

MARIE BARRETT



BORDERLINES

NORTH-55

CREATING
CULTURAL
CORRIDORS

MARIE BARRETT PREVIOUS PROJECTS

The approach has been interdisciplinary, always aiming to combine the transformative power of collaborative public art practice with the rigour and analysis of in-depth action research.

The work of artist Marie Barrett has been primarily concerned with the development of innovative, process-based work in public space. Since the late 1980s Barrett has created a series of site-specific public art works, which have used processes of collaborative engagement and dialogue with specific communities. These projects have typically been articulated in a cross-border context, bringing together divergent community groups. The approach has been interdisciplinary, always aiming to combine the transformative power of collaborative public art practice with the rigour and analysis of in-depth action research.

Over the course of an extensive and diverse series of public art collaborations certain persistent themes, communities of interest and locations have emerged. In terms of identity and location, projects have been cross-community, cross-border and also directly concerned with the border itself. A number of projects have harnessed the River Foyle as a particular site of meaning. Communities of interest have included youth, the unemployed, women's groups, garment factory workers, emigrant and migrant workers. There is an emphasis within Barrett's practice on establishing long-term collaborative alliances: in some instances, it has been possible to re-engage with groups from earlier collaborations to explore a new set of project ideas.

The scope of the work has been both national and international. Projects have been developed through **Sitework**, the Orchard Gallery's public art programme in Derry, the P.S.1. International Studio Programme, New York and the **Artists Work Programme**, Irish Museum of Modern Art. She has been the recipient of several national and

international awards including the Alice Berger Trust Award (Berlin) and the Cultural Relations Travel Award (Quebec). Barrett has conducted extensive research into socially engaged art practice supported by the Arts Council of Ireland's **Community Arts Development Scheme** (2002-2003). She has also pursued ongoing research interests through international conferences and seminars relating to socially connected ways of making art. They have included **New Zones for Critical Practice in Art**, Salford (1994), **Chimera**, Sydney (1995), **Littoral**, Dublin (1998), **InSite**, San Diego/Tijuana (2001), **I confess that I was there**, Belfast, (2006) and **Working in Public: Art, Practice and Policy**, Inverness (2007).

Barrett is a co-founder and currently Artistic Director of North-55, a socially engaged visual arts organisation which develops site-specific public art projects. North-55 engages divergent communities on civic issues on a cross-border basis.

North-55 has shaped a hybrid form of cultural practice that utilises a multi-disciplinary approach, fusing cultural and aesthetic pursuits with community development processes. North-55 has established new coalitions with other arts, community and statutory organisations through long-term partnerships, thus creating a cultural corridor where innovative ideas can be visualised and articulated across the region. North-55 promotes critical art practices and cultural strategies through innovative project work, ongoing research and the creation of public forums.

MARIE BARRETT

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SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1987 Sources, Orchard Gallery, Derry.
- 1988 Derry Unemployed Workers Centre.
- 1989 Irish Arts Centre, London.
- 1991 Irish Arts Centre, New York.
- 1992 Arts Council of Northern Ireland Gallery
- 1993 Artists Work Programme, I.M.M.A., Dublin.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1989 Issues, Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
People at Work, Irish Congress of Trade Unions.
- 1990 Art Festival, Berlin.
Parable Island, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool.
- 1991 International Studio Programme, New York.
- 1992 Ireland-People, Place and Politics, New York.
Exhibition of Visual Art, Limerick.
- 1993 See through Art, Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery, Dublin.
- 1994 Exploding the Myths, Foyle Arts Centre, Derry.
Recite Nomad, Quebec, Canada.
- 1995 L'Imagine Ireland, France.
- 1996 Art in General, New York.
- 1997 Irish Art, Pilshanger Manor, London.

AWARDS

- 1984 Owen Sheehy – Skeffington Travel Award
- 1985 Derek Hill Scholarship.
- 1986 Alice Berger Hammerschlag Trust Award (Berlin).
Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Bordervision
- 1987 Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
Ireland-America Arts Exchange Fellowship, New York.
Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
- 1993 Cultural Relations Committee, (Canada).
- 1994 Artflight, Arts Council of Ireland.
Community Arts Development Scheme, Arts Council of Ireland.
- 1999 Percent for Art Scheme, Donegal Co. Council.
Go-See Award, Arts Council of Ireland.
- 2010 Arts Council of Ireland Travel and Training Award (Cape Town)

PUBLIC ART

- 1988-90 Sitework, Public Art Project, Orchard Gallery, Derry.
- 1989 Impact, Public Art, Derry City Council.
- 1991-95 Collars, See Through Art, Sculptors Society.
- 1990 Art and War, Berlin
- 1991 Emigration Project, New York.
Battering Ram, Sculptors Society.
- 1993 Exploding the Myths, Derry.
- 1994-95 Air Monitoring Sculpture, I.M.M.A.
- 1994 Border Letters sWomen's Programme, I.M.M.A.
- 1996-97 The Event Horizon: Maps of Meaning, I.M.M.A.
- 1997 Cross-Border Programme, Beyond Borders.
- 2005 Turas, Commission, Donegal Co. Council.
- 2002 -03 Dialogues (North-55)
- 2003-04 Transactions (North-55)
- 2005-07 Testimonies of the River (North-55)
- 2008 Remnant (North-55)
- 2009 Borderland (North-55)
- 2010 Landmarks (North-55)
- 2011 Illuminate (North-55)

COLLABORATIVE & LECTURING ACTIVITIES

- 1988 Sitework, Public Art Programme, Orchard Gallery, Derry.
- 1990 Artists Exchange Programme, England.
Artist in Residence, Derry Unemployed Workers Centre.
- 1990 Emigration, London, Commission for Culture and Education
Visiting Artist, NCAD, Dublin.
- 1991 Artist in Residence, P.S.1 Museum, New York.
Artist in Residence, Long Island University.
Artist in Residence, Area Mental Health Unit, Derry
- 1992 Public Art, Derry City Council.
Artist in Residence, Area Mental Health Unit, Derry.
- 1993 Beyond Border, Cross border arts programme.
Area Mental Health Unit, Derry.
- 1994 Artist Work Programme, I.M.M.A.
Women's Exchange Programme, Nicaragua, I.M.M.A.
Synapse, Sydney.
- 1996 The Event Horizon, I.M.M.A.
- 1998 Lecturer, Art Access, Dublin.
- 1999 Lecturer, Dublin Institute of Technology.
- 2000 Suile Programme, Cross border Women's Groups.
- 2001 Tory, Donegal Travellers Project.
- 2002-09 Visiting Lecturer, Community Arts Diploma,
National College of Art and Design
- 2003-09 North-55, cross-border arts programme.
- 2004-09 (BA)Community Development,
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1987 Sources, Orchard Gallery
- 1989 Issues, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- 1990 Art and Politics and Ireland, Brian McAvera
- 1991 International Studio Programme Catalogue, PS1, New York
- 1992 Marie Barrett, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Gallery, Belfast
- 1994 From Beyond the Pale, Artist Work Programme, Irish
Museum of Modern Art
- 1996 Thinking Long: Contemporary Art in the
North of Ireland, Liam Kelly
- 1997 The Event Horizon, the Irish Museum of Modern Art,
Michael Tarantino
- 2004 Conversation Pieces, Community and Communication in
Modern Art, Grant H. Kester
- 2006 Icons of the North: Collective Histories of Northern Irish
Art, Brian McAvera & S.B. Kennedy
- 2009 Troubles Archive, Arts Council Of Northern Ireland.

THE SITEWORK PROJECTS: 1988 – 1990

Sitework was a public art programme developed by the Orchard Gallery in Derry, which aimed to present challenging artworks that reflected the social, political and economic issues relating to public space and public meaning. Barrett delivered these projects in collaboration with members of the Sitework team.

1. SUITCASES IN THE FOYLE 1988-89



A site-specific collaborative project with cross-community youth groups that examined the issue of contemporary emigration from Derry.

Suitcases in the Foyle focused on the most common response to high levels of unemployment at that time in Derry: emigration from the North West of Ireland to London. The project engaged two local youth training schemes, the Derry Youth and Community Workshop which served young people from the catholic community and the Maydown Training Centre, which served young people from the Protestant community. At that time, there was a high level of emigration among young people from both sides of the community. As well as economic conditions, young people cited political conflict and sectarianism as factors in their decision to emigrate. The issue of emigration had a range of social, economic and cultural effects, which impacted on working class catholic and protestant communities alike.

The project took the form of fourteen suitcases that were moored on the River Foyle, Derry. Printed on the suitcases were the names of young people who had recently emigrated. The sculptural form of the suitcases and the names were realised in a series of collaborative workshops between the young people and members of the local community. During the event, the suitcases floated on the river beside the railway station, which for many emigrants was the first place of departure on the journey to London via Belfast International Airport. In earlier times, the river was also the route by which people left to travel by boat to the United States and Canada. For eight weeks from October to November, the suitcases were moored in position during which time a series of workshops and a seminar took place with additional youth and community groups.

The following year the work was a feature of the Irish Arts Festival, which brought the suitcases to a site near the Thames River, London. The work subsequently featured in a multicultural event with Asian and Afro-Caribbean artists. In conjunction with this event, a series of visual art workshops took place with young people from different cultural backgrounds exploring the themes of identity, emigration and relocation.

The project was further developed in 1991, when Barrett was based at the P.S.1 International Studio Programme, New York. Barrett worked with young people attending La Guardia High school who were recent emigrants to the city, the majority of whom had come from places of conflict or political unrest. Many of these young people struggled to maintain a sense of identity in a new country, separated from their roots culturally and geographically. The multi-media project included combining photographs of objects they had brought with them from their country of origin with text written in their own language. This imagery was then printed onto baggage labels that were hung as a temporary installation in subway stations and on the street, creating a context for the young people to express different experiences of relocation and displacement.

Collaborators: Derry Youth and Community Workshop, Maydown Training Centre, St. Josephs Secondary School, St. Peters Secondary School, St Cecilia's Secondary School, Derry Emigration Bureau, The Harbor Commission, Foyle Fisheries, London Irish Commission for Culture and Education, (PS1) International Artist Residency Programme and La Guardia College, New York.

2. DANCE – STATE 1989



A multi-media video project that engaged with local youth in exploring nocturnal life in Derry City.

Dance – State was developed in collaboration with a group of young people attending cross-community youth training schemes in Derry. The project was developed over a nine-month period and took the form of a three minute looped film. The film combined text and soundscapes with imagery of army helicopters, surveillance cameras, taxi drivers and local people to reflect the sometimes surreal experience of the night-time cityscape and the issues for young people as they explored nightlife in the city centre.

Research carried out in advance of the project with Derry City Council identified that the two buildings most frequented by the public at that time were the unemployment exchange and a nightclub called Squires. The video was screened at the nightclub, running simultaneously on 18 video screens on consecutive weekend nights over a period of one month. The film generated considerable interest from the wider community with very positive responses from the participants' peer groups.

The film was subsequently shown in the Hasienda nightclub in Manchester, England. Barrett and others from the Sitework project attended the screenings in Manchester, and gave talks in which they presented an overview of the social and cultural context for the video work. It was estimated that over the entire screening period, approximately four thousand people were given the opportunity to view the work.

Collaborators: Squires Nightclub, The Nerve Centre, Foyle Film Festival, Derry Youth and Community Workshop, Maydown Training Centre, North West Musicians collective, Hasienda nightclub, Rochdale Artists Group.

3. SECURITY – INSECURITY 1990



A short film produced and screened in a number of locations throughout Derry city, which dealt with issues of personal and collective security.

Security-Insecurity took the form of a looped film and accompanying text, which dealt with issues of personal and collective insecurity. Material taken from national and international television coverage was incorporated into the film as well as text which reflected the type of language used by the media to describe the political events taking place in Northern Ireland. Using figurative imagery along with images of checkpoints, barricades, and video cameras, the film also provided a visual commentary on military surveillance. A series of specially produced art pages appeared in the local newspapers to coincide with the film screenings.

Security-Insecurity was screened in five television outlets throughout the city over four consecutive weekends. The film ran simultaneously on all the screens in each outlet, ensuring maximum visibility for passers-by on the street. It was estimated that over the entire screening period, approximately two thousand people were given the opportunity to view the work.

Collaborators: Vision-Hire, Foyle Film Festival, Derry Journal.

4. TARGET 1990



A site-specific public art project that aimed to raise the issue of on-going sectarian violence. The project engaged with local youth from both religious backgrounds.

Target was produced as a direct response to the on-going tit-for-tat murders that were taking place across the province at that time. **Target** aimed to remind the viewer that within an environment of conflict anyone could become either an intentional or accidental victim of violence. The project was collaborative and engaged with two local youth training schemes, one Catholic and one Protestant.

Target consisted of a series of life-size cutout figures placed at regular intervals along the River Foyle embankment, linked to an equivalent series of seemingly anonymous figures on hoardings at Orchard Street. The work was installed overnight without any advanced publicity. The freestanding figures were designed to co-ordinate with the colours and imagery of road signs, the rifle range and surrounding urban paraphernalia camouflaged yet distinguishable from their surroundings as individual targets. The figurative imagery represented on the fence mural, spelled out the word 'Target' in semaphore. The temporary nature of the work provided opportunities to experiment with new ideas in the public domain without the restraints normally encountered with permanent public art.

There was an immediate reaction from the public to this work. A number of the target figures were vandalised and the project attracted a great deal of local comment and national press coverage. The extent of the media response triggered a public debate, which drew views from all sections of the sectarian-religious and political divide.

Collaborators: Derry Youth and Community Workshop, Maydown Training Centre, Derry City Council Roads department, Derry Journal, The Playhouse.

EXPLODING THE MYTHS 1991-1993



A long-term collaborative project developed with the Area Mental Health Unit of the Foyle Health and Social Services Trust and the Orchard Gallery in Derry. The project engaged with residents of Gransha psychiatric hospital as they made the transition from institutional to community care.

Exploding the Myths aimed to reflect the changing ethos of a local psychiatric institution and to provide a means to reclaim patient individuality within the context of making the transition from long stay psychiatric environment to community care.

Barrett worked for three years with a group of long-term residents in the hospital. Using a wide range of media, the group documented the contrast between the wards and workshops where they had previously lived and worked with their newfound independence and dignity as a result of living in sheltered accommodation in the community.

Exploding the Myths visualized and articulated a range of individual viewpoints and experiences of mental illness. In a city divided along sectarian lines **Exploding the Myths** quietly drew attention to the fact that no visible sectarian divide existed between hospital staff, residents and their extended families. The project culminated in a multi media installation and accompanying seminar in the Foyle Arts Centre, Derry. The installation combined audio-visual work, photography and documentation to explore the myths, conjecture, fear, superstition

and hostility surrounding mental illness. The seminar examined the various public perceptions of mental illness and targeted a wide audience, which included the new host communities, local community groups, schools, service users and carers.

Collaborators: Bernard McAnaney, Carmel O’Kane, Dr. Kate Gillispie, Area Mental Health Unit Management Team, (Foyle Health and Social Services Trust), staff and residents of the Oak, Maple, and Ash Villas, Gransha Hospital. Orchard Gallery, Foyle Arts Centre.

COLLARS 1991-1995



A site-specific installation based on the experience of women working in the linen/garment industry in the North West of Ireland.

Collars based on the subject of the linen/garment industry. Shirt making had existed in the North West of Ireland for over a century. Since its inception, there was a well-established practice of having shirts sewn by women in their own homes. This practice, known as “out-working”, led to the development of shirt factories that employed local women. Barrett worked collaboratively with two groups of women from local shirt factories in the development of the project.

The work took the form of fourteen enamel bowls, filled with water with a shirt collar submerged in each. Trade names of collars traditionally used in the production of shirts were printed across the base of the bowls. Additional text on the bowls related to phrases and words associated with the factory, for example, the phrase ‘On the man’s time’ referred to a new employee learning her trade. The bowls, typical of the type used traditionally for domestic tasks, were arranged in a circle.

Collars was exhibited in Donegal, Dublin, Belfast and New York. In New York, the work was further developed through an exhibition and programme of related events entitled ‘The Global Sweatshop’, Art in General, New York (1995). ‘The Global Sweatshop’ programme was carried out in conjunction with the garment workers union, local factory workers and community groups. This programme was investigating the subject of women as a source of labour within the garment industry from a global perspective.

Collaborators: Faulat Factory, Mc Carters Factory (Buncrana), Action Inishowen, Sculptor’s Society of Ireland, Art in General, Garment Workers Union (New York).

BORDER LETTERS 1994



A cross-border visual and written exchange between women from Belfast and Dublin in the period directly after the cease-fire of 1994.

This cross-border project was coordinated by Barrett working with twenty women of various religious backgrounds from North and South of the border. It was part of an event organized by the Family Resource Centre, Inchicore and the Irish Museum of Modern Art. The project took place shortly after an announcement by the IRA of a cease-fire in August 1994.

Barrett facilitated women in Dublin and Belfast to exchange their messages of solidarity and to share their optimism about the recent ceasefire and their hope for peace in Northern Ireland. The women communicated with each other by faxing visual (instant photography) and written material (letters) to each other over the course of the project.

All the material from the exchange was gathered in a book, which was produced for the women who participated.

SAMPLE QUOTES

"We are a group of women from Drimnagh which is four miles from the city of Dublin. We were overjoyed when we heard of peace coming to your homes. We as women and mothers could feel the pain you were going through, and would like to know how you feel today. How has the changes effected your daily lives?"

"Dear women of Drimnagh, One of the brilliant things about peace is that we are beginning to feel able to be more creative and outgoing. Please, please keep in touch, I would love to escape to Dublin for a wee break... I have never been across the border or down there to Dublin before"

"We are thinking of you there in Belfast and we hope you will think of coming to meet us in Dublin. You would be very welcome. You have suffered so much. We admire how you have kept going in all the terrible times of the past twenty-seven years. But now we pray we all can have peace and that the sadness will ease and mothers, sisters, wives and all carers and their dependents will live in comfort and happiness again."

"The edge has been taken off the fear but there is the sense of dancing at the edge of a precipice. How will it all work out – of course, it's wonderful to turn on the local news and not hear about another sectarian murder-it's unreal but sinking in. No, need to barricade the hall every night creating a fire risk-Yes I am not so frightened, so terrified but I'm still watching and listening carefully to the politicians and paramilitaries on both sides. Meanwhile I'm getting involved in women in politics-making sure women are included in any changes for the future and looking forward to the birth of my second child soon"

Collaborators: Irish Museum of Modern Art, Family Resource Center, Old Museum Arts Centre, (Belfast), Drimnagh Centre, Bluebell Women's group, Palmerstown Women's Group.

AIR MONITORING SCULPTURE

1994-1995



A collaborative public art project investigating environmental issues. The project was developed with a group of young people attending a FAS training course in Cabra.

The Air Monitoring Sculpture project, was developed while Barrett was participating in the Irish Museum of Modern Art's **Artist Work Programme**. At that time I.M.M.A. were collaborating with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on the development of their Centenary programme. Over a twelve-month period, Barrett developed the Air Monitoring Sculpture project in collaboration with a group of young people from the FAS training centre at Cabra.

A context for the trainees to begin to explore their own ideas was established via series of introductory visits to the Cabra training centre where Barrett gave slide presentations and organised video screenings of previous work. In the subsequent action research phase environmental issues were identified as the central conceptual theme. There followed a series of research visits to a range of environmental organizations including E.N.F.O and Coast-Watch. An open community studio was developed at Barrett's studio at I.M.M.A. The young people subsequently facilitated environmental education workshops with local children and other community groups, in collaboration with the Community and Education Department at I.M.M.A.

The young people engaged in workshops with Barrett that led to the development of visual blueprints and designs for temporary and permanent air monitoring sculptures. The artist and young people eventually moved their work to the FAS training centre to weld the semi-permanent sculpture they had collectively designed. These sculptures were subsequently sited throughout the Dublin area.

Each phase of the project was presented to the public through an installation in the IMMA studio with support video screenings including an acid rain billboard produced by Friends of the Earth, and a reading room. The trainees took an active role in the public mediation of the project.

Collaborators: Irish Museum of Modern Art, ENFO, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, (Cabra) FAS Training centre, The Greenhouse (Templebar), Coast- Watch, St Josephs school (Cabra).

MAPS OF MEANING – THE EVENT HORIZON I.M.M.A. 1996-1997



A two-year collaborative project that examined Traveller, Gypsy/Roma identity, within a national and European context.

Maps of Meaning was an element of The Event Horizon programme held at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1996-97. As part of this programme of exhibitions, films and projects exploring the theme of European identity, Barrett was invited to initiate and develop a collaborative project, which aimed to examine and represent Traveller and Gypsy/Roma identity within a national and European context.

Links between Barrett and the travelling community were established through national and international traveller support organizations including: Pavee Point Dublin, the Tullamore Travellers Movement, National Travellers Women's Forum, Donegal Travellers Centre and Museum Okregowe (Museum of Gypsy Culture) in Tarnow, Poland, which is the only museum in the world dedicated to the representation of Gypsy/Roma culture.

Tullamore Travellers Movement and Donegal Travellers Centre participated in the project. Workshops took place with these groups in their own centers and at the artist studio at I.M.M.A. Using photography and mixed media the young people and women began to explore issues of access, education and health as well as the significance of the oral tradition and music in travelling culture. The project adopted several forms of dissemination to the wider public including an exhibition of photographic documentation in each of the centers.

The final public mediation of the work featured looped slide projections, illustrated text panels, sound recordings, audiovisual presentations, photography and a book made by women participants, which were exhibited as two installations in the Event Horizon Programme at I.M.M.A.

A public seminar coordinated by Barrett and entitled 'Issues of Representation - Travellers and Gypsies in a European Context' took place during the exhibition. This seminar aimed to question whether the shared identity of Irish Travellers and European Gypsies was determined by commonly perceived and marginalising stereotypes for both groups or by their shared nomadic culture.

National and International Traveller Representative Bodies and project participants took part in the debate. The panel included Catherine Joyce, youth worker and member of the National Travellers Women's Forum, John O'Connell, Director, Pavee Point, and Adam Bartosz, Director of the Museum Okregowe.

Collaborators: Irish Museum of Modern Art, Adam Bartosz, Okregowe Museum of Gypsy Culture, (Poland), Pavee Point (Travellers Centre), Tullamore Travellers Movement, Donegal Travellers Centre, National Travellers Women's Forum.

BEYOND BORDERS 1998



Beyond Borders took place in 1998, and aimed to engage local young people and adults in a collaborative arts process in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing.

In 1992, on returning from the International Studio Programme at PS1 New York, Barrett co-founded Artlink, a community-based art group located in Buncrana. From 1992 to 1998 Barrett developed a series of socially engaged programmes and projects. These programmes encouraged extensive community participation in artistic and developmental processes and fostered a number of long-term partnerships and cross-border collaborations between women's groups, youth groups, the community sector and other cultural organisations.

Taking place in 1998 in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing, **Beyond Borders** aimed to engage local young people and adults in a collaborative arts process. Barrett collaborated with Scoil Isogain and the Omagh Arts Department, in co-coordinating an interdisciplinary arts programme that would engage local young people who had been in Omagh on the day of the bombing.

This included co-coordinating an exhibition for the Tullyvaran Mill entitled **Petals of Hope**. The artwork exhibited was made by young people and cross-community groups, using some of the many flowers that had been sent from all over the world, and placed at the site of the bombing. These flowers were a symbol of sympathy, solidarity and a mark of respect for those killed and injured. This collaborative process created individual artworks for each of the bereaved families. There was a private viewing on the first night of the exhibition for the families from Omagh and Buncrana in the Tullyvaran Mill. The exhibition also included books of condolences sent from all over the world.

NORTH-55: 2002–2011

North-55 is a socially engaged visual arts organisation based in Buncrana Co. Donegal, which develops site-specific public art that engages divergent communities on civic issues on a cross-border basis. Previous projects include Dialogues (2002-2003), Transactions (2003-2004), Testimonies of the River (2005-2007), Remnant (2008), Borderland (2009), and Landmarks (2010).

DIALOGUES 2002–2003



The Dialogues series investigated public space in the border region both as a subject and as a site for work from local, national and international perspectives.

Dialogues was an explorative series of conversations between a wide range of partners drawn from the cultural, community, voluntary and statutory sectors. Spanning 2002 and 2003 six public forums were programmed in a range of cross-community and cross-border locations. In this way the programme acted as a catalyst for creative discourse supporting fluid interchanges between artists, communities and place. The Dialogues series investigated public space in the border region both as a subject and as a site for work from local, national and international perspectives.

Dialogue 1: *Revealing the Region* was an interactive forum which took place on board a chartered boat that made its way along the River Foyle from Derry into Donegal, thus circumnavigating the border. The programme combined audio-visual presentations with discussion groups. Over fifty participants took part in the event including curator Declan McGonagle, Mary McCarthy, National Sculpture Factory, Shauna McClenaghan, Inishowen Development Partnership, Ian Hunter, Littoral, Jenny Stuart, Peace and Reconciliation Programme and Martin Mularkey, The Nerve Centre.

Subsequent Dialogues events were carried out in collaboration with the International Conflict Research Centre (INCORE) University of Ulster, the Playhouse, Social Economy Agency, B.A. in Community Development (LYIT), and Inishowen Community Radio.

Dialogues enabled North-55 to solicit public input from an unusually broad set of perspectives, building on existing partnerships and creating new collaborative networks. The dialogues series also enabled North-55 to analyse and understand more precisely the various interests that converge when an invitation is extended to represent different 'visions' about art in public space.

Collaborators: Inishowen Development Partnership, International Conflict Research Centre (INCORE) University of Ulster, the Nerve Centre, City Bridges, Social Economy Agency, the Playhouse, B.A. in Community Development (LYIT), and Inishowen Community Radio.

TRANSACTIONS 2003–2004



Transactions aimed to create a model of practice that could be used by other community and cultural agencies.

Transactions was activated in 2003 as a series of parallel research programmes. The **Transactions** series used the model of a Community Design Charette, which is a discursive device borrowed from architecture, to bring together teams of people to develop ideas around the themes of periphery, identity, community and cultural participation. The Transaction series also included exchange with international artists, arts organisations and curators.

Transaction1: *Location and community* took place in collaboration with Rick Lowe, Founding Director of Project Row Houses, Houston, Texas. Rick was in conversation with arts and community development practitioners and local council members about issues that emerge in relation to the development of cultural work within communities in an international context and within the region locally. Participants included Michael Heaney, Director Culture and Environment Unit, Donegal County Council, Annette Patton, Manager, Social Economy Solutions, Annette Moloney Public Art Specialist, Arts Council of Ireland and Ailbhe Murphy, Artist.

Subsequent charette-like events in the *Transactions* series were carried out in collaboration with the Inishowen Development Partnership and the Social Inclusion Programme.

Transactions aimed to create a model of practice that could be used by other community and cultural agencies. An air of consensus and exchange prevailed in this work, redefining the potential of cultural practices through an exploration and critical interface with local communities.

Collaborators: Project Row Houses, Arts Council of Ireland, Inishowen Development Partnership, Social Inclusion Programme, CAIT Initiative, Culture and Environment Unit (Donegal County Council), STEPS Lone Parent Project, Farset (Cross Border Initiative), International Conflict Research Centre, (INCORE) University of Ulster, Moville Family Resource Centre, Community Workers Co-op, Department of Urban Studies Rutgers University at Camden and Limavady College.

TESTIMONIES OF THE RIVER

2005–2007



A long-term, site-specific public art project devised and directed by Marie Barrett for North-55, which aimed to animate the public space of the River Foyle.

Testimonies of the River was an innovative public art project which engaged with local communities in order to critically reposition the voices and experiences of local people in the realm of cultural and civic discourse. Conceived as a process of socio-cultural mapping, **Testimonies of the River** worked with communities which hold factors other than geography or politico-religious identity in common, such as long-term unemployment, early school leaving and lone parenthood. Testimonies of the River used a variety of conceptual approaches and innovative artistic forms in order to evoke and go beyond the specific thematic of the border itself.

The River Foyle flows through the Donegal/Derry hinterland and is viewed as both a neutral space and as a connecting force. The river is accessed by both religious traditions and urban/rural communities alike. **Testimonies of the River** evoked associations that already have common currency in the consciousness of the people of the area, with the river acting as a metaphor, a point of departure and an actual site.

Action Research (2005-2006)

In 2005 **Testimonies of the River** engaged directly with a range of individuals and groups in a number of multi media works, which investigated the community's responses and connections to the river environment. Working with two visual artists and a radio producer, those involved included young people, divers and fishermen from the Greencastle, (Donegal) and Magilligan (Derry) areas. Using photography and audio-visual recording, a range of testimonies were gathered which spoke of life on the river, the decommissioning of boats and the invisible 'border line' in the water.

In 2006 the project developed as a collaboration between North-55 and New York-based artist collective ConjunctionArts. Artists from both organisations co-facilitated a series of workshops with the Cathedral Youth Club and the Glen Youth Club. These young people from opposite sides of the religious divide, explored how they navigate the river environment, how they negotiate the interface areas of the city and how they deal with points of tension such as the marching season. These explorations, enriched by intergenerational perspectives, were reflected in a series of oral testimonies, photographic portraits and video recordings.

In 2006 the project also concentrated on communities closer to the river's source. The process of gathering audio/visual testimonies from individuals and communities along both sides of the waters route was extended to include those of both emigrants and new immigrants to the area.

Public Art Event and Seminar (2007)

In 2007 **Testimonies of the River** culminated in a large-scale public art event on the River Foyle. Over four consecutive weekends from mid September, the various testimonies of the diverse communities, which inhabit the environs of the River Foyle, emanated from the tannoy system of the ferry as it traversed the border in a broadcast event entitled **Transmission**. The ferry operates a critical link across the river, which separates Donegal's Inishowen Peninsula and the Antrim Coastline of Northern Ireland.

TRANSMISSION reflected a collective narrative that spoke of life on the river, the decommissioning of boats, the invisible border line in the water, socio-economic change and diving to find a World War II bomber. It also included extracts from 'Hovering above the Sea' composed by 3Epkano, a contemporary music collective and the last transmission of morse code signal from Malin Head radio station. The river itself became a visual element within the work, framing the voices contained in the audio recordings, thus creating a live performative public artwork. **Transmission** was also audible at various locations along the rivers edge and on Inishowen Community Radio.

A time-lapse film portrait of the River Foyle accompanied the sound work. Over the course of a day, two cameras recorded the river from fixed viewpoints at Greencastle, Co Donegal and Magilligan Point, Co Derry. The imagery reflects the night time navigation of ships, Magilligan Prison, Martello Towers, local people and the flow and ebb of the river itself. This film was projected as a site-specific audio-visual installation in the Planetarium at the Maritime Museum.

To extend the location-based dialogue and create an open forum for communication, audience members and the wider public are invited to submit their audio testimonies on the theme of the river through a number of cross-border community networks.

This month long event engaged a daily audience of over one thousand people made up of students, deliverymen, commuters, local people and tourists among others, as they traversed the river on the Foyle Ferry. In September a public seminar entitled 'Civic Testimonies' brought together artists, participants, critics, academics and others to respond to the **Testimonies of the River** project. Speakers included Mary Jane Jacob, Independent Curator, Chair and Professor of Sculpture at the School of Art Institute Chicago, Russell Lewis, Executive Vice President of the Chicago History Museum and Board president of the not-for-profit Street Level Youth Media and Sophie Hope, Curator, evaluator and researcher B + B Curators, London.

Collaborators: Inishowen Development Partnership, Maritime Museum, Foyle Ferries, Customs Staff, River Foyle Pilot, Magilligan Field Centre, Derry Port, Foyle Rescue, Coast Guard, Loughs Agency, Inishowen Sub-Aqua Club, Inishowen Rural Development Ltd, Moville Community College, Greencastle/Moville/Magilligan Youth Groups, The Playhouse, The Nerve Centre, The Cathedral Youth Club, The Glen Youth Club, ConjunctionArts.

REMNANT 2008



A long-term, collaborative public art project that reflected the experiences of local people who had worked in the linen/garment industry in the North-West region. The project also found resonance within the transnational politics of labour supply.

Remnant was a cross-border, participatory public art project that visualised and articulated elements of the working lives of women and men who were central to the linen/garment industry in the North-West region. Remnant recorded contemporary and historical elements of linen/garment factory work and culture. Audio-visual workshops took place with forty participants, who were ex-factory workers, to document their experiences. Through oral testimonies, photographic portraits and video recordings these workshops gathered a range of perspectives. Remnant culminated in an audio-visual installation and large-scale projection event at Fort Dunree from the 28th November to the 12th December 2008.

The linen/garment industry existed in the North-West for over a century and had been a major source of employment. It had a major presence in the area over the last twenty years, employing over 3,500 people in plants across the county. This has had a significant impact on social-cultural identity - young people, particularly females, left school early to work in local factories and generations of the same family often worked in the industry.

At its height 10,000 people worked in more than 30 shirt factories in Derry. The industry received a mention in *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx when discussing the factory system:

The shirt factory of Messrs. Tille at Londonderry, which employs 1000 operatives in the factory itself, and 9000 people spread up and down the country and working in their own houses.

Part IV, Chapter XV (first published in 1867)

The project has found resonance within the current socio-economic climate. Garment sector production has now become highly globalised and characterized by continual waves of relocation. The North-West has been transformed socially and economically by the unraveling of the once dominant textile industry.

The exhibition presents large-scale photographs of derelict factories. These images reveal ghostly signage that reflects their former use and occupancy. The photographs make visible an urban and rural archaeology which chronicles local social history. Visitors to the exhibition could simultaneously listen to audio testimonies.

The **Remnant** film includes footage of factory buildings, people at work and a wide range of participant narratives which epitomised an era. The soundtrack also features extracts from the Frank McGuinness play **The Factory Girls**. His play explores the story of five women who, facing the threat of redundancy, stage a lock-in in a shirt factory in Co Donegal.

'Not factory women, factory girls. Everyone here is a factory girl. Factory girls never grow old and they don't fade away'

Frank McGuinness, The Factory Girls

Communal singing was a strong tradition in local factories. Evoking that tradition, the soundtrack includes the recorded singing of Masie Grant, who was a local factory worker along with extracts from instrumental music that factory workers in Derry would sing along to. Typically these instrumentals were piped onto the factory floor from the BBC radio programme *Music While You Work*. The film also features the sound of the shirt factory horn, symbolising the last post for the factories.

Collaborators: Inishowen Development Partnership + the EVEN training course for ex-factory employees, Inishowen Community Radio, Inishowen Women's Information Network, Inishowen Rural Development Limited, Social Economy Agency, Glenaden Shirt Factory, Tuas/Centres for Adult Learning, McCarters Factory, Fort Dunree, The Playhouse, The Verbal Arts Centre, The Nerve Centre.

BORDERLAND 2009



With a view to capturing the cultural and psychological borders which people encountered on a daily basis, the project gathered recollections on the lived experience of the border crossing between Derry City and the Inishowen Peninsula.

Borderland was a cross-border participatory public art project, which reflected the memories, lived experiences and current realities of communities living in an evolving post-conflict society.

With a view to capturing the cultural and psychological borders which people encountered on a daily basis, the project gathered recollections on the lived experience of the border crossing between Derry City and the Inishowen Peninsula. Experiences of over fifty local participants were gathered via workshops which employed a range of multi-media and documentary strategies including oral testimonies, photography, archival research and participation in film production.

Borderland culminated in a site specific public art installation and screening of the B-239 film in the Plaza Ballroom, Buncrana. The Plaza Ballroom and other dancehalls such as the Borderland in Muff had a particular resonance as significant sites of social exchange for people from both sides of the border from the early 1940s onwards and throughout the period of the Troubles in the 1970s and 80s. The B-239 film takes its name from one of those formerly unapproved B roads that traverses the border region and includes footage of the border itself, former border crossings and the B roads that intersect the local geography.

The **Borderland** exhibition at the Plaza also included large-scale photographs taken by participants around the border area of Derry and Donegal and presented *Projecting Borders*, a screening programme of national and international documentary films. These films gave an insight into the multi-faceted experience of people who cross borders and boundaries in a range of political, cultural, and social contexts.

Collaborators: Inishowen Development Partnership, Immigrant Outreach Project (IDP), The Playhouse, Inishowen Community Radio, The Verbal Arts Centre, The Nerve Centre, Family Resource Centre, Moville, Tullyally & District Resource Centre, Muff Community Development Co-op, Quigley's Point Community Centre, Crana College, Buncrana, St Mary's College, Derry, St Cecelia's College, Derry, Inishowen Woman's Information Network, (BA) Community Development LYIT, Shared City Project Derry.

LANDMARKS 2010



The project sought to evoke the memories, lived experiences and current realities of communities living in evolving, post–conflict societies.

Landmarks was a participatory cross-border art project which explored the cultural and social complexities of place. The project sought to evoke the memories, lived experiences and current realities of communities living in evolving, post–conflict societies.

Landmarks sought to engender new international connections through a residency programme which connected local experience of the border region to experiences of displacement and conflict in post-apartheid South Africa. Working with artist Rod Sauls from District Six in Cape Town, project participants created work in photography and film. The residency programme also engaged Dublin-based *Vagabond Reviews* and Photographer Paola Bernadelli. These workshops employed a range of media and documentary strategies including photography, archival research and participation in film production. Over thirty participants took part in **Landmarks** including local women and community development leaders.

Landmarks presented work in photography and film which drew on a number of local sites of displacement including the decommissioned Lough Swilly railway line, which until 1953 connected Donegal and Derry. Archival footage from District Six in the 1960s, prior to the displacement of its residents and the demolition of their homes, also features.

Landmarks culminated in a site specific exhibition and screening of a filmwork entitled *Low Intensity*. The film features a conversation between artist Rod Sauls, Derry participant Bernadette Mahon and Donegal based John Coyle about everyday life experiences in conflict situations set against contemporary urban Derry.

Low Intensity was screened at the former Stables Block at Ebrington Barracks in October 2010. Ebrington Barracks is located on the East Bank of the River Foyle, in Derry. The barracks was built in 1841 within its own defensive wall and used as a naval and military base until recent times. The exhibition of this work at Ebrington was timely in that the barracks is a key site for development in relation to the City of Culture programme for 2013.

The project was linked to the Playhouse (Derry) ICAN programme in 2010. The work was further contextualised through an international conference which assembled and drew on local, national and international contributors to consider how collaborative and contemporary visual art and culture impact upon conflict zones and the social, political and economic changes that evolve from this type of work. Conference contributors included Mary Jane Jacob (Curator), Bonita Bennett (Director, District Six Museum, Orla Moloney (Head of Arts Participation, Arts Council of Ireland) and Caoimhín Corrigan, (Cultural Broker Ilex).

Collaborators: Rod Sauls, Bonita Bennett, District Six Museum, Mark Abrahams (Cape Town), Inishowen Development Partnership, Immigrant Outreach Project (IDP), Second-Chance-Education Programme, Vagabond Reviews, Ilex/Ebrington Barracks, The Playhouse, Paola Bernadelli, Elisabeth Zeindlinger.

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