

Reclaiming Nature

Reclaiming Nature is a public event that examines how art encourages us to reimagine our relationship with the natural world. Through a new artist commission by Marielle MacLeman, a film screening by Aoife Desmond and a panel discussion, the event brings together artworks that examine humans' relationship to nature in the midst of environmental and ecological collapse. Contemplating the transience of our ecosystems, the programme reflects on the ways humans can positively engage with the natural world. The event has been developed by Aoife McCloughlin, 2025 Provost's Fellow in Curating at The Douglas Hyde, and builds on her interest in the relationship between art and ecology.

Wake is a new commission and site-specific installation by artist Marielle MacLeman presented in a room adjacent to the screening space. Taking inspiration from hazard tape that is used to support toppled trees in the wake of storms, the work is comprised of 35 naturally dyed streamers hanging in a state of flux. The dyes used by MacLeman are made from native and invasive plant debris gleaned in the aftermath of these storms. Screen-printed natural inks punctuate plant dyes mottled by fire retardant fluid – nature interrupted and managed.

Invasive plants are known to steal light from other species, expanding on this, MacLeman has pasted the dyed silk to her studio window to draw lines with sunlight. In the dyeing process, resilient evergreens have been used which are predicted to prevail in the face of climate change. Some of the silk has faded in the sun's rays from *Grianstad an Gheimhridh* (Winter Solstice on 21 December) to *Imbolc* (St. Brigid's Day on 2 February), the marks acting as a subtle record of time. The streamers comment on human intervention in the natural world while the hazard tape acts as a warning about the torrents of climate change.

Following the opportunity to see MacLeman's new work, the event begins with a screening of artist Aoife Desmond's film, *WE HONOUR, WE LAMENT*, 2026. The film was made as part of *River Guardians*, a collaborative project with a community living in close proximity to the river Bandon. Beautifully shot on 16mm film, the work documents collective actions on the Bandon River from Imbolc to Lughnasa (Harvest Season), as

the community living on the banks of the river attempt to restore care for the water system. Through a series of collaborative seasonal engagements, from tree planting, feasting, storytelling and dancing, the community contemplate their concerns for the river. This project was supported by local groups such as Bandon Rivers Trust, Bandon Environmental Action Group & Creative Bandon, and funded by OPW and managed by Cork County Council Arts Office.

A panel discussion follows, moderated by McCloughlin, bringing together artistic and academic voices to reflect on concerns between art and the vulnerability of ecology. Desmond and MacLeman discuss their practices and shared lines of enquiry in relation to care for ecosystems. Joining them in this discussion will be Gareth Kennedy, Course Coordinator on the Art and Ecology programme in the NCAD Field- a site where art and design students engage with critical ecological thought and action. Bringing knowledge from her ongoing research into understanding the science of climate change and biodiversity loss, Professor Jennifer McElwain, Chair of Botany at Trinity College Dublin, will join the discussion.

Reclaiming Nature aims to generate discussion around the complex relationship between humans and the natural world, exploring the points where ecology, art and community intertwine.

Programme

Saturday 7 February

14:00 - 14:15 | Welcome

Welcome by Dr Georgina Jackson, Dr Sven Anderson, Provost Linda Doyle, followed by an introduction by Provost's Fellow in Curating, Aoife McCloughlin.

14:15 - 15:00 | Film Screening

Aoife Desmond, *WE HONOUR, WE LAMENT*, 2026. 16mm film, 45 minutes.

15:00 - 15:15 | Break

15:15 - 16:00 | Panel Discussion, Q&A

Speakers Aoife Desmond (Artist), Marielle MacLeman (Artist), Gareth Kennedy (Assistant Lecturer in Sculpture and Expanded Practice at NCAD) and Professor Jennifer McElwain (Chair of Botany at Trinity College Dublin). Moderated by Aoife McCloughlin.

14:00 - 16:00 | Artwork

Marielle MacLeman, *Wake*, 2026. Wood, silk, natural dyes and inks, starch. Site-specific installation.

Contributor Biographies

Aoife Desmond is a filmmaker, visual artist and performer. In her work she prioritises embodied knowledge and explores materiality, site and human/non-human relationships. She works in response to environmental crisis and rupture with an emphasis on restorative practices. Based in Cork, Desmond works locally, nationally and internationally on solo and collaborative projects. Recent key film works are: *Bury Our Hearts At The Bend Of The River*, 2023; *sirius – harbour’s mouth*, 2023; *Mná & Sons*, 2022; and, *A Boated Roof*, 2022. Recent screenings include: Lima Alterna, Peru; Marienbad Film Festival, Czech Republic; RAI Film Festival, Bristol; ICA London; IMMA Earth Rising, Dublin; Cork International Film Festival; Sirius Arts Centre and aemi Dissolutions Film Festival, The Complex.

Gareth Kennedy is an artist and lecturer in Sculpture at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin. His work as an artist includes public art commissions, workshops, education projects, exhibitions, residencies and collaborations. Since 2020, he is lead coordinator of NCAD FIELD, a site beside the college which through radical pedagogies is being appraised as a place of third level outdoor learning combining art, design and ecological research. Together with artist colleagues Seoidín O’Sullivan and Mark Clare, Kennedy runs the Creative Futures Academy Professional Certificate and Diploma in Art and Ecology. In 2025-26, he is an Urban Fields artist in residence as part of L’Internationale Museum of the Commons Climate Assembly and was the resident artist on the Rhizome Residency with Kilkenny Arts Office. He is a member of the All-Island Climate and Biodiversity Research Network.

Born in Scotland and based in Ireland, **Marielle MacLeman**’s practice is concerned with the material traces of progress and decline. Melding craft and fine art processes with context-specific details, her artworks literally and metaphorically reconstitute remnants to explore ideas of care and value. Recent solo presentations include *The Visitors*, Butler Gallery, 2025, *To Impermanent Collections and Scattered Acquisitions*, Kunstverein Auhgrim, 2024, and *We are collecting today for tomorrow*, Etnografski Muzej Zagreb, 2024. Major group exhibitions include *The Air* at BIEN 2025 in Slovenia; *Staying with the Trouble*, IMMA, 2025; *Take Hold*, CCA Derry-Londonderry, 2025; *Swallowing Geography*, Regional Cultural Centre, 2022; and *Speech Sounds*, VISUAL, 2022. She was awarded a Landscape, Ecology & Environment Research Residency 2023/24 at Leitrim Sculpture Centre and her work is included in collections at University of Galway, Layer House, Kranj, and the Arts Council.

Aoife McCloughlin is the 2025 Provost’s Curatorial Fellow at The Douglas Hyde. McCloughlin graduated from National College of Art and Design with a BA Joint Honours in Fine Art Sculpture and Critical Cultures in 2022. In 2024, McCloughlin received her MPhil in the History of Art and Architecture at Trinity College Dublin, completing her dissertation, entitled: *The Lifecycle of Public Art: The Anna Livia and Molly Malone sculptures from Inception to Public Reception, 1988– present*. She worked as an Exhibition Mediator at the Irish Pavilion, Niamh O’Malley’s *Gather*, at the 59th Venice Biennale and was an intern at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. She has supported and facilitated education events for Sculpture Dublin’s Creative Engagement Programme, The Ark Children’s Cultural Centre, Rua Red South Dublin Arts Centre and the Chester Beatty.

Jennifer McElwain is Professor of Botany in the School of Natural Sciences in the Discipline of Botany at Trinity College Dublin. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society and Member of the Royal Irish Academy. Professor McElwain leads an active research team interested in understanding how Earth’s atmosphere and plant life have changed and interacted over millions of years. This research serves as a baseline to inform current understanding of the science of climate change and biodiversity loss. She established and co-directs the Environmental Science and Engineering Programme (TR064) at Trinity which integrates teaching in the natural sciences and engineering. She is also the Director of Trinity College Botanic Garden, an historic college garden established in 1687. Professor McElwain is an award winning scientist, author and educator and regularly collaborates with artists.

Current Opportunity

Provost's Fellowship in Curating

We are currently accepting applications for 2026 Provost's Fellowship in Curating. This paid Fellowship offers recent graduates of Trinity College Dublin the opportunity to work at The Douglas Hyde for 12 months and gain invaluable experience through hands-on work and mentorship, giving an insight into both the daily workings and programme development of one of Ireland's leading contemporary art galleries. Visit our website to find further details including how to apply. Deadline: 27 February 2026.

The Provost's Fellowship in Curating is generously supported by the Office of the Provost, Trinity College Dublin.

Exhibitions and Events

Current Exhibitions

Atsushi Kaga

Just Another Human Experience
Gallery 1

The Artist's Eye: Stephen McKenna
Gallery 2

Visit our current exhibitions by Atsushi Kaga and Stephen McKenna at The Douglas Hyde before they close on 22 February.

Events

to view the moon Jessica Foley

A newly commissioned text by poet Jessica Foley exploring the emotional resonance of Atsushi Kaga's work is available to read online from 26 January.

Aesop's Fables Tuesday 10 February 6.30pm Fully Booked 7:15pm Limited Tickets

Join us for a special performance by artist Isadora Epstein and musician Dan Whelan, with costumes by Amie Egan, which takes place within Kaga's summer pavilion.

Support Us

The Douglas Hyde is a registered charity and we are proud to be supported by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon and Trinity College Dublin. We also fundraise to support the delivery of our programme. There are many ways to support us; through a once-off donation; joining as a Friend or Patron, or partnering with us on new initiatives. By supporting us, you help artists make their most ambitious work to date and bring that work to new audiences. Visit our website or speak to one of our friendly gallery assistants to join as a Supporter today!

If you'd like to stay in touch and receive invitations and information about upcoming exhibitions and events sign up for newsletter.