

# draíocht 2001 2022

***you breathe differently down here***

**The inaugural Draíocht Open Exhibition presenting new work from 35 graduate visual artists from the last three years 2019-2021**

**Wed 02 March – Sat 30 April 2022  
Ground & First Floor Galleries**

**Curated by Amanda Coogan**

Thirty-five emerging artists explore our world through the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, a momentous time when our breath and our body's fragility came sharply into focus. ***you breathe differently down here*** \* is an odyssey through the next generation of Irish visual art. Draíocht's inaugural Open Call nurtures and champions early career artists and invites us into their new world: *breathe deep*. Draíocht sought to create new opportunities to support and uplift particularly compelling practices developed throughout an exceptionally challenging time, a time where exhibiting opportunities were few and far between. The exhibition is a fitting celebration of Draíocht's 21st birthday.

An open call exhibition is an ambitious project for any gallery, a brilliant opportunity for emerging artists and an adventure for the selectors. Emer McGowan (Director, Draíocht); Aoife Ruane (Curator/Director Highlanes Gallery); Rory O'Byrne (Fingal Arts Officer); Caroline Cowley (Fingal Public Arts Officer) and I had an exquisite expedition through one hundred and thirty-two applications. We never knew what the next click would bring.

The selected thirty-five artists come with robust, rich and differing practices: from moving image to stills photography; textiles to text; painting to sculpture. The choices of media proposed were as disparate as the colleges these artists graduated from, across this island, London and the Netherlands. We were thrilled by the range and diversity.

The body looms large in this exhibition. It is the filter through which we read these engaging and fascinating works. In coming together to view this exhibition – in the same place, at the same time – we explore with our bodies, together. We have to peer into, stand back and move around the galleries to experience the works. We have an embodied experience. Many of the artists here speak of this. They present work that investigates, references and challenges our understanding of the body.

These artworks de-centre accepted norms of Irish society and pose wonderfully complex ideas. They *re-member* the body. They present us with a glorious multiplicity of languages, evidencing the rich diversity of Ireland in 2022. Effortlessly, the works sign-post our interconnectedness. Our old binaries are eclipsed as these works shape-shift into the multiple possibilities of the future. As they interrogate our cultural references they catalogue, challenge and propose an Ireland to come. Breathe in these artworks – *breathe out; breathe them in again* – the molecules of air are changing.

Thank you to all who applied to the Draíocht Open Call, and congratulations to our exhibiting artists and to our prize winners. It has been my great honour to curate this exhibition. I had the privilege and joy of working alongside Sharon Murphy (curator/artist) and Sara Muthi (curator/writer), brilliant women who know Draíocht so intimately and whose support has been immense. We were challenged, excited and awed by the works. Be delighted, inhale, be shocked, exhale, be enraged, inhale, be consumed, exhale. *You breathe differently down here - inhale deeply.*

**Amanda Coogan  
March 2022**

## **Participating artists:**

Karolina Adamczak | Nadia Armstrong | Iryna Baklan | Aifric Prior Beliere | John Conway | Dominique Crowley  
Owen de Forge | Ellen Duffy | Kelley Farrell | Lana May Fleming | Shane Hynan | Vanessa Jones | Alex Keatinge  
Orla Kelly | Seanán Kerr | Martyna Lebryk | Jialin Long | Sarah Louise Lordan | Day Magee | Ben Malcolmson  
Michelle Malone | Rory Malone | Steven Maybury Emily McGardle | Niamh McGuinne | Dominic McKeown  
Clara McSweeney | Oisín O'Brien | Patrick O'Byrne | Pól O'Connail | Vasiliki Stasinaki | Kym Tracey  
Luke van Gelderen | Ellen-Rose Wallace | Tina Whelan

\* Adrienne Rich (Diving into the Wreck, 1971)

*through-praxis*

## **A commissioned essay in response to *you breathe differently down here* by Draíocht Open Call Associate Curator Sara Muthi**

I will resist broad brushstrokes. While it may be tempting to seek out some uniformity from the last three years of global complexity, I believe this exhibition is a testament to the variety of aesthetic categories such emerging artists are continuing to produce. ***you breath differently down here*** showcases a wealth of perspectives, concerns and questions surrounding the self, the body, the rural, the state... the list goes on.

I will resist the term graduate artists. I gather little difference between a graduate artist and an established artist, apart from the fact graduates are *newly* emergent. This emergence is an exciting part of an exhibition such as this. These artists are doers; they are active agents, critics and commentators of their immediate and subconscious environments. If an artist is a sponge, they absorb the world as they see it; as they experience it socially, politically, and aesthetically. They become channels for new ways of seeing, doing, and making in their studios, whatever that work-space may have looked like in the in recent years. With the intention of gaining an aesthetic sense from the non-sense of our wider world, these artists become engaged in serious praxis. Marx referred to praxis as a free, universal activity through which we can *create* the world. Sartre, in his later writing, similarly defined praxis as an action *upon* the world. This is a uniquely human undertaking. A crow builds its nest in an unchanging response to its natural environment. But, while crows always build in the same manner, artists will develop new ways of channelling their environments. In turn, this affords us the opportunity to be opened up from our material and visual assumptions. These thirty-five exhibiting artists embody this intention. Their methods of making are an asset for a pivotal time in Irish culture; a time where norms are no longer normal, and our bodies increasingly interrupted and integrated with technology.

In their uniquely human praxis, Karolina Adamczak and Emily McGardle explicate instances of emotional labour, while Nadia Armstrong and Lana May Fleming tap into our identities within the digital sphere. Exploration of the digital is continued in the algorithmic sculptural image of Luke van Gelderen and in the vibrant painting of Dominique Crowley. Jialin Long considers the power dynamic of state loyalty in China, as Aifric Prior Beliere and Michelle Malone brood on the socio-economic failures of the Dublin context. New ways of seeing are encouraged in the subtleties of the work of Rory Malone and Ben Malcolmson, and explicitly encouraged in the enveloping sculpture of Niamh McGuinne. Pól O'Connaill and Seanán Kerr bring us innovative and varied narrative modes with original and repurposed imagery. The body is distorted by Martyna Lebryk and reconsidered in the rich textiles of Orla Kelly. The self is the subject matter of the intense spectral imagery of Day Magee and Sarah Louise Lordan, as Vanessa Jones engages a more vivacious form of self-portraiture. Moments of palpable nostalgia seep through Steven Maybury's *7 Allen Park Drive* lock and key, and continue to echo in the painting of Owen de Forge and Kym Tracey. Stepping away from the human subject, Shane Hynan, Clara McSweeney and Kelley Farrell turn our attention to abstract and rural subjects such as bogs and lakes, while Ellen-Rose Wallace, Vasiliki Stasinaki and Iryna Baklan use the lens to capture interventions within the natural. We are uplifted by the exclamation of John Conway's *Future Happiness*, and made sombre at the sight of Patrick O'Byrne's empty room. Our sights are lifted high with Ellen Duffy's airy wire sculpture and brought low with the weight of Dominic McKeown's concrete *SWADDLE*. Familiar objects such as candles, denim jackets and honey dippers are made uncanny through the work of Tina Whelan, Alex Keatinge and Oisín O'Brien, bringing the mundane into renewed relationships with us.

The subject matter of emerging artists is the same as any established artist: the world as we know it, in this time, for we cannot speak or intend towards any other. It is infinite and indescribable. This exhibition marks time as it marks significant cultural and political shifts, accelerated or impeded by the very cultural producers scaling the walls and floors of Draíocht's galleries. These thirty-five artists have already acted *upon* and *into* the world, and their continued praxis will ensure that the next generation of artists will have new considerations, and a new wealth of visual art to be inspired by.

**Sara Muthi**  
**March 2022**

Sara Muthi is a curator and writer based in Dublin.