

Elizabeth Woods & Kevin Leong  
Curators / Lead Artists

James Bilson  
Colette Beausang  
Mike Cleary  
Kate Damery  
Lucy Dawe-Lane  
Lynne-Marie Dennehy  
Sera Ellis  
Roisin Everard  
Nicole Flanagan  
Pauline Gibbons  
Michelle Hardwick  
Mark Hathaway  
John Hennessy  
Patricia Hoffie  
Fiona Kelly  
Peter Kidney  
Willie Maloney  
Jerome McCormick  
Maaike Mijland  
Catherine Murray  
Peter Nash  
Inge Nieuwstraten  
Breandán O'Brien  
Diarmaid Ó Cadhla  
Melanie O'Driscoll  
Bill O'Flynn  
Caroline O'Sullivan  
Anne Roche  
Claire Ryan  
Stephen Thornhill

See you  
tomorrow

***Notes for Visitors***  
*by Patricia Hoffie*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Producer: Claire Ryan

Writer: Emer. Prof. Patricia HOFFIE, AM

### Sirius Arts Centre

Director: Miranda Driscoll

#### Staff:

Carmen Apuniewicz

Anne Halligan

Richard Mulcahy

Nico Nieuwstraten

Mary O'Dea

Megan O'Driscoll

Claire Ryan

Brian Mac Domhnaill

Willie Maloney

### Cobh Youth Centre / Chill on the Hill

#### YMCA Cobh

2019 Students of the STEP Programme

### Crawford College of Art and Design

#### Advisors

Christine Pybus

Inge Nieuwstraten

Willie Maloney

Cullan Joyce

Installation Assistant: Corinne Lacorne

Mary O'Leary

Planet Organic

## See you tomorrow an overview

### Elizabeth Woods & Kevin Leong in partnership with the Sirius Arts Centre and the people of Cobh

The exhibition *See You Tomorrow*, held as the 2019 iteration of the Sirius Art Centre's *This Must Be The Place*, is a culmination of a series of events, discussions, interviews, interactions, performances and programmes lead by Australian based artists Elizabeth Woods and Kevin Leong, a duo who have worked on projects informed by relational aesthetics and a commitment to building community cohesion and critical thinking and action at a range of international destinations for many decades.

This particular project has been some five years in the making, and as it has evolved, the network of artists participating has increased, deepened and now, as it can be seen, interconnected. Although Woods and Leong place strong emphasis on the processes with which they approach their work, the fact that it emerges, at this stage of their work as a visual art exhibition situated in a gallery, is also important to them.

Apart from its contribution to the ongoing importance of Cobh's own art history (the significance of which has been amply demonstrated by the series of projects surrounding Sirius Arts Centre's research and development of the Brian O'Doherty/Patrick Ireland series of projects) this exhibition also provides an opportunity for all the artists, supporters, audiences and community groups they have worked with over this extended period of time to witness how their own contribution has augmented the project as a whole.

There are a number of common denominators that run across all sub-currents of the project: the very title of the exhibition, *See You Tomorrow*, reflects the project's deep commitment to working towards a positive, energetic and creatively productive *future* for the communities of Cobh.

## **See you tomorrow a description of the components**

The second, crucially important factor, is that Woods and Leong have taken great pains to build a radical hospitality at the centre of each of their engagements. They spend an almost overwhelming amount of time cooking for people, serving them and seeking ways of giving agency to ideas that already exist within the community, rather than to operate as FiFo (fly-in-fly-out) visual arts workers with all the answers.

The third factor lies with the imperatives of consultation and communication: the commitment the artists share about the necessity of what they describe as 'deep listening' to the people with whom they work.

The methodologies Woods and Leong adapt and commit to are rare – they take time, courage, and a willingness to see things to the end. In a world where time is money, they are even more rare at taking time out to make sure things work out. This kind of dedication is reflected in all of their art projects. But this particular one has been of acutely long duration, and has been maintained by patterns of flight right across the world and back. In terms of their own long and diverse careers as artists, and even in terms of any other projects run with similar objectives, *See You Tomorrow* stands the test as being a long, deep and richly layered love-letter to the town and people of Cobh.

*See You Tomorrow* is a project in eight parts. Each of the parts emerged from the shared belief that Cobh offers its communities special opportunities for sharing, for remembering, and for moving towards exciting, interesting and unexpected futures.

Cobh's role as a departure-point for new futures is well established; its location on one of the world's most magnificent harbours has been the site where over three million hopes and dreams began their journey as Irish migrants set off towards new futures.

This project, a collaborative, cross-continent initiative, has been five years in the making. And this iteration of it as a gallery exhibition is yet another node in what we all hope will be an ongoing, developing journey.

The following projects share common denominators:

- (a) The belief that art practice offers opportunities for shared objectives, icons, directions and outcomes;
- (b) The belief that community projects offer ways of strengthening connections of people to other people as well as to place and time.
- (c) The belief that art can offer us alternative ways of seeking respectful connections in a new world order
- (d) The belief that taking time to sit and look and listen and share is an investment that pays back into all aspects of daily life.

The ten projects are as follows:

- 1** *The Green Light* is a temporary public art project inviting audience members to participate in a minimal way. Through agreeing to install a green light in the window of their homes, each household is literally 'giving the green light' to moving Cobh towards a bright new future; one that draws from, but that is not mired in the past, as is often portrayed in populist touristic propaganda about Cobh's value as a destination of interest.
- 2** The wall mural titled *From Above*, that will be worked on for the duration of the installation by well-known Cobh based artist Mark Hathaway, explodes the traditional scale and approaches of watercolour into a wall-sized mural depicting a drone's-eye view of the Cobh waterfront radiating out from the axis of the Sirius Arts Centre. In every sense, the image responds to the celebrations of *See You Tomorrow*, where the town's epi-centre is centrally re-located, implying the importance of its role as 'the heart of the matter' of everyday Cobh life.
- 3** *A Sirius Bakery* developed when Cobh's local bakery closed in 2016. As a premise that drew inspiration from the positive values of literally role of 'putting bread on the table' of locals, *A Sirius Bakery* has gathered together a range of domestic bread machines that were 'panic-purchased' when word got out that the bakery was closing down. Over the term of the exhibition, *A Sirius Bakery* will produce a series of bespoke, artisan-created loaves with site-specific references relating to local themes, particular landscapes and specific people. The bread loaves reflect local landmarks and mountainous knolls. They are a celebration of meeting and speaking and sharing and breaking bread together, all re-established within the parameters of a contemporary art space.
- 4** The *Vacant Buildings Appreciation Society* arose from analysis revealing the high primacy of local concern for the growing number of local buildings no longer used as viable small businesses. Local concerns come from the fact that these buildings might be seen to stand as signs of the decline of the town.  
  
When applications for physical access into these buildings proved too difficult to achieve in terms of the project's resources, the VBAS made the decision to instead offer imaginative ways of repurposing the sites, thus forming an ersatz "Society" where members are joined by their capacity to dream up positive, productive and often alternative uses for vacant sites.
- 5** For *The Long Table*, eleven local candidates sit together in audience with locals within a room in the Sirius Arts Centre. Timed to coincide with the run-up to local county elections, *The Long Table* offers an opportunity to share discussion and to seek ways of furthering cohesive action between the local candidates. The project arose from the high level of responses from local audiences detailing how much faith had been lost in the capacity of politicians to respond to the crucial problems and challenges we now face. *The Long Table* offers a means of working towards transparency, trust and coherence.
- 6** *Me and My Mate Manners* is a childrens' book auspiced by the YMCA and Chill on the Hill Youth organisation. The project arose from discussions where local Cobh youth members expressed their concerns about intergenerational tensions in the community. These concerns resulted in two outcomes: the first, *Me and My Mate Manners*, introduces the basic principles of etiquette through the character of a small Cobh boy who befriends a local heron called Manners.
- 7** *Etiquette for Cobh-heads and Old Folks* comes from local slang for youth living in Cobh, with "Old Folk", a term referring to everyone over the age of thirty-five. Drawing from stories describing incidents where youth felt they had been treated unfairly or disrespectfully by older members of the community, workshops drew out an awareness of the way faults are always "on both sides".

The resulting manual or rule-book details some prototypes seen from “both sides of the story”, and as such is offered as a draft for a rule-book of etiquette seeking to establish a more congenial basis for future interactions. While this publication has drawn largely from consultation from a particular youth demographic, it is offered as the grounds for further discussion rather than as a final instruction manual.

**8** *Sign Bearers* is a performance-based poetry work where two local artists signal, in semaphore, a poem they have written about the hawthorn tree, a species steeped in myth and legend and one that draws from the past to make positive connections with the present and the future. Cobh’s location on its internationally famous harbour and its historical role in shipping and maritime exercises had contributed to a higher-than-usual proficiency in the otherwise arcane language of semaphore

**9** *Meeting Your Future Self with Kindness and Compassion* seeks to slow down communication within the rushed tempo of everyday life. As a performative project by local meditation facilitator Michelle A. Hardwick, the immersive process is based on a guided meditation through time via an audio recording. It offers a way of heightening participants’ awareness of their sense of being located in a specific time and place. *Meeting Your Future Self* also introduces considerations about the value of other forms of spiritual sustenance that complement traditional methods used by the church.

**10** *Evolution Interviews* with Cobh residents and collaborators are recordings that document initial and ongoing processes of consultation. These videos are recorded evidence of the processes of engagement that lie at the core of all layers of this long project, and have been produced in the hope that these shared conversations will be carried well into the future.

Some considerations arising from the project:

### **What is art?**

Make no mistake – art is NOT a noun.

People like to *think* that it is a noun, because they like to think of it as an *object*.

And if they can think of it as an object, they think they can *control* it: they can frame it; they can pin it to a wall or keep it in a black box or a white box.

Or – even better (they think) - they can buy it or sell it.

But all those approaches are ways of trying to control the art. And art – real art - cannot be controlled. *Art is wild*. And art is not really a noun at all.

*Art is a verb*.

A verb is a doing, being, having and helping word. It is a word of *action*. Art, too, is about action. It is a process that never stops. The action of art depends on several things: it depends on the artist, the site and the audience. And all must play their part. Like electrodes, they carry the current of art around, connecting all things together.

### **What do artists do?**

We might not know as much as we would like about the very first humans, but much of what we do know comes from the art those first people created. We can guess that from the start, they were moved to express themselves visually. Throughout history the works that artists produce have given us insight into how people thought and lived and feared and dreamed and imagined.

When the first groups of people gathered together inside caves around fireplaces, we can imagine how the animals they'd painted over the roof and walls of the cave seemed to surge and dance in the shadows of the flickering flames. We can imagine how, in the half-darkness, the tales of the hunt came to life when the artist and the story-tellers joined each member of the group together in a sense of connectedness with each other, with place, and with the activities and beliefs that were essential to their survival.

And when we look at the stained-glass windows inside cathedrals, we also see stories that joined people together in a shared understanding of belief.

Art galleries, too, are places where audiences and individuals are able to look carefully, and in looking, to think and wonder and dream. The images they enshrine are triggers that link us into other ways of seeing; other ways of perceiving the world.

Throughout history, artists have been responsible for creating visual images that gave people a sense of shared belief, a sense of connectedness with each other, with their place within the community, and with the activities and belief systems essential for their sense of belonging and cohesion. Artists still work in such roles – today they use mediums that might include drawing or painting, sculpture or printmaking, film-making and photography, performance and sound art and interactive engagements. Artists choose the medium they use in accordance with their audience, the site of production and what they want to 'say' through the materials of their work.

Artists provide us with symbols and images and forms and icons that give us a sense of ourselves, of our place, and of our connection with the rest of the world. As with their historical roles, artists today can provide insight about how the world has changed – and about how we can make new connections in the changing world. And although we may have traditionally come to associate art as being contained (and controlled) within galleries and official institutions, artists also work with other organisations and communities beyond those 'official' sites to provide a sense of belonging and a way of making sense of the world.

One of the things that connects what artists do is a drive towards communication – art can provide a visual language that opens the way up to see *new ways* of connecting – *new ways* of making sense – *new pathways* towards new ways of belonging.

In this way artists are connectors – they join together circuits of approaches and identities and ideas that may never have seemed to have been connected before, in order to keep power and energy flows keep streaming.

## **Do we still need art today?**

But with all the connectedness of social media, in a world saturated with so many visual distractions, do we still need art?

Art connects people in ways that differ from the way social media connects them. Art often makes you think about things, connections and possibilities in ways that might diverge from mainstream ways of seeing.

This does not mean that you have to be "different" to become involved in art – whether as a maker, as an audience member or as a participant. But it does mean that you will have to be brave enough to imagine that things can be different; that old ways of seeing and doing and interacting *might possibly* be able to be changed.

But there are costs to be paid in a willingness to take part in the processes of art: in order to become involved in art you have to be brave enough to believe that a sense of *playfulness* is essential to seeing the 'other side of the story'.

And in order to be involved in art, you have to be brave enough to imagine that the processes of art might change *you* – and might keep changing you.

## **Why might we need art(ists) in Cobh?**

Another way of turning the question around might be, "Why might (contemporary) art need Cobh?" or even, "why might artists need Cobh?"

A possible answer to the first question could lie in what the history and contemporary life of Cobh offer to one of the central questions of our time. Any contemporary artist interested in questions of diaspora, colonialism, identity and cultural survival would be magnetically drawn to Cobh as an historical repository of stories of events that have become key to the biggest questions of our era. Starting from its role as an embarkation point for over three million Irish expatriates, the winding streets and taverns and waters of Cobh harbor are threaded through with tales of love and loss; of grief and hope; of vanquish and recovery. These are the tales that reflect the experiences of expatriates, emigres, immigrants, and exiles that have continued as currents carried along by the tides of colonization. And carried along by these currents come the accompanying issues of environment, national identity and economic flow.

A response to the second question: “Why might artists need Cobh?” would surely lie partly in the generous support Sirius Arts Centre that has offered to artists for over two and a half decades, in its goal to operate as an intermediary between art and the public. Sirius Arts Centre’s dedication to igniting its gallery spaces with the energy of engagement, debate and experiences is a magnet that links a rich heritage to exciting future possibilities. The Arts Centre crosses all kinds of boundaries to connect other artform disciplines that include writing, music, performance and dance as well as the visual arts, and provides a trans-cultural facility to bringing artists from abroad to work and think and interact.

A response to the third question rests with the roles that art has always played: all communities, great and small, draw from art practices as ways of providing them with new ways for regeneration: for new ways of seeing themselves in relation to each other within changing times, and in terms of the specifics of the particular place they inhabit. Cobh needs artists to reflect back to them who they are, who they have been, and, importantly, who they might become.

See you tomorrow was assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, and by Cork County Council’s Creative Communities Award.



**Sirius  
Arts  
Centre**



**Cork  
County Council**  
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí



Australian Government



**Queensland  
Government**