Magdalene laundry, brought to NMI attention by the heritage professional conducting site-specific oral history work with survivors. The outcomes of this project continuously inform the selection of material chosen to illustrate both the Magdalene system and women’s experiences inside it.

In conclusion, the Rapid Response collecting approach, corresponding to the Repeal Referendum event, has produced a new and different model for collecting material culture within NMI. A critical outcome has been vastly increased participation from the Irish public, who have acted with the organisation as citizen curators. In suggesting and offering artifacts, they have engaged fully with their national museum, choosing material that represents them and their experiences. The Museum’s new approach to outreach has instilled a stronger sense of public ownership of its collections and has renewed citizens’ sense of belonging to the organisation. This valuable relationship will be developed in the future and will be used to identify further gaps in the twentieth and twenty-first century collections and to source objects. This relationship is essential in establishing a clearer role for NMI in current Irish society. What we collect will as a result more effectively reflect contemporary events in Irish history for future generations. Those events on which we will focus include economic boom and bust, newer Irish communities, the housing and homelessness crisis, direct provision for asylum seekers and the reformation of the Irish border after Britain leaves the European Union. In this way, our institution will become more reflective of the public it serves, providing a model of timely and proactive collection practices.

Brenda Malone is Curator of Military History at the National Museum of Ireland.
Introduction
Heritage can be considered, amongst other things, to be a reflection of our humanity. Given that this is so, a visitor to Ireland’s museums would be forgiven if when they left they were still questioning whether queer lives had ever existed at all. This article pursues the argument that the exclusion of queer identity from the museum has historic roots in the influence of an authorised heritage discourse which, in turn, has defined institutional practice throughout museums’ history. In a historic cultural climate where the powerful élite held dominance, queer identity was relegated as ‘other’ and remained invisible in museum displays. However, as we enter the third decade of this century a number of ambitious developments are taking place in the Irish museum sector that seek to reinvigorate the ways in which we engage with our collections. Furthermore, these are challenging long-held assumptions about what is acceptable in museum programming. As Robert Janes (an advocate for museum activism) has argued, “what the world really needs are museums that provide cultural frameworks to identify and challenge the myths and misperceptions that threaten all of us”. As social and cultural institutions, museums have the ability not only to represent this marginalised community, but also to challenge the societal injustices faced by its members. They can do so both by interpreting their past and present lives and by acknowledging their importance to the history of Ireland.

Challenging the Status-Quo – The issue of heteronormativity
The introduction of queer narratives to the museum space can only truly occur if we first accept that the sector has contributed to the perpetuation of an ingrained heteronormativity that remains prevalent today. This term describes the assumption that heterosexuality and fixed gender identities are natural and right, whilst all other possibilities are considered to be in opposition to these values and are therefore wrong. Within the museum context, heteronormativity has resulted in an often-unconscious assumption that the narratives portrayed are gender binary and heterosexual, except where it has been clearly stated that they are connected to queer lives. It is important to highlight that these assumptions are often unintentional, with many people, both visitors and museum staff alike, remaining unaware of the embedded bias that is inculcated by a prevailing heteronormative culture. However, the concept of heteronormativity exposes the need for a shift in perspective, and a need to provoke change. Museum practice can mobilise this change by identifying and interpreting queer narratives that have always been present in our collections.

Moves to draw out queer narratives in museums have not been without criticism. Some for example have argued that overt references to individuals’ sexuality and gender identity appear ‘awkward, tokenistic, unnecessary and reductive’.
Notwithstanding these claims, unless visitors are presented with information that challenges heteronormativity, the status-quo will remain unchallenged and the erasure of queer existence from the heritage narrative will endure. Of course, queer programming requires sensitive, nuanced and context-specific attention to detail. It is therefore essential, in the first instance, that we channel research into the ways in which our collections and heritage sites have the potential to represent previously elided queer identities in order to uncover the stories that have been undeveloped. Following this, it may be possible to explore the most appropriate and impactful methods through which these stories can be presented as part of the visitor offer, in ways that are appropriate to each museum and heritage site. As Ferentinos argues “every organisational attempt to interpret these pasts will follow its own unique paths”.

The Emergence of Queer Practice in Ireland

John Vincent has stated that museums have been “unable to move beyond Victorian curatorial orthodoxies and consider it inappropriate to engage with sexuality issues or to go back and reassess their historic holdings”. His analysis reflects on a generalised attitude towards queer heritage programming that has until recently been prevalent. Despite the expansion of Western museum practice to become more representative of other minority groups since the beginning of the 21st century, queer communities and their heritage have largely been left unexplored. Through their failure to engage, Ireland’s museums have been outstripped by other types of cultural institution. In 2008 for example the Linen Hall Library hosted an event as part of the Queer Arts Festival ‘Outburst’ entitled ‘Telling Tales’ that explored methods for archiving queer stories. In the same year, the Irish Queer Archive, described as “a vast collection of material which provides fascinating and valuable insights into the social, cultural and political history of the LGBT communities in an Irish and international context”, was presented to the National Library of Ireland. More recently however, their development of new partnerships with queer organisations have begun to supply museums with opportunities to engage with this group for the first time. In 2014 for example the Ulster Museum became an event partner during the 2014 Outburst Queer Arts Festival by hosting the performance piece ‘David Hoyle’s Queer History Tour’. Described as “part performance, part fantasy museum tour”, it asked the question, “where is our queer history and why is it important that we make it visible?”.

Although this recent growth in queer programming at museums and heritage sites across Ireland is noteworthy, there has been a lack of research on why these changes are taking place now. In the UK, the impetus for institutional change occurred with the demi-centenary of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act in 2017. National-level acknowledgement of this anniversary provided the momentum for many British museums to engage with queer narratives for the first time. By comparison, no such stimulus appears to have motivated the recent upsurge in Irish programming: in Northern Ireland and Ireland, male homosexual acts were not decriminalised until 1982 and 1993 respectively. It therefore appears that the exponential growth in engagement within the UK heritage sector has brought queer narratives prominently to the fore in public consciousness, acting as a catalyst for Irish organisations to re-consider their own collections and spaces.

The 2015 Irish equal marriage referendum, resulting in the 34th Amendment that made Ireland the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage by popular vote, has been of even greater significance. This decisive event endorsed wider public dialogue on the subject, opening up space within the museum sector to explore a history that had previously carried with it a risk of controversy. Museums’ prior aversion to risk had not been unfounded, for as Dubin has noted, the sector is characterised by ‘culture wars’ in which the increased empowerment of one group in society can render those whose narratives were previously dominant feeling threatened. The 2015 Marriage Equality Act has reassured museums that the risk of inciting adverse reaction is reduced, and that, by representing queer narratives, they will be...
acting in line with public opinion.

Despite equal marriage remaining illegal in Northern Ireland, there has been a growth in queer programming that has coincided with that in the Republic. Since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, reports of homophobic incidents have notably increased and the region continues to be described as “a deeply patriarchal and homophobic society”. Therefore, museum engagement with queer identity may be a response to the injustice faced by this group in Northern Ireland where, by contrast, the achievement of marriage equality is being celebrated on the other side of the Irish border. Therefore, the recent growth in Northern Irish practice may best be understood within the social and political context in which museums in the region are operating. Notwithstanding a current lack of evidence as to why this is taking place, it is possible to examine the means through which the sector has mobilised.

Queering our Spaces

As stated above, considerable work remains to be done to uncover the queer stories hidden in the archives and collections that are housed by Irish museums. I will focus here on progress to date, providing samples of recent interpretative projects. This article cannot provide a comprehensive overview: instead, it is a snapshot of changes currently taking place in the sector and an analysis of their potential impact. Below I synthesise two key approaches that museums can use to introduce these narratives. As I will argue, these are methods that are available to all museums in Ireland.

Queer Tours

This familiar form of museum programming provides an impactful way of presenting queer narratives that also, due to its tried and tested nature, furnishes museums with strong motivation to research them. By offering a focused examination of identity that allows museums to succinctly articulate the importance of their queer collections, tours can provide a richly nuanced experience for visitors. Enabling them to perceive exhibits through a ‘queer lens’ and therefore to scrutinise collections in a new way, queer tours confront participants with alternative perspectives that enable them to develop their understanding of the past.

As an example, in 2018 the National Gallery of Ireland introduced a monthly LGBTQI+ tour that examined the history of gender and sexual identity through exploration of the subjects and artists behind a selection of works on display. Similarly, the Crawford Art Gallery has delivered several LGBTI+ themed tours in tandem with keynote city-wide events marking LGBTI+ Awareness Week and Cork Pride. These examples deepen the exploration of queer identity, by extending user curiosity beyond querying solely who was queer, to examine “why and how we find queers in history”. Further queer tours include those of Kilmainham Gaol, which since 2018 has focused on the experiences with crime and punishment of LGBTQ+ people; and that of Hillsborough Castle, which in 2019 introduced a LGBTQ+ tour exploring the history of diverse gender identities and sexualities associated with Northern Ireland’s royal residence.

The initiation of queer tours at these two sites is especially significant, given that both have previously been attended by specific public perceptions of what constitutes national identity. As Laurajane Smith notes, “heritage discourse, in providing a sense of national community, must, by definition, ignore a diversity of sub-national cultural and social experiences”. The introduction of queer narratives in these locations has helped to subvert the status quo, challenging visitors to reconsider their own interpretation of the past. Furthermore, by restoring historic queer identities as part of the development of normative societies, these events have challenged what Horn et al describe as “overly simplistic stories of gradual transition from repression to liberation over the course of history”. By addressing the past marginalisation of this group through its re-presentation, queer tours actively engage with the forces that have led to its oppression.

Whilst tours improve museum research on, and engagement with, queer heritage, they alone are insufficient to counter heteronormativity within museums, or to challenge the ongoing experience of oppression that continues to affect this group. In addition, because they primarily appeal to those who are members of the queer community, or have a pre-existing interest or investment in queer stories, there is a need to introduce further initiatives that encourage broader groups of
visitors to engage with a heritage and identity that they may not otherwise encounter. These audiences can be reached through Queering Collections, a method that is examined below.

Queering Collections
The interpretation of collections from the perspective of gender diversity and sexuality is a powerful way of adding queer narratives to the existing visitor offer. At some museums this has been achieved through the acquisition of new objects – for example, the Ulster Museum’s ‘The Troubles and Beyond’ exhibition displays a t-shirt from the first Belfast Pride parade and badges worn during a marriage equality rally. An even more effective method however is to re-interpret existing collections. This process is known as ‘queering the museum’ and has been described by Horn et al as “an opportunity to look at our collections with a fresh eye and explore further the multitude of possible perspectives and readings.”

Through this method, the museum presents visitors with narratives that challenge their pre-conceived notions of gender and sexuality.

The National Museum of Ireland’s ‘Rainbow Revolution’ exhibition and trail (June 2019 – June 2020) is an excellent example of its usage. This includes a series of newly displayed artefacts “that define some of the most memorable moments in the LGBTI+ movement in recent years”. It is however the reinterpretation of existing objects that has been particularly impactful. Visitors receive a map of the museum galleries guiding them through centuries of queer history via objects already in situ within their permanent displays. This form of programming is effective because it refuses to assign ‘other’ status to queer objects, instead revealing the presence of queer stories in unexpected places. It is furthermore efficient because it enables museums to introduce queer narratives to their sites without requiring gallery re-structuring, new acquisitions or new exhibitions.

Conclusion
The challenge of queer programming remains to consider how best to integrate queer narratives with the existing visitor offer. Even in the case of the NMI ‘Rainbow Revolution’ trail – amongst the best examples of usage of the Queering Collections method in Ireland – visitors must choose to collect a trail guide. Therefore, the prevalence of heteronormativity in our museums remains resistant to change. Nonetheless, the very presence in the above national cultural institutions of the interpretation of queer history – and the strategically-placed rainbow stickers beside chosen objects – must be recognised as ground-breaking steps.

Through their adoption in national museums and galleries, these methods will undoubtedly encourage more visitors than ever before to engage with Ireland’s queer history. It is also true that despite their limitations, the interpretation methods discussed above are effective in facilitating the slow erosion of heteronormativity. The Irish museum sector is still in the early stages of this journey and much research is still needed to develop methodologies through which to promote queer discourse.

In this paper, I have demonstrated how queer programming in the Irish museums sector has developed over the last two decades, and how the movement has accelerated since the 2015 Referendum. It is also my argument that, as demonstrated by the efficacy of the two methods for queering the museum that I have explored above, any museum can and should consider how they too can draw out these narratives. By doing so, the sector not only has the potential to represent a group that has historically been marginalised from heritage discourse, but also to effect positive change on its lived experience beyond the museum walls.

Kris Reid is a Heritage and Museum Studies PhD Student at Ulster University. His topic is focused on the pathways to museum-based activism in Northern Ireland with a focus on LGBTQ+ representation and display in the region’s museums.

Notes
10. The Linen Hall Library is also an Accredited Museum. See www.nimc.co.uk.
Is your museum participatory at its core? Is it relevant? Are the values of co-curation and co-production at the heart of your organisation and how you programme? What do these values look like when embedded in the day-to-day operations of a busy museum? These questions percolated through a number of talks and workshops as part of the IMA annual conference 2019, held in the wonderful Crawford Art Gallery in Cork city.

This article is an opportunity to expand on a presentation I gave as part of that conference, when the benefit / curse of being the last speaker had caused a radical re-organisation of key points over the preceding twenty-four hours. This re-organisation was primarily in response to the obvious depth of knowledge and significant experience in the Conference audience. There is a wealth of activity and programming happening in Ireland that firmly operates within the scope of what within the profession are understood to be participatory and audience-centred museums and galleries. We are not short of examples of excellent practice across the sector, but where this practice occurs it is often delivered solely by colleagues within Education and Learning departments. In smaller museums, where frequently one member of staff wears many hats, this work tends to be squashed amidst daily operational demands; and is oftentimes driven by short-term programme delivery or is targeted at maximising on specific funding opportunities. This article aims to debate by contrast the fundamental shifts needed to make museums participatory at their core on whatever scale they operate; and asks how we can examine in our own institutions whether we want, or have the capacity, to make them.

The scale of organisational and strategic change that is needed to drive our museums to be truly participatory in values and practice cannot be underestimated. This change requires revisions to the ways that we work, in order to develop more empathic working methods, that also values the experience and perspectives of the specialist colleagues across multiple disciplines (for example in curatorial, education and conservation departments) who will drive programming that is broad in reach and scope. Change on this scale requires us to think about how we can deliver on our museums’ missions, as organisations with collections care at their heart, while also providing the level of resourcing needed to fully demonstrate the relevance of these collections to wider audiences. It requires us to fundamentally re-think the vision of the participatory museum; and to consider how to re-align the daily management of museums as public spaces, in ways that will establish and deliver on participation as an underpinning value.

The term ‘participatory museum’ has been widely adopted since Nina Simon’s publication of that title (2010). Simon defines the participatory cultural institution as:

...a place where visitors can create, share, and
connect with each other around content. Create means that visitors contribute their own ideas, objects, and creative expression to the institution and to each other. Share means that people discuss, take home, remix, and redistribute both what they see and what they make during their visit. Connect means that visitors socialize with other people—staff and visitors—who share their particular interests. Around content means that visitors’ conversations and creations focus on the evidence, objects, and ideas most important to the institution in question.¹

Consider Simon’s definition alongside the model below, which builds on Stephen Heppell’s discussions² on the differences between 20th and 21st century learning modes. The model illustrates a movement in practice methodology, from an approach based on conceiving of cultural institutions as isolated content-providers driving uni-directional interactions with audiences, towards one that better acknowledges their role as porous spaces and as creative platforms that can engage in participatory interactions.

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Model of the differences between 20th and 21st century learning.
Lynn Scarff, based on Stephen Heppell.

So far, so good – if we want museums and galleries to be participatory, we need just follow Simon’s definition, and the right-hand column above, and all will be well. However, those of us who are working in cultural spaces and institutions know that it’s not that simple. Embedding the values of participation at the core of your organisation is nuanced and complex. These complexities derive from tensions between conceptions that the museum has a single authoritative voice, and the need to create space for research and discussion that explores multiple interpretations of objects.

Providing opportunities, for communities that have traditionally been under-represented within our institutions, to engage our curatorial teams in dialogue, can stimulate interpretations that recognise and lean into the multiple identities of our visitors. This provision can also lead to better acknowledgement and support for the changing nature of identity in Ireland as a whole.

A particularly strong example of this provision in the National Museum of Ireland, was our recent exhibition Travellers’ Journey, shown in the Museum of Country Life in Turlough Park House from July 2018 until May 2019. Led by Folklife Curator, Rosa Meehan, this exhibition resulted from a co-curation process with the Traveller Community. In development over several years, it was driven by the commitment and energy of a number of individuals within the Community and from the Museum, who worked hard to nurture this collaboration by building relationships based on trust. The project was as a result the embodiment of the phrase ‘Nothing for us, without us’, which recognises the criticality of having representative voices at the table.

The most contested hurdle in developing participatory practice maps onto the question of institutional governance. To embed participatory principles, there is a need to move audiences into decision-making roles. In addition to receiving and processing external feedback as is more traditional, museums must adopt new management and production mechanisms, including for example developing co-curation teams, setting up more representative advisory groups, and revisiting Board composition. Delivery on these principles, requiring the building of trust within our relationships, is not easy to do, because it involves the entire organisation in allocating the time and energy required on a long-term basis.

This approach is however essential to ensure museums’ contemporary relevance and their representation of multiple identities within our society. To achieve embedded participatory practice requires investment in supporting our staff – limited programmes within Education and Learning departments do not participatory museums make. It is easy to envision compelling and exciting strategies that are radical and
ground-breaking, but unless these are supported by changes to the underlying structures of our organisations, we cannot deliver these strategies for the longer term. Ultimately therefore what is needed is overall cultural change within our institutions.

Dannemillar’s Formula for Change is a useful analytical tool, establishing the importance of both a clear vision and a plan for first steps. It furthermore emphasises that the most influential force in overcoming resistance to change, derives from an unquantifiable variable – the level of dissatisfaction with the current situation. The Formula states that:

\[
C = D \times V \times F > R
\]

\[
Change = \text{Dissatisfaction} \times \text{Vision} \times \text{First Steps} > \text{Resistance to Change.}
\]

Mapped onto our discussion around delivering on the values of a participatory museum, the Formula for Change leads us to clarify two things. One: are we dissatisfied enough with our existing model? Is that dissatisfaction universal across our organisation? Does the need to develop a museum with participatory values resonate with the majority of people within it? And have we, across the whole organisation, acknowledged the fundamental importance of becoming a fully participatory museum? Two (leading on from One, and probing why change might not occur at organisational level): Have we asked ourselves why we want be more participatory, and how that desire aligns with the published mission of our museum?

The reasons why a museum or gallery institution might wish to drive its practice to be more participatory are many. For me the most compelling argument is closely linked to the question of Irish identity and the changing nature of our societies in general. If we can all agree that we function better as a society when we make space for diversity, then it is beholden on museums to examine our practice and make sure it is more participatory. This is one of the only ways in which we will become better at representing multiple identities in our practice and collections, especially when we still operate, in Ireland especially, in predominantly white, middle class and in some instances (still) male-dominated organisations.

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*Bridgie McInerney sitting in a barrel top wagon. Tullamore, Co. Offaly, 2002.*

Credit: Derek Spiers

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If, as museum professionals, we want to encourage people to protect and cherish heritage, if we want to build recognition of the value of material heritage for reflecting on our past, and if we want to use this learning in envisioning Ireland’s future, we need to be sure that we are engaging audiences on a very broad basis. Not everyone is practised in the appreciation of arts and culture, or is comfortable within museums and galleries, either as institutions in which to work or as buildings. This may have been due to missed opportunity, to active or accidental exclusion, or to an absence of provision of experiences that were relevant to their identities and connected with their daily lives.

Assuming that the case for the participatory museum experience is made, let’s examine some broad principles that might help us get there. Figure 2 below encapsulates some thoughts on the first steps that can be taken on the journey to a more participatory museum experience. These stem from the key points around governance and the need to build relationships in cultural institutions made earlier in this article; and should provide some hopefully helpful prompts for further thought and discussion.

Women who co-curated the exhibition Travellers’ Journey with the NMI, with friends, photographed at the exhibition launch in front of a model barrel top wagon on display in the Museum grounds as part of the exhibition.

Credit: Keith Heneghan

BIAS FOR ACTION: JUST DO IT, STRUCTURES WILL NEVER BE PERFECT, SUPPORT YOUR TALENT
BUILD CAPACITY, CHANGE POLICY: PARTICIPATIVE PROGRAMMING NEEDS PEOPLE AND POLICY
INVOLVE THE OBJECTS: THEY CAN BEAR WITNESS, THEY CAN BE PLATFORMS, MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS
FOSTER COLLABORATION: INTERNALLY FIRST, ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED HIERARCHIES AND SILOS
GENUINE: NOT BECAUSE IT’S TRENDY, OR BOX TICKING EXERCISE BUT BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IN IT
BRING EVERYONE: CURATORS, ATTENDANTS, OPERATIONS TEAM CAN’T JUST BE IN EDUCATION TEAM
DESIGN FOR PARTICIPATION: FROM CHAIRS IN EXHIBITS, TO FEEDBACK LOOPS, TO OPEN CALLS
INCREASE RISK APPETITE: IT IS GOING TO GO WRONG, ACCEPT THAT MAKE SPACE FOR EVALUATION
UNDERSTAND IT TAKES ENERGY AND TIME: BE IN IT FOR THE LONG RUN, SEEK SUSTAINABILITY
POWER: SHARE IT, DON’T NEED TO LET GO COMPLETELY – NEED TO TACKLE THE GOVERNANCE, ADVISORY ROLES
CHANGE INDICATORS: NEW WAYS TO MEASURE SUCCESS, NOT VISITOR NOS. ONLY BUT LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

First steps for becoming a participatory museum.
(Lynn Scarff, 2019).
Finally, I would like to end on a note regarding the value of empathy! Becoming a participatory museum is a long journey for an organisation – we will lose good people if we don’t bring all of our teams with us. We need to engage everyone, from our curators and front of house teams, to our finance and administrative teams. We need to make the space for a shared understanding of purpose and to demonstrate empathy for the expertise and experience that lies at the heart of every role within our organisations. Ultimately we need to be guided by our collections; responding to the opportunities presented through participatory models of interpretation; deepening the levels of engagement with our audiences and developing long term–relationships and commitment to our visitors.

Lynn Scarff is Director of the National Museum of Ireland and a member of the Council for National Cultural Institutions.

Notes
2. See www.heppell.net
Introduction
For many young people in Northern Ireland, visiting museums and interacting with heritage is simply not part of their lives. Reimagine, Remake, Replay is a four-year project enabling 16–25 year olds from across the region to connect with and enhance museum collections, by using a mix of creative media and the latest digital technologies. Integral to the project is a youth-led approach. Two years in, there is much to look back on and learn from. This article will share insights on various aspects of the project including its structure and management; resources; recruitment and retention of young people; digital activities; PR and marketing and organisational change in museums.

Establishing the project
The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s ‘Kick the Dust’ funding stream aims to change the under-representation in heritage projects of 11–25 year-olds. Reimagine, Remake, Replay is one of twelve projects across the UK to be funded under this stream and the only one in Northern Ireland. The project brings together FabLabs, an established means of allowing young people to learn and be creative with digital and creative technology, and museums as public spaces in both rural and urban locations across Northern Ireland. National and local museums, as well as Northern Ireland Screen, hold important resources – collections – which represent local identity and sense of place. Establishing a partnership between these organisations was the first step in developing the Reimagine, Remake, Replay programme.

Resources and Outputs
Reimagine, Remake, Replay has hit the ground running through an extremely busy programme which has included 18 public demos/showcases, 21 youth-led events delivered in nine museums and 153 creative Sessions. 340 core creative participants and a total of 3,009 young people have been engaged. 240 OCN/Digital badges have been awarded and there have been 1295 creative outputs.

‘Reimagine, Remake, Replay’: Engaging young people with heritage through digital and creative technologies

Tríona White Hamilton

Digital Makers Club,
Newry and Mourne Museum.
Credit: Reimagine, Remake, Replay
Project structure and management
The project is led by the Nerve Centre, with partners Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC), National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI), and Northern Ireland Screen making up the project Board. It is being delivered in nine museums and museum services, including Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Service, Mid and East Antrim Museum Service, Newry and Mourne Museum, North Down Museum, Fermanagh County Museum, Tower Museum, Ulster Museum, Ulster Transport Museum, and Ulster Folk Museum.

The Project Lead and Project Manager are both based at the Nerve Centre with a Digital Museums Coordinator based at NIMC, a Youth Engagement Officer at NMNI, and two Trainer posts. As the project has progressed, much of the post of one of the trainers has been filled through consultants, young role models and core participants from the projects, who through training, shadowing and support have been leading on delivery of some of the workshops. One of the participants has reflected on this positive aspect of the project:

*I think from becoming a facilitator in this project it's quite rewarding, my skills are acknowledged, I've been given the trust and it's given me confidence to apply for jobs in teaching etc., I've proven to myself that I can do it.*

The project has seen challenges around communication between the partners and there is certainly an opportunity for all partners going forward to be more involved and informed about plans for the next range of activities and to find ways to maximise access to collections and programme activities for all organisations. Capacity-building for museum staff has been built into the programme through a conference and peer-learning sessions, and this will be further developed in 2020.

The most positive examples of rewards have been when museum staff have joined in with the sessions and workshops, learning about the digital tech alongside the young participants, sharing their knowledge of the collections, and assisting young people in developing ideas for creative outputs for the projects. These museum staff have formed bonds with the participants, learned new skills, developed confidence in working with young people and using digital tech, as well as gaining better insight into the potential of digital technology in a museum setting. It is hoped that this approach can be further embedded as the project progresses.

Recruitment and retention of young people, PR and marketing
Recruitment of young people was initially slow and difficult at the local museums with a much faster uptake at National Museums Northern Ireland sites. Initially a mix of marketing through social media, pop-up events in shopping centres and youth centres and leaflet drops were used. Social media, used as a broad engagement tool rather than exclusively for marketing, has been crucial to promote the programmes. The tone is lively, fun, and at times rooted in causes and ideas important to the young people involved in the projects.

Relationships with key teachers and youth support organisations have helped with the recruitment of participants. As the project has progressed and as young people have seen their friends and other young people get involved, the project has been successful in retaining participants who over time have become loyal followers and strong advocates for the project, often signing up to
several courses. Building these relationships has required significant time and resources but is paying dividends, with courses now often being oversubscribed.

**Digital and creative activities with young people**

Young people are enhancing existing exhibits and collections through virtual reality, film-making, photography, 3D scanning and printing, all while developing their own innovative content. While Digital has been the hook to engage young people, getting behind the scenes at museums, handling original artefacts and taking over museum spaces are increasing motivators for young people to remain on the programme. They also make and curate their own exhibitions and manage their own events. Events delivered so far include escape rooms, small festivals, Museum Lates and a Christmas craft fair. In turn these have brought further young people into the museums. As one participant notes,

> It was so rewarding to see people having as much fun at the museum as we do. There was a great sense of pride in that amongst the team.

**Organisational change in museums**

Museums have had to re-examine many aspects of their work during this project. As a staff member at a local museum commented, there have been ...

> positive changes and an awareness of how removed we were for activities for this age range and

> being relevant to them, there’s recognition [at the museum that] needs to change.

The young people have identified evenings and weekends as the peak times when they are available to engage with the project. This combined with its regionality has meant that project staff, particularly within the local museums, have been required to do a lot of travelling and to work at unsocial hours. Museums have therefore had to diversify opening hours and ensure that key staff members can work during evenings and weekends. In addition, using a participatory approach has been relatively new for some of the museums involved. Embedding organisational change is a specific area that the project hopes to address more as the project gets into its stride during 2020, the second year of delivery. Providing more down-time for project staff between programmes has also been planned.

**Conclusion**

The *Reimagine, Remake, Replay* project is challenging museums to reflect on their missions and is supporting them to develop capacity, skills and confidence to work with young people. The project has had much success so far in developing younger audiences for museums and in turn has been changing young people’s perceptions of museums, connecting them with their heritage and increasing their confidence. The comments from participants that reflect this have included: 

> “Before getting involved in the project I really

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Bastion Festival, Tower Museum.
Credit: Reimagine, Remake, Replay

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Reimagine, Remake, Replay participant using VR, Ulster Museum.
Credit: Reimagine, Remake, Replay

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**Conclusion**

The *Reimagine, Remake, Replay* project is challenging museums to reflect on their missions and is supporting them to develop capacity, skills and confidence to work with young people. The project has had much success so far in developing younger audiences for museums and in turn has been changing young people’s perceptions of museums, connecting them with their heritage and increasing their confidence. The comments from participants that reflect this have included:

> “Before getting involved in the project I really
wouldn’t have been comfortable going into museums, it wasn’t a place people my age really went...I am now more confident to go in there and have a look around or to talk to anyone there...I’m actually looking at maybe hosting an event at the (Ballymoney) museum with my friends.”

“I knew I had to start talking to people more because I wasn’t the best at social situations and from that I’ve taken part in loads of different [Reimagine, Remake, Replay] courses, then I volunteered and now I’m actually leading courses, so it’s really helped.”

“My highlights of Reimagine, Remake, Replay so far is the sense of community, opportunity to meet like-minded people, it creates a lovely space for people to be themselves and explore ideas creatively.”

The Reimagine, Remake, Replay Project Evaluator provides the team with structured advice and recommendations. The evaluation reports support the project to negotiate new relationships with young people, to stimulate meaningful engagement between the young people and the museums and to continue to move towards being more participatory in museum thinking and practice. Fundamental to this project is a commitment to build on the youth-led approach by integrating it into core functions and services of the museums over the long term.

Notes

2. FabLabs – digital fabrication laboratories – were set up to inspire people and entrepreneurs to turn their ideas into new products and prototypes by giving them access to a range of advanced digital manufacturing technology. See www.fablabni.com

Triona White Hamilton is Development Officer at the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) and the NIMC Lead for the Reimagine Remake Replay project.
The new Museum of Literature Ireland is a great asset to Dublin, the thriving literary capital and UNESCO City of Literature. The museum is a partnership between UCD and the National Library of Ireland, with capital support from Fáilte Ireland, and is generously augmented by the Naughton Foundation and other donors.

Colloquially ‘Molly’ after James Joyce’s Molly Bloom, MoLI is situated in UCD Newman House which, facing onto the south side of St Stephen’s Green, comprises Numbers 85 and 86, the Aula Maxima and University Church. This historic building complex opened in 1854 as the Catholic University of Ireland under John Henry Newman, an English theologian, poet, writer, Catholic convert and recently-canonised Saint. Of the two 18th century houses, the earlier Number 85 was designed by Richard Castle and has superb Lafranchini Brothers stucco ornamentation. The larger Number 86 was built for notorious Co. Wicklow M.P. Richard Chapel Whaley (1766–1800). In the scented, terraced garden is an ash tree under which Dublin-born James Joyce (1882–1941), a student here between 1898 and 1902, had his graduation photograph taken. A gate leads to the OPW-managed Iveagh Gardens, the best-kept secret in Dublin.

These impressive buildings are heavy with the presence of former literary occupants, including poet Gerard Manley Hopkins who taught here until his death in 1889, Kate O’Brien, Mary Lavin, Flann O’Brien and Maeve Binchy. Architects Scott Tallon Walker and exhibition designers Ralph Appelbaum Associates have conserved the buildings’ fabric to maximum standards, their interventions appearing minimal and effective in achieving space. Comprising eleven rooms with an entrance lobby, shop and café, the museum runs between the three secular buildings, united by a new lift. An access guide helps to navigate the complex. Events and activities include free monthly 6–9pm ‘First Fridays’ with ad hoc concerts and talks; a free education programme that is booked out for months; and a new digital radio station, RadioMoli.

MoLI exhibitions draw on National Library of Ireland and UCD collections. ‘Joyce’s Century’ in the ground-floor first room, arrays over a hundred Irish writers, both living and deceased, and in both
Irish and English, reflecting MoLI’s aim to include as many as possible. At four-monthly intervals, a special exhibition and event programme will focus on one. The first, on Limerick-born writer Kate O’Brien (1897–1974), is curated by her granddaughter, actor Kathy Rose O’Brien. A theatrical setting of photographs and images, objects, text panels and sound recordings brings her to life with style and panache.

‘A Riverrun of Languages’ (its title taken from the first word in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*) is an immersive audio-visual installation presenting Irish writing from the earliest times. Visitors can trigger audio recordings of writers’ voices while watching a digital display of quotations (with printed copies to take away). For example, Oscar Wilde speaks from *De Profundis* (1897) “… if the world has indeed, as I have said, been built of sorrow, it has been built by the hands of love, because in no other way could the soul of man, for whom the world was made, reach the full stature of its perfection.”

In the Aula Max, a lower space contains a permanent exhibition devoted to Joyce’s “Dear Dirty Dublin”. Sculpture and a scale-model present Joyce’s city and an extended illustrated timeline charts his life in Dublin, Trieste, Paris, London and Zurich. A newly-commissioned short film adaptation of *Finnegans Wake* by Irish film maker Dave Tynan, featuring Joyce scholar Susie Lopez, actor Lisa Dwan, poet Paul Muldoon and DJ John Kelly, is accompanied by text noting Joyce’s playful spelling. Display cases, on the cleverly-inserted mezzanine, show writing and censorship during the establishment of the Irish Free State. Memorabilia relating to authors’ lives would enhance these spaces by giving visitors something to linger over.

Considered by some to have the best view, the rear bay of No.85 is a dedicated creative, family learning and reading space, with books by well-known authors appealing to children and young people. Four rooms at the top of the house devoted to James Joyce are the highlight. One displays his books in multiple languages. Another with a comfortable sofa screens a stunning immersive film, featuring a tone poem or homage to *Ulysses*, commissioned from acclaimed filmmaker, writer and director Alan Gilsenan. The dedicated central room presents a first edition of *Ulysses*, published on Joyce’s birthday, 2nd February 1922, and inscribed by him. In the last, which exhibits Joyce’s notebooks and illustrates the paper he wrote on as his works came into being in draft after draft, we come to realise the hard work that underpins genuine creativity. An array of audio recordings of living writers including Roddy Doyle, Doireann Ní Gríofa, Derek Mahon, and Sinéad Morrissey is accompanied by blank sheets of paper for adults and children to write on and say to themselves “I can do this too!”. After this heady experience, head for the café, spotting literary allusions en route, such as the witty sign to the toilets, “meeting of the waters”, a reference to *Ulysses*.

This brand-new museum, just a month old, deserves another review when it’s fully opened. Future developments will include the Saloon and
Apollo rooms of Number 85; Hopkins’ bedroom and the Old UCD Physics Theatre, setting of the Tundish chapter of Joyce’s *Portrait of an Artist*. A city like Dublin, rich in literary venues and associations, needs cultural enterprises of this calibre at a time when many places are undergoing dramatic changes and as retail shifts online.

MoLI addresses this by making maximum use of its historic spaces and creative potential, using a newer approach and giving people a meaningful experience that touches the soul of literary Dublin.

Having turned important period buildings into cultural use on the quietest side of the Green, MoLI must obtain permission from the city’s planners for signage to compete for audiences in the city-centre market. The museum has started well, judging by the interest from venues wishing to collaborate with MoLI, and from others seeking to borrow its temporary displays.

**Dr. Marie Bourke is a cultural historian, former Keeper and Head of Education at the National Gallery of Ireland and author of several books including *The Story of Irish Museums 1790–2000*.**

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**Hillsborough Castle**

*Brian Crowley*

On 19 January 1921 the last Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Fitzalan-Howard surrendered the keys of Dublin Castle to the head of the Irish provisional government, Michael Collins. In handing over this centuries-old seat of the Crown, he also relinquished British authority in the new Irish Free State. The loss of the twenty-six counties, and the establishment of Northern Ireland as a new political entity containing the six that remained within the United Kingdom, meant that a new bureaucratic centre and royal residence were needed.

The Elizabethan military adventurer Sir Moyses Hill had arrived in Ireland with the ill-fated Earl of Essex in the 1570s. Through judicious marriages and sizable grants from the Crown, over ensuing turbulent decades the family became amongst the largest land-owners in Ireland. The Hills managed their estates from the eponymous County Down settlement of Hillsborough, where in the late 1700s, they built a neo-classical mansion with, to the rear, an expansive landscaped parkland containing follies, formal gardens and a large artificial lake. The front entrance of this dwelling, which is a relatively modest ‘Big House’ rather than a castle, unusually forms one side of the village’s main Georgian square.

Granted the title of Marquess of Downshire in 1789, the Hills’ interests increasingly centred on their English estates. Following the Irish Land Acts and their ensuing disposal of substantial property, the Hillsborough foothold was no longer required. Purchased in 1925 from Lord Arthur Hill by Britain’s Office of Works, the Castle and its idyllic location were perfect as the official residence of the Duke of Abercorn, King George V’s representative in Northern Ireland as first Governor-General.

In 1972 following the establishment of direct rule from London resulting from the Troubles, the
role of Governor was abolished, and Hillsborough became home to the newly-established office of Secretary of State. Sealed off and fortified against attack, the building would play a key role in the peace process, becoming the location for the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. For Mo Mowlam, who led critical behind-the-scenes meetings here leading up to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the Castle and its gardens also provided a much-needed refuge.

Due to the return to political normalisation in Northern Ireland, in 2014 the British Government handed the Castle over to Historic Royal Palaces, a world-leader in conservation, curation and heritage management. In contrast to the charity’s globally-renowned English sites – the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace and Kew Palace – Hillsborough remains a working government building. As furthermore a non-palatial and only recently royal dwelling, and its first property outside of Greater London, this represents a significant departure for the organisation.

Hillsborough Castle opened in April 2019. Top-of-the-range visitor facilities and meticulous conservation work on the house, gardens and collection make a £24 million investment evident. A devastating fire in 1934 that destroyed the eighteenth-century interiors is not elided from the new interpretation, which retains the
lightness and ambience of an early twentieth-century country house. There is though allusion to royal presence: a decision to decorate the Throne Room in keeping with its 1840s origins, and to hang its walls in green silk, exemplifies how the reconstruction respects all of the building’s former functions. An emphasis throughout on the layering of history is also notable in curators’ pleasing resistance of the temptation to replace the PVC-framed French doors, fitted during the Troubles to withstand a rocket attack. The navigation of public sensitivities surrounding the building is further evidenced in a guide book, in which a timeline locates the house within Irish historical context.

Hillsborough’s grandeur is limited when compared with other royal residences, and Historic Royal Palaces has thoughtfully selected artworks that do not dominate its more domestically-scaled rooms. Choices of works from the Royal Collections are especially nuanced. These include, in the entrance hall, images of English monarchs, the histories of whom continue to resonate politically in Northern Ireland. William III (colloquially known as King Billy) is not however depicted on his white horse, as in the trope so often featured on Orange Order banners and murals. Instead, a portrait of him as a young boy hangs alongside those of several Stuart relatives, including his uncle, father-in-law and rival, James II. This clever juxtaposition informs the viewer that the Williamite Wars were as much
a family power squabble as a battle between rival religions.

There is a welcome quirkiness in the curatorial choices. I was especially taken by a set of forty royal portraits in miniature, commissioned by Prince Albert who with Victoria and their children used them to play ‘Name that Monarch’. A deliberate emphasis on Hillsborough as an Irish house is further developed in the State Drawing Room, where paintings by modern Irish artists are shown: many are from the personal collection of the Prince of Wales.

Country houses like Hillsborough were designed to beguile visitors, distracting them from the inequalities that made lavish lifestyles possible for only a lucky few. Denser information on the building’s grittier past, and on the harsh realities of life outside its walls, would be a useful addition. For more recent history, this may be partially addressed through plans to include Mo Mowlam’s quarters in the guided tour.

Strolling around the peaceful parkland at the end of our visit, I reflected on the contrast between Hillsborough’s new role as a public amenity and its history as the preserve of a powerful elite, in particular during the Troubles when it was at Northern Ireland’s political centre. Everyday pleasures, like having a nice day out without the constant worry that something terrible might occur, were made impossible by the conflict. I also thought about Mo Mowlam, whose ashes were scattered in the park after her death. Nothing could be a better tribute to her legacy, and her dedication to the peace process, than the sight of people enjoying this beautiful place that was so dear to her.

Brian Crowley is Curator of Collections at Kilmainham Gaol Museum, Dublin.

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**HMS Caroline, Belfast**

*Elspeth Hocking*

After being blown down the Alexandra Dock on a blustery Belfast Saturday, I arrived at the HMS Caroline with a sense of foreboding. The transport museum for which I worked does not contain ships and I worried that the experience might best be appreciated by those already passionate about naval vessels and battles at sea. However, my visit transformed that foreboding into an unexpected emotion: I think I love ships now.

The HMS Caroline, moored in Belfast since 1924, is the only surviving ship from the Battle of Jutland in World War One. She rests proudly front and centre of the museum site at the end of the docks, adjacent to a well-designed children’s play area. Short and snappy questions are aimed at a younger audience, with a more detailed history guiding the way to the entrance. The exhibitions begin, within the elegant space of a lovely nearby brick building,
with a traditional timeline and overview of HMS Caroline’s busy career. The original objects here are well-chosen and respectfully handled, although I found the use of technical nautical terms quite overwhelming. This introduction provides important foundation for boarding HMS Caroline herself, where I discovered a multitude of stories and histories connected with this single-object museum.

Although for many visitors the opposite is true, I prefer to read text rather than listen to audio-guides. Here though, the audio material is a brilliant addition. An infrared system provides options for choosing which sound segments to engage with, but I found myself listening to almost all. The combination of facts with human touches, such as the ship’s diary detailing the captain’s requirement for a separate toothbrush for each day, brings the ship and her crew to life. Combined with interactive elements pitched at multiple age and knowledge levels, the museum provides layers of learning, enabling visitors to delve into the elements they choose rather than bombarding them with information.

The care taken in Caroline’s conservation is stunning, while the smells, sounds and sights of the ship’s life still echo around every corner. Unlike the onshore section which is hushed and austere, the experience of being on board the ship is cramped and intense. Through its soundscape and light, the engine room is particularly effective at conveying the overwhelming noise and motion.
of working on board during her active service. I was also impressed by the virtual tour of the lower levels of the ship, which, given the steepness of the stairs, are not physically navigable for those in a wheelchair or who are less mobile.

After spending double the time I’d expected on HMS Caroline ('Carry' to her crew), I ended my visit sobered by the casualties of the Battle of Jutland, amused by the descriptions of the ship's pets, and feeling a sense of connection and respect for both the ship herself, and the people who worked with her. This museum is a beautifully designed, engaging and well-pitched experience, which challenged my preconceived notions of what a maritime museum can be.

Elspeth Hocking is the former Exhibitions Curator at the Museum of Transport and Technology, New Zealand.

Áras Uí Chonghaile –
James Connolly Visitor Centre
Karen Logan

The James Connolly Visitor Centre, Áras Uí Chonghaile, opened in April 2019 and describes itself as the first centre anywhere to honour this Irish social and political leader who was also an influential figure in global trade union history. It both showcases his achievements in those circles, and examines his personal life. The combination enriches the narrative and makes it all the more powerful.

A striking representation of James Connolly on the outside gable wall signals arrival at the centre, which includes a café and library of reference material as well as the exhibition itself. The first panels relate to the death of James Connolly and his last statement, which is reproduced along with testimony from his daughter, Nora Connolly, and Father Aloysius Travers. From here the visitor enters a larger room in which the interpretation begins with Connolly's early life in Edinburgh and Dublin. I found this slightly disjointed and wondered whether the reasoning behind starting with his death was to set a melancholic tone from the outset, or to emphasise the importance of his loss.

The interpretive content in the central area is comprehensive, although there are very few artefacts. Many are instead represented graphically on the walls, whilst interactive technology makes additional testimonies and excerpts from his writings available. Connolly’s pioneering role in the trade union movement, and his advocacy for one big union rather than separate factions, come across. We learn too about his time in Belfast and America and the loss of his
first-born child. Throughout the exhibition I was struck by how his experiences are set in a wider context and how his personal and professional lives are portrayed. From the information provided and the approach to display, his talents and aspirations are evident and a clear sense is conveyed of the impacts of his actions on both his family, and on wider networks and political movements.

A large interactive map, audio accounts of his lecture tours and excerpts from letters demonstrate how transnational Conolly’s work was. A digital interactive, under the heading ‘A Man of Remarkable Ideas and Writings’, enables listeners to hear extracts from his many publications. The influence of women in his life is clear, as is his influence on them. Towards the end of the central display area we learn of Connolly’s role in the Dublin Lock-Out and in the formation of the Irish Citizen Army and the Easter Rising of 1916. Here a small collection of items on loan from the Pat O’Hagan collection are displayed, including typeset used in the printing of the Proclamation and a bayonet confiscated from the rebel forces by a British soldier. Ending this section with his execution would have been logical and powerful, although the display effectively concludes with his court martial and his role in inspiring a new generation.

The Centre has made maximum use of the space available and the use of interactive technology is effective. A slide-out version of the panel text in Irish is available. There is an opportunity to try on a hat and coat and hold a placard for a photograph; and to engage with additional information and reference material if desired. A mini-theatre at the end of the exhibition shows RTE Archive footage, including a poignant interview with Nora Connolly, who describes visiting her father on the eve of his execution. This makes an important contribution to the interpretation, although I would recommend the inclusion of subtitles and a time bar.

I left with a better understanding of the man James Connolly, but what impressed me most was how diverse and interconnected the narrative is. It does not present his story, or any one part of his story, in isolation, but conveys his position within a network of ideas and experiences. The reciprocity of his impact on others, and theirs on him, was tangible.

Dr. Karen Logan is Senior Curator of History at National Museums NI.
Walking up Henrietta Street, north Dublin, on a dull November afternoon, the cobbled stones glistening under a darkening sky, the reality of the present begins to shift. The hum of city traffic fades and a stillness descends, preparing you for an immersive, sensory journey in this new museum.

14 Henrietta Street is a gracious Georgian townhouse that was first occupied by Viscount Molesworth, cheaply subdivided in the 1870s into seventeen apartments by a Thomas Vance and, by the early twentieth century, a slum. According to the 1911 census, this row of fifteen houses were home to a staggering 835 people, including charwomen, domestic servants, labourers, porters and lots of children. Served by just one toilet and two cold taps and backing on to piggeries, Number 14 was the epitome of tenement housing described by Dublin playwright Sean O’Casey as ‘convalescent homes of plague, pestilence or death’. Combined with poverty and malnutrition, cramped and insanitary conditions like these produced Dublin’s comparably high annual mortality rate of 35.7 per 1,000.

When in the 1930s the government belatedly invested power in local authorities to clear slums and build new suburban housing, Henrietta Street remained intact. In the mid-twentieth century, some of its interiors were converted into more comfortable flats, but from 1979 Number 14 lay vacant, its doors and window boarded up. In 2018 it opened as a museum, to the house’s changing fortunes, and to the experiences of the families who lived there.

Upon entering the house, I was struck by spacious elegance, evoked by its high ceilings and a
sweepingly reminiscent, cantilevered staircase that is utterly contemporary. The former grandeur of the first floor rooms presents a backdrop for the stories of the house’s early occupants, told through audio-visual projections. Bare of material culture, these rooms are an apparent precursor to the real Henrietta Street narrative of a tenement slum.

Through a door, everything changes. We descend to the early twentieth-century tenement rooms via the house’s back staircase, once infested by rodents and climbed at night in total darkness. The stone floors and walls of a basement room, that once housed a family of thirteen, is in stark contrast to the fine plasterwork and polished floorboards of earlier centuries upstairs. The room lacks any ornamentation bar some religious iconography: a few chipped mugs and a single old bedframe are the only furnishings. In this room, we are informed about the harsh realities of life on Henrietta Street and about the impact of the Dublin Lockout and the Great War on its inhabitants.

Mrs Dowling’s flat, brighter and cheerier in its 1940s and 50s condition, is one of the most intriguing parts of the house. There is no luxury here, but this authentic space feels warm, lived-in and familiar. Objects and pictures crowd the rooms, as though Mrs Dowling has just stepped out for a few minutes. There are tiled fireplaces and linoleum floors, a piano with music open on its stand, the top crowded with framed photos. The table is laid for tea, a loaf half-sliced. Importantly, where most of the colourful wallpaper has been recreated using patterns found in the house, some original fragments are left on one rough wall, reinforcing the sense of the people who lived here.

Each room is brought to life through a story of one particular family, that universalises the experiences of many of that class and that time. Portrait reproductions are used to good effect, as are videos throughout that share the house’s history through photographs, newspaper clippings, documents and Irish Film Institute footage. These keep the narrative flowing, but at times are a bit too long, with some repetition. The stars of the show are surely the guides. How often have we trailed wearily through country houses desperately wishing the tour was over? Not in 14 Henrietta Street! My captivating and enthusiastic guide spoke with genuine interest and passion about the house’s history, drawing on his first-hand knowledge to relate the stories and experiences of the people who had once lived in the house.

Our large group passively listened throughout and those of all ages would at times have been more effectively engaged through more interactive set presentation. At New York’s Tenement Museum, for example, each room is enriched using copies of primary documents and artefacts, through which guides encourage smaller groups of visitors to explore the house’s history. I would also have valued information on the intriguing processes of bringing Henrietta Street back to life, that are instead only hinted at through the wallpaper and through linoleum remnants that were used as a template for newly-created fabrics. More information on the social and historical research, tough decisions, challenges and craftsmanship that restored and repurposed the building, would have been welcome.
Overall, this is an excellent experience and well worth a visit. In recent years, museums like Henrietta Street have risen in number and popularity, partly a result in the growth of scholarly and popular interest in social history and in the experiences of the working classes and urban poor, but also because spaces like this speak to the heart of what heritage actually is. Certainly some visit through simple curiosity. At a much deeper level, however, heritage sites take on meaning when they speak to the visitor’s sense of their own past – when they see the familiar rather than the unfamiliar and encounter something of themselves in the experience. Heritage is, as Laurajane Smith has argued, ‘a process of engagement, an act of communication and an act of meaning making in and for the present’. The visitor does not simply observe something distant or strange, rather the experience of being there finds resonance in their own sense of the past. In this lies an important part of the undeniable success that 14 Henrietta Street has become.

Dr. Olwen Purdue is a Senior Lecturer in Modern Irish History and Director of the Centre for Public History at the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen’s University Belfast.

Note
To mark the 60th anniversary of The Niland Collection, The Model in Sligo has staged a two-stranded exhibition curated by the centre’s Director, Emer McGarry.

The first strand, The Keeper (February – April 2019), was a playful contemplation on collecting and the loss of collections, installed across several rooms. An ‘exhibition within an exhibition’ of works in a range of media examined relationships between curator and art through the collection of Jobst Graeve, a curator and former director of the Model. Also included in this strand were significant video pieces by four international contemporary artists – Ed Atkins, Susan Hiller, Taus Makhacheva and Elizabeth Price. Each of these accessible and enjoyable films probed what is lost when we fail to value our cultural repositories. Makhacheva’s was an especially thought-provoking and beautifully-filmed depiction of a tightrope walker balanced over two tiny cliffs, carrying paintings from Dagestan’s Museum of Fine Art. Trapped in a perpetual act of recovering and sorting across the death-defying ropewalk, he carries the works back and forth, each time placing the pieces within a small museum racking system. One was left with a poignant sense of what we keep and what we discard, both in art and in life as a whole.

The second strand, To have and to hold (April 2019 – January 2020) is a major re-installation of the collection that was the brainchild of County Librarian and Museum Curator Nora Niland (1913–1988). Beginning in 1959 with her acquisition of five paintings by Jack B. Yeats, the Niland Collection was formerly housed in the local library before being moved to a purpose-built space at The Model. Having grown under the auspices of Sligo County Council to over 300 artworks, the collection now comprises the largest Yeats collection in Ireland, and is among the most comprehensive surveys of 20th-century Irish art outside the National Gallery.

The Model has successfully highlighted its collections over several successive annual summer exhibitions. To have and to hold presents the largest single showing to date. Taking its title from the traditional marriage vow, the exhibition conveys the promise of a public cultural institution to keep and care for its collections. There is a joyful cherishing of the artworks here, presented in a glorious golden mustard-walled salon-style hanging.

Within this ambitious display, works are set around four themes: landscape, domesticity, portraiture and abstraction; an arrangement that help to make sense of the enormous number of works (100+) presented in one room. A large feature wall shines a light on Yeats and conveys a sense of his influence and that of his contemporaries on other more recent artists. This is perhaps most evident where the sheer physical energy of Yeats’ late paintings is strikingly reflected in those of Seán Mc Sweeney (1935–2018). The works of Irish modernists Mainie Jellet (1897–1944) and Evie Hone (1894–1955) are a joy to see and are a tribute to Nora Niland’s eye for the significant moments in Irish art.

Elizabeth Kinsella is an Artist, Lecturer and Programme Co-ordinator of the BA in Fine Art at Sligo Institute of Technology
(A)dressing Our Hidden Truths at National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
From March 2019
Laura McAttackney

Alison Lowry is a glass artist who works from her studio in Saintfield, Co Down. Her (A)dressing Our Hidden Truths brings together a selection of her works “inspired by such traumatic histories as the Tuam Mother and Baby Home, domestic violence and Ireland’s former Magdalene Laundry System”.

The artistic use of Lowry’s primary medium – glass – is relatively rare in Ireland, but it is a powerful choice for representing Ireland’s painful legacies of institutional abuse. At once tough and unyielding and delicate and fragile, glass can also be dense and heavy whilst appearing to be weightless and light.

Glass sculptures can faithfully represent the mundane while innately changing the material presence of the subject. In this exhibition, Lowry’s sculptures are both enchanting and uncanny, pulling in the audience whilst also repelling them. Lowry’s nuanced manipulation of her medium transforms the everyday and mundane into magical, indeed haunting, representations of the past legacies to which she is responding.

It seems appropriate that one has to make a long and meandering journey through the dark, institutional building of Collins Barracks to reach the temporary exhibition space on the top floor. The underlit and eerie upper floor proves a fitting backdrop to present the dismal realities of the institutionalized. *(A)dressing Our Hidden Truths* is an eclectic exhibition that has four distinct reference points: responses to the fate of institutionalized children; responses to Magdalene laundry survivors; a video installation (with Jayne Cherry) responding to domestic abuse; and a glass and leather “new skin” (with Una Burke), responding to sexual assault.

Lowry’s glass sculptures and art pieces are the focal points of the exhibition. They are intermingled with text, photography, embroidered textiles, laser-cut paper and artefacts – including suitcases retrieved from a derelict Magdalene laundry. At a number of stations, one can listen to soundscapes of music and spoken word, including the oral testimonies of traumatized survivors and their families. This unremittingly socially-engaged art is shocking in revealing the mundanity of cruelty – for example, a glass cardigan alongside a poem personalizes a child’s experience of grinding poverty – and it is also mesmerizingly beautiful.

The highlight of the exhibition is Lowry’s nine sand cast *pâte de verre* christening robes, suspended from the ceiling of the largest exhibition room. The glass robes gently float, refracting light from a number of discreet spotlights and in doing so, simultaneously presence and absence the children who died at Tuam Mother and Baby Home. They are a haunting and moving presence in the otherwise sparse and underlit rooms.

The last room of the exhibition contains the video installation and glass and leather sculpture and with it, they represent a slight disconnect with the rest of the exhibition. While they are powerful pieces – collaboratively reacting to sexual violence – the slight change in theme detaches them from the focused societal critique occupying the rest of the exhibition. *(A)dressing Our Hidden Truths* is more a cultural necessity than a must-see exhibition; do go and experience it.

*Dr. Laura McAtackney is an Associate Professor in the Department of Archaeology & Heritage Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark.*
Imaging the Great Irish Famine: Representing Dispossession in Visual Culture
Kelly, Niamh Ann

Anne Hodge

This book examines in detail both contemporary and historical images, monuments, artefacts and locations related to the Famine, in order to develop an understanding of hunger, dispossession and enforced migration and their continuing effects on Irish society and history. Author Niamh Ann Kelly, a lecturer on Contemporary Visual Culture and the History of Art at the Dublin School of Creative Arts, Technological University Dublin, argues that imaging of the Famine is both influenced by and has influenced Irish ideologies, cultural history and colonial and post-colonial identity. Visual imagery assists viewers to make sense of the past, but it also colours their view of that past. She believes that commemorative visual culture can allow society to rethink the past and ultimately to engage in ‘shared secondary witnessing to experiences of dispossession, past, present and unfolding’, noting that it can make ‘today’s society aware of ongoing problems created by dispossession and injustice.’

Published by academic press I.B. Tauris, an imprint of Bloomsbury, this neat, hardback book is not a light read. The 220 pages of text are replete with densely-argued points and scholarly references. A comprehensive bibliography runs to fourteen pages while the endnotes are concise and useful. The text is well-illustrated with images and photographs which sharpen the arguments. The author’s own colour photographs of locations of historical events or memorials are particularly enlightening.

The book’s title and the excellent preface, which reflects on the humanitarian disaster at the heart of the Famine, encapsulate the outlook of the book as a whole. It combines personal research and thought with a wealth of arguments and ideas, from a wide variety of sources, including contemporary art, academia and museum practice.

The Introduction provides a short history of the Famine and references previous histories and literature. The first two chapters explore visualizations of Famine experience, including paintings and contemporary illustrations, which focused on depicting the hungry body and migration. A wide range of historians and critics are referenced: for example, Susan Sontag makes a case for the interpretive and imaginative role of art in imaging suffering. Chapter Three focuses on how museums tackle commemoration of the Famine in a post-colonial world. The author acknowledges that museums and heritage centres successfully manage, through virtual and referential displays, to offer ways for visitors to witness and understand traumatic history. Chapter Four examines temporary exhibitions, particularly those organised around the 150th anniversary of the Famine in the mid-1990s, and the potential of art ‘to indicate grievous history’. Chapter Five looks at tangible remains in the landscape, in particular Famine graveyards, while Chapter Six describes commemorative heritage walks. It is a comprehensive overview, covering all visual remains.

Although there is warmth in the writing, at times the text can be dense, for example: ‘If imaging of historical suffering and its contingent spectatorship are, to borrow from Butler, speech acts in which the subjects and views of representation are differentially acted upon, then such recognition might underline the interconnectedness of the lives of others with the life of the viewing self, even with taking into account separations wrought by temporal and geographical considerations.’ At times there is too much reliance on the arguments of others – there are five separate references to one academic in the short conclusion.
Despite these criticisms, I believe this is a valuable book, which will be of much interest to museum professionals. At its most basic, it is an account of some of the many forms of commemorative visual culture that strive to describe and commemorate the Great Irish Famine, and as such it is a valuable addition to the literature on the subject.

Anne Hodge is Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Ireland

Ceramics Ireland: Celebrating 40 years of makers and community
Byrne, Tina
Dublin: Ceramics Ireland. 2019
Kim Mawhinney

Forty years really is a huge achievement for any arts organisation and to mark this significant anniversary, Ceramics Ireland has published a comprehensive review of its activities, members and exhibitions since its establishment in 1977. The 272-page publication comprises archival material and photographs that give the organisation its context. This beautifully-designed book includes introductory texts by Dr. Audrey Whitty, Head of Collections and Learning at the National Museum of Ireland, and the current driving forces behind Ceramics Ireland, Chairperson Elaine O’Riordan and Editor Tina Byrne.

The concept and format of the book is extremely well thought through. The history and transformation of the organisation is considered within the initial section, ‘Community in Clay’. Although Ceramics Ireland continues to be a membership organisation, run by a committee of volunteers, it has certainly not stood still over the years. This is evident from its change from its initial inception as the Craft Potters Society of Ireland in 1977, where its objective was ‘To foster interest, communication and assistance in pottery matters to members’, to the outward-looking, ambitious and inspirational organisation it is today.

Throughout the publication, sections on Exhibitions, Workshops/Demonstrations, Publications, Festivals and Awards punctuate the listings of ceramic makers. Each of these sections has a historical overview of the achievements of the organisation. A myriad of archive photographs will allow the reader to reminisce and recall the events and people who have shaped the organisation since 1977.

The catalogue of 158 makers is a legacy in itself. Selected because they took part in one or more of the exhibitions to celebrate the organisation’s fortieth year in 2017, it records and references the wealth of current ceramic talent across Ireland. Each maker has a dedicated page, containing two images and their artist statement. Importantly for the creative clay community, the technical specifications on how artists’ work was made are provided.

So few books are published that relate to craft or the applied arts. This publication will hopefully encourage other writers to explore more craft specialisms in Ireland. Whether you are a student, art collector, ceramics enthusiast, or a museum curator like myself, this is a critical book that allows us to really appreciate how important Ceramics Ireland has been in promoting established and emerging makers over the last 40 years.

Kim Mawhinney is Senior Curator of Art at National Museums NI

Heritage after Conflict: Northern Ireland.
Crooke, Elizabeth and Tom Maguire (eds)
London and New York: Routledge. 2018
Dacia Viejo Rose

Northern Ireland features frequently in studies of heritage after conflict and case studies often focus on murals, prisons, parades, and anniversaries. Elizabeth Crooke and Tom Maguire’s volume offers a new collection of insightful reflections on a selection of cases of conflict heritage in the region. As editors they bring together contributions covering familiar terrain from new angles, and less familiar sites of conflict heritage that are mostly in Belfast. Covering a refreshingly broad range of sites, the book explores both the work that
The book addresses a variety of different spaces for the curation and negotiation of heritage as and of conflict, including streets and prisons, museums, funding programmes, conferences, and political speeches. A piece by Chris Reynolds on Northern Ireland’s 1968 shows how the memorial narrative of one conflict can come to overshadow other historical events with legacies of their own. The chapter by Paul Mullan exploring methodologies for engaging with difficult heritage through the ‘Decade of Centenaries’ is particularly revealing, providing insights garnered from his having chaired the Decade of Centenaries Roundtable. Katie Markham, writing on organised innocence in the paramilitary museum, explores the problematics of victimhood narratives that are common in the heritagization of conflicts containing characteristics of civil war. Karine Bigand, on representing paramilitary heritage in non-museum exhibitions, highlights how narrative ambiguity results in unsettling visitor experiences. Henriette Bertram and David Coyles explore the challenges of dealing with the spatial legacies of conflict in Belfast, underlining how the fault-lines between different communities of memory run throughout the city including through residential segregation. Philip McDermott, writing on the space for migrants within the Northern Ireland heritagescape, and Laura McAtackney on the near-absence of women in this sphere, round up the volume. The book concludes with reflection on the work still to be done by bodies such as the Equalities Commission, and by commemorative initiatives more generally, to integrate a more inclusively representative appraisal of past events and current audiences.

What this reviewer missed was a further degree of congruence between the contributions that might have allowed for identifying common patterns. Several authors, for instance, identify stages of commemoration, such as the Decade of Centenaries (Mullan) and Long Kesh/Maze (Purbrick). It would have been worthwhile to compare across these to determine whether the stages are unique to each case or are similarly shaped by the shared fluctuating socio-political context. This might have allowed a further engagement with how the detailed exploration of Northern Ireland and Belfast in particular can further our understanding of the nexus between heritage and memories of violence. Both the volume editors in their introduction and several of the authors frequently use heritage as a synonym for legacy (e.g. “[…] the heritage of the violence itself”, p.6). Northern Ireland offers a rich case to explore how and when these come together, but also when they do not.

There are other common threads running through the contributions. These include the narratives of essentialized differences that persist; the seemingly homogenized opposed sides presented, despite far messier realities of diverse stances and marginalized groups; the many groups that fall through the cracks as a result and continue to be overlooked in subsequent heritage narratives; the heritagization of the conflict and its legacies; and the impact of tourist attraction agendas on today’s heritage landscape. This volume is at its strongest when the contributions chart how heritage practice struggles through the messiness and offer an analysis of its successes and failures in the process: thankfully, many of them do just that. They also show that the legacies of conflict are unstable and therefore their heritagization is an unfinished process. With Brexit and its impact on Northern Ireland an uncertain horizon ahead, the terrain on which sit questions of how ‘we remember’ is all the more shifting, with ever-mutating contexts and connections.

Dr. Dacia Viejo Rose is a University Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge.
Heritage Ireland 2030 – Public consultation
Chris Bailey

In November 2018, the Irish Government issued outline proposals for the future use and protection of our heritage. The public consultation document – Heritage Ireland 2030 – is a first step towards building a policy, and as the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan TD, says in her Foreword, the overall aim is to ensure that heritage is valued and protected. While only being an invitation to participate in policy-building (no doubt the ensuing policy recommendations will come in for considerable scrutiny), this document raises some fundamental questions, not the least of which are: which heritage, which Ireland and is this the right approach?

In relation to which heritage, the document states that Heritage Ireland 2030 will “focus on our built and natural heritage” because “other important aspects of our heritage are dealt with in other plans and strategies”. This may be so, but it belies the holistic and inextricable nature of linkages across the heritage infrastructure. Furthermore, intangible heritage is only briefly alluded to and the extent to which the final policy will embrace heritage under private ownership and control, outside the direct charge of government, is unclear. Museums and archives receive but a cursory reference and their contribution to the natural and built environment in terms of research, interpretation and the preservation of artefacts goes unmentioned. This is a grave omission, because their role as the memory banks of society, if not acknowledged and strongly supported, could lead us to the equivalent of national dementia. Museums’ roles must be duly recognised in the final policy.

The ‘which Ireland?’ question requires us to consider boundaries and borders in another fashion. The consultation document makes no mention of the Irish diaspora – what about the heritage held outside the 26 counties? The suggestion, that the delivery of Heritage Ireland 2030 will take into account cross-border, European and international frameworks is to be welcomed, for issues such as climate change cannot be addressed alone, but only as part of a broader consensus.

The approach proposed is that the document’s overall aim to ‘help us enjoy, understand and care for our heritage’, will be pursued through objectives presented under three themes: National Leadership and Heritage; Heritage Partnerships; and Communities and Heritage. The Minister states that ‘Heritage is a valued amenity for communities .. [and] .. It is an important resource for economic activity, including tourism.’. It could be argued forcibly that this approach is fundamentally flawed. It is precisely a previous emphasis on public access to, and the economic exploitation of, heritage, that now requires us to formulate a reactive policy to protect and conserve our heritage and our environment. Is it not time for a new paradigm? One in which (as in Scotland, for example) public policy outcomes replace rather anodyne objectives and targets; where, conceivably, ethics and aesthetics become the primary policy drivers; and in which we argue that access to some of our heritage becomes a privilege rather than a right? Given, as Mike Berners-Lee has it, there is no Planet B, the time is ripe for a more radical approach and commitment to conserving, preserving and presenting our heritage.

Chris Bailey is Director Emeritus of the Northern Ireland Museums Council.
