



UNRAVELLING DEVELOPMENTS

Public Art Commissioned by Sligo Borough and County Councils 2004 – 2010

A Message from the Cathaoirleach

Between 2004 and 2010 Sligo County Council's Arts Service completed a second series of Public Art commissions titled *Unravelling Developments*.

Mary McDonagh as part-time Public Art Officer, has, in doing so, implemented the policy of the Sligo Local Authorities of mainstreaming the commissioning of Public Art projects. Through this series, Sligo Arts Service have created a unique opportunity for ten artists to make new work that reflects on change and the changed world of Sligo and the North West region of Ireland. It has created opportunities for a diverse public in Sligo to engage with or be involved in contemporary arts practice in enlightened and imaginative ways.

Access to and participation in the arts is a fundamental right.

The public of Sligo have been well served by this project.

I commend all involved.

COUNCILLOR JOE LEONARD
CATHAOIRLEACH, SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

Acknowledgements

The realisation of any public art project is a complex undertaking that involves a wide range of individuals. We therefore wish to acknowledge and thank everyone associated with the *Unravelling Developments* series for their help, support and enthusiasm.

Special thanks to Mary McAuliffe, Rhona Feely and Sarah Leavy of the Sligo Arts Service and all the staff who helped and contributed from Sligo County and Borough Councils.

Front cover photograph:
Ghost Ship in the Garavogue River
by Nevan Lahart

Back cover (detail from) photograph:
Site 36 by Dara McGrath

We would like to thank the artists commissioned for the *Unravelling Developments* series for the use of their photographs in this publication

Text written by Joe Lee and edited by Mary McDonagh

ISBN 0-9539704-8-5

Introduction

Ten new arts projects were completed in the *Unravelling Developments* series of Public Art Commissions by Sligo County Council Arts Service between the years 2004 to 2010. This was made possible by Sligo Borough and County Councils accessing funding through the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Per Cent for Art Scheme.

Unravelling Developments followed the successful first pilot series of per cent for art projects in Sligo *Placing Art*. Following *Placing Art*, strategic policy for public art projects was implemented by Sligo County and Borough Councils with the intention of mainstreaming the commissioning of public art projects into Sligo Local Authority services. This involved, among other things employing a part-time public art officer, Mary McDonagh and engaging my services as curator for this second round of public art projects which I titled *Unravelling Developments*. The new series began to take shape in the second half of 2003 with a call for submissions accompanied by a curatorial statement (see p. 24) and the first projects began in 2004.

The issues that influenced the content of the curatorial statement were; the recent accelerated pace of development in Ireland; and in particular, the amount of growth and expansion taking place in the North West region around Sligo. There was also an atmosphere at that time of uncertainty about the economy and unease about the viability and wisdom of whether the boom would or should continue. There were also questions about how globalisation would impact on national and local culture.

By any measurement the most striking thing about Sligo and the North West is the amount of change and development that has taken place in the last decade. Fields on the side of mountains formally designated for grazing sheep have been transformed into futuristic looking wind farms. Old town and village streetscapes converted into shopping malls and unfamiliar looking apartment and housing developments. Of course we now know that boom went to spectacular bust, but Ireland still remains a very different place than it was a decade ago. I believe now as I did then, that it is important that artists are given opportunities to reflect on or engage with ideas about change as it effects culture, landscape and the built environment in County Sligo.

The words *Unravelling Developments* could be seen as a catch all slogan to describe Ireland's economic story in the last few years but as our title for the new round of public art commissions, it was intended more as a starting point. As commissioners, we were interested to see how artists might respond to all the change that had taken place in Sligo in recent years. We were also curious to see how artists responded to the idea of change itself. We were equally open to ideas and proposals where artists were exploring something new in their art practice that they could relate to an area in Sligo.



An unexpected benefit for the arts of the boom years was the rapid growth in public art commissioning by Local Authorities around the country since 2000. These projects often happened (but not always) by utilising the mechanism of the Per Cent for Art Scheme. Alongside this welcome growth in arts production there has been a great deal of debate about public art. Who it is for? How it should be made? What it should be? Where it should be located? To date no one has found a one size fits all formula as an answer to these questions, nor should they. Because at the heart of much of this debate, at local and county level, is an attempt to bring together, what can be, conflicting needs, meaningful engagement for local communities or the general public, on one side, and meeting the needs and understanding the work practices of contemporary artists on the other. These needs are not always mutually exclusive but it would be equally wrong to ignore the reality and the tension that exist between them.

Many working artists see public art projects simply as a way of making new work and being rewarded for it. Many are happy to explore new ways of engaging with people, a minority encourage public involvement and participation in the production of work and equally many artists see public engagement as purely an encounter between the artwork and audience at the point of dissemination. Likewise the general public and or many different communities of interest come to public art projects with different levels of anticipation, understanding and commitment.

The challenge of meeting those diverse needs and expectations in *Unravelling Developments* was best served in our view by having a range and variety of projects and artists across the commissioning round, rather than all artists meeting the same criteria. Similarly, at the outset we also wanted to encourage as many artforms as possible to be represented in *Unravelling Developments*.

The process of how commissions unfolded in *Unravelling Developments* was as follows. From over 70 applications, 10 artists were selected by a selection committee to be part of a panel of artists. The selection criteria was based on, quality of submission, response to curatorial statement, originality of ideas and track record. The selected artists who completed projects for *Unravelling Developments* are Dara McGrath, Jack Harte, Ian Wilson, Christine Mackey, Grace Weir, Stephen Hurrell, John Langan, Nevan Lahart, Helen O'Leary and Tracy Walsh with the community of Caltragh in collaboration with artists Peggy McKenna, Liz Byrne and Sean Ó'hAnnracháin.

As capital projects came on stream, artists were introduced to different areas in Sligo that later became contexts for their work. They were then assisted in drawing up project proposals that were presented to a selection committee for approval, which in turn became the commissioned projects. We were pleased that there was a wide variety of approaches taken by the artists in how they produced work and a wide diversity in how they interacted or engaged with the public in Sligo. (see artists and projects section) We were less successful in attracting a full range of art forms, such as theatre, dance and poetry. However we were very pleased to have worked with the writer Jack Harte and the music composer Ian Wilson. The issue of the inclusion of a wide variety of artforms may be a matter that can be looked at in future public art commissioning series.

The above structure and approach was put in place by the Sligo Arts Service as a result of earlier reports by the Sligo Public Art Steering Group. At the outset we imagined the *Unravelling Developments* series would be completed in about two to three years from the start of 2004. It quickly became apparent during 2004 that the initial timeline for the series would be much longer. This was primarily due to the involved nature and process of formulating project proposals into working commissioned projects and the slower than expected roll out of capital projects that had a knock-on effect of slowing the draw-down of funding. All the artists involved were informed of the expected delay and were kept up to date as the series evolved. Projects began in 2004 and the tenth and final project was completed in early 2010.

These projects in *Unravelling Developments* are in many ways brought together for the first and possibly only time in this publication. The commissions have given the ten artists involved the opportunity to make new work about change and the changed world of Sligo and the North West region of Ireland. Through this series, Sligo Arts Service has created possibilities for a diverse public to engage with and participate in contemporary arts practice in new and innovative ways. *Unravelling Developments* is certainly a title for our time and the work made for this public art series is certainly for and about our time.

JOE LEE, ARTIST/CURATOR

In the Wake of the Bagger

JACK HARTE, WRITER

PRODUCED: A NOVEL AND A CD OF SHORT STORIES AND SONG

COMMENCED: 2004 **COMPLETED:** 2005

Jack Harte applied as an established short story writer. *In the Wake of the Bagger* is his first novel and it was published by Scotus Press in 2006.

The story has two circular narratives, one set in the Nineteen Fifties, the other in the present day. It is a story set in childhood and told in a contemporary context. At once a social document and a meditation on change, it is the story of the Dowd family who are uprooted from their home in Killeenduff, Co. Sligo, to re-settle as economic migrants in the Midlands, where the industrial development of the bogs is providing jobs and opportunities. It is a journey around Jack's father and the struggles, tragedies and joys of life for an Irish family then. There is a forth right telling of sexual abuse and cruelty in schools, the church and the workplace. The tension between an old traditional way of life and the first stirring of industrialization in rural Ireland is captured graphically.

From the reviews of *In the Wake of the Bagger*:

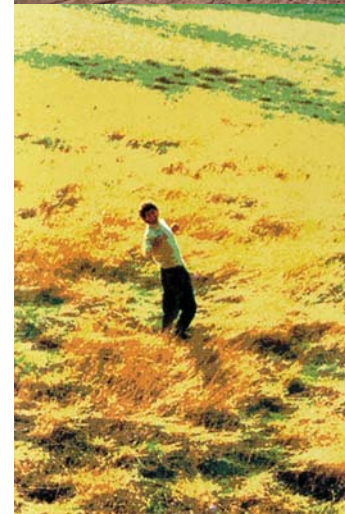
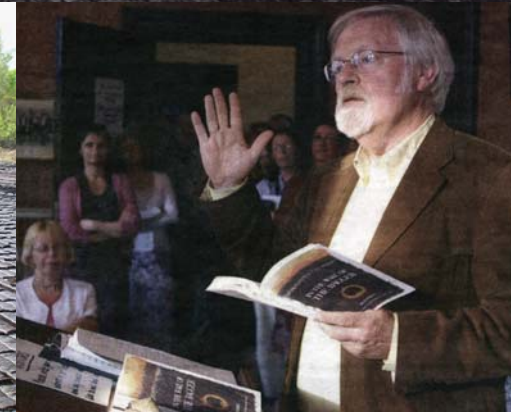
'This is one of the great books about Ireland full of astounding scenes, a truly fabulous book. Don't miss it.' Irish Independent

'This first novel from the accomplished short story writer Jack Harte is truly a many-splendoured thing.' Sunday Business Post

The CD *Lament for The Birds* is a compilation of stories and song that Jack Harte made with Sligo singer/musician Carmel Gunning it was produced and launched in 2004. Jack produced this CD as part of the commission while writing the novel. *In the Wake of the Bagger* has been re-printed due to popular demand and it has also been translated into Bulgarian.

FUNDING SOURCE: NEW HOUSING AT DROMORE WEST.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED MEETINGS AND READINGS WITH RESIDENTS, DROMORE WEST AND WORKSHOPS WITH CREATIVE WRITING GROUPS AROUND SLIGO COUNTY.



Plantation

DARA MCGRATH, PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTIST

PRODUCED: A BOOK *PLANTATION* AND TEN SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS, BILLBOARD IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS, WHICH APPEARED IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS.

COMMENCED: 2004 **COMPLETED:** 2005

The book and photographic project *Plantation* explored how the planning process and new development manifest themselves on the land and on the Enniscrone area in Sligo in particular. McGrath's photographs for *Plantation* look in two directions, firstly, they look at things and spaces that have been developed in the recent past and secondly at places and landscapes that will soon be developed. Rather than looking to the sea and its relationship to the county, McGrath chose to look at development moving into the landscape of west Sligo. Over a period of six months he walked extensively in the area, he identified and indexed two hundred sites that had in the recent past or were coming up for development, he took over six hundred photographs, of which ten are selected for the *Plantation* publication.

In a report by the *Western People* on Wednesday 29 November 2006 the architect and cultural commentator, Sean O'Laoire is quoted as saying of this work,

'McGrath's camera brings us beyond narrative, the picturesque and cosy myth: no air brush or John Hinde postcards here. It cuts to the chase without being didactic, judgemental or begrudging. It gives equal time and space to the eloquent silence of a see-saw in a suburban garden as it does to a Neolithic 'gallan' (standing stone) improvising as a fence post.'

Alongside producing the book *Plantation* Dara McGrath erected a temporary billboard site to display work from the project and located this on an approach road to Enniscrone. He also published a number of his images in local newspapers.

FUNDING SOURCE: NEW HOUSING, ENNISCROME.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES, COUNTY COUNCIL STAFF AND TALKS AT A LOCAL SECONDARY SCHOOL.



Pieces of elsewhere

IAN WILSON, CONTEMPORARY MUSIC COMPOSER

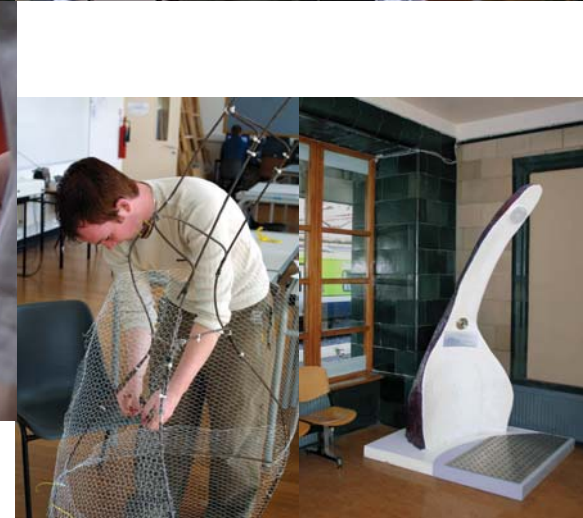
PRODUCED: A CD OF PERCUSSION AND VOICE *PIECES OF ELSEWHERE*, WITH 17 SHORT MUSIC COMPOSITIONS. THREE LISTENING POSTS WERE DESIGNED AND PRODUCED IN CO-OPERATION WITH THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGN DEPARTMENT OF SLIGO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. THE LISTENING POSTS WERE PLACED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF SLIGO TOWN OVER A PERIOD OF THREE WEEKS IN AUTUMN 2005. ANY OF THE 17 TRACKS OF *PIECES OF ELSEWHERE* COULD BE HEARD BY THE PUBLIC WHEN THEY ACTIVATED THE LISTENING POSTS WITH THE PUSH OF A BUTTON. **COMMENCED:** 2005 **COMPLETED:** 2005

Ian Wilson's idea in *Pieces of Elsewhere* was to write music that would be contemplative and atmospheric in mood, allowing the listener to step outside their familiar surroundings for a brief moment and imagine beyond their immediate urban environment. Because the funding source came from a water dam project that supplies Sligo city, Wilson envisioned dispersing music through the city. He set seventeen haiku, a Japanese poetic form, to music for voice and percussion. The work was recorded in the Royal Irish Academy of Music in June 2005 and an edition of one thousand CDs was released. The public sampled this work when they encountered the curiously shaped listening posts that were located around the town for a few weeks in September 2005.

Pieces of Elsewhere was written for soprano Natalie Raybould and the RIAM Percussion Ensemble with texts translated from the Japanese by Sam Hamill.

FUNDING: KILSELLAGH DAM WATER PROJECT.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED 2ND YEAR INDUSTRIAL DESIGN STUDENTS AND STAFF AT SLIGO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, SHOPPERS, TOURISTS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. *PIECES OF ELSEWHERE* ALSO INSPIRED THE COUNTERBALANCE INTEGRATED DANCE ENSEMBLE TO CREATE A NEW DANCE WORK BASED ON IAN WILSON'S MUSIC WHICH WAS PERFORMED AT AN GRIANÁN THEATRE, LETTERKENNY FROM THE 8-11 OF MARCH 2010.



Up on the Greenfort

GRACE WEIR, VISUAL ARTIST/FILM MAKER
PRODUCED: HDV FILM ON DVD, (15 MINUTES)
COMMENCED: 2004 **COMPLETED:** 2006

Grace Weir's film project *Up on the Greenfort* is based on collected interviews about the Greenfort in Sligo. The Greenfort was an ancient site of strategic importance for the defence of Sligo. Perched above the town, it affords a clear and panoramic view across the surrounding landscape, both North towards Ben Bulbin, and South from Sligo Bay to Knocknarea and the Ox mountains beyond.

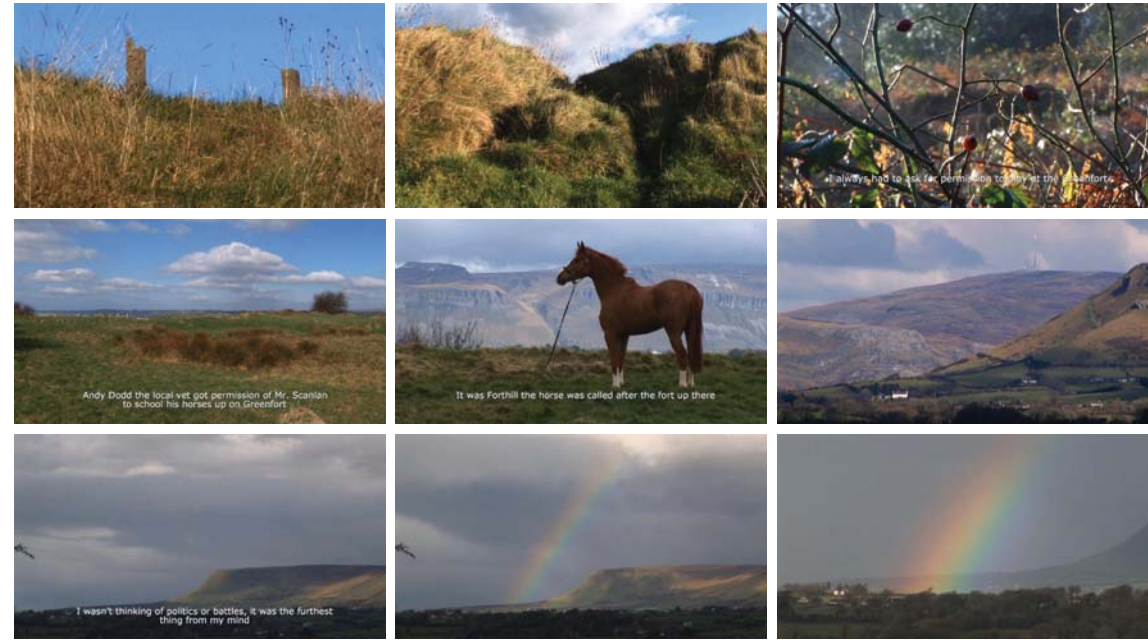
After the Battle of the Boyne William of Orange's armies spread west, and with the fall of the Greenfort the soldiers fled to France. This became known as the Flight of the Wild Geese. Now overgrown and a bit inaccessible, it retains an air of mystery and in many ways it remains a repository of both historical and contemporary memory.

Grace Weir became interested in local people's thoughts about the ancient site of the Greenfort. She comments:

'There is a certain mystery about the site, it has always been a bit inaccessible or seeming remote but I think there exists the idea that it is a place of importance without always knowing why. It has become a place where people's imaginations are loosened and different stories unfold across its grassy height.'

In the film *Up on the Greenfort*, Grace Weir combines a series of overlapping narratives in time about the mapping of a particular place. She achieves this by using subtitled extracts of accounts taken from various interviews she had conducted with people locally. She merges these with sequences of beautifully composed shots that relate to each particular account and combine to slowly map the area. This gradual accumulation leads to a series of final panoramic images of the Sligo landscape. The sound in the film is made from simple and clear atmosphere recordings made on site. The film is both a meditation on the many layered meanings of place as a space for the imagination and also a rare treat that celebrates the beauty of the Sligo landscape as seen from *Up on the Greenfort*.

FUNDING: NEW HOUSING AT CONNAUGHTON ROAD
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND LOCAL HISTORIANS. PUBLIC SCREENINGS AROUND SLIGO IN THE MOBILE CINEMA.



RIVER work(s)

CHRISTINE MACKEY, VISUAL ARTIST, MIXED MEDIA
PRODUCED: ARTISTS RESIDENCY, AN OPEN STUDIO, A BOOK *RIVER WORK(S)*, AND EXHIBITION
COMMENCED: 2006 **COMPLETED:** 2008

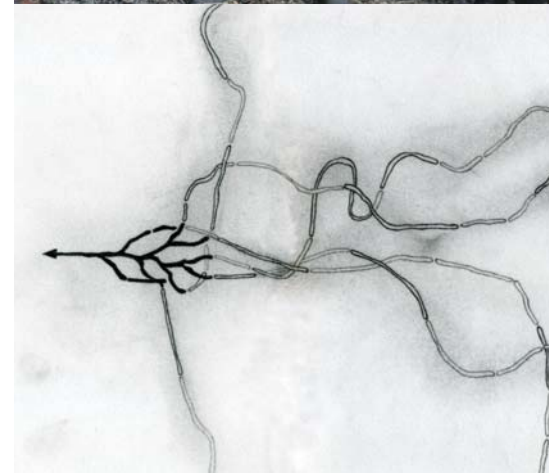
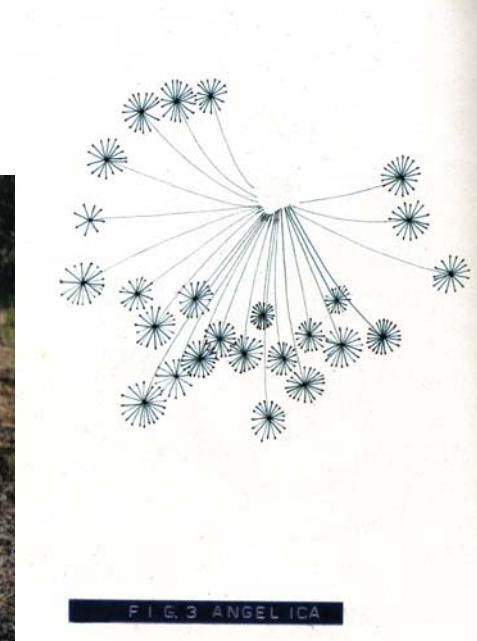
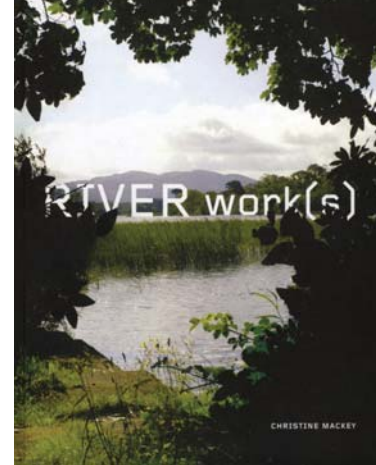
The context for this commission was the refurbishment of a large number of local authority houses in the Doorly Park area in Sligo, where many of the residents have a strong affinity with the nearby river and parklands. A vacant gatehouse was made available to Christine Mackey, as a daytime base and studio. This was also open to local people and the public to engage with the artist.

The artwork is an artist's book *RIVER work(s)* derived from the artists explorations of the harbour in Sligo and up river to Lough Gill. The work is based on the artists photography, filming, drawing and research into people's local knowledge including walkers, residents and fishermen. Mackey spent much time in the Sligo County Reference Library, Dublin libraries and the Royal Irish Academy, researching historical sources, place names and maps.

The language of geography and how it describes the formation of rivers was also a subject of research, which led to new drawings and mappings. Mackey made contact with many experts, specialists, public officials and local record keepers collecting a huge amount of information on an array of subjects. She was particularly interested in the ecology of the Garavogue, Lough Gill and the wider landscape of the area.

This exploratory process, was grounded by Mackey's presence and connection with people. This in turn was developed through her occupation of an abandoned gate lodge in Doorly Park, where she set up studio for three months and her regular website diary of discoveries. Her meticulous research led to the publication of the artist's book *RIVER work(s)*, containing drawings, photographs and maps which is a record of the area and a valuable resource for Sligo. These images were also exhibited in the Sligo Art Gallery.

FUNDING: REMEDIAL WORKS AND NEW HOUSING AT GARAVOQUE VILLAS.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED EXTENSIVE CONTACT WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS AND PEOPLE CONNECTED WITH THE GARAVOQUE, LOUGH GILL AND THE CLEVERAGH DEMESNE.



Value for Tax Payers Money

NEVAN LAHART, VISUAL ARTIST, MIXED MEDIA
PRODUCED: ARTISTS RESIDENCY, 49 PAINTINGS, TWO SCULPTURES AND
A WEBSITE PRODUCED FROM HIS RESIDENCY IN A TEMPORARY STUDIO
COMMENCED: 2008 **COMPLETED:** 2008

The project *Value for Tax Payers Money* began when Nevan Lahart came to Sligo in the summer of 2008 and set up studio in a disused premises on Markievicz Road. During his six week stay in Sligo he enlisted the help of two other artists Thomas Marcus Schumann and Terry Blake. He also engaged with *Young Model*, a local art group for young people run by the Model & Niland Art Centre, who came to the temporary studio on a number of occasions to make work.

Lahart describes the process of working on the commission on his website:

'I began by making some paintings, in the form of street signage. The subject matter was a personal mish mash of feelings, ideas and whimsy that I had about the previous ten/fifteen years of prosperity that Ireland has just experienced and where that might have left us, culturally, socially and economically. I made a total 49 signs. The plan was to hang them out and about the town's environs, on public railings, signposts, etc. All the paintings had "PROPERTY OF SLIGO BOROUGH COUNCIL" spray painted on the back of them. . .

I also made a memorial for all the Builders and Builder Supplier workers who lost their livelihoods in the Bust of the Irish Boom. It consisted of a 3D line drawing of a skip on top of a memorial plinth. I wanted it to be a *Value for Tax Payers Money* sculpture, so I mounted the sculptural plinth on the roof rack of a car and drove it around Sligo town for a day. I attached a speaker to the plinth, which played an ice cream jingle. When I was finished I took the sculpture apart and stuck the 3D skip component directly into the riverbed in the centre of town.'

Lahart comprehensively documented his residency in Sligo and then incorporated this into his website to create a long term point of public access about the commission.

FUNDING SOURCE: SMALL BOROUGH HOUSING SCHEMES POOLED.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED YOUNG PEOPLE ON YOUNG MODEL PROGRAMME, CASUAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PUBLIC AND WORKS PUBLICLY SITED.



You Lucky Thing

HELEN O'LEARY, PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTIST
PRODUCED: A BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND ESSAYS
COMMENCED: 2007 **COMPLETED:** 2008

In 2007 Helen O'Leary was commissioned to produce an artwork based on the theme of luck, a subject she proposed herself:

'... I knew at the time I was interested in the vernacular language of the area, and interested in a project that would have a public forum, be it, book, billboards, photographs, radio. It took a while to filter the ideas into the final format of a book, which seemed more fluid than making public sculpture, and more permanent than a performance or an intervention that would be time restricted. . . I don't think I would have responded to a more prescriptive commission.'

You Lucky Thing is primarily a book of photographs but it also contains an essay by Sarah K. Rich (art critic for Art Forum magazine and Associate Professor of Art History, Pennsylvania State University) and the poem *The Wishing Tree* by Seamus Heaney. In her introduction O'Leary describes her feelings about luck and something of her working process on the project and book *You Lucky Thing*.

'As soon as one realises that something one cares about deeply is a matter of luck, and that luck depends entirely on the generosity of other people, its awfully hard not to feel like a shameless opportunist of the very worst sort.

In working on this project I found this to be especially true – I thought of it every morning as I set out, fully aware that the kindness of near-strangers would chart the day's peregrinations.

Trusting to luck in writing this book, I travelled to villages all over Sligo, almost on a whim (though not quite) and, over innumerable cups of tea, heard a marvellous wealth of stories, related with remarkable candour, of how good fortune might be courted – and how it may or may not be won. . .'

FUNDING SOURCE: SLIGO HOUSING REMEDIAL WORKS.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED EXTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH OLDER PEOPLE AND MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN SLIGO.



Fóidín Mearbhaill – A Field in Transition

JOHN LANGAN: VISUAL ARTIST MIXED MEDIA
PRODUCED: RESIDENCY, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEYS AND REPORTS, (BASED ON TEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS IN A FIELD NEAR BALLYMOTE), 1.2 ACRE FLAX CROP DRAWING, AN EXHIBITION, A WEB SITE AND THE DELIVERY OF A SELECTION OF IMAGES AND PROJECT INFORMATION TO 680 HOUSES IN THE BALLYMOTE AREA
COMMENCED: 2008 **COMPLETED:** 2009

The *Fóidín Mearbhaill* is based on a folk tale that the fairies sometimes put a spell on a piece of earth and whoever steps upon it loses his way at once and can not find an exit until the fairies tire of their game and at last throw open the unseen doors. John Langan took the title *Fóidín Mearbhaill* as an analogy for unpacking the meanings and stories associated with one small field in Ballymote in County Sligo. In documentation published for his exhibition in November 2009 Langan says of the project:

'The intention of *Fóidín Mearbhaill* is to create an experimental, time-based, collaborative process which presents and mediates contemporary arts practice in a local rural community.'

He conducted both a desk based and field archaeology survey with archaeologist Martin Fitzpatrick. He consulted local historians and community representatives about the history of the site. He discovered the area his field was in had at one time been part of wider flax plantations. With the assistance of local people he replanted most of the field with flax. When the flax had grown he made a crop drawing, based on the medieval Book of Ballymote. He then had aerial photographs taken of the drawing. He established a small vegetable garden and brought a temporary studio to the site. This acted as a base for both workshops (with local children and adults) and for his research. He documented everything over an 18 month period. Finally he mounted an exhibition in a local venue which included drawings, photographs maps and documentary information. He did a mail shot to 680 local houses with an information pack and a selection of images from the project and he also established a website about the project.

FUNDING SOURCE: FOR THIS COMMISSION CAME FROM POOLED COUNTY HOUSING.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: EXTENSIVE CONTACT WITH RESIDENTS, LOCAL HISTORIANS, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES, FARMERS AND SCHOOLS.



HOLD-FAST, HANG-TEN, S.L.I.G.O.

STEPHEN HURREL, VISUAL ARTIST, SCULPTURE (SCOTTISH)
PRODUCED: NINE SCULPTURAL ARTWORKS IN WOOD, POWDER-COATED STEEL AND CARVED STONE, INSTALLED AT SALMON POINT AMENITY AREA
COMMENCED: 2009 **COMPLETED:** 2009

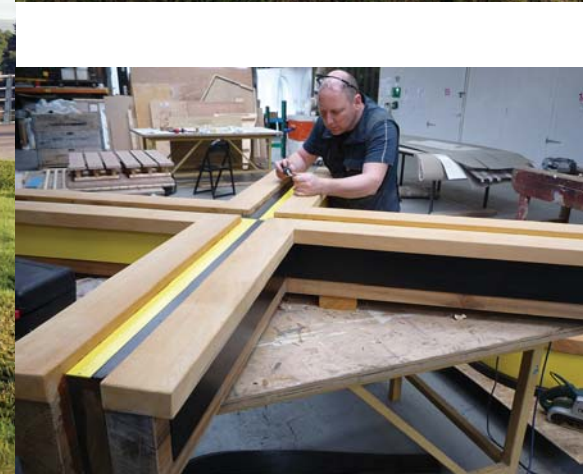
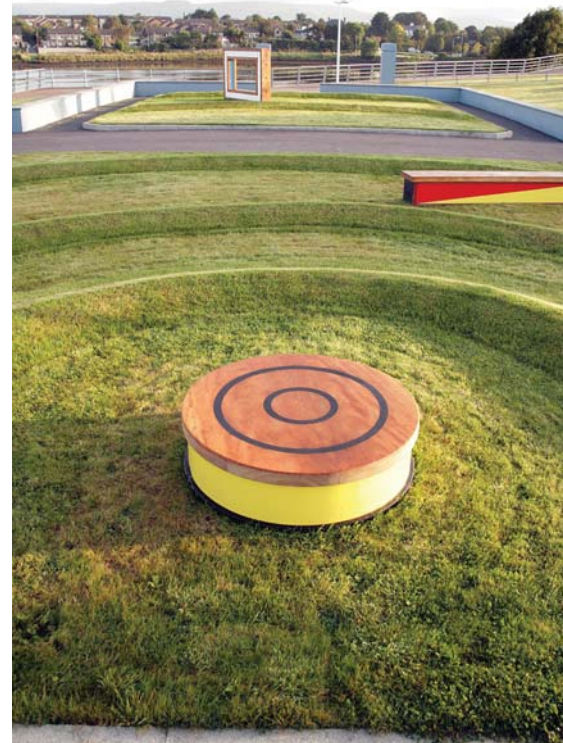
Stephen Hurrel's sculptural project **HOLD-FAST, HANG-TEN, S.L.I.G.O.** was designed for and has been installed in the recently opened Salmon Point Amenity Area. This area has been transformed from the derelict site of a former public swimming pool to its newer function of recreation area and viewing point.

Each of Hurrel's five wood and steel constructions are based on designs of nautical signal flags. Each signal flag represents a message as well as a letter of the alphabet. The 'hidden message' in the five pieces spells out S.L.I.G.O. There are also four large pieces of Kilkenny Limestone each have a single word carved into their top surface, **HOLD FAST** and **HANG TEN**. The idea of having the text on the top surface is so that each letter may, at times, fill up with rainwater. This makes reference to the water that used to exist in the former swimming pool.

Artist, Seamus Dunbar, from the Leitrim Sculpture Centre, was commissioned by Hurrel to carve the lettering on the stone pieces. The text '**HOLD FAST**' refers to tattoos that riggers, who once worked in the port, used to have on their hands to help them pull in the ropes. The text '**HANG TEN**' refers to a surfing term, ten toes hanging over the front of a surf-board. This reference acknowledges the numerous forms of exchange between Ireland and America. For 30 years surfing has been a popular sport in the North West region. Hurrel also designed ripples in the grass – in the area where the swimming pool used to be. The ripples originate from the point where people would dive from the diving board.

The official site opening of Salmon Point and the launch of the public art works, took place on Saturday 24 October 2009 in conjunction with the Sligo Live Festival.

FUNDING SOURCE: SLIGO WASTE AND WATER TREATMENT PLANT AND BOROUGH REMEDIAL HOUSING WORKS, POOLED.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS: INCLUDED A PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSAL TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND CONTACT WITH INTERESTED LOCAL INDIVIDUALS, CONSULTATIONS AND ADVANCE PLANNING WITH STAFF OF THE PARKS DEPARTMENT (WHO CARRY OUT THE REGULAR MAINTENANCE WORKS ON THE SITE) ADVERTISEMENTS AND ARTICLES IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ABOUT THE PROJECT.



The Caltragh Hoard We looked and didn't see

TRACY WALSH, VISUAL ARTIST

PRODUCED: DVD ABOUT THE PROJECT, RESIDENCY, ART WORKSHOPS, HALLOWEEN, CHRISTMAS AND SPRING EVENTS/RITUALS, FIELD TRIPS, PERMANENT CERAMIC WORKS FOR THE ESTATE

COMMENCED: 2008 **COMPLETED:** 2010

The Caltragh Hoard: We looked and didn't see was a project based in the Caltragh Estate. It was led by the artist Tracy Walsh who worked closely with the local community and artists Peggy McKenna, Liz Byrne and Seán Ó'hAnnracháin. The project took place over a two and a half year period and was developed in three stages.

In the first phase Tracy established contact with the community by running regular art workshops for local children in the Caltragh Community Centre. This allowed her to familiarise herself with local parents, children and youth workers. The culmination of the first phase was a Halloween lantern parade. In preparing for the parade, Tracy worked with artists Peggy McKenna, Liz Byrne and Seán Ó'hAnnracháin who had previously worked with the children and this collaboration was very successful. The parade involved large numbers of local parents and children and proved to be a successful community arts event.

The next phase of the project involved weekly workshops with two groups of children (4 to 7 year olds and 8 to 12 year olds). Field trips with archaeologist Padraig Meehan explored the area along the new N4 road route. On this important site, evidence of early circular dwellings and burial sites were investigated. This led to the building of a temporary labyrinth in the local centre as part of a community arts Christmas event.

'The working title of the commission is *We looked and didn't see* which is a reference to the hidden parts of landscape which are not visible to the human eye but are present in our stories, naming of places and mythology. I had decided to use the idea of labyrinth to anchor the work... this references the archaeological content of the area... as well as the modern day roundabouts leading in and out around the general area..'

The third phase of the project developed artworks around the idea of the labyrinth. These in turn have been adapted into designs for 85 ceramic tiles, made with ceramicist Peggy McKenna that have been strategically placed in the public green area of the estate. The project concluded with the public launch of the artworks on 22 May 2010.

FUNDING SOURCE: HOUSING, CALTRAGH.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: EXTENSIVE ART WORKSHOPS WITH LOCAL CHILDREN, FIELD TRIPS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS, CONSULTATIONS WITH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION AND A SERIES OF COMMUNITY ARTS EVENTS BASED AROUND ANCIENT AND TRADITIONAL SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS.



Unravelling Developments

A CURATORIAL STATEMENT FROM JOE LEE ANNOUNCING THE FORTHCOMING SERIES OF COMMISSIONS BY SLIGO BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILS, 2003.

'Day and night the telescreens bruised your ears with statistics proving that people to-day had more food, more clothes, better houses, better recreations – that they lived longer, worked shorter hours, were bigger, healthier, stronger, happier, more intelligent, better educated, than the people of fifty years ago..'. In this anniversary year of the publication of George Orwell's book *Nineteen Eighty Four*, the thoughts above of the character Winston Smith provide an interesting list to gauge our idea of progress.

Fortunately, we don't live in a totalitarian state and we can say with some certainty that most of the above has improved in the last fifty years. Unlike many other parts of the world, Ireland is a net beneficiary of globalisation. The success of the economy has become part of a new and more complex Irish identity.

At the heart of this success is the social partnership model. From the early 1990s, it has delivered the conditions for much prosperity. Partnership with its principles of inclusion, mutual respect, consensus, openness, equality and environmental sustainability is faced with conflicting pressures of a commodity-driven culture and increasingly gloomy forecasts on the Irish position in the global economy.

At this moment of uncertainty it is important to consider the impact of the boom years and ask ourselves a number of questions. What changes have occurred in our belief-systems? How has it effected how we see ourselves? What are the consequences for daily life? How has development impacted on the landscape and the built environment of village and town?

The artist Antony Gormley in his address to the *Placing Art* colloquium in Sligo in 2000 said 'there is no question in my mind that the most potent monument that we are leaving to the future is the network of roads and highways and autobahns and freeways that speak of a restlessness that inscribed itself on the skin of the planet.'

Evidence of that restlessness can be found everywhere in Ireland today and along with the achievements of the boom years new problems have emerged. Massive transportation projects are universally understood to be overpriced and over schedule. Cities and towns appear more clogged with traffic than ever. Public transport less than adequate. A significant housing shortage which has artificially inflated property values. A perceived deficit in health care provision. Growing concerns about personal safety in urban areas. The homogenisation of culture, with its implications for the loss of regional and local identities. Real environmental dangers as a result of development and an accelerated flight from the land.

Luke Gibbons, in his paper for the *Placing Art* colloquium 2000, unearths an intriguing quote from Lady Morgan's *Patriotic Sketches of Ireland, 1807*:

'The fairy land of Hazelwood, the bold attitude of Benbu[[]]bin, the beetling brow of Knockna[r]e, the oceans' gleaming line comingling with the horizon, and the town of Sligo spreading irregularly along the base of a lofty hill, crowned with meadows, and successively betrayed by an expanding view..'¹

Gibbons sees this quote as 'a premonition of the Celtic Twilight that would not be out of place in Yeats's imaginary Sligo.'²

Today as you drive through Dromore West towards Sligo town the certainties of this 19th century romantic description seem to shift with the unusual sight of ten 60 metre-high white wind turbines gently rotating in the breeze set against a green mountain backdrop. These unfamiliar signposts unsettle our idea of what landscape is for and would seem to suggest the potential for new narratives to emerge from the familiar at any time.

We are encouraging artists in this new round of public art commissions *Unravelling Developments* to engage with the idea of change and or development as it effects culture, landscape and the built environment.

¹ *Patriotic Sketches of Ireland* (1807), Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan).

² pp. 23-24, 'Space, Place and Public Art: Sligo and its surroundings' by Luke Gibbons in *A Colloquium on Public Art in Rural, Coastal and Small Urban Environments*, 2002.

