

## **Two Steps, Twice**

An exhibition of new works and projects by Lorraine Elder, Breege Fahy, Laura Flood, Madeleine Hadd, Aisling McConville, Sorcha McNamara, Pdraig Sinnott, Emer Wang.

The LAB Gallery

Exhibition launch: Wednesday 13 December 2023 6-8pm

The exhibition continues from Thursday 14 December 2023 to Saturday 7 January 2024.

The LAB gallery is open 10-6pm Mondays to Saturday (closed on Sundays).

Please note the gallery is closed from Friday 22 December 2023 to Tuesday 2 January 2024.

## **Two Steps, Twice**

The title *Two Steps, Twice* conjures a sense of movement or progression. But it also implies looking back and reflection. Steps describe a familiar way of moving in space and time, most obviously in the form of walking. But steps can take other forms in artistic processes. An artist rarely just progresses forward, continuously creating in a constant stream. Every now and then they must take a step backwards to retrace their own artistic pathway, revisit old projects, theories, or methodologies to step forward with their current project. Sometimes, they even step sideways, pivoting in a totally different direction from that envisioned at the start of a project, to explore a new and exciting direction. The artworks in *Two Steps, Twice* are a reminder that thought-provoking work doesn't always happen on a linear path, it is a combination of forward, reflective and flexible stepping.

The LAB gallery can be a place from which to view everyday reality differently, by finding new routes and pathways inwards, or by stepping outwards towards the street, the urban world beyond, and even the wider realm of the earth itself. A growing planetary consciousness has inspired many individuals to take steps towards sustainability and artists are no exception. Materials and objects undergo many stages or steps in their lifetime, through processes of construction, manipulation, production and display. Artists often seek out new uses for discarded objects or deliberately choose materials that may, in time, degrade and return to the earth. These motivations are evident throughout *Two Steps, Twice*, in artworks that activate the walls, floor, ceiling, and windows of the LAB Gallery. This exhibition is an invitation to step into an active process and to join these artists in their ongoing choreography of experimentation, invention and reflection.

Exhibition text by ARC-LAB Gallery Curatorial Scholar Clara McSweeney and Maeve Connolly

## **Lorraine Elder**

Lorraine Elder is a Dublin-based artist whose work celebrates, and makes visible, everyday support structures and forms of labour – including the labour of women – that can often be overlooked. Her research project *So Without* delves deep into layers of meaning that arise from moments of quiet contemplation and moments of chaos. She uses non-traditional methods and materials to create experimental sculptural assemblages, which incorporate elements of visual trickery and illusion. Elder is compelled by the image of the glacier, which is slow moving and composed of matter melting and merging at different rates. Her work is also directly informed by the experience of confinement within domestic space, for an undetermined time. Within this space of confinement, she imagines herself to be in an ongoing and playful material conversation with works and gestures by other artists, whether located in the past, present or future. Elder frequently uses sticky tape of various forms (masking, mirrored, electrical, duct and gummed or paper-backed), sometimes in combination with other media, including digital photographs, video, clay, Perspex, brushed aluminium and polyurethane. Language too is considered as material, and Elder is specifically drawn to film and song titles that evoke fragments of pop culture. *So Without* attempts to arrest the time of the everyday, petrifying what is in motion.

## **Breege Fahy**

Breege Fahy has been a costume cutter and maker for thirty years. Her practice focuses on textiles and embroidery. The focus of *Féile na Vulva* is female body positivity and Vulva pride. Her main embroidered pieces are on the backs of costumes because so much of the reality of women's bodies and work goes on behind the scenes. This imagery explores some ancient female symbols putting the Vulva out and proud into the light. Many women today consider cosmetic surgical procedures such as Labiaplasty, believing their Vulva is not textbook or porn-perfect. Breege is attempting to show that each Vulva is as individual as a fingerprint. Her costumes include pockets hanging from the waist, following the eighteenth-century style. Traditionally worn underneath clothing, here the pockets are displayed outside, honouring the hidden economy produced by often unseen female labour. Historically, needlework is often associated with mothers, grandmothers and female relatives, who worked without remuneration. Therefore, it didn't have a value. *Féile na Vulva* pays homage to the unseen long hours of learning and practicing required for these skills, rather than knowledge being somehow inherited by gendered magic.

### **Laura Flood**

Laura's project *Products of My Environment* is based on her interest in her local urban waste and plant dyes. In the gallery, she uses broken garden parasols that were destined for the dump and second-hand fabrics that are dyed using home-grown organic flowers as well as food vestiges from her local cafés. The parasols and naturally dyed cotton create the walls of a playful space for education, alternative to the typical classroom. They perform the function of soft structures, reminiscent of the forts of teenhood. These materials are easy to repair and change, yet also easy to break and be discarded. Audience participants are invited inside to see some of the principles of permaculture put into action and take home a D.I.Y natural dye guide. Laura's favourite permaculture principle is 'Use Edges and Value the Marginal', and she is also interested in how we take stock of our assets that are not limited to money. She searches for ways to be present with the Earth and the inner world. Naturally dyed fibres are the conduit between these worlds. In her urban garden, Laura has organically grown flowers to make her natural dyes. Cultivating colour in this way involves months of planning and care. This slow stewardship directly opposes the pressure that consumerism has put on the earth's resources. The delicate flowers' vibrant lifeforce is captured in cotton, until they fade and decay, and cycle back into the earth again.

### **Madeleine Hadd**

Madeleine Hadd's *Rest, A Mind So Far Away* is a project that focuses on aphantasia and dreaming. It includes a graphic novel, an animation and collaged illustrations. Aphantasia is defined as a condition of reduced or absent internal imagery. Dreaming is an unconscious state of internal imagery that is not limited by aphantasia. To most, dreams are seen as fleeting, subjective thoughts— but when dreaming is the only opportunity to connect one's imagination with images, dreaming quickly becomes something of a solace. The graphic novel *Faraway* is a fictional narrative that does not centre around aphantasia as a research topic but instead portrays it as a distinctive, personal experience. The story revolves around a woman who has aphantasia in her waking life but is still able to dream vividly. The narrative begins with her dreams "spilling". Not simply awake or asleep, she becomes regularly trapped in an abyss between consciousness and dreaming— the faraway pool. Madeleine is also exhibiting her newest animation *The Winds Know Not of Any Tire*. The context of this animation was derived from a specific moment in *Faraway* where the main character submits to her consciousness and successfully leaves the faraway pool.

### **Aisling McConville**

This body of work originates in the striated layers of rock formations, where time and memory entwine. Aisling McConville grew up during the Troubles, a period when she remembers narratives to be quietly but surely compounded upon one another. She is intrigued by sedimented rock. Its imagined ability to sequester memory has catalysed this series of work. Almost two decades ago, Aisling left the North and spent many years living in Indonesia and Peru. In 2018, she returned to Ireland where ruminations of place and time prompted her research into cultural memory and collective narrative. Aisling's mode of working is guided by the material she uses. She hews 'mnemonic forms' as a way of preserving her generational labour of the land. Carving from locally sourced wood, she attempts to unveil striated layers and

undulating lines that are resonant of time and narrative. She constructs the bases for these wood sculptures by layering tinted Jesmonite, a material that is made from gypsum, an eco-friendly alternative to concrete. Her abstract wall sculptures are formed from manipulated, welded and patinated copper. She also makes prints, reworking photographic images through an iterative digital editing process. The resulting works are topographic in form and amplify the striations of rock, by carving them into paper.

### **Sorcha McNamara**

Sorcha McNamara is a visual artist currently living and working in Mayo. She has no urge to add anything more to the world, only to take from what is left and make new shapes with it. Her project, *Rigid-Body Dynamics*, explores the transgressive possibilities of painting, specifically looking to dismantle how painting is framed, structured and positioned in any given space. These possibilities are guided by a sense of resourcefulness, inventiveness, and moments of material and gestural improvisation, often taking place in the artist's studio. Highly led by process and site-situation, her work frequently responds to found objects, architectural nuance and certain conditions of light. Within this research, McNamara is focusing on how painting can enter networks outside of itself. How it can move, change, transform its material potential, and infiltrate alternative systems of thought. For *Two Steps, Twice*, Sorcha orchestrates a physical system – or network – of interconnected particles, weaving various forms of 'painting' into the fabric of the LAB space. With this, she intends to expand upon her own understanding of how one interacts with material, while at the same time, creating subtle subversions on the grounds of how painting is seen, circulated, and appreciated.

### **Padraig Sinnott**

We are invited to enter into a dark world that makes no sense. Padraig takes us from the gallery into a fictional realm, which is organised around a cycle of repetitive events, such as family arguments. The work is designed to involve the viewer in a narrative about family and trauma, fusing theatre and sculpture. The characters in this world see each other every day, occupying separate rooms in a household and the narrative centres on a protagonist who is continually trying to move forward in time. A theatrical set in the gallery contains the remnants of existence in the form of discarded objects. These objects are made exclusively from cardboard and this material plays an important role in the experience. Cardboard carries an aura of something familiar, salvaged from packaging boxes and second-hand shops. Visitors to this dark world could be viewed as trespassers, or as detectives, trying to understand what misery may have caused this emptiness. The objects provide clues about the inhabitants, contributing to the feeling that whoever was there could return at any moment. Or perhaps the characters walked out a long time ago, leaving a room in which time seems to stand still.

### **Emer Wang**

Emer Wang is an illustrator from China. She worked for several years as a commercial artist, producing digital paintings and book illustrations, engaged in repetitive work day after day, using digital drawing to express the ideas of others. In her current work, she uses more traditional forms of drawing to tell her own story. She is fascinated by fairy tales because there are many dark and thought-provoking details hidden within these seemingly beautiful little stories. Are fairy tales really fiction, or do they contain some truth? Emer focuses in particular on the classic fairy tale Rapunzel, adapting and revising this story for the present day. Her project, titled *Trap*, encompasses drawings and sculptural elements, combining fantastical imagery and everyday experiences. In real life we often encounter things or situations that trap us, just like Rapunzel imprisoned in the top of a tower. We could be Rapunzel dancing inside a music box, Rapunzel hiding in a childhood dollhouse, or Rapunzel submerged in water and unable to breathe.

### **ARC and the LAB**

The Masters in Art and Research Collaboration (ARC) is a full time practical taught masters programme, offered by Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology. The core lecturing team consists of David Beattie, Maeve Connolly, Sinead Hogan and Maria McKinney. ARC is open to artists, critics, curators and those engaging with art in other roles. ARC works in collaboration with Dublin City Arts Office and the LAB

Gallery on numerous projects, and in 2019 the LAB Gallery and IADT launched the ARC-LAB Gallery Curatorial Scholarship, a unique initiative in curatorial education at postgraduate level developed with Sheena Barrett during her tenure as curator of the LAB Gallery.

### **Acknowledgements**

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Image Credit: Lorraine Elder and Laura Flood