

Mirror Lamp Press

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Ingrid Lyons

Ingrid Lyons writes about art and contemporary culture. She is currently developing a writing practice that includes fictional literature and immersive research practices such as collecting oral narratives and musical collaboration to complement more traditional academic research methodologies.

Anu Lakhan

Anu Lakhan's work has appeared in Poetry magazine, Bomb magazine, small axe, the Caribbean Review of Books, Wasafiri, and many other publications both in print and online. Her chapbook, Letters to K, was published in 2018. She writes a weekly column, Head Space, for the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday.

Padraig Regan

Padraig Regan is the author of two poetry pamphlets: Delicious (Lifeboat, 2016) and Who Seemed Alive & Altogether Real (Emma Press, 2017). In 2015, they were a recipient of an Eric Gregory Award, and in 2020 they were awarded the Ireland Chair of Poetry Bursary Prize. They hold a PhD on creative-critical and hybridised writing practices in medieval texts and the work of Anne Carson from the Seamus Heaney Centre, Queen's University Belfast, where they were a Ciaran Carson Writing and the City Fellow in 2021.

John Graham

John Graham is an artist and writer living in Dublin. He is a lecturer in the Yeats Academy of Arts, Design and Architecture (YAADA) at ATU Sligo. He is a part-time student on the MA Art in the Contemporary World programme at the NCAD.

Rosie O'Reilly

Rosie O'Reilly is visual artist working across sound, sculpture, written work and drawing. Named as Irish Times One to watch for 2022, recent exhibitions include Beyond the Studio, DLR Lexicon Gallery (Upcoming), Molecular Revolutions, The Lab Gallery (Upcoming) Idirlinn, Shifting Silence (solo show) The Lab Gallery Dublin 2022, LEER Leitrim Sculpture centre 2022, Treimhse IMMA, 2022, The Body Electric, Model Sligo 2020.

Beth Fox

Beth Fox is a multimedia artist. She tells personal stories using a combination of appropriated footage and self shot scenes. Immigration, gender norms, addiction, food, and labour are recurring themes in her work. Recent exhibitions include the London Open at the Whitechapel Gallery, Soft Focus cultural exchange, Busan, South Korea, Biscuit Tin Film Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland, and i am not TINO Sehgal at Nahmad Projects, UK.



Lee Welch

Lee Welch (IRL/USA) has an MFA from Piet Zwart Institute and BFA from National College of Art and Design, Dublin. He was shortlisted for Merrion Plinth Award, received grants from dlr Arts Grant and the Arts Council of Ireland, and was the NCAD Studio Artist for 2020-21. He has an upcoming solo exhibition at The Complex, Dublin in 2023. His work has been featured in institutions like Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, and private and public collections.





Welcome to the 6th issue of Mirror Lamp Press

For this Spring edition, Ingrid Lyons looks at the folkloric figure of the ‘duende’ and what it has come to mean if one beholds this undefinable characteristic in art.

With thoughts of extinction always close at hand, Anu Lakhan writes a series of letters to Mammoths, divulging her deep sense of kinship with these strange beasts, and sees in their fate a parable of the threat to human existence. They also contain some of Lakhan’s charcoal drawings.

Padraig Regan describes a candid experience at a gay sauna in Belfast, while drawing connections with John Donne’s poem ‘The Flea’. John Graham reviews Sibyl Montague’s solo exhibition *Claí na Péiste* (Worm’s Ditch) at Temple Bar Gallery in Dublin. While Rosie O’Reilly can’t stop thinking of rust and its inevitability.

Lee Welch’s alluring paintings punctuate each of the texts, telling their own story. As you’ll see, this issue also contains our inaugural audiovisual essay, ‘12 Lemons: Adventures from the Gig Economy’ by Irish artist Beth Fox, which unveils the

challenging and sometimes entertaining aspects of working as a Deliveroo driver.

Enjoy.

Gwen & Eoghan





Review: Sibyl Montague, Cláí na Péiste (Worm's Ditch)

Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin 16

December 2022 – 19 February 2023

John Graham

Entering from the rainy street, the bare room of the gallery is bathed in pink, violet and permutations of mauve. From within this soothing spectrum comes a faltering, disembodied voice. “I am the zombie; your wish will command me”. Slowed to a funereal pace, the familiar song is made unfamiliar by a glitchy, asymmetrical beat. Róisín Murphy’s vocal, pressed into service as part of a complex sound design, is the first in a sequence of sung voices effectively narrating this animated story of pigs and a circling worm – the *Péiste* of the exhibition title.¹ Screened directly onto the wall, the warm-hued images are framed by smart, black acoustic panels. As characters arrive in and out of the storyline, they appear to come and go through these dark portals. The eponymous *Péiste* is in two places at once, a

coiling worm/serpent within the main narrative, and a writhing figure let loose across the gallery floor. Psychedelic and loud, a sinister resonance undercuts the cartoon cheeriness. As animal noises snort and snuffle through the mix, it's all pretty dark, but funky.

A project commissioned by Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, the exhibition title, *Claí na Péiste* (*Worm's Ditch*), refers to ancient earthworks running between Connacht and Ulster. Likely to prevent cattle raids over the territories of opposing clans, these raised borderlands were said to be made, according to different folklore, by a mythical wild pig or serpent. This attribution of human works to animal agency is buried and subverted within the film, with the mythic power of animals reduced to something much more quotidian. Borders of various kinds are enacted and traversed within the exhibition structure. The gallery becomes an enclosure for viewers held within its darkened space, while the shapeshifting *Péiste*, liberated from the parameters of the screen, runs amok behind your seat, and in the back of your mind.

This is not the first time Montague has created

animal surrogates. For *SELF SOOTHERS*, her 2020 show at Visual Carlow, fashionable fabrics of snakeskin print were appropriated to make snake-like forms.² The real animal behind the trashy aesthetic was foregrounded, albeit as shapes akin to stuffed toys or overly extended draught excluders. By deconstructing and reconfiguring matter, the artist imbues it with the value of care, a piously valorised but poorly rewarded function in our neo-capitalist economy. With a small exception (a discreetly positioned group of cast-silicone animal toys), the materials characterising Montague's previous work are not part of this exhibition. Instead, the video installation becomes like a stream of unconsciousness, a sublimation of awkward materials into more digestible form. The enlivening spirit inherent in material transformation is resolved into something else, a more literal animation.

To a significant degree, wider contexts are fleshed out through the exhibition's mediation, with a framed working drawing on an outside wall, a billboard sized window display acting as a film-noir style movie poster, and a pamphlet text running to almost 1200 words. With the word count effectively doubled by the translation of the

whole thing into Irish, you might feel, as I did, a little daunted, but the work carries its weighty contexts extremely lightly.

Like the German artist Andrea Büttner, Montague explores complex value systems through expressions of empathy and humble means. Touch is important. Things held, fashioned and refashioned, the understanding of relationships through habits of the hand. While Büttner has made paintings from the fabrics used for workers' uniforms and is fascinated by natural materials like moss – “the dust of nature” –, Montague has frequented Penneys clothing stores and supermarket grocery aisles to amass (perhaps to liberate) her base materials.³ In Carlow, there was a lot of pickling going on too, with rows of jarred fruit and vegetables sealed in lubricants like whiskey, water and coke. In the same exhibition, her snake-forms were suspended over objects on the floor, arrangements that included variously filled bottles and jars, woollen blankets, layered cuts of pastel-coloured fabrics and clothing smeared with unctuous, miscellaneous creams. Familiar, but oddly alienating, these unheimlich assemblages were aftermaths, new beginnings, or both, a gathering of roadside picnics in some

indeterminate zone.⁴ None of these are the historically ‘proper’ materials of art – though Joseph Beuys might beg to differ – and so all the better for challenging historical conventions.

Often viewed as light entertainment, hand-drawn animation has also been used for information films and subtle forms of propaganda. In cartoons made for children, ideas can be inserted under the cover of absurdity – *Tom* never catches *Jerry*, and the *Roadrunner* always escapes the *Wile E. Coyote*. Montague’s film benefits from these associations, her use of the process not unlike her appropriation of other materials, where seemingly innocent forms are revealed to be mired in complex ethical considerations. Within the film, as hand-drawn animation and CGI give way to puppetry, a collection of detritus – bedraggled bundles – float about within a blackened space. There are no people here, as such, but a human presence is detectable as a negative space moving within the colourful churn. Other humans behind the scenes include animators, archivists, producers, camera operators, editors, curators, and writers. Seemingly divorced from the material basis of Montague’s previous work, *Cláí na Péiste* becomes an orchestration of people and practices extending

the artist's hand towards other means.

The installation draws on numerous sources, including references to mythology, history and the Irish language. Mimicking the Celtic patterns found on ancient stone carvings and illuminated manuscripts, the *Péiste* is like a wriggling usherette, tying different elements together while tying itself into knotty configurations. Montague's research includes an extended engagement with the National Folklore Collection at UCD. The collection holds artefacts bridging transitions between both oral and written forms and handmade and industrial processes. Our troubled history with language is central, especially the gaps and misunderstandings occurring through forms of translation. 'There is nothing outside of the text', Derrida wrote, emphasising that all claims to objective authority are suspect.⁵ In any kind of translation, authority and recognition are inevitably broken down, assuming a kind of floating contingency, an interzone of multiple potential meanings. The film's atmospheric soundtrack – sounding at times like a dubstep opera – explores this idea effectively, skewing traditional and contemporary genres of Irish music into a kind of dream fugue – a mesmerised

Moloko, a pitch-shifted Seán Ó Riada – with added vinyl crackle and hiss.

Animal farming can be a difficult subject matter, and the often-cruel trajectory of that process is not easy to look at head on.⁶ Montague's terms of reference are wider, but taking on this subject without becoming preachy is an achievement in itself. The sleepy siren, 'Muc', is a doe-eyed cutie who wiggles her arse gamely in showgirl style. The headless, pulsating torso of 'Psychopump' is the first thing we see on screen and the external appearance of an impending inner world. The Disney-esque treatment of animal characters echoes how meat products are sold, with anthropomorphism promoting ironic affection, a sentimental attachment enhancing our desire to consume but destructive of genuine feeling. The film's trio of 'Weaner', 'Squealer' and 'Finisher', make this most explicit, three little pigs named for the different stages of livestock processing they represent.

Like the gallery itself – with natural light filtered through flesh-tinted windows – the film feels internal, an abattoir, a womb, a twisted sonic dream. A world inside the body of a pig, but

also of some collective psyche, where lost souls combine in a centrifugal dance macabre. Everything here is processed – drawings, sounds, language, and ultimately, the pigs themselves. As the music stutters and grinds to a halt, all that's left is a tragi-comic finale of animated sausage links, a chorus of strung-out forms serenaded by a baby-voice song. A singing sausage sinks to the floor, jaded by the breezy façade, a final curtain of closing eyes.

1. Moloko/Róisín Murphy, *Sing It Back*, 1999
2. Sibyl Montague, *SELF SOOTHERS*, Visual Carlow, 23 March – 18 October 2020
3. Andrea Büttner, *Moss/Moss*, Hollybush Gardens, London, 27 January – 4 March 2012
4. Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* (1979) and the infamous 'Zone' are based on the science fiction novel *Roadside Picnic* (1972) by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky.
5. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, corrected edition, trans Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London, John Hopkins Press. First published 1967, Translation 1976 p.158
6. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* was originally published as *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story* (Secker and Warburg, London, 1945). This political fable inevitably comes to mind, though, with the exception of Snowball, Orwell's pigs are hardly sympathetic.



Mammoth Letters

Anu Lakhan

Dear mammoths,
You didn't say goodbye.



Dear mammoths,

I miss you. Not knowing you is a terribly small,
irrelevant detail.



Dear mammoths,

Do you want to come back? Is this an impertinent question? I'm terribly afraid of offending you – especially with your being dead (which seems like such a sensitive matter). It's just that I have uncovered a plot to bring you back. Do you want me to stop this? Can you send word?

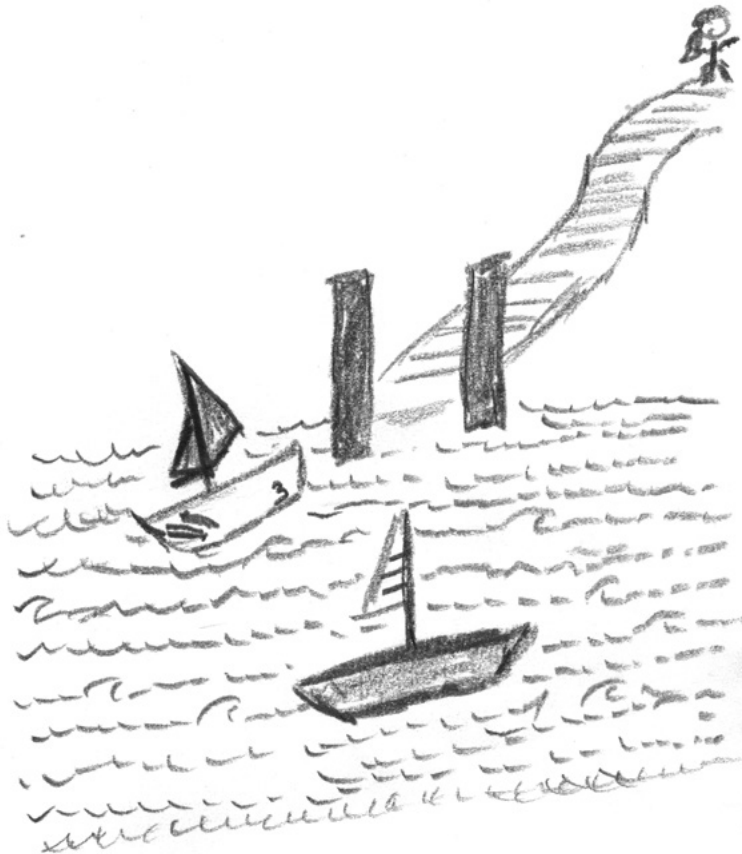


Dear mammoths,

I was standing on a rough road looking at some boats when a friend mentioned that enough DNA had been harvested from a mammoth to bring it back. He'd read about it in a magazine. My heart burst from my chest like fireworks, only, instead of sparks, there were bone shards and blood.

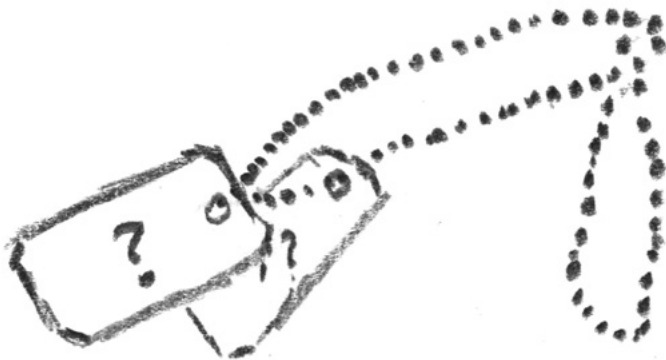
That was near 30 years ago and I've been looking for signs from you ever since. Where are you?

Ps: I too am stuck.



Dear mammoths,

I'm not going in for naming you and all that. That's what the people who find pieces of you do. They name you for the part of the world in which they found you, or for the person who found you, or just some silly name they thought was clever. This seems ridiculous. Let's say one of my arms and I were to go our separate ways, maybe because of an accident, maybe because someone didn't want me to have all my limbs. If that happened and a stranger found my arm, sure she could take it home, but I would be very, very disturbed if she was sitting with her dinner thinking, "What will I call you, then? Lydia? Iris? Iris seems like a great name for an arm."



Dear mammoths,

How are you out there in the world of things-no-longer-alive? Is it cold? Do you want it to be cold? Is it sunny and full of trees? I feel you deserve a nice, green place. With ponds and rivers and maybe all the mammoths that ever were, all there together.

I need to take a deep breath and anchor myself to say this: I want to be near you. I miss you. Even though this is not at all accurate, I feel like I just missed being there with you. I might have missed you by four million years or four thousand years. I did not miss you by four hundred years or four years, because you had already disappeared. Still, I feel like you might have tried harder to be around. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I don't mean that. I know there was nothing you could have done.

The funny thing is, the thing that took you away from me, may take me away too. And it's also the thing that let me have a glimpse of you in the first place.

There you were and then there was this ice-plosion, ice-travaganza – whatever you want to call it – you were quite suddenly iced over. Fast

forward to me-time and the ice starts to melt a bit and we're able to find you.

But the way the big freeze did for you, the big thaw will do for me and mine. Funny world, eh?



Dear mammoths,

Did you ever see a desert? Not just a dry place but the really full-on sand-duney kind. I dread the desert. A desert is like the sea, but upside down. And with no water. Or fish. Or sea-things. It's nothing like the sea except that it is.

To be not-near to water seems unnatural. When I am in a land-locked place, I feel ill. I feel – I know how silly-in-an-obvious-way this will sound – I feel parched. I feel like that when it doesn't rain for a long time, too.

This is how I miss things; how I miss you. With a longing that is like dying of thirst and heat. And the less I understand how you could simply have vanished, the more I want to find you. You were a giant and beautiful and strong and then – just like that – you were not. Not there.

I could disappear like that, couldn't I? The sea could erase my small, beautiful islands. I wonder if anyone would miss us.





Dear mammoths,

Sometimes I think I see a faint shadow of you. A little like how cat owners seem to see cats around every corner, and they keep asking if you see it, and you want to scream at them, “For the love of all that’s holy, you only have the one cat, and it’s in your lap, so it can’t very well be on the shelf or the stair or wherever you think you’re seeing it.”

Well, perhaps not so like with the cat-shapes. When I see a shadow of you, usually I’m not anywhere with anything likely to cast a mammothly shadow.

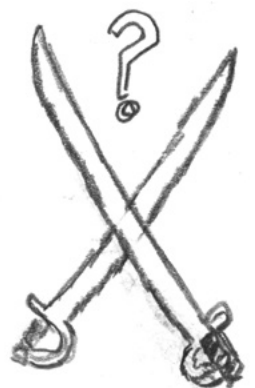
I once saw a film with a lot of fishing in it. There was a man doing something they called ‘shadow casting’. It was beautiful. The line thrown out made rainbows near the water. Like ballet made of light and water. Many years later I read the whole shadow casting thing had been made up. It didn’t exist before the film (except in the short story they made the show about). Real fishermen had to look at what they wanted to do with the story and figure out what this fictional kind of fishing might look like.

Maybe I am mammoth casting. Maybe that’s all anyone has ever done.

Dear mammoths,

I was trying to read more about you so I might write to you in a more interesting manner. Out of luck. It wasn't too bad at first, but then I came across something that got me into something of a rage and I stopped reading. This article said that some science people had found two manly-mammoths, and their tusks were locked together and through the marvels of scienciness, they found that the mammoths basically stayed like that for so long, they starved, so really, they took that fight-to-the-death thing to heart.

What I want to know is how they know that. How come no one said, well, maybe one of you was trying to help the other one out? Suppose one of you was going in the wrong direction and refusing to go with everyone else and someone had to drag you back? Suppose you were going after a lady-mammoth who was bad news and a friend came along and was, like, let's get out of here, she's bad business? How do they know the difference between fight and friendship?



Dear mammoths,

In my last letter I told you I was upset that people thought that because your tusks were interlocked, you must have been fighting. They must have other reasons to think you were having it out.

I think if one of you was falling off a cliff, another mammoth would rush over, lock tusks, and try to pull you to safety. Maybe you were falling because you didn't see the edge. Maybe you were falling because you were being hunted. If you were being hunted, the people would have had to get you alone. They would not have thought that another mammoth would come to your rescue. They would not have thought one of your kin would trample them to save you. That could have happened, couldn't it? Or maybe it didn't happen that way.



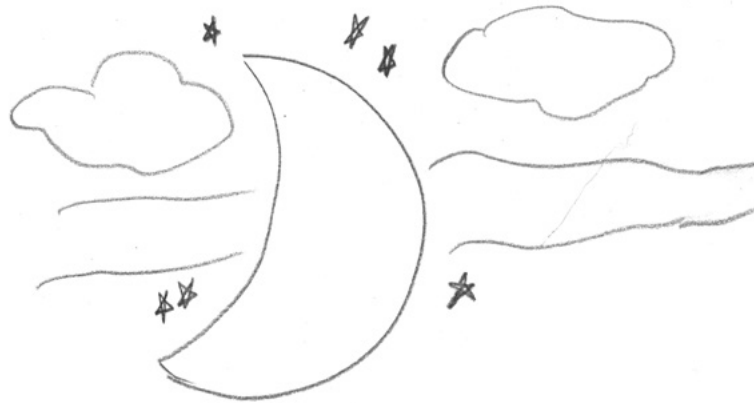
Dear mammoths,

They hunted you. They chased you and speared you and cut you and bled you.



Dear mammoths,

Mammoths, I know you in the cold in my bones
and the dark of my blood. I know I stood with
you at the end. I know the fall. The soul-scream,
bone-split fall. I was there and I saw. I still stand
witness.





El Duende

Ingrid Lyons

The *duende*....Where is the *duende*? Through the empty archway a wind of the spirit enters, blowing insistently over the heads of the dead, in search of new landscapes and unknown accents: a wind with the odour of a child's saliva, crushed grass, and medusa's veil, announcing the endless baptism of freshly created things.

– Federico García Lorca

Duende, which doesn't translate to the English language, has its origins in Spain and Argentina, where it was initially the name given to a folkloric creature that lived in the shadows of your house. A goblin; a humanoid who gave symbolic form to darkness with a plurality that defined it as neither good or bad. Its force was the expression of darkness that exists inherently in all humans as part of the human condition. It articulates or celebrates this close proximity to darkness. The duende were believed to inhabit caves, wells, rivers, and lakes – but are most commonly associated with domestic

environments. The word itself is a contraction of the phrase, ‘dueño de casa’ or master of the house. Living in the shadows and being *of* darkness yet morally ambiguous, they were sometimes mischievous or troublesome but always well-meaning.

Based on its popular usage and folklore, the word evolved in Spain to describe an ambiguous quality that some artists have, a darkness that mysteriously enriches those who possess it. The most enchanting flamenco singers and dancers have been described as having duende, and the term is used to articulate a sense of depth or intensity in the artist. People understand what this looks and feels like when they witness it, though it is difficult to define. It has come to represent great heart, honesty and authenticity in the way a person expresses themselves creatively.

‘So, then, the duende is a force not a labour, a struggle not a thought’.

It was the Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936) who recognised the folk term and wrote about the aesthetics of duende which he first presented as a lecture in

Argentina in 1933 titled 'Theory and Play of the duende' in which he set forth a series of artists who possessed this energy as well as narratives that demonstrated its presence. Indeed, Lorca possessed the duende too as he observed plenty of rich and evocative vignettes in his surreal and often melodramatic style.

'Years ago, an eighty-year-old woman came first in a dance contest in Jerez de la Frontera, against lovely women and girls with liquid waists, merely by raising her arms, throwing back her head, and stamping with her foot on the floor,' and with great satisfaction Lorca reveals that it is the old woman who earns the prize with her 'moribund duende sweeping the earth with its wings made of rusty knives'. In Lorca's recounting of the tale, there is a sense that this woman's grief connects with the audience, they recognise themselves in her dance and this exchange meets with flamenco as a form of folk expression, which has always been about sharing the burden of collective trauma through art.

Patrick Kavanagh (1904 – 1967) in his long form narrative poem, 'The Great Hunger' gets at something similar. Though maybe Kavanagh's

duende is clay – the sodden soil underfoot that has borne witness to and absorbed the centuries of desperation and pain of its people. And unless you are prepared to trudge through this clay and taste it, then what can you offer anyone with your song or dance or poetry?

There is the source from which all cultures rise,
And all religions,
There is the pool in which the poet dips
And the musician.
Without the peasant base civilisation must die,
Unless the clay is in the mouth the singer's
singing is useless.

Much like the elusive duende you will encounter those who pretend to eat the clay, or as Lorca has it, 'they might deceive people into thinking they can communicate the sense of duende without possessing it'. Though through intuition and observation, Lorca posits, we only have to attend a little, and not be full of indifference, to discover the fraud, and chase off that clumsy artifice'.

The Spanish Romani flamenco dancer, Carmen Amaya (1913-1963) is said to have had duende and even to this day, mediated through stuttering

footage in blurry low resolution on the small screen of a device, you can understand exactly what this phenomenon is. Her way of inhabiting a rhythm and the conviction in each movement is bound with tragedy, assimilated from the personal and simmered off to distil an elixir of the universal. Something beyond skill, talent or even inspiration, Carman Amaya's dancing is chaos and anarchy harmonised through the movement of her body, bringing powerful emotions like fury and indignation into physical poetry.

'All the arts are capable of duende, Lorca says, 'but where it naturally creates most space, is in music, dance and spoken poetry, the living flesh is needed to interpret them'. It is physical memory and the assimilation of hardship as experience that give form to the duende, though the tenets that Lorca applies can certainly be observed in artists and poets whose work is frank, intensely tangible and emotional.

The opening lines of Kavanagh's 'The Great Hunger' initiates a visceral deliberation on the human condition. He ties the experience of the land and the history of its people and weaves it with his own experience. He embodies this

history through empathy obtained from clay in the mouth.

‘Clay is the word and clay is the flesh
Where the potato-gatherers like mechanised
scarecrows move
Along the side-fall of the hill’

There’s duende in the singer-songwriter Lisa O’Neill. To listen to her new album, ‘All of This Is Chance’ is to understand that grooves of emotional experience and the imprints of life events create channels for the flow of expression through art. If we endure something and we are at the helm of a reckoning, then yes – we will have something that we can bring to bear on our expression. It’s an elaborate dance with darkness emblematic of soulful strength. Duende is also a refuge where melancholy, loneliness, loss and grief are not maudlin. Rather, they’re generative, inclusive and celebratory, genuine, generous, and loving.

Duende, Lorca concludes, shapes people ‘like wind on sand’ as if to suggest a process of refining or clarifying, ‘and at every instant works the arms with gestures that are the mothers of the dances

of all the ages', through empathy the artist relives a collective memory.

The transformative potential in pain and hardship elevates paintings, or any kind of artwork, song and dance, poetry and music into something incredibly moving when we can witness vulnerability as a form of defiance. There is something reassuring in the acceptance of the shadow side. How exciting it is to see a person emerging from the doldrums, mysteriously enriched.





The Inevitability of Rust¹

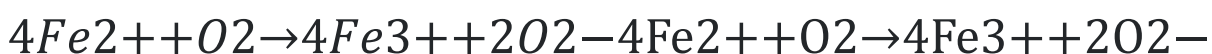
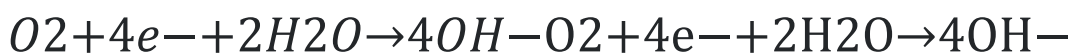
Rosie O'Reilly

The inevitability of rust

I lower myself into the engine room, wind pushes the stern and condensation soaks my hair in drops that seem to keep falling. “It’s not the season for taking on the engine room,” calls from other moorings just about make it into the steel cave. But this time of year I’m consumed by rust. The notion it is happening. That I might stop it momentarily but that it will continue.

The bilge rusts.
It will always rust.
I will rust.

This is rust:



Iron (Fe) meets water (H₂O), oxidation and reduction begins; three simple chemicals entangle to begin a journey back in time.

Wind hits the stern again and the ropes creak in a long echoing groan. With a wire brush I begin to scrape the onion-ing layers, thin crusts of reddish brown, flakes – small and big.

Over and over again they peel off. Kenneth Stanton's voice is in my ear, an unknowing poet of materials. *No metal is content, he tells me, it is on a journey, making its way back to the rock from which it came.*

With 10mm of steel between my material life and the water of the canal basin, I'm entangled in the boat's journey to rock and dust. Water, the main catalyst on this journey, is everywhere. It laps against the boat, the condensation pools, allowing it to penetrate microscopic pits in the metal. Hydrogen combines with other elements to form acids that cause more metal to be exposed and corrosion begins. The metal weakens expanding in its decay. Losing density but increasing in mass.

In its expansion of mass it gathers other things, takes them on a journey; rust is storyful. I've

been collecting these rusted ghost objects on beaches for years, digging around looking for a shot of golden orange among the rocks at the hightide mark. Holding the first one in my hand I remember being frozen in the sand by the possibility it held. A form hiding behind layers of expanded time, a shape mutated. Tossed around in white wash an arrangement of matter found a resting space among the rocks. Wedged, it grows, expands and shapeshifts as its density decreases, in many cases engulfing a nearby object and taking it with them.



These finds are speculative tools now, hanging on the boat wall they rock as the wind blows. I wonder about the set of seven spanners frozen in time as one. The bolts they undid, the hand searching for it in a pocket. I speculate about the large bent fish hook that captured stones and shells as it grew and the 15cm nail as fragile

as burnt wood glowing red and orange as it lay waiting for another tide, another dose of hydrogen.



I look down and make a poor attempt at a calculation on the mass of corrosion of my 10mm hull based on the flakes and crumbling powder in my hand. I give up the math and draw comfort from the knowledge that boats that tie off nearby have outlived many owners. I concentrate on saving the rust; I'm more consumed now with these steel ghosts as their pigment stains my hands and clothes.

Rust: A commonly used metaphor for slow decay due to neglect... this rattles around in my head.

I disagree. Who can stop this, the inevitable.
It's the inevitability of rust and rusting that begins
to unlock thoughts, everything seems stained now
in an orange pigment.

My thoughts take on the shade and I'm engulfed
in silence; no groans, no echoes, just ghosts.

Around me everything and everyone is framed in
the context of the matter of which it's made and
the potential of the journey it is on.

There it is again.

The wind hits the stern and the ropes creak.

Wet air and long winds. More scraping, more rust.

Expanding 8 times its mass through corrosion
metal in its decay has more presence. How can
this be a faded glory. In its journey to the rock
from which it came it leaves more behind, releases
the orange ghosts into the world.

Tears slip down my cheeks.

Of course.

I am matter and matter matters that's why I cry.
It's here to tell its story and in its telling I begin
to retell other tales. I think about myself as a mesh
of body-matter, the reality of being an organic
material like so many others on a journey to the

place from which we came.

Another moment comes into focus, tinted reddish orange. I'm crouched low again this time beside the bed as my moma took her last breath. In those long months of her death and dying her spirit seemed to grow in mass. In moments of perishing where her life was peeled away² she was weakened but in that moment she took her last breath I saw stars leave her body, exploding as the sun rose the last time for her. Proof to me she had expanded beyond my terrestrial comprehension on her journey back to where she came. She rusted, she expanded. This thought like a rusted object brings another tale in to focus as it journeys through my mind. My daughter turned 3 this week. She's beginning to talk about her dreams. She wonders a lot about where my moma is. She told me she had a dream; she was sitting on a star eating star biscuits with her. The power of expansion in decay evident in a new speculative tale. I'll add this to my rusty story bank as I try to understand where it is we are trying to get to.

I see raindrops hitting the engine and this snaps me out of my rusty daze. Looking down I'm happy, I've peeled back some layers, no flakes to

be seen, some likeness to the flat steel that sits above the waterline.

I'm not done but then I never will be. In the clumsy act of trying to find words and meaning for loss and life I have found rust.

I close the engine hatch thinking I'll head to the beach again tomorrow. Keep combing the high tide for the rusty ghosts, more rusty metal that's yearning to tell stories. I'll add them to the wall and they'll remind me that in our making, doing and living we can't escape the inevitability of rust. We'll shift our shape, expand in our decay, maybe we will carry other things along and without knowing become a speculative fiction of our own as we journey back to the place from which we came.





Images: Rusted Objects, Many Beaches by Rosie O'Reilly

1. Hi there, and welcome to this text. I had the great fortune of being on a residency in Parity Studios last year in UCD and met Kenneth Stanton - Head Of School of the School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering . Our discussions on materials were profound. He didn't necessarily think so, these were facts. But as an artist material investigation can make you weep, opening your eyes to the previously unseen and raise deep questions about the world and how we move through it. as matter.

2. Her name was Catherine, she was only 63. Too young to leave, 10 years this year.



Outside, Belfast

Padraig Regan

I wouldn't claim to love the poetry of John Donne, but there is one poem that has always stuck with me since I read it as a teenager studying for my A-levels. 'The Flea', though not published until after the author's death in 1631, is most likely an early poem, written before Donne's Christian faith becomes the central concern of his work, when he was not much older than I was when I first read it and still making poems out of his swaggering and unusually erudite attempts at heterosexual seduction. I was, what, seventeen, eighteen? In any case, just being introduced to the sexual economy; and naive enough to place myself into the position of interlocutor to Donne's goading conceits. Now when I read it, I envy not the speaker of the poem who spins from his desire such an enviable performance of articulation, nor the person who is both the cause and addressee of this desiring speech, but the flea itself. I envy its strange mode of living, more as space than as a body occupying any single point in space. I envy its status as a catalyst, a

fetish: not involved, as such, but necessary for the involvement of two others in each other.

Ok, a brief tour: you enter through an inconspicuous door on Donegall Lane (is there even a sign to let you know you've found the right place? I think there is, a small one, just the name, *Outside*, in neon; though I may well be inventing this out of my want for it to be the case, and I can't check, writing this, as I am, in another city on another island). I say you enter, but first you must ring the buzzer and wait in a little vestibule for the second door to open, onto a staircase (and a smell of chlorine), which you ascend, then give your cash to the man behind a Perspex window who hands you your towel and key; then you go into the locker room on your right, undress, shower; then down a different set of stairs, through narrow corridors lined with corrugated steel, to the ground floor, which is made up of three rooms, a dry sauna, a steam room, and a room with a hot-tub. If you like, you can go back up, past the entrance, to the top floor with its (semi-)private booths, not unlike honeycomb, but all black, low-lit, body-warm.

Or, if you are feeling particularly adventurous, to the darkroom, where, divested of sight, you can navigate by touch alone.

When I read ‘cloistered in these living walls of jet’, I can’t help but think about these black painted walls, the cushioned leatherette on the floor, its softness on the knees.

Outside, I like that name. I like the obvious pun on *out*, as in *coming out*, but also *going out*, which are not separate experiences, but parts of the same process, which is also a coming and a going *in*, to an identity, a community, a history. And there’s more to it than that: the name amuses me, attached, as it is, to this space of intense interiority, without windows, behind a locked door. But also, the name reminds us, a space whose topology is a complex arrangement of various small, nested interiors and exteriors: it’s warren of corridors; its rooms separated by glass doors; its booths whose walls don’t quite reach the ceiling. Frames within frames, apertures within apertures — a spatiality our own bodies are invited to emulate as we open

ourselves up to each other, and each other's gaze.

It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;

[...]

This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;

When I read these lines, I think back to a day last summer spent entertaining a couple visiting from England. I didn't know them very well, or at all, really. I'd met one at a reading earlier in the week; we talked in the pub afterwards, and I promised I'd take him and his partner out for drinks at the weekend. They were both handsome, and clever, and fun, and it felt good to be in their company. Both of us, in a sense were playing host: I, in my beloved city; them in the intimate space of their relationship. We spent the afternoon in the garden of a pub, the evening dancing. Then, at the end of the night, when things seemed to be wrapping up, one of them suggested we all go to the sauna together; and we did, and in one of those black booths, I knelt before them, taking each one in

my mouth, moving back and forth between them while they kissed each other. I felt like nothing but a space in which they met, like I was no more than the walls.

I first came here with my friend M—. We had been out at the Kremlin, the Soviet-themed gay club around the corner on Donegall Street. In the smoking area, M— said to me that he had started going to the sauna after the bars had shut for the night. He said this like a confession, like he expected me to judge him, but it was also, I knew, an invitation. I guess my reaction betrayed that I took it as such: a few minutes later, without saying goodbye to our other friends in the club, we were at the top of the stairs and M— was paying my admission. It made sense that it was him who would introduce me to this place. We had been friends since we were kids, and had gone through our adolescent navigating of our queerness not together exactly, but in tandem; him, admittedly — because of his beauty and his recklessness, which even then I envied and was scared by — always a few steps ahead, bringing back reports from the abstract world of adult desire. We

undressed in front of each other, which we hadn't done since P.E. lessons in our catholic grammar, but was less awkward than I expected. He showed me around, then we went our separate ways, to our separate stories. For a while, it became a thing we did together, like squash or LARPing. I felt close to him then; we've drifted since.

It is, of course, dead matter with which the flea swells. And the flea is, of course, quite literally an agent of contamination (*con tangere*: mutual touch).

In those adolescent days, the sauna occupied us as a symbol of the sexual world of men, over whose threshold we were taking our first tentative steps, but whose true interior we had not yet reached. We knew about it through its depictions, in porn, in rumour, and — in my case — in the books I was reading to try to understand that my desires came with a history attached. We talked about the sauna as a space of almost infinite erotic allure, but also as something to be feared or vaguely disgusted by. Everyone knew someone who knew someone who knew someone who had

contracted the virus at a place like that. This is a mindset which the more conservative elements of our community never quite grow out of. The sauna is to them part of a culture they try to extricate themselves from in an effort to prove their somatic purity, their similarity to the sexual majority and their submission to its rules. I refuse. I know the risks, but I also know what is risked when you refuse to open yourself up to the world.

When I read 'The Flea', I am reminded of another poem: Lorca's 'Sonnet of the Garland of Roses'. Less the poem itself, but the footnote in the Penguin Classics edition, which suggests that the line 'queiebra juncos y arroyos delicados [break open delicate rivulets and reeds]' might refer to 'interior veins broken in furious lovemaking'. Through this association, I incorporate Donne's incorrigibly heterosexual pleading into my personal queer cannon of poems that link sex and death through blood; a metaphoric tradition which predates HIV, but which HIV transfigured into a literal reality.

I'm on that soft leatherette again. A man, much older than myself, has just come on my stomach. The men who come here are of all ages, but the average, you would have to say, is the generation just before my own. There is a sense, for those of us who grew up with Grindr, that the sauna belongs to the past; and it is true that they are disappearing much like gay bars are. But this is one of the reasons I love going there. In the sauna, I feel connected to a tradition, not just through the touch of older men, but through inhabiting the space itself, as though the walls contained some material trace of the bodies that they briefly held. It is not a relic, but a reliquary.



12 Lemons: Further Adventures from the Gig Economy

6.28mins, HD video, 2023

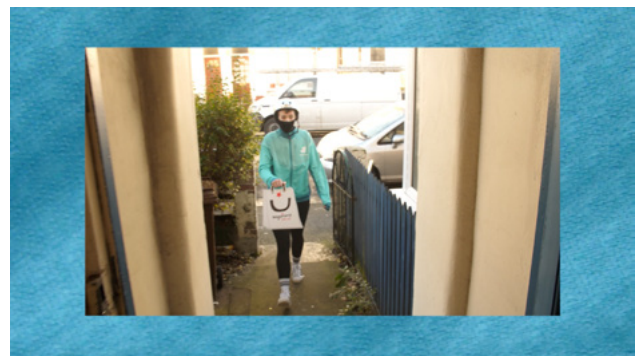
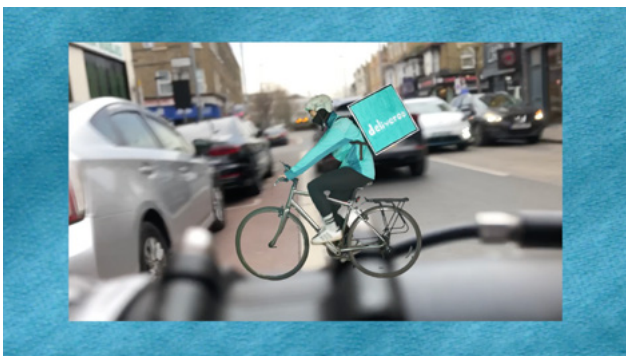
Beth Fox

“Beneath the shiny surface of our phones and tablets, behind the frictionless apps that allow us to order all kinds of products and services, someone, somewhere, is doing the work.” The protagonist works as a delivery rider transporting delicious takeaways around the city.



[Watch Video](#)

12 Lemons: Further Adventures from the Gig Economy



[Watch Video](#)



Cover

through the abundance of its pasts 2019
acrylic on polyester
137 x 102 cm / 53.9 x 40.2 in

Page 02

Laocoön and His Sons 2021
acrylic on United airplane blanket
50 X 40 cm / 19.7 X 15.7 in

Page 04

invisible the iridescent darknesses beyond
2019
acrylic on polyester
102 X 68.5 cm / 40.2 X 27 in

Page 06

to be emptied of meaning 2023
acrylic on polyester
68.5 x 51 cm / 27 x 20.1 in

Page 07

to seize upon greatness 2020
acrylic on polyester
137 x 102 cm / 53.9 x 40.2 in

Page 08

Patience is also a form of action 2019
acrylic on polyester
68.5 x 51 cm / 27 x 20.1 in

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I will try to speak with more simple
words, 2022
acrylic on polyester
68.5 x 51 cm / 27 x 20.1 in

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the seemingly uneventful and motionless
moment, 2019
acrylic on polyester
137 x 102 cm / 53.9 x 40.2 in

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and knowing vaguely what is 2021
acrylic on United airplane blanket
50 X 40 cm / 19.7 X 15.7 in

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a gesture of rejection 2023
acrylic on canvas
30 x 25 cm / 11.8 x 9.8 in

Page 41

Only the gentle are ever really strong,
2019
acrylic on polyester
130 x 100 cm / 51.2 x 39.4 in

Page 42

Sforzino Sforza As Swan 2023
acrylic on polyester
50 x 35 cm / 19.7 x 13.8 in

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That's why I'm here, 2022
acrylic on polyester
80 x 60 cm / 31.5 x 23.6 in

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The joy you get from looking 2022
acrylic on gesso panel
25 X 20 cm / 9.8 X 7.9 in

Page 63

under an immense sky 2018
acrylic on cotton
137 x 102 cm / 53.9 x 40.2 in

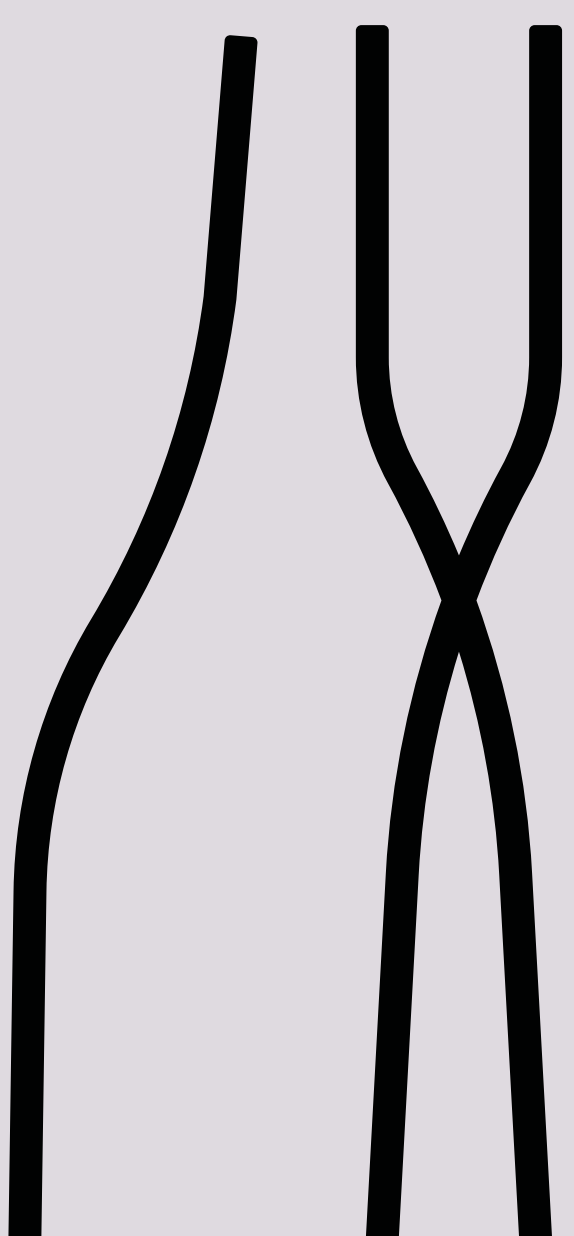
Page 65

eyes without a face 2021
acrylic on United airplane blanket
50 X 40 cm / 19.7 X 15.7 in



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