

Discursive Collaboration

EOGHAN MCINTYRE DISCUSSES IADT'S MA IN ART AND RESEARCH COLLABORATION.



'Guest Appearance', installation view at the Museum Building, Trinity College Dublin; image courtesy of Eoghan McIntyre



Juan-A Han, *Voice: 목소리: Moksoli* at Rua Red, Dublin; image courtesy of Eoghan McIntyre

IT IS DIFFICULT for art colleges to keep pace with the increasingly expansive methods of art production, particularly in the growth, and now perhaps ubiquity, of collaborative and dialogical art practices. Work that is socially-engaged or made collaboratively often does not ally with the rigid division of arts practice into fine art, design or theory. Relatedly, such work may not fit within the set spaces of the degree show or the customs of the academic thesis.

The Art and Research Collaboration (ARC) programme at IADT Dún Laoghaire – a full-time, practical, taught masters course – seems to have been developed with such conditions of contemporary art production in mind. Coordinated by Dr Maeve Connolly and Dr Sinead Hogan, ARC was preceded by the MA in Visual Arts Practices (MAVIS) programme delivered at IADT from 2004 to 2014. What has remained consistent throughout the lifetime of the programme is an emphasis on the public dissemination of research and practice, with a special focus on the discursive and collaborative aspects of contemporary art.

ARC students work towards public-oriented outcomes that include exhibitions, publications, performances and talks. Often these projects operate across disciplines and include partnerships with collaborators who work within and beyond the field of art. I studied on the ARC programme between 2016 and 2018, and over the past few months my colleagues and I have taken part in a series of events that are broadly representative of the programme's diverse forms of research.

Recent work by students on the ARC programme reflects a resurgence in contemporary art concerning the ocean. Whereas in the past, art reflected a deference to the sea's mystery, timelessness and mutability, more and more practices are beginning to analyse the subject with a disturbing awareness. The sea is no longer seen as separate from humanity, but indelibly linked to it, primarily through the persistent shaping of human-caused pollution.

A recent study has suggested that by 2050, plastic will outnumber fish in the world's oceans. Responding to the concerns surrounding microplastic ocean pollution, ARC student Yvanna Greene gave a talk in the Science Gallery on 7 March, titled 'SuperNatural Plastic Eaters'. The talk featured

illuminating presentations by researcher and lecturer Dr Heidi Acampora and marine biologist Karin Dubsky on the effects of plastic pollution on the marine environment. It culminated with a presentation-cum-performance by Greene, in which she presented her plastic sculptures of colourful limpets, crab claws and bird beaks as examples of new species that had absorbed plastic biologically. The absurd and humorous content of Greene's lecture conflicted with her matter-of-fact and deadpan delivery, causing confusion amongst some audience members, that became evident in the concluding Q&A session. 'SuperNatural Plastic Eaters' was engaging and original in its presentation of scientific research and artistic practice delivered together in the same tenor, showing the value of reciprocal exchange between the arts and sciences.

Moving away from the political dimension of the world's oceans and looking at the sea's surface as connective system was Petra Berntsson's long-term and multiform collaborative project, *Casting Invisible Lines*, which was showcased in The LAB, Dublin, on 22 March. A film by Berntsson showed video material she had compiled from various invited international artists, who each represented their relationship with the sea's surface. The film was accompanied by a soundtrack by sound artist Jane Pitt and was followed by an essay written in response to the film by artist and writer Colin Glen. While artists have historically depicted the ocean as immeasurably vast, *Casting Invisible Lines* showed the sea's surface as a point of familiarity and connection, that can act as a versatile medium of communication.

Irish galleries and museums are increasingly aware of the need to work in a broader partnership across their locality and responding to the social and political aspects of their site. Jung-A Han's performance and audio installation, *Voice: 목소리: Moksoli*, was part of Rua Red and Civic Theatre's symposium and group show, 'Forum – Transcultural Dialogues', which took place from 11 – 13 April. This project was an exploration of aspects of dual-identity and the hybridity of culture and language, featuring a performance by Han and performer and choreographer Yoon Kyung Chung, exploring themes of immigration and disorientation by combining calligraphy, writing and dance. The audio installation consist-

ed of a series of interviews featuring personal reflections on diverse cultural identities. The piece expressed a conviction in the potential of performance and personal narratives in exploring transcultural experience.

All of these projects were inherently collaborative and were often produced collectively. The artworks were made in a process of exchange in which collaborators' responses evolved the form of the work. Emblematic of this mode of artmaking was 'Guest Appearance', an exhibition and performance in Trinity College Dublin's Museum Building on 27 April. It featured the work of six ARC students: Sophie Behal, Isadora Epstein, Maeve Lynch, Rosie O'Reilly, Benjamin Stafford (in collaboration with Vanessa Donoso López) and myself. During our time on the ARC programme, our collaborative practice has resulted in the production of a series of performances, exhibitions and events in the Douglas Hyde Gallery, CIT Wandesford Quay Gallery and KuvA/Exhibition Laboratory, Helsinki.

'Guest Appearance' was both a response to the politics and conditions of hospitality, and to the materiality of TCD's Museum Building – constructed using a range of contrasting stone, imitating the Byzantine architecture of Venice. In the show, we explored the contradictions of hospitality, made evident in the display of visual art, as viewing art demands a localised and ever-changing set of behaviours and adherence to regulations on the part of the viewer. 'Guest Appearance' saw a diverse series of responses to this thematic – from Isadora Epstein's engaging and comic performance as Medusa, to Rosie O'Reilly's installation and performance *thrown up by the sea* – which questioned ideas of borders between temporalities, species and things.

In conclusion, the ARC programme at IADT continues to provide a space for formal notions of artistic production to be redefined and renegotiated. Above all, the course helps postgraduate students to develop a critical framework for their ongoing projects, while offering assurance in the process of collaborative production.

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