

Website Texts; Sarah Iremonger; November 2025

Home Page:

This website represents more than thirty years of Sarah Iremonger's visual art and writing practice; from the first oil paintings in the early 1990s, to the conceptualisation of the work in the late 1990s, a site-specific multi-media approach through the 2000s, a return to painting since 2014, and recent developments in text-based and digital artwork.

Visual artist who makes art and writes to explore the nature of being and consciousness, to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to the world, the amazing cosmic wonder that is life and the real threat to that life we are facing and how we can turn this around by embracing the unknown and the unknowable.

Based in Kinsale, Co. Cork, Ireland, early work consists of large, abstract paintings that express a presence with epic implications. Later work employed a pan-disciplinary approach to ideas about representation, while recent work serves as a meditation on the post-representational turn towards the extraordinary and a re-enchantment of the world. The work is planned, repetitive actions build up over time to develop open-ended series.

General Statement:

Recent work

The [Horizons](#) works 2014-24 were created using digitally modified found images, traced and layered multiple times onto paper, creating a map-like web of abstract shapes, where the originals are hidden in a forest of post-representational visual noise, painted using a colour map theorem, ensuring that no two adjacent colours are the same. This systematic approach renders foreground and background indistinguishable, creating a non-hierarchical colour distribution. "Haunted by the history and context of painting, I establish rules beforehand to organise what colours will be used, where and how, to undermine self-expression. I am like a one-eyed ambient robot crawling across the surface of the painting, eradicating any depth perception and diminishing aesthetic choices to chance encounters."

The results are reminiscent of AI-generated camouflage designs; [Entangled Horizon](#) 2024 is based on George Barret's 18th-century painting 'View of Powerscourt Waterfall', 1760. Recent developments include transforming drawings based on Barret's painting into 3-dimensional digital virtual landscapes, with the help of Net Artist Daniel Murray using Blender.

Images used to create this work include drawings based on screensavers, nature camouflages, photographs of Cork Harbour, Skellig Michael, Star Wars and the works of painters James Arthur O'Connor 1792-1841, George Barret 1728-1774 and Piet Mondrian 1872-1944. This work was precipitated by a return to painting in 2014 through a collaboration with poet Derek Mahon (1941-2020).

Included in this work is the paper [The Lady of the Lake is Hiding in the Expanded Field](#), written for the 2nd Symposium on Digital Art at UCC (University College Cork) in association with Sample Studios, Cork, 2024. The paper contemplates the loss of the horizon as part of an evolving technological landscape, exploring the sense of dislocation, disorientation, and situationlessness created by our data-driven digital era and how this presents an opportunity to look beyond ourselves towards a decentring of human exceptionalism, in a bid to save our planet. It takes the form of a pan-disciplinary meander through disparate ideas connected through descriptions of my painting process. Includes references to and quotes from writers Hito Steyerl, Jonathan Cary, Donna Haraway, Robert Hughes, Paul Glynn, Retort and Toril Moi.

[Cantos: Thinking Vessels](#) and [Open Horizons](#) are text-based works that use notebooks collected over ten years as found text reframed in the style of 'The Cantos of Ezra Pound', as an epic, non-rhyming, stream-of-consciousness, prose poem, where thought processes are exposed as a kind of self-portrait, exploring ideas about creating, aesthetics, art, painting, expression, being, politics and representation through times of inspiration self-doubt and trauma. *Cantos* traces the development of ideas that led to

the *Vessels* and *Horizons* painting projects and includes *The Cosmic Handbook*, a guide for accidental cosmic transcendentalism. The notebooks were started as a dialogue with poet Derek Mahon and continued after he died in 2020. They are conceived as visual written documents comprising short paragraphs, sentences, lists and quotes. The idea for this work came about after reading 'Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age', by Kenneth Goldsmith. Derek's copy of Joseph Joubert has kept me company, and Lydia Davis's *Essays* have constantly inspired me throughout the process.

[Build Your Own Horizon](#) public participation artwork was created as part of the Bealtaine Artist in Residence program for Uillinn, West Cork Arts Centre, Skibbereen, Co. Cork, in association with Cork County Council and exhibited with Re:Group at 'Fragments in Constellation', the O'Driscoll building for the Skibbereen Arts Festival 2022. This artwork involved a drawing workshop where participants made drawings of the horizons through the windows at Uillinn, WCAC. Uillinn is situated in the centre of Skibbereen town, a contemporary building rising four floors above the town, providing panoramic views of the town on several levels. The work explored the horizon as a constantly shifting, ephemeral idea dependent on the perspective or situation of the viewer. A situationless situatedness! The drawings were transformed into 1000+ cardboard cut-out horizons, installed and added to throughout the exhibition at the O'Driscoll Building in Skibbereen.

[Vessels](#) 2019-22 is a series of paintings developed through the pandemic, conceived as a visual thought experiment using the Venn Diagram to establish a self-directed, systematic approach to making paintings that "generates the thing to be done" (Catherine Harty 2021). Exploring the history of vessels, seven basic shapes were chosen from Turkey, Iran, North America, Sudan, Thailand, Pakistan and Syria, for their simplicity, multi-time, multi-national and geo-political implications. Reducing them to silhouettes and superimposing them on top of each other to create Venn Diagrams and the illusion of layers through colour juxtaposition. This work was conceived through a post-representational thinking process using diagrams that interact with the world rather than representing it, opening the possibility of a different kind of engagement with the world. The colours have been selected to represent colour separations.

"It is clear that the interplay between these vessels, which represent such a broad expanse of geography, politics, and time, is an examination of multiculturalism, how cultures evolve, influence each other or even remain isolated. As the series evolves, the works become increasingly complicated until the artist sets aside her rigid parameters. Individual colours are still visible but as fragments rather than blocks; colours as federalism ceding from nation states, perhaps." (Oliver Sears 2022)

More work

[Solipsism Series](#) was exhibited at Macroom Town Hall, Co. Cork, as part of the 'World View of An Oyster' exhibition curated for Cork County Council, 2013. In this series, printed digital artworks based on 19th-century maritime paintings of Cork Harbour by George Mounsey Wheatly Atkinson and Cork landscape by 18th-century artists Nathaniel Grogan and John Butts, were digitally manipulated to remove their subject matter, the ships and the people, changing the focus of attention to their backgrounds creating the possibility for a different reading of the images away from the solipsistic humancentric towards a non-human reading.

[Landscape Unions](#) include the *Desert, Mountain, and River Unions*. *Desert Union* was exhibited at The Guesthouse, Cork, 2011 as part of 'Worlds End'. It was a multimedia installation using photography, video, text, lights, and smoke. *Landscape Unions* explore the positioning of power over nature and how this is influenced by historical colonial perspectives reflected in painting. Here, the land acquires agency and asserts its autonomy, attempting to fight back by forming landscape unions.

[The Hunting Box Party](#) was shown at the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, 2005, the Knoll Gallery, Vienna, Austria 2010, the Knoll Gallery, Budapest, Hungary 2011, The Armoury Gallery, Sydney Olympic Stadium, Australia 2011, and the Emmanuel Walderdorff Gallery, Molsberg, Westerwald, Germany 2021. Using video, painted murals, badges and greeting cards to explore the idea of the artwork as an ephemeral dematerialised object in the form of paraphernalia for a political party for hunting boxes and concerned with the seat of power about nature and non-human spheres.

[The Travels of Eugen von Guérard](#) shown at allerArt, Bludenz, Austria, 2011 and Sirius Arts Centre, Co.

Cork, 2012, examined how nineteenth-century Austrian/Australian artist Eugen von Guérard exported a specific Eurocentric vision of landscape to Australia. This work explores the ephemeral nature of artwork through temporary installations imbued with meaning and shows how ideas about nature are a construct. It included found objects, photography, text and a painted mural to confound fact and fiction, past and present and the nature of understanding reality.

In the exhibition, [*I thought I dreamed of you*](#) at the West Cork Arts Centre 2009-10, fake documentation of a nonexistent mural in the exhibition space, which took the form of a drawing on a photograph of the exhibition space. This was exhibited alongside a similar mural in the space, creating slippage and dislocation of space and time, fact and fiction, confounding reality. Other work in the exhibition consisted of photography, a photo album, video, neon, drawings, display cases and badges. Can we be sure reality exists? Is it a dream, a series of thoughts? *I thought I dreamed of you* presented a series of fragmented realities exposing the illusion at the heart of perception through a series of post-modern possibilities. The title of the exhibition explores the idea of 'I' as a thinking presence, while 'dreamed' questions the nature of reality constantly in flux, 'you' is experienced in terms of an existential quandary of the other, questioning how we understand ourselves through others and the world around us.

Past work

[*Upside-down Mountains*](#) is an artwork situated in the foyer of the Northside Civic Centre, Coolock, Dublin, installed in 2003. This work consists of two landscapes, one in blue neon and the other painted on the wall. The landscapes are based on drawings of Connemara by George Petrie (1790-1866); engravings of his work were used to illustrate guidebooks to Ireland published in the 1820s, when tourism first became a feature of Irish life and economy. Some of Petrie's drawings have been turned upside-down, transforming them into reflections and suggestive of valleys, while the blue light of the neon animates the wall painting. This work explores ideas of abstraction and representation, past and present, juxtaposed as symbols of Irish society.

Upside-down Mountains was also part of a collaborative project with Peter Murray and was exhibited as an installation in the Research and Process room at the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, for the 'George Petrie' exhibition in 2004. The installation consisted of a wall painting, video, photographs, reproductions of prints, photocopied research documents, and an interactive public participation area. The video and photographs followed a revisiting of the sites in Connemara that the artist had made drawings of in the nineteenth century.

[*Lumpy Art History*](#) was exhibited at Temple Bar Gallery and Studios, Dublin, 2001 and the Turku Art Museum, Finland, 2003. In Turku, the exhibition was a response to the work of 19th-century Finnish artist Matilda Rotkirch. The exhibition was held in two adjoining rooms to the exhibition (Studios) and expressed a sense of exaggerated romanticism. Rotkirch's notebook sketches were transformed into vast cold landscapes as murals exploring ideas of the sublime and alienation.

White Landscape and *White History* were shown at EV&A, Limerick City Art Gallery, 2002. These works are a response to the history of painting, post-colonial racism and the role history painting has played in perpetuating the dominance of the white male gaze.

Developing a multimedia approach in 2002 to explore the way the site affects meaning, attempting different kinds of engagement through site-specific installations. [*The Top Half of the Hero*](#) at the Triskel Arts Centre, Cork 2002, for example, had images of the gallery space and hidden office spaces reproduced and included as part of the exhibition in the form of drawn murals and photographs. This created a dislocation between space and meaning, creating a heightened awareness of the site.

Early work

The conceptualisation of my practice towards the end of the '90s changed how I approached my central concern. [*Nothing & the quandary of painting*](#) the work became research-based and explored how context shapes meaning. I became fascinated with the idea of representation as subject matter instead of a means to an end.

Early [paintings](#) from the 1990s consisted of large oil paintings aimed at capturing an indefinable presence, with epic implications. Depicting representations of space and light on a flat surface in layers of dark oil paint, walls, windows, and doorways created the illusion of space on the picture plane. Later versions dissolved and heightened awareness of the surface through layers of luminous dark oil colours on canvas. (Sarah Iremonger 2025)

Artworks:

Horizons 2014-2024

A return to painting in 2014 led to a collaborative engagement with poet Derek Mahon (1941-2020). A prose piece and poem were published as part of the collections 'Olympia and The Internet' 2017 and 'Against The Clock' 2018 with [The Gallery Press](#).

The *Horizons* works were created using digitally modified found images, traced and layered multiple times onto paper. This created a map-like web of abstract shapes, where the originals become hidden in a forest of post-representational visual noise. Painted using a colour map theorem, to ensure no two adjacent colours are the same. This systematic approach renders foreground and background indistinguishable, creating a non-hierarchical colour distribution. "Haunted by the history and context of painting, I establish rules beforehand to organise what colours will be used, where and how, to undermine self-expression. I am like a one-eyed ambient robot crawling across the surface of the painting, eradicating any depth perception and diminishing aesthetic choices to chance encounters." Images used include drawings based on screensavers, nature camouflage, photographs of Cork Harbour, Skellig Michael, Star Wars and the works of painters James Arthur O'Connor 1792-1841, George Barret 1728-1774 and Piet Mondrian 1872-1944.

A 2023 development into digital media sees drawings from *Horizons* transformed into digital 3-D landscapes with the help of Net Artist Daniel Murray, exploring ideas of situationlessness, presented in the paper [The Lady of the Lake is Hiding in the Expanded Field](#) at the ['2nd Symposium on Digital Art in Ireland'](#), UCC, June 2024

This work includes a public participation project, [Build Your Own Horizon/BYOH](#) developed for [Bealtaine Festival](#) and Uillinn, [West Cork Arts Centre](#), 2022, exhibited at 'Fragments in Constellation' with Re:Group for the [Skibbereen Arts Festival](#), 2022; exhibited at ['Coalescence' The Lavit Gallery](#) Cork, 2024 and 'Press Play' [Oliver Sears Gallery](#), Dublin, 2019; and was funded through a [Cork County Council](#), Arts Grants Scheme Award, 2015

Statement & Texts:

2014 saw the development of a collaborative project, *Horizons*, with the poet Derek Mahon (1941-2020), who completed a prose piece and poem of the same name, published as part of the collections 'Olympia and the Internet' and 'Against The Clock' both The Gallery Press 2017 and 2018 respectively.

The [Horizons](#) painting and drawing works are created using found images that have been digitally simplified and traced multiple times onto paper. This creates a map-like web of abstract shapes, with the originals hidden in a forest of post-representational visual noise. The paintings are then painted using a colour map theorem (in this case, six colours) so that no two adjacent colours are the same. In this systematic approach, foreground and background are indistinguishable, creating a non-hierarchical colour distribution - a transcendental mathematics in the borderlands of the digital and craft. The results are reminiscent of AI-generated camouflage designs, where the image is hidden in a forest of visual noise. "I am like a one-eyed ambient robot crawling across the surface of the painting, eradicating any depth perception and diminishing aesthetic choices to chance encounters." Images include drawings based on screensavers, nature camouflages, and photographs of Cork Harbour and Skellig Michael, found images of Star Wars and the artworks of James Arthur O'Connor, George Barret and Piet Mondrian.

Development into the digital world sees drawings from the *Horizons* project transformed into virtual 3-D digital landscapes, with the help of Net Artist Daniel Murray, exploring a sense of dislocation and disorientation, situationlessness and groundlessness created by a data-driven digital era, presented at

2nd Symposium on Digital Art in Ireland at UCC June 2024 see Texts: [The Lady of the Lake is Hiding in the Expanded Field.](#)

This work explores ideas of perception and representation and how, as a hangover of the romantic tradition, representation perpetuates scenarios of separation from the world around us. Focusing on appropriation and adaptation of found images places the agency of subject matter and personal artistic expression in the background; visual signifiers become hidden in a forest of post-representational camouflage mirroring the digital storm in which we find ourselves enmeshed today.

This work includes a public participation project, *Build Your Own Horizon/BYOH* developed for the Bealtaine Festival and Uillinn, West Cork Arts Centre, Skibbereen 2022 and was exhibited as part of 'Fragments in Constellation' with Re:Group for the Skibbereen Arts Festival 2022. The project involved a drawing workshop where participants drew the horizons from the windows of each floor at Uillinn / West Cork Arts Centre. Uillinn is situated in the centre of Skibbereen town, a contemporary building rising four floors, providing panoramic views of the town on several levels. This project explored the idea of the horizon as endlessly shifting and ephemeral, depending on the perspective/situation of the viewer, a situationless situatedness. The drawings were produced as cardboard cut-outs, installed in the studio and exhibited in the O'Driscoll building as part of the Skibbereen Art Festival 2022.

Distant Horizon includes images based on the mouth of Cork Harbour and abstract works of Piet Mondrian, *Submerged Horizon* is a reflection on the idea of 'lost islands' in this case Skellig Michael, the loss here is of the islands' identity to corporate, popular and tourist culture, water camouflages and Star Wars imagery have been used to achieve this. *Beyond the Horizon* looks at the idea of creating fantasy landscapes based on the works of Irish nineteenth-century painter James Arthur O'Connor, buried underneath nature camouflages and plastic waste vectors.

Painting and drawing are the chosen media for this project because they offer a particular structure; lines and planes of colour. At the same time, they allow the organisation of information in new and unexpected ways. This is an opportunity to explore and reference the history of painting. The old opening up to the new!

Using watercolour has enabled me to explore intense colour combinations. The works reference computerised pixilation achieved through multiple images, which have been superimposed and traced on top of one another, fragmenting the original image and painted in the style of camouflage. The resulting images have implications about the processes involved in understanding our visual world. 'Pre-visual' memory of objects seen as abstract shapes in early childhood informs this work, how once we 'know' what the object is we are looking at, it becomes fixed in our mind as part of the recognisable world. The fragmentation or abstraction of recognisable visual images here attempts to recreate the process of understanding and misunderstanding the visual world.

The undermining of the identity of Skellig Michael is explored in *Submerged Horizon* to complicate the recently assumed identity of the island as 'The Star Wars Island' through the creation of a series of camouflages for Skellig Michael, which include a Star Wars camouflage based on a simplified version of a stormtrooper helmet. This work investigates the identity of the place, including that of a spiritual historical site (Skellig Michael), and how this identity has been co-opted or displaced for mass media and corporate gain. Their style references early 20th-century abstract art with a digital twist, by focusing on appropriation and adaptation of found images, placing the agency of subject matter and personal artistic expression in the background, visual signifiers become hidden in a forest of post-representational camouflage. (Sarah Iremonger 2025)

This work has been funded by a Cork County Council Arts Grants Scheme Award 2015 and two residencies at Cill Rialaig, Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry, 2014 & 15, works were exhibited as part of 'Press Play' at Oliver Sears Gallery, Dublin 2019.

Horizons

Night Wind - a continual, baffled aspirate -
wanders the water like a vagrant spirit
seeking repose but there is no repose
till morning, when the tide withdraws

from exposed depths to the south-west
with its imaginary Islands of the Blest.

A straight line, wherever the edge may be,
confines and also opens up the sea
to ancient shipwreck, drowned forest,
lost continents and nuclear waste.
You hear a different music of the spheres
depending where you stand on these quiet shores.

Relatedly, beyond the blue horizon,
beyond the rising and declining sun
and more horizons, and among real waves
the line receded to infinite alternatives
before the final hot sand or pack ice.
Nobody clears the same horizon twice.

Same thing with time. When you were twenty-one
you took it for granted you would die young
as genius should. Now that you're seventy-five,
sails idly fluttering, but still alive,
you sit becalmed, imagining the many
horizons past and those to come, if any.
(Derek Mahon 2017 'Against The Clock' The Gallery Press 2018)

Horizons

'A white van dashes past. 'Cleaning Solutions', it reads, 'in pursuit of global excellence.' Biscuits are made with 'joy'. Excellence and joy are now trade terms; 'horizon' too. What with training schemes and management speak, horizons, always figuratively useful – new horizons, broader horizons, time horizons – have a busier metaphorical life than ever. They're especially good for adding a touch of mystery to the banal (what lies beyond the horizon?) but are often themselves banal, and in art can verge on kitsch: it's a risky proposition. Beyond the horizon lie other horizons, each as ephemeral as the last; but the ephemeral is fascinating in itself. Waves slide and dance continuously out there, while what we see from the shore is only a straight line, often choppy, dividing sea from sky. A rough stretch of water presents itself as plane geometry; and a strange residue of Ptolemaic, flat-earth thinking, somewhere in the genes, see horizons as a form of enclosure. We note surface activity – surfers, white sails, container ships – and imagine water temperatures and the Gulf Stream which, driven by prevailing winds, can move at a hundred miles a day and still be warm when it reaches us. Boundary, margin, limit, edge, says Roget; perimeter, skyline, rim. Horizons are all these things and more. They're where we live; they're there wherever we go, be they land, sea or city roof horizons. Symbolic land horizons include sand deserts, that enigmatic, ocean-like phenomenon. Paul Bowles, in his strange, slow-moving Algerian novel *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), gets close to it: (Kit) 'touched the window-pane; it was ice-cold. The bus bumped and swayed as it continued upward across the plateau.... Here in the desert, even more than at sea, she had the impression that she was on top of a great table, that the horizon was the brink of space.' She experiences the Sahara as an existential extremity.

Considered philosophically, horizons present us with a paradox, confining and liberating our vision at the same time; nor are they real, or only momentarily so. While gratifying visual expectation, they remain imaginative constructs, fictions; the closer to them we get the more they recede, the more *far-fetched* they seem. Between the bright edge, that slight meniscus, and the immediate foreground, what dark depths, what intensity! Surrounded by land horizons (a line of hills, fields, houses, woods), why do we think primarily of sea horizons? Because they're open, and because popular culture of the early 20th century, heyday of ocean travel, looked on them with such favour. Gaelic poets scanned them once for aid from overseas, but they seem not to have interested Shakespeare, for example, a Warwickshire man, who gives them no specific mention where you'd most expect, in *The Tempest* and so on; or Defoe (Crusoe is too busy to gaze out to sea), or the 18th century, except for those Gaelic poets and William Cowper, when the modern sailing and swimming cults had yet to establish themselves, as they soon did with Byron and the rest. The rise of 19th-century imperialism gave horizons a new

significance: all that tonnage racing back and forth to India and China. Their popularity peaked in the 1930s, those hard times, with the likes of Ernst Lubitsch's flighty movie *Monte Carlo* (1930), where Jeanette MacDonald sings 'Beyond the Blue Horizon' (lyrics by Leo Robin), and James Hilton's best-selling novel *Lost Horizon* (1933), which exploited the romance of long-distance flight and introduced the world to 'Shangri-La'. Proust was on to Horizons early. A boy, though a precocious one, Marcel watches the evening sea from his hotel room at Balbec (*À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, the Scott Moncrieff translation): 'Sometimes the ocean filled almost the whole of my window, raised as it was by a band of sky edged at the top only by a line the same blue as the sea so that I supposed it to be still sea and the change in colour due only to some effect of lighting. Another day the sea was painted only in the lower part of the window, all the rest of which was filled with so many clouds, packed one against another in horizontal bands, that its panes seemed... to be presenting a "Cloud Study".'

They cry out, as in Proust, for artistic representation; and more than this, for they work too as a *compositional* principle in art, what with frames and framing devices or their absence. (Howard Hodgkin painted on the frames themselves, and now we have the 'expanded field' of art outside the box.) The realistic horizon as a compositional principle has been a feature of landscape painting at least since the 17th century of Claude and Ruisdael. Sarah Iremonger, a contemporary artist, once put it like this: 'The vertical line suggests an actual presence, a being, whereas the horizontal line describes a place for that being to exist.' She worked in the vertical for several years: dark upright panels – blues, greens – aspiring to black as in 'Blue Light' (1994) and 'Night Light' (1995). She has also worked in the horizontal: often a deep dark sea and a cloudy sky, laterally trisected, a hint of light at the horizon itself, but not really representational, 'not pictures of horizons but experiments with paint.' In there too is a 'literary' component. A close reader of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* (1767) and related things, she warms to the nature of the 'sublime' as embodied in vastness and infinity; in horizons. Real horizons? No, schematic horizons: we're not talking about seascapes here but about art scapes, even thoughtsapes. 'This new idea,' said Mondrian of abstraction, 'will ignore the particulars of appearance, that is to say, natural form and colour; on the contrary, it should find its expression in the *abstraction* of form and colour.' Iremonger now appropriates and disrupts this aesthetic, and the framing functions of colour and form. Her horizons define themselves not in realistic, or even abstract terms, but in imaginative ones: what lies beyond. What lies beyond perceived reality, the received frame of reference? *Shifting* frames, ontological alternatives, deep-water mysteries, drowned forests, shipwrecks, *Star Wars*, vanishing continents?

Marie Heaney, in *Over Nine Waves* (1994), renders a famous moment in the story of Niamh and Oisín (Finn Cycle) as follows: 'Ahead of them they saw a most delightful country bathed in sunshine, spread out in all its splendour. Set amid the smooth rich plains was a majestic fortress that shone like a prism in the sun. Surrounding it were airy halls and summerhouses built with great artistry and inlaid with precious stones.' The pair have arrived at Tír na nÓg where nobody grows old and sorrow is unknown. (The name survives in that of a beach-front resort in Antigua, a folk band, and video games including the techno-fascist *Mystic Knights of Tír na nÓg*.) But this shining destination is only of several imaginary places in the Atlantic. Hy-Brasil, supposedly a circular island a hundred miles or so off the southwest of Ireland, appeared on maps as late as the 19th century. Dodging sea monsters and waterspouts, St. Brendan went in search of it, says the *Navigation*. Perhaps there was once such an island, since submerged by rising sea levels or subsidence of the sea bed. Paul Simons, in *Weird Weather* (1996), describes thermal inversions, mirages caused by weather: 'When conditions are calm and warm air sits on top of cool air it creates a "temperature inversion" which behaves like a mirror, bending light and... revealing places hidden by the curve of the earth.' The early Christian writers endowed such apparitions with religious significance ('Brendan' speaks):

*I passed the voiceless anchorites, their isles,
Saw the ice-palaces upon the seas,
Mentioned Christ's name to men cut off from men,
Heard the whales snort, and saw the Kraken!*

- Padraic Colum, 'The Burial of Saint Brendan'

Uí Breasil, O'Brasil, the Breasal country, was named for St. Bresal (6th c.), a friend of Brendan, or perhaps for St. Bresal (8th c.), once an abbot of Iona. Isola or Insula de Brazil appears on 14th c. maps and stayed there at the same spot for centuries. Shortly after its disappearance from 'history', if not

from myth and legend, Brunel's *Great Eastern* laid the first successful transatlantic cable from Kerry to Newfoundland. There are many fibre-optic cables now, and no doubt that's good news. Rachel Carson reported the bad news decades ago in a famous preface to the 1960 reissue of *The Sea Around Us* (1951), where she warned about the future of radio-active material: 'By its very vastness and its seeming remoteness, the sea has invited the attention of those who have the problem of disposal, and with very little discussion and almost no public notice... has been selected as a "natural" burying place for contaminated rubbish.' It doesn't seem so as you look out at the waves and contemplate the horizon; but these things – drowned forests, shipwrecks, mythical lands, cables and nuclear waste – lie there in the subconscious, of which the Big Blue is a famously potent symbol.

We hear a different music of the spheres according to where we sit in the auditorium, said Einstein; and we see a different horizon according to where we stand on the shore. This relativity, and related deflections, inform Iremonger's post-conceptual art. Working, for example, from digitally manipulated versions of traditional paintings, or from photographs of the sea as seen from Cobh, looking south over the Cork Harbour area, she uses deconstructive 'colour separations' to create images which are themselves horizons of thought. Nothing definitely *is*, everything is becoming; vision becomes re-vision, brine becomes watercolour: 'I am painting about the horizons of painting, not horizons themselves as a subject but painting as the subject.' So instead of familiar horizons, though she starts with these, we get *event* horizons of a kind, where previous convictions vanish, to be replaced by fragmentation (screensaver 'tiles') and re-construction, psychic flow, indeterminacy, unknowable futures. I could have wished for a few gills; but these artworks – paintings, photos, neon drawings – chart a voyage from the interior to the open sea and, while remaining themselves, document expanding fields of creative possibility, wherever the edge may be.' (Derek Mahon 2016 'Olympia and the Internet' The Gallery Press 2017)

Vessels 2010-2022:

Using the Venn Diagram to establish a self-directed internal logic as a systematic approach to making paintings, "I explored the history of vessels and how their shapes change through time. Settling on seven shapes and reducing them to silhouettes from Turkey, Iran, North America, Sudan, Thailand, Pakistan and Syria. Superimposing them on top of each other to suggest a Venn diagram, creating the illusion of layers through colour juxtaposition."

Vessels work was exhibited at '[Coalescence](#)' [The Lavit Gallery](#), Cork, 2024 and [Oliver Sears Gallery](#), Dublin, 2022, funded through a Cork County Council, Creative Artists Bursary 2022, and exhibited online at '[The Time of Our Lives](#)' 2020 and '[New & Recent Work](#)' 2021 at www.oliversearsgallery.com

Statement:

Vessels is a series of paintings conceived as visual thought experiments that use Venn diagrams (images that interact with each other and the world rather than representing it) to explore representation. The Venn diagrams become guides for a self-directed systematic approach to making paintings, which challenges the author dynamic by placing self-expression in the background. Exploring the history of vessels and how their shapes change through time and their cultural identities, settling on seven basic shapes from Turkey, Iran, North America, Sudan, Thailand, Pakistan and Syria they have been reduced to silhouettes and superimposed one on top of the other to suggest Venn diagrams creating the illusion of layers through colour juxtaposition and the use of separation colours magenta, cyan and yellow. The vessels have been chosen for their multi-time, multi-national implications, this work is a call for collective global unity and a contemplation of its complexities through colour as light in the form of colour separations.

The framework holding this light uses a 'Venn logic' which suggests a self-directed concept for making the work that "generates the thing to be done." (Catherine Harty 2021)

"It is clear that the interplay between these vessels which represent such a broad expanse of geography, politics and time is, itself an examination of multi-culturalism; how cultures evolve, influence each other or even remain isolated. As the series evolves, the works become increasingly complicated until the artist sets aside her rigid parameters. Individual colours are still visible but as fragments rather than blocks; colours as federalism ceding from nation states, perhaps." (Oliver Sears 2022)

Painted from the perspective of refracted light, the three basic colours, cyan, yellow and magenta, make up all the other colours possible in the world. I followed the 'Venn logic' of colour choice suggested through the layering process. This created an illusion of layering, while each colour was chosen and painted separately.

I chose watercolour paint to make this work as it offers a huge variety of colours to explore and they dry quickly so that I can develop the ideas in rapid succession, and the colours can be very intense due to their transparent nature. This process of development also inserted a political dimension/implication to the work through the mixing of cultures as they were placed one on top of another and through the mixing of colours at the points of contact with each other.

Like all painting series, the work then took on a conversation with itself and I became the facilitator of that conversation. This included breaking the rules I had established and experimenting with random colour associations as well as pivoting and moving the vessel shapes around. This pushed the work towards states that suggest broken or collapsed diagrams. The 'Venn logic' established in the early part of the series became obliterated.

Work from this series was exhibited at ['Coalescence' exhibition the Lavit Gallery](#) Cork 2024 and at [Oliver Sears Gallery](#) Dublin 2022 funded through a Cork County Council Creatives Artists Bursary 2022; exhibited online at ['The Time of Our Lives'](#) 2020 and ['New & Recent Work'](#) 2021 www.oliversearsgallery.com

Solipsism Series 2013-2015:

Exhibited at Macroom Town Hall, Co. Cork as part of 'World View of an Oyster' exhibition curated for Cork County Council 2013. In this series, printed digital artworks based on 19th-century maritime paintings of Cork Harbour by George Mounsey Wheatly Atkinson and Cork landscapes by 18th-century artists Nathaniel Grogan and John Butts, were digitally manipulated to remove their subject matter of ships and people, changing the focus of attention to the backgrounds creating a different reading of the images away from the solipsistic human-centric towards a non-human reading. These works have been printed on hahnemühle photographic paper and mounted on Dibond.

Statement:

'World View of an Oyster' was an exhibition curated by Sarah Iremonger for Cork County Council and exhibited at Macroom Town Hall in Co. Cork 2013, artists included Helen Horgan, Maximilian Le Cain and Mick O'Shea, with text by Danyel Ferrari.

A poem for the oyster:

The oyster, about as big as a fair-sized pebble, is rougher, less evenly coloured, brightly whitish. It is a world stubbornly closed. Yet it can be opened: one must hold it in a cloth, use a dull jagged knife, and try more than once. Avid fingers get cut, nails get clipped: a rough job. The repeated prying marks its cover with white rings, like halos.

Inside one finds a whole world, to eat and drink; under a firmament (properly speaking) of nacre, the skies above collapse on the skies below, forming nothing but a puddle, a viscous greenish blob that ebbs and flows on sight and smell, fringed with blackish lace along the edge.

Once in a rare, while a globule pearl in its nacre throat, with which one instantly seeks to adorn oneself.
(Francis Ponge 1942)

(Francis Ponge, *les parti pris de choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942)

(English translation is taken from Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008)

'The ragged "pebble" is closed to and yet reproduces the whole world. The "World View of an Oyster" takes the world of art practice and its possibly solipsistic vantage point as a similar paradox. The artists included in this exhibition all draw on reflection; on themselves and their processes as their

'interlocutors', as a means of creating individual histories, visual languages and experiences. In so doing they also comment on and gain access to something beyond their own individuated worlds.

Ponge's poem was once notably critiqued for presenting an "anthropomorphised" vision of the oyster in its attribution of human traits to the unthinking mollusc. Denying the validity of these criticisms, based on the letter rather than the spirit, the noted literary critic and author of *Persons and Things*, Barbara Johnson, notes that Ponge's poem is, despite its subject, written from the view of the observer-looking in onto the oyster. He describes the oyster as an object of various attributes, but he does not frame the world, either it's own or the larger surrounding, from the oyster's perspective.

The premise of this exhibition poses the question of how the world might appear from within a presumably closed world. How does one see the world, both internal and external, from within a "stubbornly closed" shell? How does the world, in its enormity exist within the limited world of one firmament reflected back upon itself from so close a distance? What can artists who point focus back at their questions and creations create or recreate of the larger world?

The pearl, which Ponge writes, we the reader will instantly seek to adorn ourselves with, is nothing more to the oyster than an irritant, a tiny stowaway inside that closed world we have to pry apart with knives to open. Let in through the bivalve by its necessary engagements with the world outside, the taking of food and breath; fixated upon by the oyster; worked over and over in an attempt to make foreign; self, the desirable "globule" begins as a grain of disruption. It is both evidence of the porosity of the tightly closed shell, and the very means by which the interior world within produces desired material of the outside world.

The disruption of the outside world, invited or otherwise, worked over until it becomes something else, is the thread of consistency in all of the distinctly internal practices included in this exhibition. Whether in reworking the stuff of our inherited narratives into an idiosyncratic language, opening the historic image to allow the self as viewer to become actor, translating one's output in one medium through another or inventing a cultural history to include a phantom self, the artists in "World View of the Oyster" simultaneously re-work the world both inside and out of their practices.' (Danyel Ferrari 'World View of an Oyster' catalogue, pages 4 & 5, 2013)

Solipsism Series

'It's an old adage of academic training that in painting you are not trying to create something where there is nothing, but rather trying to create space where there is none. In her *Solipsism Series*, artist and curator, Sarah Iremonger has taken the works of academic landscape painters and digitally divested these worlds of their subjects. Historic landscape painting invites the viewer to the comfortable pose of the surveyor; the world laid out for the viewer to enjoy. All the pleasure of ownership and none of the obligations of stewardship. The complete worlds of others' making are suddenly vacated. By removing the scenes for which they are titled, Iremonger performs a paradoxical act upon them. By opening space, she insinuates herself as viewer/maker/squatter into them, and, by extension invites us in as well. In offering entry through she also imparts the viewer a kind of peculiar responsibility. She, and we, can no longer merely survey a world, the cost of our imagining is the newfound imperative to act within our imagining.

In her new digital drawings, Iremonger creates shapes from forms repeated, reversed and redoubled creating a form of recognizable parts that take on a new identity. *The Solipsism* drawing, takes as its base one of the ships removed from George Mounsey Wheatley Atkinson's *Ship in Stormy Seas* c.1854 and by flipping and reproducing its form creates something of a Rorschach test image; taking what was a titular subject and making it playful ambiguity.

In an earlier series, Iremonger creates a campaign for *Landscape Unions* and all the attendant visual propaganda of buttons, badges and postcards. The landscape, as a genre of art and image history which belongs to cultural history is unlike land, hard to delineate. Its borders are not easily drawn out. By making land; landscape, she abstractly liberates. Even as a playful gesture, a subtle awareness of the often arbitrary delineations of power structures become apparent, in a way that argument could not equally elucidate. Iremonger works at the borders of worlds, where the abstract world of story becomes space, where image becomes, where play can become politics, and here, she creates space

where there was none and invites the viewer in.' (Danyel Ferrari 'World View of an Oyster' catalogue, page 14, 2013)

The Landscape Unions 2011-2013:

Include the *Desert, Mountain and River Unions*. *Desert Union* was exhibited as part of 'Worlds End' at The Guesthouse, Cork 2011, consisting of a multimedia installation using photography, video, text, lights and smoke. *The Landscape Unions* explore the positioning of power in relation to nature and how this is influenced by historical colonial perspectives reflected in painting.

Rights for Nature? Here, nature attempts to fight back and acquire agency by forming unions. This line of thinking came about through a residency at [The Broken Hill Art Exchange](#), NSW, Australia, 2011, the work of Austrian/Australian 19th-century artist Eugen von Guérard, and my experience of politics and running as a candidate for the Green Party in 2007.

Statement:

This work explores the positioning of power in relation to nature and how this has been influenced by historical colonial perspectives reflected in painting. Associations and contexts about nature are complicated and mixed up to explore nature as manifestations of the romantic tradition and how this has created a distancing through notions about 'view'.

By using an existing strategy of 'the union' to create a paradoxical situation to expose the possibility of a perceptual shift about our relationship with nature the animals, plants, rocks and birds are symbolic representatives for an attempted individualization and actualization of the desert, its attempts to assert its position or point of view through a 're-positioning' process using 'the union' as a vehicle for realising this.

The context is the historical idea of landscape as dominated by the image of a single human figure surveying 'his' domain, separated from 'his' surroundings, as seen in the work of 19th-century German artist Caspar David Fredric. This reflects an idea of nature as an object to be surveyed, used and dominated.

In this work this idea is subverted, nature exerts its right for identification as an entity in its own right with a view of itself with rights, a voice and an awareness of its right to exist.

Historically positioned within the romantic landscape tradition, this work spans the historic bridge between a 'Caspaesc' image of the single human figure surveying 'his' domain, separated from nature and the idea of an immersive relationship with nature, one where nature takes up the mantel and has a voice and consciousness of its own.

This work is designed to provide a shift in the way we relate to and see nature, be it mountains, desert, woodland, bog, marsh etc. to provide a vehicle for expressing that shift, it offers an idealistic redress from a humancentric situation towards the non-human, while using a human political relationship mechanism 'the union' as the means to do this.

Creating a series of 'Landscape Unions' - Desert Union, Mountain Union, Bog Union, United Forests and Woodlands etc. the mechanisms of politics are subverted into a symbolic gesture for the transition of power and ownership back to nature.

This line of thinking came about during a residency in the outback mining town of Broken Hill NSW Australia, through The Broken Hill Art Exchange in May 2011, my experience of politics and running as a candidate for the Green Party 2007 and through the work of Austrian/Australian 19th-century artist Eugen von Guérard, who I came across in the Regional Art Museum of Ballarat Victoria in 2010.

Eugen von Guérard was an important part of the artistic establishment in Australia. He went to Australia to mine gold and ended up playing an important role in the development of the Australian art world, as director of the art school and the art museum in Melbourne for more than 30 years, he was also an important painter in his own right, though his work is little known outside Australia.

Evidence of colonial interpretations of the desert landscape can be seen in his work, and through the introduction of viewing points in the desert, for example, a vast open landscape, which is the same in every direction for 100s of kilometres. This exposes a particular colonial interpretation and positioning of the desert landscape, in which the viewer is the central focal point, separated and distanced from nature. This can also be seen in the way the desert has been categorized and mediated for our engagement and entertainment. Documentation of these strategies exposes the positioning of the desert and how it is understood. (Sarah Iremonger 2013)

The Travels of Eugen von Guérard 2011-2012:

Exhibited as part of 'Sub-plots' exhibition with artists Mick O'Shea, Marianne Keating and Stephen Brandes at [allerArt](#), Bludenz, Austria, 2011 and [Sirius Arts Centre](#), Cobh, Co. Cork, 2012

In this work, ideas of distance and fragmented realities are explored, landscape becomes a site for the collapse of time and space through imagined and real connections between places.

This work was developed from research in Austria and Australia in 2010 and 2011. The work consisted of a painted mural with photographs, research material and text. The mural is a fragmented outline drawing of a painting by Eugene von Guérard painted onto the wall of the gallery. Guérard was an Austrian immigrant to Australia in the nineteenth century. He went to Australia to mine gold and ended up playing an important role in the development of the Australian art world as director of the art school and the art museum in Melbourne for more than thirty years. He was also an important painter in his own right, though his work is little known outside Australia.

Statement:

In November 1811 Johan Joseph Eugen von Guérard was born in Vienna. He studied at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf 1839-45 and departed for Victoria Australia 1852 from London to look for gold. Establishing himself as a painter in Melbourne in 1854, he sailed back to Europe in 1882 where he died in London in 1901.

'Sub-plots' was curated by Sarah Iremonger, and included artists Stephen Brandes, Sarah Iremonger, Marianne Keating and Mick O'Shea. It was an inter-disciplinary installation at Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh Co. Cork 2012 and allerArt, Bludenz, Austria 2011.

'Sub-plots' was the result of an exchange that was developed between allerArt in Bludenz, Austria and Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh over three years and was a response to place and a play on the idea that what is presented is not the whole 'story' or 'plot'. Working collaboratively in response to the idea of the 'Alps' (where Bludenz is situated) each artist engaged with the subject in their own way, though the intention was not to have boundaries between the works but to let them migrate through each other, the vision being a considered arrangement of composites rather than several visions vying for attention.

Stephen Brandes's participation in the installation involved the design and production of eight new posters ranging in size from A4 to A0. These posters are suggestive of a golden age of travel when the previously inaccessible landscapes of the world were opening up to popular imagination and at the same time becoming emblematic of nationalistic endeavour.

From research in Australia, Sarah Iremonger developed new work for this installation, a wall painting with text and photographs, based on the work of Austrian/Australian 19th-century artist Eugene von Guérard whose work is referenced to create a disembodied relationship between the landscape of the Alps at Bludenz and von Guérard's landscapes of Australia, in a sense bringing him home.

Marianne Keating created a text-based work, incorporating the text of French-Cuban author Anais Nin, "We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are" in reference to the title of the exhibition and how each person can perceive the same event in many different ways. This piece was site-specific, screen-printed wallpaper, that captured the silhouettes of the Austrian alps created through the use of text.

Mick O'Shea's sound installation of field recordings included spoken words from the texts used by the other artists, which at once connects and creates a disembodied atmosphere to the installation.

With thanks to Alfred Graf, Hildegard Gunz, allerArt Bludenz Austria, Broken Hill Art Exchange Inc. Desert Knowledge Australia, Outback Business Networks, National Parks Australia, rightbrain.ie, South Tipperary County Council and the Sirius Arts Centre. This project would not have been possible without the help of Culture Ireland. (Sarah Iremonger 2011)

I thought I dreamed of you 2009-2010:

A multimedia installation exhibited at the [West Cork Arts Centre](#), Skibbereen, Co. Cork, 2009-10; Gallery 817, Anderson Hall, [UARTS](#) University of the Arts, Philadelphia, USA and the [Yarra Sculpture Gallery](#), Melbourne, Australia, 2010

Consisting of photography, video, neon, drawing, wall painting and badges, this exhibition explored how we understand reality. Can we be sure it even exists? Is it just a dream, a series of thoughts? *I thought I dreamed of you* explored ideas of fragmented realities, presenting post-modern possibilities. The title of the exhibition is a give-away, the idea of 'I' as a thinking presence, while 'dreamed' questions the nature of reality as an imagined flux, 'you' is experienced in terms of an existential quandary of the other, questioning how we understand ourselves through others and the world around us.

Statement:

I thought I dreamed of you was a multidisciplinary installation exhibited at the West Cork Arts Centre, Skibbereen, West Cork 2009-10, UARTS University of the Arts, Philadelphia US 2010 and the Yarra Sculpture Gallery, Melbourne, Australia 2010.

How do we understand our reality? Can we be sure it even exists? Is it just a dream or a thought? *I thought I dreamed of you* explored the idea of fragmented realities presenting a series of post-modern possibilities.

The title of the exhibition is a giveaway *I thought I dreamed of you* explores the idea of 'I' as a thought, while 'dreamed' questions the nature of reality suggesting it as imagined and constantly in the past. While 'you' is experienced in terms of the existential quandary of the 'other', questioning how we understand ourselves through others and the world around us.

To add to the complication, you could also say that the words 'thought' and 'dreamed' position the work in a possible past reality which is also present. This asks the viewer to reconsider their position in relation to a perceived reality, which is constantly under review as a social construct. For example, in the work *Vista & Access*, this social construct takes the form of a sort of oscillation between a desired view of the landscape at Mizen Head and how you have to obtain that view from the centre of the bridge suspended in mid-air, exposing the desire for an emersion and engagement with our surroundings as a fallacy.

I thought I dreamed of you included faked documentation of a nonexistent painted mural in the exhibition space that took the form of a drawing on a photograph of the exhibition space. This was exhibited alongside an existing similar mural in the same space creating a slippage and dislocation of space and time, fact and fiction, confounding reality. Other work in the exhibition consisted of photography, a photo album, video, neon, drawings, display cases and badges.

A different form of engagement with landscape is explored in the work *Ode to Courbet*. Using found video footage of cars spinning in a car park, the romantic notion of the desire to be immersed in landscape is turned on its head when faced with the reality of how young people engage with their surroundings using cars in a sport called 'doughnutting'.

The idea of fragmented realities is explored further in the central work of the installation *I thought I dreamed of you* which consists of 5,000+ badges, each of an individual photograph, bagged and

labelled, evoking the idea of a personal keep-sake but with mass production undertones. The badges have been placed together in a case so that most of the images are not visible and they are inaccessible. The digital photographs are taken from the artist's collection, unedited and dating from 2001 onwards. Each photograph represents a captured moment, which has already passed. This ephemeral reality is highlighted by the multitude of photographs and by the use of badges as the frame or support for the photographs, since badges are, by their nature, ephemeral objects. Here, the perception of time is sentimental, in the sense that an attempt is being made to capture and hold onto something, as all photographs do, which has already disappeared.

Neon Waterfall is a reflection of the sublime in painting, intensifying and elevating the experience of the subject to the point of the extraordinary. This is achieved through the reduction of the waterfall to a single neon strip, this is my third work in neon to date and continues concerns about using contemporary media to examine traditional landscape themes.

Other video works included *Habitation* a short video piece which further explores the immersion or engagement process which occurs when we are confronted with the desire to co-exist with our surroundings. Here the scene is Ballyannon Wood in Middleton, Co. Cork and the video shows the remains of an attempt to create a habitation in the woods. (Sarah Iremonger 2009)

'*I thought I dreamed of you* continues West Cork Arts Centre's ongoing programme of solo exhibitions with artists whose work contributes to our understanding of contemporary art practice. We are delighted to show this installation - comprising a mural, video works, a neon work and digital photography, made by Sarah Iremonger over the past 18 months - which explores and questions the nature of reality and how we construct that reality through our interaction with others and the world around us.

This new body of work revisits themes and concerns explored by the artist in previous projects. In *Lumpy Art History* 2000 / 2001, Sarah experimented with materials, context and titles to interrogate the idea of painting itself and questioned the nature of art by questioning its history.

In *Top Half of the Hero* and *Upside-down Mountains*, 2002 / 2003 Sarah moved from making paintings to making murals, video-work, photography and neon work. She also sought to explore our relationship with the world by appropriating different modes of presentation. In the case of *The Hunting Box Party* 2003 – 2008 she used the mechanism of the political process as a means for exploring ideas of communication, looking at notions of identity, engagement and access.

These themes and approaches find their way through this installation. Sarah looks again at the nature of reality, at fragmentation and constructivism, at how we strive for a connection with the landscape and at our separation from it.

I would like to thank the artist for her enthusiasm, hard work and commitment to this exhibition and for the opportunity to show this work at West Cork Arts Centre.'
(Ann Davoren / Director / West Cork Arts Centre 2009)

The Cork Harbour Project 2007-2009:

Realised and managed for the [Sirius Arts Centre](#), Cobh, between 2007-09 to connect artists with the environment of Cork Harbour.

Cork Harbour Project was developed through the Sirius Arts Centre's Artist in Residency Programme in 2007 through a series of research meetings and workshops called *Laboratories* (Lab 1 & Lab 2), activities occurred in the Sirius building and around the harbour as field trips. International and local artists, community groups, natural history experts and representatives from the local authority were brought together to raise awareness of the fragile beauty of Cork Harbour and its endangered environment through collaborative reciprocal research.

Thanks to the artists involved: Dara McGrath (Cork); Dieter Buchhart (Austria); Allan Giddy (Australia); Martin Sims (Australia); Mara Adamitz Scrupe (USA); Ciara Healy (Ireland & UK); Julia Pallone (France)

& Cork); Meaghan Schwelm (USA); Donal Moloney (Cork); David Kavanagh (Cork); Colette Lewis (Cork); Colleen Bartley (USA); Tressa O'Brien (Cork); Eva Maher (Cork); Jeanienne McCarthy (Cork); Mary Gough (Co. Cork); Deborah Dallyn (UK); Danny McCarthy (Co. Cork); Holly Asaa (Co. Roscommon); Ralf Sander (N. Ireland); Tom Fannon (Co. Cork) Community Projects: Marie Brett (Co. Cork); Mark Stewart (Cork); Cork Greenmap (Cork); Naomi Fein (Cork); John McHarg (Co. Cork)

Thanks to the speakers who participated: Peter Thompson, Carrigtwohill Environmental Alliance; Patrick Smiddy, Conservation Ranger with The Dept. Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Cathal O'Mahony, Cork Harbour Forum, University College Cork UCC; Paul Murphy, Head of Planning, Cork County Council; Dominick Donnelly & Dan Boyle from the Green Party; Michael Martin, Historian; Jim Wilson, Naturalist; Mary Sleeman, Archeologist with Cork County Council; Cormac Rynne, Lieutenant Commander N.S. Staff Officer for Planning & Policy, Haulbowline Naval Base; Ryan Howard, ECAD East Cork Area Development; Birgit O'Driscoll, Cobh Green Flag Schools Project.

For the realisation of the exhibition and related events, special thanks to the artists and everyone at the Sirius Arts Centre; Cobh and Passage West Town Councils; Jim & Anne Willson; Paul & Gemma O'Halloran of Ryan's Bar, Cobh; Danny Halligan; The Mercantile Hotel, Sydney, Australia; Birgit O'Driscoll & ECAD East Cork Area Development; Alice D'Arcy, Sophie Le Roch and Sébastien Bertrand of Cork Greenmap also Naomi Fein; Lieutenant Commander Cormac Rynne, Irish Navy; Ted Creedon; O'Leary Insurance; Jane Smith, Office of Public Works Ireland OPW; Jamil Yamani Technical Programmer, College of Fine Arts COFA; University of New South Wales UNSW; The Environmental Research Institute for Art ERIA; Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

Cork Harbour Project could not have taken place without help from the Arts Council through a New Project Award 2007 and the Cork County Council's Arts Award Scheme, 2007 & 2008. (Sarah Iremonger 2009)

A Secret Archology 2005:

Shows a collection of research material including postcards, notes, drawings, found photographs, prints, newspaper cuttings, collected art objects and early works. Here they are exhibited as an installation covering the walls of the studio and installed in an exhibition case. They describe a form of exterior personal memory and creative process. Here they are put to use, laid bare at the [Backwater Artists Group](#) open studios, Cork for [Cork European City of Culture 2005](#).

The Hunting Box Party 2003-2021:

Initiated in 2003 with a photographic and video documentation project of Hunting Boxes found in the woods of Wiepersdorf in Germany. In 2005 the idea for *The Hunting Box Party* was created and has been exhibited as part of 'Change Hunters Hide' [Emmanuel Walderdorff Gallery](#) Molsberg, Germany, 2021; 'Magaslesek' (Hochsitze – Raised Hides) [Knoll Gallery](#), Budapest, Hungary, 2011; 'Buffer Zone' [The Armoury Gallery](#), Sydney Olympic Park, Australia, 2011; 'Hochsitze' (Raised Hides) [Knoll Gallery](#), Vienna, Austria, 2010; 'C2' [Crawford Art Gallery](#), Cork 2005 & 'ArtTrail' Cork, 2003

The Hunting Box Party consists of a political party for hunting boxes; the hunting boxes are the members and the candidates of the party. Working strategies include photography, display cases, greeting cards, badges, murals and videos. In this work, I was interested in how our relationship with nature is a construct of identification with historic cultural traditions, such as painting, and how these traditions have created the idea of nature as a landscape. The distancing these 'Hunting Boxes' represent reduces nature to an object of desire to be viewed from a distance, expressed through issues of observation and hunting, hunting in this case, for something unobtainable, a connection with nature.

This work was made possible through a residency at [Kunstlerhaus Schloss Wiepersdorf](#), Germany, with the [Stiftung Kulturfonds](#), 2003 and an [Arts Council of Ireland](#) residency award, 2002

Statement:

The Hunting Box Party was initiated in 2003 through a photographic and video documentation project of Hunting Boxes found in the woods of Wiepersdorf in Germany. In 2005 the idea for *The Hunting Box Party* was created and exhibited as part of 'Change Hunters Hide' [Emmanuel Walderdorff Gallery](#) Molsberg, Germany 2021; 'Magaslesek' (Hochsitze – Raised Hides) Knoll Gallery, Budapest, Hungary 2011; 'Buffer Zone' The Armoury Gallery, Sydney Olympic Park, Australia 2011; 'Hochsitze' (Raised Hides) Knoll Gallery Vienna, Austria 2010; 'C2' Crawford Art Gallery, Cork 2005 and 'ArtTrail' Cork 2003.

The Hunting Box Party consists of a fake political party for hunting boxes, the hunting boxes are the members and the candidates of the party. Working strategies include photography, display cases, greeting cards, badges, murals and videos. In this work, I was interested in how our relationship with nature is a construct of identification with historic cultural traditions, such as painting, and how these traditions have created the idea of nature as a landscape. The distancing these 'Hunting Boxes' represent reduces nature to an object of desire to be viewed from a distance expressed through issues of observation and hunting, hunting in this case for something unobtainable a connection with nature.

This work was made possible through a residency at Kunstlerhaus Schloss Wiepersdorf, Germany through the Stiftung Kulturfonds 2003 and an Arts Council of Ireland residency award 2002.

Hochsitze ~ hunt (raised) hide / hunting box expresses a particular relationship with nature, which is romantic and depraved at the same time. Romantic in the sense that these 'Hochsitze' are designed to hold one or two people, for some time out in the woods, you sit and watch nature through a small window, high above the ground. The fact that you then shoot at the animals is a further expression of that romantic relationship, through a desire to obtain something, to control and own it.

The Hunting Box Party is designed to undermine the idea of the 'object of art' and introduce a political movement as a context for the making of artwork. Exploring how the mechanics of politics has informed my work. Here the objects are reduced to the status of paraphernalia, their meaning becomes obscured, mixed up with what is suggested they represent.

The placement of this paraphernalia in a case where it can only be observed and not accessed mirrors the inaccessibility of nature from the hunting box.

These hunting boxes were documented in 2003 at Wiepersdorf in Germany and were made possible through a 'Fellowship Stipendiatin der Stiftung Kulturfonds' residency at Kunstlerhaus Schloss Wiepersdorf, Wiepersdorf, Germany and a Culture Ireland award 2003. The development and production of the work was made possible through bursary grants from the Arts Council of Ireland in 2004 & 2005, and an Arts Council of Ireland Residency award in 2002. (Sarah Iremonger 2011)

'Raised Hides' / Knoll Gallery, Budapest, Hungary 2011

"With the participation of international artists, this exhibition of Raised Hides focuses on the connection of several topic-related questions. Primarily created for hunting purposes, these special architectural developments became a symbol of nature and civilization, still marking human intervention and therefore recalling environmental problems as well. Made of varying raw materials, the special – sometimes bizarre equipment, raised hides are proof of individual creativity and inventiveness.

Society as a power structure is visualized in the work of the Irish artist Sarah Iremonger which consists of an installation and a site-specific wall painting. *The Hunting Box Party* refers to an imagined political party whose members are strictly raised hides. The installation recalls the theoretical and functional meaning of these architectural realizations; besides, by representing each "party member" on a stylish badge it creates a political connection."

'Buffer Zone' / Sydney Olympic Park, Australia 2011

"Another type of buffer zone is represented in Sarah Iremonger's video film stills, *Hochsitze/Hunting Boxes*. They are symbolic of the particular paradoxical relationship to nature in hunting, where a love of nature is conflated with its slaughter. The hunter sitting above nature, observing, is intent on destruction."

Upside-down Mountains 2003-2013:

Upside-down Mountains is an artwork situated in the foyer of the Northside Civic Centre, Coolock, Dublin installed in 2003, this work consists of two landscapes one in blue neon and the other a painted mural on the wall. The landscapes are based on drawings of Connemara by George Petrie (1790-1866) engravings of his work were used to illustrate guidebooks to Ireland published in the 1820s when tourism first became a feature of Irish life and economy. Some of Petrie's drawings have been turned upside-down transforming them into reflections and suggestive of valleys, while the blue light of the neon animates the wall painting. This work explores ideas of abstraction and representation, past and present juxtaposed as symbols of Irish society.

Statement:

Proposal for *Upside-down Mountains* for the OPW Office of Public Works at the Northside Civic Centre, Coolock, Dublin 2003.

1. Proposal for a Neon Work - 175 / 500 cm; colour - light blue

For the Northside Civic Centre, I propose to make a Neon Work based on drawings of the Irish landscape by George Pietre(1790 - 1866) who trained in Dublin as a watercolour artist and was one of the great Irish Antiquarians of the Nineteenth Century. The work will be light blue in colour and the placement is designed to wash the main hall in a light blue light mixing with the existing lights and complementing the blue of the wall tiles on the outer wall of the main hall. The colour of the light will draw people into the main hall and then reveal itself as a neon landscape.

2. Proposal for a wall painting extending from the back wall of the main hall and along the wall opposite the neon work to the reception area. This work will be painted in black acrylic paint directly onto the wall, the size is variable. This work is also based on landscape drawings by George Pietre, though in this work it is more evident that I am playing with the illusion of drawing and the representation of landscape by turning some of the drawings upside down. The blue light of the neon work opposite will animate this wall painting.

3. Proposal for a publication poster, as a free handout to the public. Printed in full colour on both sides it will be A3 in size. With photographs of the works installed in the Civic Centre, an explanation of the work and the art history sources on which the work is based. This is designed to promote and explore the artwork in the Civic Centre and the Civic Centre itself to the public.

These works are about an Irish Identity which is forward-looking but also aware of the past. This is represented through the heroic nature of the subject matter, the mountains which stand proud and strong in their isolation, but which, were also used as places of refuge or escape in Irish history. The mountains are connected to their inverted images, which could be valleys or places of refuge. (Sarah Iremonger 2002)

'George Petrie – Research and Process Room' for the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork 2004.

"Revealing the process, or revealing the experience of the process, is a common feature of contemporary art, ever since we began to see images of artists in the moment of action or making.

Looking back at the historical work of the artist and scholar George Petrie (1790 – 1866), we wonder about the eye of the artist or narrator, how he perceived the land and artistically developed and framed his vision into his strongly romantic studies of Irish sites and landscapes.

Throughout the exhibition, there is evidence of different stages in the artists' process - from line drawings with pencil and ink to ink wash tonal studies, to finished works in watercolour. The Research and Process Room brings our exploration a stage further and attempts to reveal this process.

Looking at the recent photographs of George Petrie's chosen sites alongside his series of studies of these places, we can begin to see and imagine a path of thought. You might ask yourself "where", in this process, did the artist invest his voice? Was it only when he made finished work, or was it when he saw a particular place for the first time?

Contemporary artist Sarah Iremonger has developed this interactive space, which allows us to creatively participate. The Research and Process Room includes stencils based on George Petrie's drawings, which guide the audience in creating their own linear drawings. Iremonger's mural, developed from Petrie's work with a postmodern sensibility, opens up the experience through a play on scale and subversion.

Being somewhat of an idealist of the Romantic era, Petrie believed that opening people's eyes to the beauty of the Irish landscape would help solve social unrest. His enquiry into the sublime is still of relevance to us today. Some copies of Petrie's books, essays and articles are also on display in the Research and Process Room giving a further key to Petrie's thoughts and articulates his enquiry and vision through language." (Crawford Art Gallery 2004 text displayed in the installation)

Top Half of The Hero 2002:

A multimedia installation with public participation, exhibited at the [Triskel Arts Centre](#), Cork, 2002, consisting of office furniture, photography, video, neon, wall drawings, paper, drawing materials and stencils.

The work was a critical response to issues which arose about the history of painting. Through site-specific works, connections were made to different sub-plots in art, such as the myth of the artist, the myth of representation and the myth of the gallery as an exhibition space. The hero here is 'art history' and the 'top half' refers to top-heavy, with the implication that it's falling over. The work is best received in a post-modern context where established Western art traditions are explored, exposing and challenging the hidden mechanisms that underpin the processes of making and exhibiting art.

Statement:

"Sarah Iremonger's practice is based on a critical response to issues which arise in relation to the history of painting. Through site-specific wall drawings or paintings, installations, videos, photographs and other works, connections are made to sub-plots in art, such as the myth of the artist, the myth of representational painting and the myth of the gallery as an exhibition space.

In *Top Half of The Hero*, the hero is 'art history' and the 'top half' refers to top heavy. The work is best received in a post-colonial context, where established Western art traditions are turned upside down, exposing and challenging the hidden mechanisms which underpin Irish politics and society today.

Sarah's earlier works were inspired by early Renaissance painters such as Giotto and the way they represented space on a flat plane, in a one-dimensional way. Since then, she has used different materials and explored the possibilities of narrative and association using both representational and abstract issues found in the history of painting and the history of the exhibition space. These themes continue to inform her recent work and can be seen in *the Top Half of The Hero*." (Extracted from the press release, Triskel Arts Centre 2002)

Lumpy Art History 2001-2003:

Exhibited at [Temple Bar Gallery and Studios](#), Dublin, 2001 and the [Turku Art Museum](#), Finland, 2003

In Turku, the exhibition was a response to the work of 19th-century Finnish artist Matilda Rotkirch. The exhibition was held in two adjoining rooms to the exhibition (Studios) and expressed a sense of exaggerated romanticism. Rotkirch's notebook sketches were transformed into vast, cold landscapes as murals exploring ideas of the sublime and alienation.

White Landscape and *White History* were shown at EV&A, [Limerick City Art Gallery](#), 2002. These works are a response to the history of painting, post-colonial racism and the role history painting has played in perpetuating the dominance of the white male gaze.

[Irish Times Review 28/3/2001](#)

Statement:

Lumpy Art History was exhibited at Temple Bar Gallery and Studios, Dublin 2001 and the Turku Art Museum, Finland 2003. In Turku, the exhibition was a response to the work of 19th-century Finish artist Matilda Rotkirch, the exhibition was held in two adjoining rooms to the exhibition (Studios) and expressed a sense of exaggerated romanticism, Rotkirch's notebook sketches were transformed into vast cold landscapes as murals exploring ideas of the sublime and alienation.

White Landscape and *White History* were shown at EV&A, Limerick City Art Gallery 2002, these works are a response to the history of painting, post-colonial racism and the role history painting has played in perpetuating the dominance of the white male gaze.

"The *white paintings* are based on famous representational paintings from the central canon of art history. In a logical, step-by-step process, the artist traces the outline of the painting in pencil onto a blank canvas, then applies "lumpy" white enamel household paint, letting the drawing reveal itself beneath a three-dimensional overlay. The result of this simple process takes on a life of its own, playing with the viewers' expectations and providing a commentary on the conventions of both representational and abstract painting. The lumpy paint simultaneously reveals the drawing and hides the familiar colour, perspective and other taken-for-granted pleasures of the original. It is like seeing a ghost: what was once covered in flesh is revealed only as shadowy bones. It is simultaneously a reminder of the original painting, a challenge to our familiar viewing habits, and a disturbing halfway point between a famous, full-colour original and a minimalist abstract.

The monochrome textured surface confounds the desire for a recognizable representational image, even while it reveals tantalising possibilities of a figurative reading, between the gaps. The shadowy, cartoon-like result challenges the reverence paid to "masterpieces" of painting in art history. The use of white enamel household paint continues a tradition in postmodern art of rejecting high art materials. It deliberately places the painting in a realm not of reverence, but of everyday existence. The whiteness also refers to the high art practice of modernism, Yves Klein, Gerhard Richter and other artists of the post-1950 period, who have produced monochrome paintings.

But in Iremonger's white paintings, the use of this favoured Minimalist technique is subverted by the "picture", revealed both through the drawing and in the high, lumpy texture of the paint itself. So her paintings are simultaneously acknowledging the art of the minimalists (and her past paintings) but also undercutting the premise of the minimalists, who deliberately avoided all representational references – violating the accepted code.

In *White Landscape*, chronologically the first of the white paintings, Sarah Iremonger makes her inclusion of the representational explicit by interspersing the pattern of three different wallpapers among the outline of the painting. The wallpapers in question are called Sea Swirl, Shell and Bark and are an anaglypta form of wallpaper, white but three dimensional, once popular as a hardwearing, paintable compromise between papering and replastering. The reference to Nature in these wallpapers, and how the shell and bark pattern of the anaglypta refers to seashells and trees is an example of the many modes of so-called "low" art, which co-exist with the "high" art canonized in museums. Using dual modes of representation – Constable's view of nature, and a popular nature-referenced wallpaper – together in a unified monochrome painting, gives the work an unexpected complexity, sense of purpose and meaning. Subsequent use of white enamel without the underlying wallpaper concentrates attention on the shadowy images, leading to a tension between abstraction and representation which is at once more subtle and more direct.

Iremonger's subversion of the conventions of art history is again evident in the monochrome wall painting "the studio", made on-site. The image is taken from *The Painters Studio: A Real Allegory*, 1855 by Gustave Courbet. A painting of a painting studio painted by Gustave Courbet is painted directly onto the wall of a gallery in Temple bar, significantly lacking the frame that sets it apart as high art, integrated into the space and colour that surrounds it, visible to casual passers-by, revealing that in this gallery there is a painting in which a group of people are looking at a painting of a painting.....

Sarah Iremonger's deadpan commentary on the conventions on which the art establishment bases its activities also embodies a strong commitment to the making of art, art that is different by being

provocative, using the simple but effective weapon of humour to challenge our habitual compliance with the orthodoxy of the art world." (Alannah Hopkin, written for the catalogue *Lumpy Art History*, produced by Temple Bar Gallery 2001)

Lumpy Art History - Sarah Iremonger Temple Bar Gallery until April 8th 2001

'There is a degree of parity between David Godbold and Sarah Iremonger's exhibitions, at the Kerlin and Temple Bar galleries respectively. They both adopt a strategy of knowing, post-modern game-playing. Both quote liberally and ironically from the art of the past, both conflate ideas of high and popular culture with provocative, interrogative intent, and both make large-scale wall drawings. Yet despite the level of similarity, their work in the end embodies different sensibilities and personalities. So perhaps the author isn't quite dead yet, even in the post-modern, deconstructed world.....

Godbold recurrently evokes notions of the sacred, in the form of religious imagery, perhaps as an equivalent of art's claim to moral or spiritual authority, content or qualities, or as an example of a comparable edifice of belief. Some years back in a Douglas Hyde Gallery show he included a work that went something along these lines: an appropriated image of Christ was painted onto two canvases, one white, the other black, using only some transparent medium. The idea, here, is of an ironic take on the presumption of latent spiritual content in pure abstraction.

The central strand of Iremonger's show, *Lumpy Art History*, develops a broadly similar idea. Her "white" (white on white) canvases rehearse well-known paintings from art history in lumpy enamel pigment. The history of art obtrudes into the present. She also references anaglypta wallpaper. Her wall drawing paraphrases Courbet's monumental painting *The Artist's Studio*, a seminal modernist work that assertively placed art and artists at the centre of its world. All of which is a relatively new direction for Iremonger, tentatively explored as yet, but interesting in its possibilities.....' (Extract from the Irish Times 28 May 2001)

In 2003 I was invited to show *Lumpy Art History* at the Turku Art Museum in Finland and make a response to an exhibition of the nineteenth-century romantic artist Matilda Rotkirch, which was held in the Museum at the same time. My exhibition was held in two adjoining rooms to the exhibition (studios) and a corridor.

Nine paintings were exhibited and I created four new site-specific wall drawings

With these works, I wanted to express a sense of exaggerated romanticism, which comes through in her work, by turning three of Rotkirch's drawings into vast cold landscapes which deal with issues of the sublime. (Sarah Iremonger 2003)

Murals 2000-2002:

The four site-specific murals documented here were installed over two years. All four were painted, and one was performative. *Hotel Room* was installed at the former Guys Building (now TK Maxx) on Cornmarket Street for the 'Cork Midsummer Festival' 2000, while *Same Difference* was installed for the 'Crawford Open 2' in 2002. They are based on historical paintings by Roy Lichtenstein, René Magritte and Henri Fantin-Latour, and were about a reinterpretation of painting.

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Same Difference

Installed at the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork in 2002 for the Crawford Open 2. The work was after 'La Clef Des Songs' 1935 by Rene Magritte.

The title *Same Difference* refers to the theme of the Open that year 'Difference'. I painted two altered

outline drawings of 'La Clef Des Songs' in two different colours, red and blue, next to each other as one piece. I changed the words around. 'La Clef Des Songs' 1935 by Rene Magritte is already a play on the idea of the word versus the object in relation to representation in painting. I have appropriated this idea and used it to make a new piece related to the idea of difference, while at the same time critiquing the historical hold painting has had and still has over-representation.

Eden & Armageddon

Installed at the Parochial Hall, Old St. Mary's Church, Clonmel in association with the South Tipperary Arts Centre in 2001 as part of 'Projections' exhibition. The work was after 'The Garden of Eden' C.1620 by Jan Brueghel and 'The Great Day of His Wrath' C.1853 by John Martin.

I chose these images because of their reference to religion, and the birth and death of humankind, as the installation was exhibited in a church hall. I also chose the colour, red, to match the surrounding paintwork of the hall itself. The work consists of four panels which face each other across the hall. The images directly opposite each other are mirror images of the same picture. The viewer is positioned inside the images with no reference as to which image is the correct orientation.

Homage

Installed and de-installed over one day at the Project Room, Backwater Artists Studios for Art Trail 2001. The work was after 'Homage to Delacroix' 1865 by Henri Fantin-Latour.

The installation and de-installation of this work was as important as the finished work and occurred over one day. It was open to the public during the whole process. 'Homage to Delacroix' is a painting of artists and art critics paying homage to a painting of another artist. I chose this image because of the site I was installing the piece, one of Cork's artists' studio spaces. Playing with associations of the representation of artists and studios, bridging the past with the present which, then disappeared as soon as it was created, and at the same time commenting on the hold painting has over representational issues.

Hotel Room

Installed at the former Guys Building (now TK Maxx) on Cornmarket Street for the Cork Midsummer Festival 2000. The work was after 'Interior with Water Lilies' in 1991 by Roy Lichtenstein.

This was site-specific work, the building was due for demolition and was to be replaced by a hotel (this didn't happen due to the recession). I wanted to suggest the possibility of a link between the past and the future through the mural. I first painted the wall white to suggest a clean 'art space' and then painted the mural in the original colour of the wall, creating a ghost-like image.

Shhhh!

Installed in the stairwell of the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork as part of 'Outlines' drawing event for Art Trail 2001. The work was after 'Portraits of Barry and Burke in the characters of Ulysses and his companion fleeing from the cave of Polyphemus' 1776 by James Barry, which is part of the permanent collection of the Crawford Art Gallery.

In this work, I took an image of a painting from the collection of the Crawford Art Gallery and reproduced it as three wall drawings in the stairwell (one was a mirror image). I wanted to reuse the image as a sign for 'Shhhh' or 'be quiet', which is impossible in that space as the stairs were bare boards.

from effect to ideology and back again 2000:

Exhibited at [MTU Munster Technological University](#) (formerly, CIT Cork Institute of Technology), Cork, 2000, and includes MA work from Winchester School of Art, 1997-98

This work represented a conceptualisation of my ideas concerning painting, particularly around issues of representation and abstraction. Through the use of different materials and a recognition of the importance of titles, for example, in the work *sky blue*, the use of premixed and named household

paint exposes and makes use of a situation where the aspiration for a representation, the idea of the sky, was already set up as a marketing strategy.

an investigation into the act of interpretation in relation to the area of representation was exhibited at the Vizivarosi Gallery, Budapest, Hungary, in 1998

Statement:

This exhibition explored the conceptual path my work took over three years between 1998 and 2000. My early work was inspired by the way early Italian painters represented space on a flat plane and the problem of representation in painting. This work culminated in the production of a series of monochromes, though the minimal associations with this work presented a dilemma and led to the production of a different type of work, where instead of pushing out representation and association, I let it come pouring in. Through the use of different materials and a recognition of the importance of titles, for example, in the work *sky blue* premixed and named household paint was used, and the paint was applied with a roller to mimic how the paint would appear in a domestic situation. By using this type of paint, I was exploring a situation where the aspiration for a representation, the idea of the sky, was already set up as a marketing strategy. This situation lent itself very happily to a play on the meaning of the words used for the naming of the colour, and the use, the materials were originally intended for.

The possibilities of narrative and association about representational and abstract issues in painting continued to inform my work, in *White Landscape* after 'Flatford Mill' by John Constable and *Bark, Shell and Sea Swirl* super fresco embossed wallpapers, which is a monochrome representational painting. The image was created by tracing designs from embossed fresco wallpapers and superimposing them onto a drawing of 'Flatford Mill' by John Constable. The surface of the painting was then painted with white enamel paint, which is viscous and glossy and builds up a texture when painted in layers. The white paint was a reference to abstract painting and abstraction's denial of representational issues. The inclusion of the image of 'Flatford Mill' by Constable references paintings' representational history, while the designs from the embossed fresco wallpapers are abstract but aspire to a representation of nature, this complicates the aspiration for a recognisable representational image. The textured surface further complicates this aspiration and confounds the desire for a figure/ground reading of the painting.

In *bearable rules for making a painting* 1998, all representational references have been eliminated from the work; the title reveals it as a play on the issues of representation in the context of modernist painting. In another work dating from the same time *any time any place* a range of painted panels, squares and rectangles, have been painted or sprayed with different types of paint while resisting the inclination to associate certain shades with certain sizes or shapes, to undermine an engaged authorship. This resistance is continued throughout the installation to confound attempts at an aesthetic reading. Inevitably the work acquires balance and aesthetic associations, which are unavoidable. The title suggests a wealth of possible associations, attributed to the colours and textures opening the doors for multiple representational readings. (Sarah Iremonger 2000)

Nothing & The Quandary of Painting 1998-2001:

Created at a time when my ideas about art were in flux, no-thing, not being, and nothingness reference ideas around identity, value and relevance.

I needed to make art nothing so that I could rebuild my ideas about what was or was not art, this included the idea of myself as an artist.

The work became a commentary on identity politics and branding. I realised that anything could be art, including found objects and my identity. I embraced the idea of the expanded field and a multidisciplinary approach to making art. I had to test the boundaries. This work opened the door to all my subsequent work, thoughts and projects.

In 1998, I held a *Studio Sale* of all my work to date, I catalogued, listed, priced and labelled everything from sketches and notebooks to large completed paintings. In 1999, I created an unbound

visual book *The Quandary of Painting-A Practical Handbook for the Making of Artworks*. This was an unbound visual book with four chapters: Representation?; The Grid (Failed Representation?); History Possibility? and Nothing. It consisted mainly of drawings in the form of notes, photographs, photocopies and collaged postcards. This work explored ideas for the making of artworks, some were realised, some were not, and some are still being realised.

Statement:

Nothing or no-thing, not being and nothingness reference ideas around existence, value and relevance. This work was created at a time when my ideas about art were in flux. I needed to make art nothing so that I could rebuild my ideas about what was or was not art, and this included the idea of myself as an artist. The work became a commentary on identity politics and branding. I realized that anything could be art, including found objects and my identity. I embraced the idea of the expanded field and a multidisciplinary approach to making art. I had to test the boundaries. This work opened the door to all my subsequent work, thought and projects. For example, in 1998 I held a *Studio Sale* of all my work to date, I catalogued, listed and priced everything from sketches and notebooks to larger paintings.

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Paintings 1994-1997:

Exhibited as part of 'L'Imaginaire Irlandais' at Villesalem Abbey, France, coordinated by Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers, France, 1996

"'First there is nothing, then there is a deep nothingness, then a beep blue'. These words by Gaston Bachelard became a work by Yves Klein, enunciated in Antwerp in April 1959. This pictorial sensibility, inaugurated by Suprematism, infuses Sarah Iremonger's works, which must be viewed, as stated by Mark Rothko regarding his works, 'in a light which is not too strong, be it natural or artificial'. The Abbey at Villesalem would fulfil these conditions perfectly." (Dominique Truco, Artistic Director and Coordinator, [Le Confort Moderne](#), Poitiers, France, September 1995 as part of the project development proposal for 'L'Imaginaire Irlandais', 1996)

Statement:

Early paintings from the 1990s consisted of large oil paintings aimed at capturing a sense of indefinable presence, with epic implications, focused on depicting representations of space and light on a flat surface in layers of dark oil paint, using walls, windows and doorways to create the illusion of space within the picture plane. These works explored the illusion of space created on and beyond a flat surface through layers of luminous dark oil colours on canvas.

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Views of L'Imaginaire:

"Sarah Iremonger's hunger for colour leads her into deep blue and black, or glowing green, exploring their diversities in relation to light. Dominique Truco has brought the Irish artists into ancient buildings and the belief that these were once contemporary, and 'you must work and do where you are'. And then Sarah Iremonger's twelve abstract canvases were conceived spatially as triptych or diptych. Since her first tentative works with architectural imagery, she has progressed gradually into works of enigma and anticipation." (Extract from the Cork Examiner review by Hilary Pyle, 3 June 1996)

Paintings 1990-1993:

Exhibited at the [Triskel Arts Centre](#), Cork, 1993

"A contemplative atmosphere pervades Sarah Iremonger's first wholly abstract exhibition (currently) on show at the Triskel Arts Centre in Cork. In the darkened main gallery, seven large canvases fill the space lit by dimmed spotlights. The quiet mood is amplified by the calm expanses of rich, resonant colour in the paintings.

This work explores space, light and colour in vertical panels of reds, blues and greens, exploiting the luminosity of oil paint and the texture of the canvas. Strength in this work derives from the interplay of presence and absence: with colour creating a meaningful presence and the lack of articulated subject a wonderful absence." (Extract from Irish Times Review by Hilary O'Kelly, August 1993)

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Architectural spaces are the starting point of these compositions. This was perhaps clearer in her earlier work where oblique architectural references served to illuminate but distract the viewer. In this show of work completed since last autumn, this suggestive but restricting figuration is gone and the work feels released: so does the viewer.

Mood changes rely solely on the arrangement of colour and the varying vertical divisions of the flat canvas. Small changes can make a big difference. The latest pieces with only three panels of colour create the strongest sense of expanse and absence while the small acrylic works on paper with stripes and horizontal lines, incredibly appear almost busy.

Colour, which dominates the exhibition, is achieved by layering one pure colour over another rather than mixing them on a palette. Rhythmic brushwork, though barely perceptible, creates rich texture in the broad panels of velvety, inky colours. Interestingly in the smaller works on canvas, colour is built up in the same way, and behaves quite differently giving a flatter, more sombre effect.

This accomplished work by a young artist may be seen at Triskel until August 28th." (Review in The Irish Times by Hilary O'Kelly, 19th August 1993)

Texts:

The Lady of the Lake is Hiding in the Expanded Field 2024:

The Lady of the Lake is Hiding in the Expanded Field was presented at the 2nd Symposium of Digital Art in Ireland at UCC, organised by Sample Studios and the UCC Department of Digital Humanities, Cork, June 2024.

It is a meditation on the loss of the horizon as part of an evolving technological landscape. This essay examines the sense of dislocation created by a data-driven digital era and how this presents an opportunity to look beyond ourselves towards a decentring of human exceptionalism to save our planet. It takes the form of a pan-disciplinary meander through disparate ideas connected through

descriptions of my art practice processes in painting. It includes references and quotes from writers Hito Steyerl, Jonathan Cary, Donna Haraway, Robert Hughes, Paul Glynn, Retort and Toril Moi.

Is it possible to be an artist in a world where everything is watching you as much as, or even more so than, you are watching it? The 1981 film *Excalibur*, directed by John Boorman and filmed at Powerscourt Waterfall in County Wicklow, provides a wonderful analogy of what it's like to be an artist navigating digital technologies in the 21st century. A loss of situatedness leads me to wonder if I am the sword 'Excalibur' embedded in the stone waiting to be released, to be plucked from the dilemma of the past so that a heroic potential can be realised and put to use, only to be broken, thrown into the depths of the lake (or in this case the pool at the bottom of Powerscourt Waterfall) and lost, once more to be rescued and held on high by the Lady of the Lake?

Art is key to unlocking realities through the imagination, images creating an apophenia, making sense out of visual noise. Painting has been a means of falling into our imaginations since the Stone Age, reminding us that experiencing is a creative act of imagination. In this paper, I discuss ideas of representation and transformation in developing artwork through practical and thinking processes as part of the *Horizons* project. Taking George Barret's 18th-century paintings of the *View of Powerscourt Waterfall* (he painted several versions – there is one in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin and another is in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool) as source material to create drawings and paintings and develop digital 3-dimensional virtual landscapes exploring a sense of dislocation and disorientation, a situationlessness created by a data-driven digital era.

Cantos-Open Horizons 2024:

Cantos-Open Horizons is part one of a text-based artwork which takes visual art notebooks collected over ten years as found text, reframing and rewriting them in the style of 'The Cantos of Ezra Pound' as an epic, non-rhyming, stream-of-consciousness, prose poem, where thought processes reveal a kind of creative self-portrait or fragmentary thought diary. The work reads like a journal that explores ideas about creativity, aesthetics, art, painting, expression, philosophy, climate change, being, politics and representation through times of inspiration, self-doubt, grief and trauma. *Cantos-Open Horizons* traces ideas through the development of the *Horizons* painting project and includes *The Cosmic Handbook* (page 104), a guide to accidental cosmic transcendentalism. The notebooks were started in 2014 as a dialogue with poet Derek Mahon and continued after he died in 2020.

This work was conceived as a visual document, with layout and font integral to the concept, comprising short paragraphs, sentences, lists and quotes. The idea for this work came about after reading 'Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age', Columbia University Press, 2011, by Kenneth Goldsmith. Derek's copy of Joseph Joubert has kept me company, and Lydia Davis's 'Essays' have constantly inspired me throughout the process.

Cantos-Thinking Vessels 2023:

Cantos-Thinking Vessels is part two of a text-based artwork which takes visual art notebooks collected over ten years as found text, reframing and rewriting them in the style of 'The Cantos of Ezra Pound', as an epic, non-rhyming, stream-of-consciousness, prose poem, where thought processes reveal a kind of creative self-portrait or fragmentary thought diary. The work explores ideas about creativity, aesthetics, art, painting, philosophy, expression, climate change, politics and representation through times of inspiration, self-doubt, grief and trauma. *Cantos-Thinking Vessels* traces ideas through the development of the *Vessels* painting project. The notebooks were started in 2014 as a dialogue with poet Derek Mahon and continued after he died in 2020.

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This project was supported by an Arts Council of Ireland Agility Award 2022

Space-Time 2022:

Space-Time: Horizons, Atlantis and A Rain Bridge was presented at 'Art Poétique' in Memorium Derek Mahon (Study Day), Sorbonne Nouvelle University, Paris, France, May 2022.

In this paper, I discuss three artistic collaborations with poet Derek Mahon (1941-2020): *Horizons, Atlantis and A Rain Bridge*, describing how this collaborative process grew out of a dedicated habit of work and enquiry through the experience of living and working together and how this affected other projects and work, casually and specifically.

24/7 Vessels 2020:

24/7-Vessels was developed for the online project 24/7 with the National Sculpture Factory in Cork during lockdown in 2020, so that artists could have a platform for showing their ideas and work throughout the pandemic. Written and recorded as a video dialogue to accompany a slideshow of images, it is presented here in its written form.

Here I have created a visual mind map to explore the thought process that went into the creation of *Vessels* (painting project) 2020. Included are source materials and other possible outcomes.

This work has developed out of explorations of the idea of post-romanticism and looks at notions of the post-representational. I know ideas about what post-representational art might look like or be are in flux, with arguments for non-object-based, socially integrated arts practices abounding, and I don't for a minute suggest that I have achieved a post-representational practice, but these ideas inform my choices.