

Pavilion of Ireland at the 60th International  
Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Commissioned by Culture Ireland in  
partnership with the Arts Council Ireland

With principal sponsorship from Dublin  
City Council for Ireland at Venice 2024

La Biennale di Venezia

60. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

# ROMANTIC IRELAND

## Eimear Walshe

Curated by Sara Greavu and Project Arts Centre

Culture Ireland in partnership with the Arts Council is delighted to present *ROMANTIC IRELAND*, an exhibition by Eimear Walshe curated by Sara Greavu and Project Arts Centre for the Irish Pavilion at the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

Through a practice that spans video, sculpture, publishing, sound, and performance, Eimear Walshe's work traces the legacies of late 19th century land contestation in Ireland and its relation to private property, sexual conservatism, and the built environment.

*ROMANTIC IRELAND* comprises a multi-channel video installation and an operatic soundtrack housed in an immersive sculpture. Set on the site of an unfinished earth build, the video stages soapy, dramatic encounters between character archetypes from the 19th–21st centuries. These figures occupy an abstracted ruin, a site under simultaneous construction and demolition. The pavilion soundtrack is a five-voice opera describing the scene of an eviction, composed by Amanda Feery with a libretto by Walshe.

Walshe's project explores the complex politics of collective building through the Irish tradition of the *meitheal*: a gang of workers, neighbours, kith and kin who come together to build, harvest and cooperate in mutual aid. It depicts a frenzied and fraught engagement with the ancient labour-intensive practice of earth building, a form of construction with an 11,000 year history and local iterations across the world. The video work was shot on location at the sustainable skills centre, Common Knowledge, on Ireland's west coast. Led by choreographer Mufutau Yusuf, a group of seven performers, including the artist, enact characters in constantly rupturing historical dyads. This was filmed on four mobile phones passed between each actor, blurring the traditional distinction between director, performer, and camera person.

Made in the shadow of the ongoing housing crisis in Ireland, the installation becomes, variously, a building site of possibility, a wrestling ring for Ireland's generational and class antagonisms, a space of tender care, and a structure made into a cold ruin by the social death of eviction.



Production still: Eimear Walshe, *ROMANTIC IRELAND*, 2023. Photo © Faolán Carey.

The exhibition forces encounters between historic moments, and draws out their parallel power dynamics and affective registers; their forms of labour, conflict and pleasure; the entangled histories of sexuality, property, and the state.

“There are a lot of insights from Irish history that we owe it to the wider world to share,” Walshe states. “Life on the island – its history of colonisation, revolution, and partition – provides so many opportunities to re-enact historical traumas, so many invitations to betrayal of our past, our neighbours, and ourselves. We are a colonised nation, and yet we aid in the colonisation of others. Some of us were dispossessed, and went on to do the same ourselves. History doesn’t split the difference. This is where the work for Venice emerges from.”

*ROMANTIC IRELAND* is representative of what curator Sara Greavu describes as: “a swelling Irish cultural revival, increasingly visible across artforms, that has received national and international interest. Walshe’s work is not nostalgic or relying on imagined mythologies, and it is not nativist, but is opening out and reconfiguring, sensitively displacing and embracing these elements as it prefigures alternative social relationships.”

Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, comments: “I wish Eimear Walshe, Sara Greavu, and Project Arts Centre the very best of luck as they represent Ireland at the 2024 Venice Biennale. This is an enormous achievement and opportunity for both artist and country. Participation at the Venice Biennale increases awareness of Ireland’s strong visual arts sector and provides the artist with an international platform for their work. My Department through Culture Ireland commissions Ireland at Venice in partnership with the Arts Council, and it is an important date in our cultural calendar. I’m wishing everyone involved the very best of luck at the Biennale this year.”

*ROMANTIC IRELAND* is on view at the Biennale Arte 2024 from 20 April to 24 November, 2024. After Venice, Walshe’s exhibition will tour nationally through 2025, returning to locations and communities across Ireland that have helped to inspire and foster the making of the work.

## The Irish Pavilion at the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

### ROMANTIC IRELAND

Press view days: 17 April 2024 – 19 April 2024  
 Pavilion launch: Thursday 18 April, 11.30 am  
 Artist Tours: Wednesday 17 April, 3pm  
 Thursday 18 April, 3pm  
 Curator Tours: Wednesday 17 April, 11am  
 Thursday 18 April, 1pm  
 Exhibition dates: 20 April 2024 – 24 November 2024  
 Location: Irish Pavilion, Artiglierie Arsenale

### Follow for Updates:

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**Ireland at Venice** is an initiative of Culture Ireland in partnership with the Arts Council. With Principal Sponsorship from Dublin City Council for Ireland at Venice 2024.

**Eimear Walshe** (b. Longford, 1992, they/them) is an artist from Longford, Ireland. Their work traces the legacy of late 19th-century land contestation in Ireland through private property, sexual conservatism, and the built environment. They travel across the island of Ireland, screening, reading, and performing their work. They have recently exhibited with Van Abbemuseum, EVA International, the National Sculpture Factory, Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, with work held in the collections of the Arts Council and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

**Sara Greavu** (she/her) lives and works between Derry and Dublin and is the Curator of Visual Arts at Project Arts Centre, Dublin. A researcher, writer and organiser, Greavu’s recent projects include the archive exhibition *We realised the power of it*, at EVA International in collaboration with Ciara Phillips and former members of Derry Film and Video Workshop. An iteration of this work opened in IMMA in March 2024.

**Project Arts Centre** was founded by artists in 1966 and was Ireland’s first arts centre. As Ireland’s foremost centre for the development and presentation of contemporary arts, Project offers the public over 600 events annually & reaches an audience of over 50,000 people, as well as supporting the presentation of work, and national & international touring, by independent artists.

With support from Dublin Port, The Office of Public Works, The National Museum of Ireland, the Embassy of Ireland Italy, The Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland Invites, Longford County Council, The Limerick School of Art and Design, Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT), the UCD School of Art History, and our patrons and donors: Keith & Yvonne Browne, Peter Crowley, Anna Devlin & Paul Gannon, Gerard & Monica Flood, Emma & Fred Goltz, Helen Kinsella, Adrian & Jennifer O’Carroll, Louise Church, Paul & Liz Duggan, Niall Ennis, Kathy Gilfillan, Simone Janssens, Anne Kennedy, Lochlann Quinn, Dave Raethorne, Odette Rocha and Richard Whelan.



Cultúr Éireann  
Culture Ireland



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Fáilte, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán  
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



OPW  
Oifig na hOibreánas  
Office of Public Works



**Amanda Feery** is a composer working with acoustic, electronic, and improvised music, having written for chamber and vocal ensembles, film, theatre, and opera. Amanda was the Mark Nelson Fellow in Music at Princeton University, completing her PhD in Music Composition in 2019. Whilst in the U.S, she formed collaborative relationships with a number of musicians including Alarm Will Sound, Third Coast Percussion, Quince Vocal Ensemble, and Amanda Gookin. Closer to home, past collaborators include Crash Ensemble, the National Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Choir Ireland, and Lina Andonovska. Her work has been featured at New Music Dublin, Gleo, and Dublin Fringe Festival, among others. Her 2019 residency at Centre Culturel Irlandais focused on recording improvisations on public pianos in Paris. Recent projects include *A Thing I Cannot Name*, an opera film commissioned by Irish National Opera with libretto by Megan Nolan, and *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra.

**Mufutau Yusuf** is a Nigeria-born Irish performer, choreographer, teacher, and curator based between Ireland and Brussels. A graduate of Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance, Mufutau is a dancer with Wim Vandekeybus/Ultima Vez in Belgium and in Ireland with Liz Roche Company and John Scott's IMDT. As a performer, he has worked with Emma Martin/United Fall, Catherine Young Dance, Pan Pan Theatre, Anton Lackhy, Ricardo Ambrozio, Ian Kaler, to name a few. Mufutau debuted his first full length work in 2022, titled *Owe*, which premiered in New York and subsequently at Dublin Fringe Festival and various other venues and festivals across Ireland. Mufutau is an associate artist with Solstice Arts Centre and Liz Roche Company and a recipient of the Irish Arts Council Dance Bursary award 2020 and Project Award 2022 and 2023. Mufutau is also a co-curator of 'TW1' (Train With One), a bi-monthly workshop platform which aims to bridge the gap between the Irish contemporary dance scene with that of continental Europe.

#### **Artistic Collaborators**

Rima Baransi – Performer, camera, co-direction  
Cillian Byrne – Performer, camera, co-direction  
Faolán Carey – Production photographer  
Ghaliah Conroy – Performer, camera, co-direction  
Ailbhe W Drohan – Performer, camera, co-direction  
Amie Egan – Costumes  
Amanda Feery – Composer  
Kieran Ferris – Set build manager  
Dr. Lisa Godson – Research consultant  
Andreas Kindler von Knobloch – Architectural modelling  
Niamh Moriarty – Lead project producer  
Ethan Soost – Performer, camera, co-direction  
Alex Synge – designer  
Mufutau Yusuf – Lead choreographer, performer, camera, co-direction

#### **Organisational Collaborators**

Common Knowledge – production partner  
Drop Everything – launch event partner  
eo/a – installation / build partner

#### **Ireland at Venice**

Ireland was previously represented at the Biennale Arte by Niamh O'Malley (2022), Eva Rothschild (2019), Jesse Jones (2017), Sean Lynch (2015), Richard Mosse (2013).

Since 2005, national representation at the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia has been a Government initiative led by Culture Ireland in partnership with The Arts Council. Both partners consider the Biennale Arte to be a remarkable opportunity for artists' development and for Irish curators to work in an international context. Following their presentation, the Ireland at Venice exhibition will return for a National Irish Tour.

An open call is issued biennially by Culture Ireland as Commissioner for Ireland at Venice to invite expressions of interest for the appointment of the Curator and Artist of Ireland's National representation at Venice. The selection of the team to represent Ireland is made following an open, competitive process with international jury members, in partnership with Culture Ireland and The Arts Council.

The Arts Council is excited to be in a position to continue to support the Irish presentation of the Ireland at Venice National Tour, as part of their commitment to the ten-year strategy: 'Making Great Art Work' which supports artists to create ambitious, innovative work and to engaging work.



Production still: Eimear Walshe, *ROMANTIC IRELAND*, 2023. Photo © Faolán Carey.

#### **Exhibition Mediators**

Exhibition mediators are always a hugely important part of Ireland's presence in Venice, being the key point of contact with the public. This year, Project Arts Centre, with the support of Culture Ireland, have built on the successes of past pavilions and have improved access and reduced barriers for people applying for this important role. In 2024, in addition to the mediators' salary, a number of bursaries have been made available for mediators who need some additional support. Curator Sara Greavu says, "Not everyone can take six weeks off work, or pay for their accommodation at home in Ireland as well as living abroad on a basic salary. People with disabilities might require accommodations or assistance. People with dependents might need to consider who could fill in for them at home. People without generational wealth or family support might need some extra backing to give a firm foundation and allow them to take up this opportunity." Project Arts Centre are grateful for consultation sessions with Arts & Disability Ireland, Praxis Artist Union, and former mediators regarding these changes.