

# Through and Between

Anastassia Varabiova, Anna O'Leary, Bernadette

Kenny, Shanaia Kapoor, Eoghan O'Kelly, Isabella Wood,

Jack Pierce, Reuben Brown, Róise McGagh, Síofra Egan.

Curated by Jessie Aylmer, James Ó Muirthe and

Caoimhe Wandel-Brannigan

10 - 13 October 2025

The Douglas Hyde is delighted to present *Through and Between*, a group exhibition organised by the members of the 2025 Student Forum. The Student Forum is a group of students and recent graduates who engage with The Douglas Hyde and its programming in different ways over a period of twelve months. *Through and Between* reflects the exchange of ideas which have occurred throughout the year. The exhibition brings together the disparate practices of the group to create new connections. There are a broad range of works, across media and subject matter, that are in dialogue with one another.

Developed through collective discussion and shared research on methods of curation, Carol Duncan's conceptualisation of the museum as a secular, ritualised space offered a useful means to consider spatial constructs in exhibition making. Historically, exhibition narratives are upheld through the careful choreography of the viewer through a series of thematically linked works. *Through and Between* asks: can this invisible choreography be reconceived, and the viewer reorientated through a multi-vocal or communal curatorial strategy? Beyond the material, textual or thematic resonances, artistic modes of enquiry emerge as the binding force in this conversation.

Each artist inhabits a site of interest which is shaped by formal experimentation and lived experience. The exhibition space, reveals the sustained orientation of the artists and their engagement towards their respective sites of enquiry. Following and extending Duncan's thinking on spatial meaning-making, *Through and Between* positions the gallery not as a container, but as a context that allows for a heightened awareness of the in-between, ritual and liminal aspects of the exhibition space itself.

Several pieces explore the body as a liminal territory, a threshold between self and other, wellness and illness. Eoghan O'Kelly's works, such as *Fruiting* and *Wounded One* use textile and embroidery to map the vulnerable and transformative experience of neurological illness, in which one's own body can feel like a "foreign entity". The meticulous act of stitching becomes a passage from physical limitation to reclaimed strength, while forms poised between the foetal and the flayed articulate a journey from pain towards a future.

The mapping of trauma onto the physical form finds a powerful echo in works that consider the Irish landscape as a body in its own right. Anna O'Leary's monoprints *I'd very much like to clear the air*, explicate this link, layering fragmented landscapes with reappropriated text to draw a stark connection between colonial violence against the land and violence against the female body. The refusal to present a clear, consumable image is an act of protection and resistance. Similarly, Síofra Egan's *Untitled* grid sculpture situates the Irish language as a site of resilience, its deliberately broken text standing

# Through and Between

against both historical erasure and the flattening speed of contemporary digital culture. The work links the interruptions of colonial history to the buffering icon of a pixelated sand timer, asking what it means to preserve nuance and memory in an age of acceleration.

The interplay between personal histories and collective politics threads through works like Bernadette Kenny's *Nikita*, which honours a woman who confronted the Irish justice system after sexual assault. Here, fabric and domestic materials become vessels for defiance, exposing both systemic failure and the courage of resistance. Personal and collective politics are also contemplated in Shanaia Kapoor's photographic series, *Why Loiter?*, extending a consideration outwards through an interrogation of the dynamics of women's presence in the public domain of Bangalore's metro system.

In Róise McGagh's *Structures*, the investigation of spatial definitions continues — volumes of negative space encapsulated in three steel structures invite diverse viewpoints and gently frame the malleability of experience.

Intimacy within Reuben Brown's film-poem *In the dusk we are shadows made of light...* and its companion piece *Self-Portrait in a Club Bathroom Mirror with Angel Wings* is found not only in the theme of the work and in particular the scale of *Self Portrait in a Club Bathroom Mirror with Angel Wings*, which is the size of a smartphone, something you could put in your pocket and bring home with you. The works drift through love, loss, and queer intimacy, transcribing desire into flickers of light and sound.

Throughout the exhibition, the space itself situates the viewer as an agent in dialogue with the works. Anastassia Varabiova's *Touching Grass IRL* literalises this notion, where audiences are invited to enact the titular phrase by physically engaging with living grass in the gallery space. The work bridges the gap between online rhetoric and sensory, embodied experience, situating both ritual and exhibition as active, participatory gestures.

Isabella Wood's *The Shadows Tell a Story of Resilience* is an experimental film on trees and the significance of shadows in considering the in-between and what is lost. It ruminates on the significance of trees within

cities and what it means for them to remain standing.

*Through and Between* confronts the capacity of the viewer to remain cognisant and affective to the phenomenological and ritualised aspects of the gallery space, whilst being attentive to the intent and ethos of the participating forum members. It is an opportunity to attend to an exhibition curated through a year of personal engagements.

Embracing Carol Duncan's conceptualisation of the museum as a secular, ritualised space, this exhibition dismantles the traditional, controlled path, laid out for the viewer. In its place, the curatorial strategy of the Student Forum proposes a different kind of orientation, one rooted not in institutional authority but in shared dialogue and mutual enquiry

- Jessie, James and Caoimhe

## Associated Events

### Performance

*Touching Grass IRL*

**Friday 10th October, 6:30pm**

Anastassia Varabiova presents a new performance bridging the gap between online rhetoric and sensory, embodied experience.

# Through and Between

## List of Works

### Upper Level

Róise McGagh, *Structure III*, mild steel, 2025.

Síofra Egan, *In Aice Leis An Mbosca Bruscaur*, hand knit acrylic yarn, 2024.

### Main Level

Síofra Egan, *Uncertainties*, handknit acrylic yarn, 2025.

Síofra Egan, *Untitled*, construction tape and steel, 2025.

Róise McGagh, *Structure I*, mild steel, 2025.

Róise McGagh, *Bend*, beech, 2025.

Róise McGagh, *Structure II*, mild steel, 2025.

Isabella Wood, *The Shadows Tell a Story of Resilience*, video, 2025.

Anna O'Leary, *I'd very much like to clear the air*, monoprints and photographs, 2025.

Eoghan O'Kelly, *Wounded One*, chicken wire, aluminium wire, stuffing, cotton drill, beads, acrylic yarn, sequins, lace, 2025.

Eoghan O'Kelly, *Fruiting*, beads and embroidery floss on cotton drill, 2025.

### Lower Level

Anastassia Varabiova, *Touching Grass IRL*, Turf Roll lawn, waterproofed MDF, water, 2025.

Anastassia Varabiova, *aissatsana\_hope\_doom\_weird\_core\_edit.mp4*, video, smartphone, 2025.

Shanaia Kapoor, *Why Loiter*, photographs, 2025.

Reuben Brown, *Self-Portrait in a Club Bathroom Mirror with Angel Wings*, 0.38mm pen on paper, 2025.

Jack Pierce, *Unruly Heritage*, etchings on Fabriano paper, 2024.

Bernadette Kenny, *Nikita*, textile, 2025.

### Gallery 2

Reuben Brown, *In the dusk we are shadows made of light, but we dance in the echoes of summer*, experiential installation, Calvin Klein CK One, 2025.

# Artist Biographies

**James Murray [Ó Muirthe]** is a writer based in Cork City. He recently completed a Joint Honours BA in Béaloideas (Folklore) and History of Art in University College Cork. Operating through and between two languages, James remains oriented towards global art histories and a critical engagement with the legacies of evolutionary nineteenth-century frameworks within Irish cultural institutions.

**Reuben Brown** is an emerging visual artist, curator and club-creative based in Belfast, N.Ireland, and specialising in interactive and experiential installation, filmography, research and performance art. He is a member and studio-holder at Flax Art Studios; Belfast, and graduated from Belfast School of Art in Summer 2022. He is also the founder and creative-director of Belfast-based Irish scenography, visual arts and ephemeral-architecture collective "club [construction]"

**Jessie Aylmer** is an emerging visual artist and recent Fine Art graduate from TU Dublin whose work explores spatial articulations through drawing and photography. Recent projects, such as Emulsions Botanics, layer Polaroid, digital, and analogue photography with architectural drawings to map out personal and domestic landscapes.

**Síofra Egan** is a Dublin-based visual artist exploring language, identity, mistranslation, and power dynamics. A 2024 Fine Art Sculpture graduate from NCAD, her work examines presence and absence, the deceptive neutrality of aerial perspectives, and their ties to modern warfare and digital spaces.

**Shanaia Kapoor** is a writer and artist from Mumbai, currently based in Dublin. Her creative practice spans essays, poetry, and visual storytelling. With work published across literary platforms and photography exhibited in group shows and featured in print, her projects explore themes of identity and its influence on human interaction, community and language.

**Bernadette Kenny** is a third-year Illustration student at NCAD. Her work combines portrait drawings with visual storytelling to explore themes of identity, youth culture, and social change. She recently completed internships at Eversholt Ltd and the National Railway museum, where she collaborated on design projects including murals and a sensory room space for neurodiverse visitors.

**Eoghan O'Kelly** is an emerging visual artist from Galway. In 2023 O'Kelly completed his Bachelor's degree in Fine Art, graduating with a First Class Honours, specialising in Sculpture and Combined Media. Eoghan explores metamorphosis and regeneration in the context of the human body. Based on personal past experiences with illness O'Kelly reflects on the body's capacity to recover from both physical and mental trauma and the potential for change that this can ignite.

**Róise McGagh** is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Dublin. Their practice centres on the relationships between the art object, the space it inhabits and the experiential concerns related to viewership. Using construction and utility materials, McGagh creates installations that investigate support, considering the formal, spatial and affective contexts in which it occurs.

**Anna O'Leary** is a Galway-born, Limerick-based artist and teacher. Her interdisciplinary practice questions the masculine, imperial desire to control both land and woman. O'Leary graduated with First Class Honours in Art and Design Teacher Education from the Limerick School of Art and Design (LSAD).

**Jack Pierce** is an emerging artist and teacher, and a recent Fine Art graduate from NCAD. His practice is process driven, integrating aspects of sculpture, paint and costume. Exploring themes of queer ecology, monstrosity and identity, he experiments with material processes and imagery to explore his interest in a sustainable future. Current research is centred around 'unruly heritage' and queer ecology.

**Anastassia Varabiova** is a Belarusian-born multi-disciplinary artist based in Dublin. Using the language of internet culture, Varabiova reflects on the effects of screen-based living and the odd behaviours that develop out of western capitalist societies.

**Caoimhe Wandel-Brannigan** is a dance artist, movement director and PhD researcher in the School of Creative Arts, Trinity College Dublin. In her work she explores how emerging technologies such as virtual and augmented reality (XR) are reshaping choreographic processes, physicality, and audience-performer relationships.

**Isabella Wood** is an emerging visual artist and recent graduate from Trinity College, Dublin with an English Major and Film Minor. She makes experimental films which consider memory, the reflective qualities of the natural world and linguistics. She is interested in pursuing a career in the arts. Her photographic work has been featured in publications such as Lesbian Art Circle and on the front cover of UT magazine.