

Róise McGagh

sticks and mountains and huge lone birds

29 March - 24 April 2026

Curated by Aoife McCloughlin

sticks and mountains and huge lone birds is the first solo exhibition by artist Róise McGagh. Site-specific in their nature, the works in this exhibition articulate architectural forms observed in the environs of the College Lane Gallery. The exhibition is a culmination of a month-long residency undertaken by McGagh where they have been exploring the relationship between the Gallery and the street. Externally visible, the artworks expand beyond the confines of the interior, thus creating a dialogue with public space.

After living in Louth and Leitrim, McGagh's interest in architecture and urban space coincided with their arrival in Dublin. Influenced by concepts and philosophies of social space, the artist's practice centres on the relationship between the art object, the space it inhabits and the experience of the viewer. McGagh employs a refined sculptural language which is suggestive of the materiality of private and public worlds. Working primarily in sculpture, they extract and abstract architectural forms distilling them into geometric sculptures. The artist's concern with making forms attempts to push the boundaries of what a material can do whilst attempting to alter the way we perceive both the material and the space it inhabits.

The exhibition title, *sticks and mountains and huge lone birds*, is borrowed from Claire-Louise Bennett's short story, *Control Knobs* from her collection, *Pond*. As Bennett writes "...it is like the last daydream from childhood in many ways because hopefully the world for a child is mostly sticks and mountains and huge lone birds..."¹ This extract resonated with McGagh, bringing to mind a childlike curiosity for the world. It through this spirit that the works have been realised.

The exhibition spans across the College Lane Gallery and the adjacent street with new and existing works shown. Greeting the viewer upon entry to the Gallery, a piece of cedar wood rests against a functional volume, concealed in plain sight. Announcing itself, *Steeple* encapsulates volumes of negative space in a stainless steel structure that gently frames the malleability of experience whilst subtly remembering the forms of the Abbey behind the Gallery. The trapezoidal form appears to be folded, as two sides provide a base for the upper half which leans precariously away from the viewer, giving it a sense of velocity and rapid decrease toward a definitive point. In contrast to the sharp edges of *Steeple*, the curves of *Handles* suggest the materiality of domesticity and the duplicity of form. Clinging to the corner of the Gallery, *Vanishing Lines* sits in a state of flux whilst creating a three-dimensional drawing in space. *Transpose* is pasted to the glass creating an interplay between public and private. Adjacent to the Gallery, a stark architectural intervention is made externally, employing the utilitarian language of public space whilst also playfully subverting it.

sticks and mountains and huge lone birds invites viewers to re-examine their immediate surroundings, adopting a childlike curiosity for the world.

¹ Claire-Louise Bennett, *Control Knobs* from *Pond*, The Stinging Fly Press, 2015, p. 67.

List of Works

Steeple, 2026. Stainless steel.

Handles, 2025. Cedar wood.

Vanishing Lines, 2026. Mild steel, clear varnish.

Hazard, 2026. Mild steel, auto paint.

Transpose, 2026. One way mirror film.

Exhibition Event

Exhibition Walkthrough

Saturday 18 April at 2pm

Join us for an exhibition walkthrough with artist, Róise McGagh. Róise will be in conversation with exhibition curator, Aoife McCloughlin, and will discuss the influences in their practices and the works in the show.

Thank You

Thank you to Róise McGagh for sharing their beautiful work. Thank you to Jobst Graeve and Josephine Kelliher for their generous support of this exhibition at the College Lane Gallery. The production for this exhibition was kindly supported by DLR Professional Development Arts Grant and Fire Station Artist Studios.

Biographies

Róise McGagh is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Dublin, originally from County Leitrim.

Recent exhibitions include *Through and Between*, The Douglas Hyde Gallery of Contemporary Art, 2025; *Prop, Hold, Bear*, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire (IADT), 2025; *In the Making: Mud Between the Toes*, 2025 at Pallas Projects/ Studios, 2025. McGagh was long listed for the RDS Visual Art Awards, 2025; was awarded a Graduate Award at Fire Station Artist Studios (FSAS), 2025; a Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown (DLR) Emerging Artist Bursary, 2025; and a DLR Professional Development Arts Grant, 2026. They hold a BA in Fine Art from Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire (IADT).

Aoife McCloughlin is a curator and arts worker who lives and works in Dublin. McCloughlin was the Provost's Fellow in Curating at The Douglas Hyde Gallery of Contemporary Art, 2025; an Exhibition Mediator at the Irish Pavilion during Venice Biennale, 2022; and an International Intern at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice in 2023. McCloughlin also has experience supporting and facilitating 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 Library. She holds a BA in Fine Art Sculpture and Critical Cultures from National College of Art and Design (NCAD) and an MPhil in the History of Art and Architecture from Trinity College Dublin.

About the Gallery

College Lane Gallery and Studios are part of The Old College located in the medieval centre of Howth in Dublin. This was a place of congregation and learning from the late 15th to early 16th century and currently artists occupy studios at the rear and the innovative not for profit project space in front.

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