

Visions of the Future: Young Women Artists of N.I.

Amber Rossi: Miss Belfast, Acrylic on Canvas - 90 x 90 cms



Irish Cultural Centre

1ST FEB - 29TH MARCH 2024

WELCOME TO VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

This exhibition has been made possible with the generous support of the following:

Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool

Irish Dept of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith, London

Ulster Presents Programme at Ulster University, Belfast

Curated by The ArtisAnn Gallery, Belfast



**ULSTER
PRESENTS**



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs



ArtisAnn

INTRODUCTION

Over twenty-five years ago The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement was signed. Since then, a new generation have grown up in Northern Ireland with an outlook vastly different to that of their parent's generation. The Troubles are no longer the dominating political and cultural influence of their lives. The voices of this new generation of women are now coming to the fore as the post-conflict society slowly recovers after decades of violence and they provide striking examples of the new ideas, visions and voices of women in Northern Ireland. This is an exciting opportunity to see these young, talented, women artists at the start of their careers.

The exhibition is hosted by the University of Liverpool's Institute of Irish Studies at the Irish Cultural Centre in London. It is a recognised world leader in the study of Irish history and culture. The Institute has developed a strong track record of delivering arts projects which seek to showcase and highlight the Irish and Northern Irish connections across the UK and Europe. The Institute provides a valuable platform for Irish and Northern Irish artists to promote their work to a wider UK audience and gain recognition.

Professor Pete Shirlow, Director of the Institute of Irish Studies makes clear why this is important:

“The Institute challenges invisibility of communities and groups. We devised the idea of female artists, given that around 80% of galleries host more male than female artists even though as many women as men are involved in the production of art. We cannot simply stand by and let such a process of unevenness, in terms of representation, continue. It is much appreciated to have funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ulster University and the support of Irish Cultural Centre, especially as they share our vision of inclusivity and the need to provide a space that redresses the reality of insufficient support for the careers of women artists who should no longer be working on the margins.”

This show is curated by the ArtisAnn Gallery, Belfast, which has an established reputation for supporting emerging artists and recent graduates.

Agreeing with this statement, Dr Ann McVeigh, co-owner of the ArtisAnn Gallery, adds;

“We believe in offering encouragement to young and emerging artists and are confident that these are stars of the future. The artwork produced by these newcomers is remarkable both for its technical ability and in its breadth of new ideas. This very varied show has two common linkages: all are recent graduates, and all are of the highest quality, with every indication that they will be ‘names’ of the future.”

The Irish Ambassador, Martin Fraser, made this statement:

“On behalf of the Irish Government, I am delighted to be supporting this exciting exhibition of fresh Irish talent at the Irish Cultural Centre in London. Ireland’s reputation as a cultural treasure house is well known throughout the world and the artists shown here are not only a wonderful reflection of this but are continuing to enhance that worldwide reputation. It is a great pleasure to see these young women artists from Northern Ireland having a wider stage in which to showcase the important role they play in reflecting their society as well as upholding Ireland’s great tradition as a cultural hub.”

Cian Smyth, Ulster Presents Programme Manager at Ulster University, said:

‘It is always exciting for us to find new ways to support artists who have graduated from our Belfast School of Art, and to do this in partnership with local independent art galleries and other Universities on these islands is a vital way for us to continue supporting our artists in a career beyond their studies. We very much look forward to working with the University of Liverpool in introducing the great work by some of our exemplary female artists to their audiences.’

EIMHÉAR ATKINSON

Eimhéal is currently based in Belfast where she has been appointed as this year's artist in residence at Ulster University Belfast School of Art, having recently completed her BA Fine Art there.

Her artwork explores the lack of representation of female artists, alongside the subjectification of women throughout art history. For this exhibition, Eimhéal has created a light-hearted but meaningful comment upon the practice of still-life and ties between male and female artists. She explains: 'Each fruit is attributed to both male and female artists, each holding their very own meaning. The pomegranate is attributed to Venus and is a symbol of desire and fertility, while the lemon is symbolic of purity and fidelity in love, alongside feminine spirituality. The banana represents masculine energy. "*A Banana Between Two Pomegranates*" symbolises the tie between the male and female forms within still life, reflecting my own critical analysis on the presence of male artists and the position of women in art institutions throughout history. "*Lemon Peel*" is an extension of its larger counterpart; a reflection of the female form encapsulating the symbolism of love and purity alongside feminine spirituality, while still reflecting elements of art history and the study of still life and a combination of a contemporary abstract style, with brightly saturated colours throughout the works.'



The Arts Council of Northern Ireland recently added her graduation piece to their permanent collection, and she was an invited artist in the Royal Ulster Academy annual exhibition 2023.



A Banana Between Two Pomegranates, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 61 x 80 cms



Lemon Peel, Oil & Spray Paint on Canvas, 16 x 18 cms

LEAH DAVIS

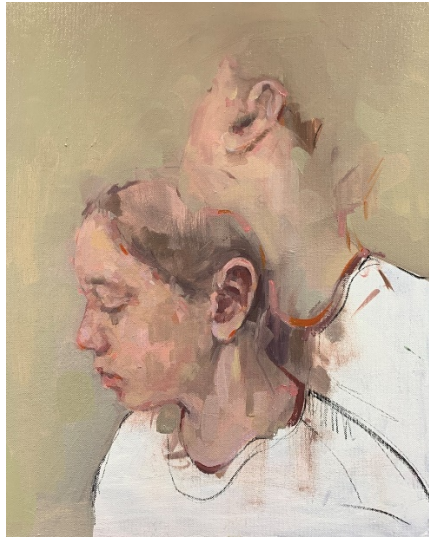
Leah is originally from Belfast. Since graduating in 2021 with a degree in fine art from Ulster University's School of Art, Leah has been chosen for several prestigious shows and commissions, including the Royal Ulster Academy of Arts 140th Annual show, where her large scale painting was sold to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for their permanent collection.



Leah has become known for a distinctive painting style combining a unique understanding of composition and colour with a broad knowledge and study of the human form. Leah's work often displays a captivating combination of a mastery of tone with elements of drawing, together with a pro-active use of negative space that suggest a looseness and elements of movement in many pieces.

The human condition has always played a key role in her practice, usually exploring the unique characteristics, events, and situations that make up the individual experience of being human. Working on both a large and small scale, Leah's captivating works are a personal response to her own emotions. The viewer is left to explore the overall complexity of the human condition through the displacement of the figure or the gestural marks. A reoccurring theme in Leah's works is the relationship with the figure and the external space, using this to evoke a personal response from the viewer.

In 2022 Leah was commissioned to paint the official portrait of the Lord Mayor of Belfast, currently displayed in the Belfast City Hall, the youngest artist to be so honoured.



Two Minds, Oil, Charcoal and Graphite on Canvas, 50 x 40 cms



The Commonplace, Oil, Charcoal and Graphite on Canvas, 170 x 100 cms

SHAUNA FOX

Shauna is an Irish born artist who studied art at Ulster University and painting at Camberwell College of Arts.

She lives between London and Belfast and paints mostly street scenes of both cities. Her art attempts to capture moments that appear mundane and ordinary, but on closer inspection become lyrical, beautiful and poetic.



Shauna is particularly interested in how the viewer interacts with her work, and so she is slightly ambitious, hoping that everyone will notice something different and come up with their own conclusion about each painting.

With a particular interest in Irish painting culture, she believes that most Irish art portrays Ireland in a certain mythical light which arguably omits to tell the full story. Shauna wants to scratch that surface and see what lies underneath.

Shauna has had five solo exhibitions in the last five years, four of which were in London, where she is rapidly making a name for herself. This year she has had a solo exterior exhibition of her very large-scale paintings on display in Peckham, London.



£3 Guinness at the Ramble Inn, Tooting, Acrylic on Plywood, 49 x 49 cms



A Man and his Cow, Acrylic on Plywood, 129 x 98 cms

HATTIE GODFREY

Hattie studied BA Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London, graduating with first class honours in 2018. She later obtained an MSc in Psychological Science at Queen's University Belfast in 2020, receiving distinction.

Her practice utilises performance, installation, painting, drawing and writing to create works that consider her own and society's increasingly complicated relationship with concepts of care, illness, and convalescence.



An exploration of 'care', in its broadest sense, is what permeates her work. Of late, focuses within this area have included illness, convalescence, institutional landscapes, family dynamics and trauma. 'My process often utilises my background in Psychology: I collect and analyse autobiographical and collective experiences in the form of conversations, notations, drawings, and more. These are re-arranged as layered environments in which existing and imagined narratives play out between bodies and objects. Moments are drawn out, gestures are repeated, and the possibilities of objects are exhausted.'

Her work has shown in galleries and festivals across the UK, recently having her debut solo show, 'Inmate', at Platform Arts Belfast, and she was selected to make work in response to the MacLennan Archive at DJCAD. She works closely with the N.I. Mental Health and Arts Festival, and contributes to the growing Creative Health Network in Northern Ireland.



21 weeks, Oil on Linen, 61 x 46cms



Big Clean, Oil on Linen, 46 x 36cms

HOLLY MAE GREER

Born and brought up in Greyabbey, County Down, Holly-Mae studied Fine Art at Ulster University, graduating with a first-class honours. Now living in Newtownards, she specialises in portrait oil paintings focusing on the domestic and daily life, with emphasis on the mundane offering a sense of universality.



Ruled by her emotions, Holly-Mae projects her deepest thoughts and inner turmoil onto canvas. and is more interested in questions than answers. Heavily inspired by 1970s cinematography and vintage French films for their warm hues, Holly-Mae offers nostalgia with dark undertones.

Holly-Mae sources her reference images from a range of sources including personal and family photos, film stills and cinematography. Reflections on themes such as the sense of memory or consciousness that have been revered throughout the history of painting influences her work, especially the poetic, disquieting work of artists such as Vermeer, Manet and Hopper for their depictions of everyday life. Her use of familiar spaces permits the viewer to feel they can absorb the possible thoughts and feelings of the figure(s), despite the absence of a clearly defined narrative. She is interested in the connection between the human psyche and humanity's inherent need to feel understood and socially connected, as opposed to these moments of isolation and dissociation. She likes to play with ambiguity.

She has recently been admitted as a fellow of the RSA, and has undertaken notable commissions, including for Titanic Belfast.



Untitled, Oil on Canvas, 40 x 50 cms



Red, Oil on Canvas, 61 x 76 cms

JUNE HILL

June is a visual artist based in Belfast Northern Ireland. After graduating from Ulster University Belfast in 2020 with a BA in fine art, she continued her studies, completing her Master's in fine art in 2023.

Working with installation consisting of videos, photography, sculptural props and found objects themes of the “everyday”, “time” and the “non-place” are common reoccurrences. An interest in the everyday began after

listening to a lecture by Georges Didi Huberman on *Glimpses* (2015) his description was captivating, he called it a glance, to quickly look then immediately look away again, to catch sight of something or someone, not to linger, it's not to study, but it is to capture for a brief moment and quickly let go again, things that are appearing, but are on their way to disappearing.

Most of June's recent work has been made using videos. photographs or sound recordings taken in or around stations in London, the busyness and movement of people holding a certain fascination for her. to photograph and be able to freeze a moment in time, to capture it and take it home, feels like catching a butterfly.

Since graduating, June has taken part in an exhibition with The Engine Room Gallery, Belfast, in September 2023, and won a place in the Emerging Artist exhibition at the ArtisAnn Gallery. She also received the Emerging Artist Award 2020 from the Queen Street Gallery (QSS), Belfast, and exhibited in their *Emergence IV* exhibition.





Hammersmith, Black and White Photograph, 90 x 125 cms (inc. frame)



Stratford, Black and White Photograph, 56 x 56 cms (inc. frame)

TRINA HOBSON

Trina worked as an interior designer for fifteen years before returning to Ulster University, Belfast, to study Art. In addition to her degree in Design, she holds a first-class honours degree in Fine Art Painting, and a Masters Degree in Art Psychotherapy, 2023.

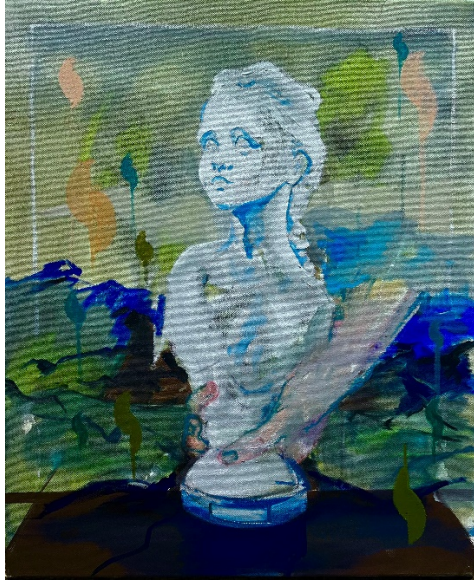


Her paintings introduce a story to the viewer, drawing on invented and imagined contexts, places and connections for the characters. The familiar and personally known are frequently merged with a store of characters from art history and literature, inviting the viewer into these sustained environments. Through narratives the painting embeds existential issues: feelings of abandonment are juxtaposed with reflectiveness, disjointedness and fragmentation.

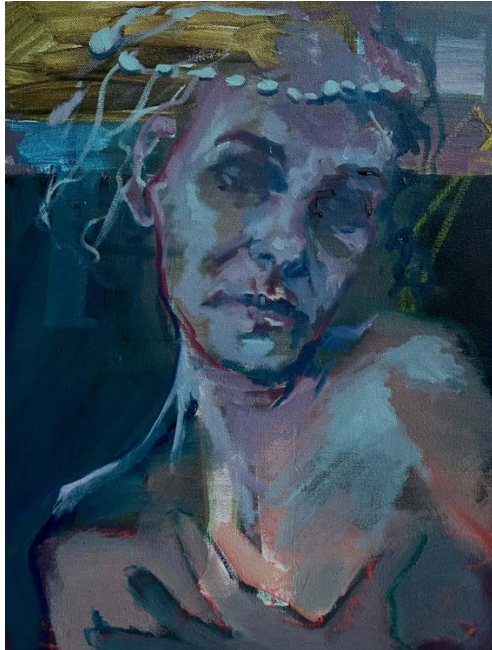
The process of deconstructing and flattening the images moves them towards the abstracted and ambiguous, forcing the viewer to fill in the spaces with something personal to the presented or given story.

Trina was the recipient of the Dean's List Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement, The Royal Ulster Academy Award for Outstanding Student, The John and Rachel Turner Bursary for Outstanding Student and was long listed for the RDS Visual Art Awards.

In 2019, Hobson won The Conor Prize for a figurative work in the Royal Ulster Academy's annual exhibition. Trina has showcased her work internationally in galleries which include The RHA Dublin, The Mall Galleries London and IAC New York.



The Art of Weaponry, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 50 cms



Third Age, Oil on Canvas, 45 x 35 cms

SANTA LEIMANE

Santa graduated in Fine Art from the Ulster University, Belfast, in 2017. While there, she completed private commissions, took part in several group exhibitions, and had a successful solo show at the Goose Lane Gallery in Belfast.

After an outstanding degree show, receiving an independent Cool Banana Art Award and being Longlisted for RDS Visual Art Award, Leimane was nominated

for Young Artist of the Year Award for Northern Ireland in 2019.



Within her practice she develops mixed media works and introduces collages into the preparation of new paintings, using images that have a significant personal meaning to her of her native surroundings and invoking them with a sense of nostalgia and intimacy.

Her voice as an artist is dominated by being a female artist and using female figure as a main object in painting. Santa tends to represent the body as a tool of expression, a subject that represent her dissociation by partly living, partly dreaming, partly lingering in existence. With unreadable face and surreal surroundings her work awakens metaphysical ideas of passing time and memory.

Leimane has been honoured to have her paintings purchased for the permanent collections of both Visual Artists Northern Ireland, and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.



Fishtank, Oil on Canvas, 100 x 70 cms



August V, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 30 cms

STEPHANIE LINDSAY

Stephanie is a recent Fine Art graduate (2023) from Ulster University who specialises in painting forest landscape scenes. She uses oil paints to build gradually thickening layers that create the depth of the forest.

Her work centres around the beauty of nature: 'I have always been inspired by landscapes and I love taking walks in forests. Being surrounded by nature makes me feel as though I've stepped into another world and brings me an



inner peace I find nowhere else. My photography, from which the paintings derive, has never captured the feeling of my experience in the forest. They are more a visual record from which I distort and edit digitally in order to create a more experiential reference of the romanticised forest I have envisioned or remembered. These edited photographs then take on another life through the process as I instinctually add branches and foliage as I paint. The resulting images hover between something imagined and something experienced.'

Stephanie won the Jordan Mills memorial prize for Landscape painting alongside the ArtisAnn Gallery Emerging Artist Prize for her final year degree show.



Happily Ever After, Oil on Canvas on Board, 61 x 39 cms



The First Chapter, Oil on Canvas on Board, 61 x 39 cms

AIMEE MELAUGH

Aimee Melaugh obtained a degree in Fine Art Painting from Ulster University and has since had her work selected for public collections including the Belfast School of Art, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland's permanent collection and the Northern Ireland Civil Service Art Collection. Melaugh was shortlisted for the Robert Walter's UK New Artist of the Year Award in collaboration with Saatchi Gallery, London and had her work exhibited at Saatchi Gallery in 2021.



Aimee's paintings draw upon ideas surrounding identity, suppressed individuality and deceiving appearances with influence taken from poetry and literature. Dark tones and fragments of otherworldly images are used to explore ideas surrounding entrapment and isolation. She makes use of memento mori whilst depicting the malleable distortion of objects intertwined with desperate figures. Mask wearers, figurines and broken inanimate objects are layered and pieced together, hinting at how fragments of oneself are at times patched up to create an alter ego in order to fit into today's image-based society.

She has exhibited extensively in Belfast, Derry and Dublin. Recognitions include the Belfast Print Workshop Residency Award and a Royal Ulster Academy Award. Melaugh exhibited at the MAC Gallery in Belfast as part of 'New Exits: 10 Years of Painting Shows,' and exhibited at Guts Gallery, London in 2023 as part of a group exhibition 'New Now.'



Pure, Oil on Canvas 64 x 54 cms



Laburnum Moon, Oil on Canvas, 134 x 104 cms

SAFFRON MONKS-SMYTH

Originally specialising in Fine Art Printmaking, Saffron graduated in 2018 from Ulster University, Belfast. She then furthered her studies to attain a Master's degree in Fine Art, this time specialising in Painting.

Saffron has received several awards for her work including the Belfast Print Workshop Membership Award, 2015,



the Seacourt Print Workshop Graduate Award 2018 and the ArtisAnn Emerging Artist Award in 2020. Her work is also held in the permanent collection of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Whilst Saffron enjoyed the technical side to printmaking, she realised that through painting she could achieve a much more atmospheric and sublime quality of work through the juxtaposition of gouache and translucent oil paint.

Saffron uses the motif of artificial light within these scenes; shadowing the idea of our human impulse to push out the darkness with synthetic illumination and providing us with snippets of life around the corner or inside the darkened buildings. She aims to create visual story-telling through light, dark and the dwellings that we call home.

By capturing a momentary atmosphere of mundane, everyday streets, she plays with the idea of creating human presence through depictions of people-less streets. Her paintings aim to create a window into an environment where the viewer can question and explore our instinctual associations with twilight and our peculiar fascination for the unknown.



The Congregation, Gouache and Oil on MDF, 20 x 23 cms



Solace, Gouache and Oil on MDF, 24 x 20 cms

AIMÉE NELSON

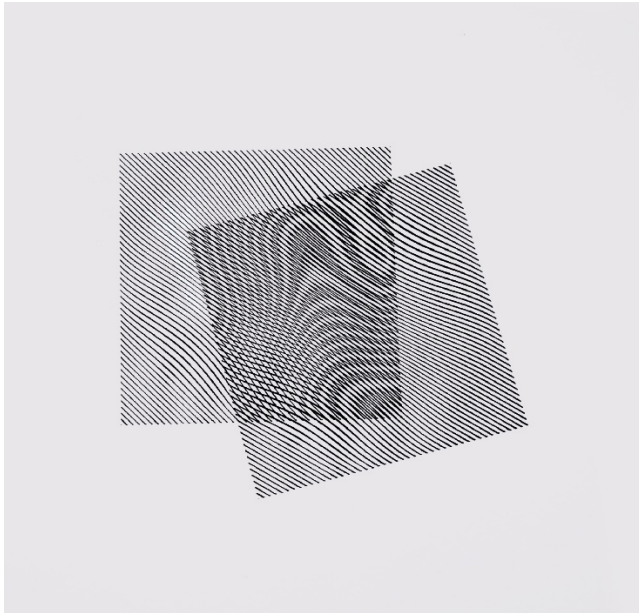
Aimée Nelson is a visual artist based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She graduated from Belfast School of Art, Ulster University with a First-Class Honours Degree in Fine Art.

In her work, Aimée explores the interplay with light and perception through sculpture, photography and printmaking. With a family background in optometry, she is interested in the study of optics which largely inspires her practice.

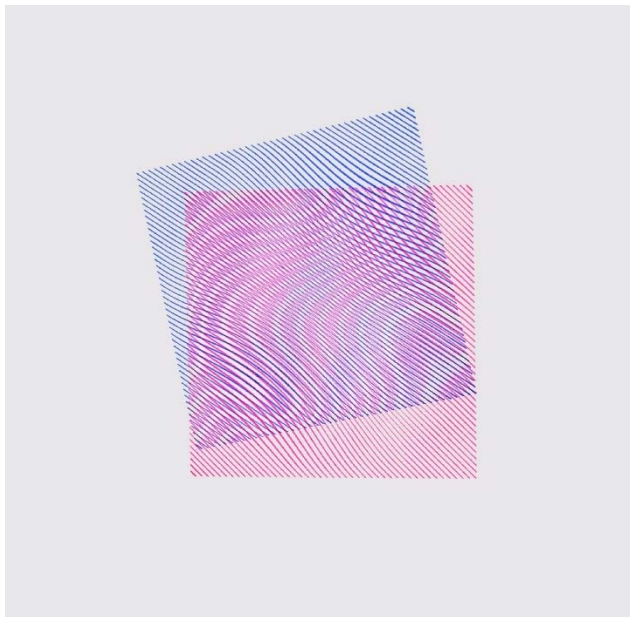


In this new body of work Aimée explores the visual phenomena of moiré, watered or wavelike effects which are produced when repetitive patterns are aligned imperfectly on top of another. She brings attention to the moiré patterns that can occur within the silk screen printing process, which commonly printmakers seek to avoid. The unique play between patterns produces optical interferences which are hypnotic in their simultaneous simplicity and complexity.

Since graduating, she has won a number of awards including The Mullan Gallery Award for Best Sculpture at the Royal Ulster Academy 2019 Annual Exhibition. Aimée was shortlisted for the Woon Foundation Sculpture and Painting Prize 2019 and exhibited with the ten shortlisted artists from across the UK in an exhibition at Gallery North, Newcastle upon Tyne. In 2021, she was selected to exhibit in 'Portrait of Northern Ireland' Centenary group exhibition at Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast. Aimée exhibits both locally and internationally and her work is held in public collections including Belfast School of Art and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.



Ebb, Original Silk Screen Print, Edition 1/1, 50 x 50 cms



Flow, Original Silk Screen Print, Edition 1/1, 50 x 50 cms

AMBER ROSSI

Amber is a fine art painter from Belfast who graduated from Ulster University with a degree in Fine art painting in 2021 and was awarded the Artisann Gallery Emerging Artist Award for her degree work.

Having been born and raised in Belfast, she feels that Belfast is a significant part of her identity. Growing up hearing stories from family members about the



troubles, it was hard not to think about what happened there. Feelings of nostalgia and melancholy are evident in her work, but also a sense of hope, reflecting how far Belfast has come.

Her work is inspired by these memories and the nostalgia that come with them. Flicking through old family photographs, she picks out the ones that makes her feel nostalgic. She then makes a collage or rough sketch of the image, playing about with different mediums, colours and compositions to see if it will make a resolved painting.

Amber elaborates: 'This isn't always my painting process, however. More often than not I will start a painting without any prep work and see how it goes from there. This is my favourite way of beginning a painting. I feel like it's more exciting for me as an artist to not know how it's going to turn out. My medium of choice for starting a painting is always acrylic paint because it dries quickly, allowing me to work faster. However, it is rare that I will stick to just acrylic paint, as my love for mix media often leaves me feeling like my paintings aren't finished unless I use at least one other medium.'



Protocol, Acrylic on Canvas, 50 x 50 cms

IRENE SWEENEY

Irene Sweeney was born in Donegal and moved to Belfast to study, and now lives and works there. She graduated with her BA in Fine Art in 2020, and MA in Fine Art at Ulster University in 2022.

Irene's most recent series of paintings is based on her close-up encounters with fungi. Rooted in eco-psychology, eco-spirituality and ecology theory, the work recounts a still moment and a

particular mood of a time and place, through painting the ambient, tranquil lighting of the forest which brings to life the vivid hues of the fungi.

This series exploring the beauty and power of fungi indulges in and celebrates an ethereal presence found in nature. The artworks are deeply inspired by her own personal feelings evoked by the forest's presence. In representing this encounter from a macro-other-worldly perspective she hopes to unlock in the viewer an innocent curiosity for the fungi, inspiring a mutually beneficial and appreciative relationship with nature.

Irene has won several institutional awards throughout her education, and has had her work *Mindsapes* selected by CEJA, The European Council of Young Farmers; as part of their permanent collection of works addressing mental health issues of farmers. This was exhibited in STAM Europa in Brussels, Belgium in 2023. She has also exhibited extensively throughout Northern Ireland.





Bite, Oil on Wood, 24 x 18 cms



Portal, Oil on Wood, 24 x 18 cms

Irish Cultural Centre

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**Opening Hours
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