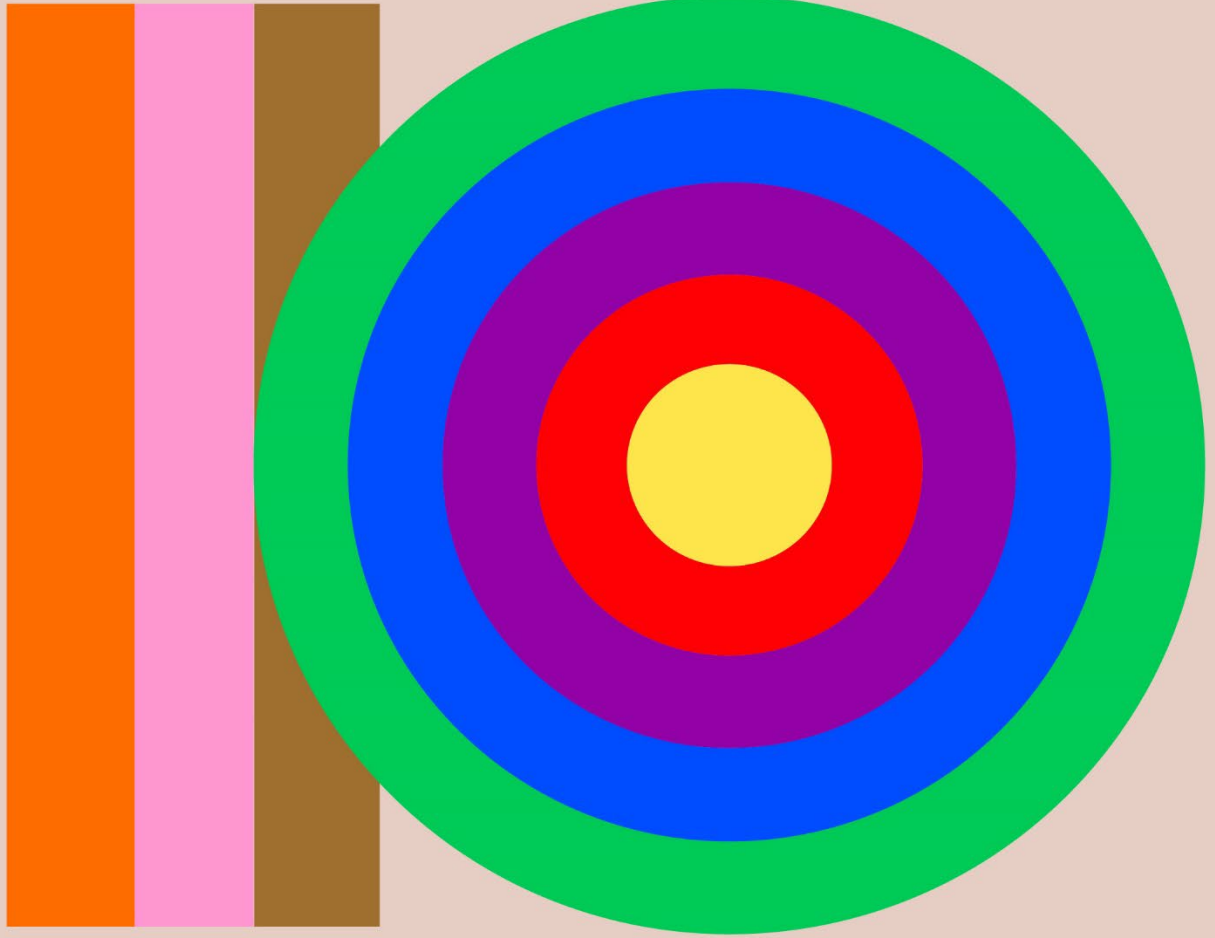


IMMA AND THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND PRESENTS



# 10 YEARS ON

Reflecting on Art  
& Marriage Equality

27 SEPT 2025  
09:15 – 16:45

NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND  
LECTURE THEATRE AND ONLINE



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Cumarsáide agus Spóirt  
Department of Culture,  
Communications and Sport

GAILEARAI  
NÁISIÚNTA  
hÉIREANN

NATIONAL  
GALLERY,  
IRELAND

IMMA

ÁRAS NUA-EALÁINE  
NA hÉIREANN  
IRISH MUSEUM OF  
MODERN ART



## Access Information

The online and onsite event is Irish Sign Language interpreted.

The online event is closed-captioned.

Outhouse will be onsite offering mental health support.

Ear defenders are available to borrow from the Merrion Square Information Desk.

The National Gallery of Ireland is fully wheelchair accessible.

A Changing Places facility is located next to the Lecture Theatre.

Our staff are here to support you and are identifiable by Gallery lanyards. If you require any additional accommodations, please do not hesitate to ask!



## Schedule

### SHAW ROOM

09.15 Tea/Coffee & Registration

### LECTURE THEATRE

10.00 Opening remarks & Welcome

Sinéad Rice, Head of Education and Public Programming, National Gallery of Ireland

Kate Drinane, Tours, Talks Training & Interpretation Officer, National Gallery of Ireland

Sean Kissane, Curator of Exhibitions, IMMA

#### Session I: Imagining New Worlds

10.20 Diarmuid Hester – Vexed: How to do queer history

10.50 Leilah Babirye – From Uganda to USA: Reframing the Abject as Culture

11.20 Seán Kissane – Before Equality: Agency and Power in the Art of Patrick Hennessy and Henry Robertson Craig

11.50-12.10 **Comfort break**

#### Session II: National Histories

12.10 Jaki Irvine – Sounds of Surrender and Resistance

12.40 Alan Phelan – Our Kind: Roger Casement's speculative life in Norway

13.10 Brian Teeling – Declan Flynn in Dublin

### SHAW ROOM AND GALLERIES

13.40-15.10: **Lunch**

Refreshments, free time, and taster tours of a small selection of LGBTQIA+ artworks in the National Collection

14.10-14.40 Sketching tour

14.30-15.00 Sketching tour

14.30-15.00 Turas trí Ghaeilge

### LECTURE THEATRE

#### Session III: Transcending History – Lecture Theatre

15.10 Samir Mahmood – Transcendence without Labels

15.40 Patricia Cronin – Memorial To A Marriage: Radical Imagination and Monumental Protest

**16.10 Closing Comments & Questions**

## Speakers Bios & Abstracts

### Alan Phelan

Our Kind - Roger Casement's speculative life in Norway

In 2016, Phelan presented a 30-minute film at the High Lane Gallery, commissioned in parallel with their exhibition High Treason: Roger Casement. The film adopted a counterfactual stance, imagining a speculative history in which, in 1941, Casement lived in rural Norway with his partner Adler Christensen. With dialogue lifted from another film and text from his execution speech interspersing the scenes, the narrative deliberately eschewed fact or historical accuracy, focusing instead on betrayal and the abandonment Casement experienced when his homosexuality was revealed in court.

For this presentation, Phelan will discuss the rationale and research that led to the decision to produce such a work. Despite the queer hagiography assigned to Casement, an inverted homophobia persists in popular historical discussions. Competing historians continue to skew Casement's legacy, unable to reconcile his nationalism, homosexuality, and humanitarianism.

The film did not attempt to resolve these complexities. Instead, it generated a further enigma to decipher, one that mirrored the debates surrounding betrayal. Phelan will consider how an imagined or speculative history created space for this exploration.

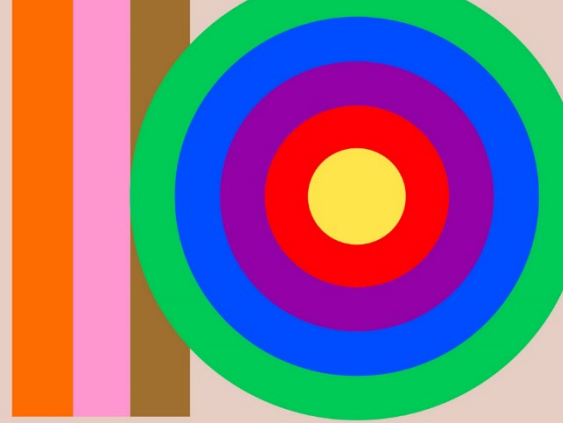
### Bio

Alan Phelan works in sculpture, photography, film, museum interventions, public art and collaborations with other artists, writers and curators. Born Dublin, 1968, Phelan received BA, Dublin City University, 1989 and MFA, Rochester Institute of Technology, New York, 1994. Exhibitions include: Casino Marino, Dublin; The Molesworth Gallery, Dublin; Void, Derry; Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris; RHA, Dublin; The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon; The Hugh Lane; RHA; Irish Museum of Modern Art; LCGA, EVA International, Limerick; Solstice, Navan; Chapter, Cardiff; Bonn Kunstmuseum; Detroit Stockholm; Treignac Projet, France; Bozar, Brussels; ŠKUC, Ljubljana; SKC Gallery, Belgrade; OK11, Helsinki; Eastlink Gallery, Shanghai; Galeria Del Infinito, Buenos Aires; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Screenings include: Videonale 15, Bonn; ECU Film Festival, Paris; Cinesonika, Derry and the Cairo Video Festival. Public art projects include: Dublin City Council; IMMA; Sculpture Dublin. Curated projects include: Small Night Projects presented at the RHA, DHG, TBG+S, Dublin, Librarie Yvon Lambert Paris, and the Paris Ass Book Fair, Palais de Tokyo. Awards include: Thomas Dammann Junior Memorial Trust Award; Grand Prix winner at 2024 Rotlicht Festival, Vienna; The Arts Council Visual Arts Bursary; Creative Ireland; Hotron Eigse Art Prize at Carlow Arts Festival for "Our Kind".

### Brian Teeling

Declan Flynn in Dublin

In 1982, Declan Flynn, a young gay man, was murdered by a group of teenagers in Fairview Park, Dublin. The court handed down suspended sentences, with the judge concluding that there was 'no element of correction' required. This decision, and the public response to it, played a pivotal role in the emergence of LGBTQIA+ activism in Ireland. Yet representations of Flynn have remained limited, often reduced to the circumstances of his death. Declan Flynn in



Dublin, recently acquired by the Arts Council of Ireland Collection, offers a significant reworking of how queer lives from this period might be visualised.

Rejecting dominant tropes of criminalisation, victimhood, and sexualised imagery, Teeling uses photography to reassemble Flynn's life through his interests, friendships, and passions. There is no body, no scene of violence, and no reference to legal persecution. Instead, the work constructs a speculative archive based on biographical research, oral history, and a process of re-inhabiting the places Flynn knew. This methodology produces a photographic constellation that operates through ambiguity and affect. A park bench becomes both a site of cruising and of mourning; a record sleeve gestures to personal taste and to queer forms of identification. These fragments allow the viewer to apprehend a life shaped by desire and connection, not victimhood.

Although not a theoretical paper, the project aligns with the affirmative turn in queer theory, particularly the work of Eve Sedgwick, in its refusal to define this moment in queer history solely through trauma. Instead, it employs affect as a structuring logic, proposing that love and relationality can serve as serious tools for reconstructing marginalised lives.

## **Bio**

Brian Teeling is an Irish artist whose practice explores queer identity, memory, and absence through photography, sculpture, and text-based works. His work engages with themes of loss, trauma, and spectral presence, drawing on concepts of hauntology and speculative history to interrogate the traces left behind by queer lives and histories. Teeling's practice resists traditional representation, using material instability, layered imagery, and immersive installations to explore the intersections of personal and collective memory. His work has been exhibited in major institutions, including the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Ireland, and the Crawford Art Gallery.

## **Diarmuid Hester**

Vexed: How to do queer history

Born into a heterosexist world and growing up at an angle to it, queer people are desperate for queer history—for evidence that people like us have existed before, that they survived, that perhaps they even led happy lives.

Yet in the past, evidence of queerness and gender non-conformity has often been turned against us. The sexological case study and the court testimony legitimised homosexual oppression, pathologisation, and criminalisation—for Michel Foucault, such evidence became the very basis of homosexuality as an identity.

'Queerness has an especially vexed relationship to evidence,' the queer theorist José Muñoz wrote. As a cultural historian, Diarmuid Hester is fascinated by this 'vexed relationship'. In this session, he will talk about how he has confronted it in his work and absorbed it into his methods of doing queer history—from academic monographs to popular histories to AR trails for young people. He will discuss the centrality of feeling, friendship, and fandom in his work and the importance of creative approaches to queer archives.

## Bio

Dr Diarmuid Hester is a cultural historian, activist, and author of the critically acclaimed books *Wrong: A Critical Biography of Dennis Cooper* and *Nothing Ever Just Disappears: Seven Hidden Histories*. He is the co-founder of Club Urania, Cambridge's premier LGBTQ+ performance and music night, and regularly contributes to BBC Radio as a BBC New Generation Thinker. Diarmuid is the creator of *Prick Up Your Ears*, immersive podcasts and audio trails that explore the hidden histories of familiar places. He teaches at the Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, and is a research associate of Emmanuel College.

## Jaki Irvine

### Sounds of Surrender and Resistance

This paper will discuss my project on Elizabeth O'Farrell and Julia Grennan, a couple who played a central role in the 1916 Rising in Dublin. O'Farrell carried the white flag of surrender from the GPO at the close of the conflict, yet her presence was erased from the iconic photograph of Patrick Pearse's surrender, where she was cropped from view within a week of publication. Both women were subsequently marginalised in official accounts, their lives and relationship consigned to silence as the narrative of the Rising was masculinised.

My first engagement with their story was through the novel *Days of Surrender*. Drawing on military archives I constructed a narrative that was fiction but not fantasy. The aim was to remain grounded in documentary sources while working through gaps, contradictions, and silences in the archive. Written as a novel, published through Copy Press and available in bookshops, the intention was to open the story of O'Farrell and Grennan to broader publics, beyond the academic circles.

On invitation to develop a visual art installation at IMMA for the centenary of 1916, I drew on this literary foundation, extending the enquiry into video, performance and sound. Here, the novel's fragmentary structure became spatial and immersive, inviting audiences to encounter aspects of *Days of Surrender* in a dispersed, multi-channel form. Central to the installation was the use of Cainteracht, a vocal notation system for Highland pipes. The women's names were translated into melody embodying them in sound. Samples of leaked recordings from Irish bankers at the heart of the economic crash in 2010 were also in the mix. In tracing this trajectory from novel to installation, past to present, I will consider how artistic practices can form, shift and intervene in historical silences and become relevant in contemporary contexts. By combining fiction, archive, and song, the project reframes memory, visibility, and belonging, offering new ways to make erased queer lives present.

## Bio

Jaki Irvine works with video installation, photography, music composition and writing. Her immersive video and sound installations tell stories through fragmented, elliptical and open-ended narratives informed by rigorous research. Irvine picks out evocative details from the landscape or cityscape, in particular honing in on Dublin and Mexico City, two cities that have shaped and informed her practice. Contested histories, sonic bricolage, the built environment, and the customs and communities of a city's residents have all found their way into Irvine's deep-reaching and polyphonic work: songs that filter through a city's streets, overheard conversations, and the flap of a hummingbird's wings are given equal gravitas. Her attention is





often turned to the peripheral or the undervalued: recentring stories or figures written out of history, particularly female figures, or presenting an alternative approach to the present, making space for strangeness. Humans and nature become intertwined in her imaginative worldview, with plants, birds and creatures permeating her practice, and adding to the sense of the unknown and unknowable, and blurring the boundary between the real and the imagined. Jaki Irvine lives and works in Dublin and Mexico City, and is a regular artist advisor at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam.

## **Leilah Babirye**

### From Uganda to USA: Reframing the Object as Culture

In this talk, artist Leilah Babirye reflects on her journey from Uganda to the United States, tracing how her biography as a lesbian shaped both her life and her practice. Coming of age in a society where homosexuality is criminalised, and where public outing carries profound risks, Babirye fled Uganda and was later granted asylum in New York. There, she continued to develop her distinctive sculptures, transforming discarded materials gathered from the city's streets into masks, figures, and personalities. By reclaiming rubbish as art, Babirye reclaims a term of abuse used against queer people in her native Luganda language, turning it into a metaphor for resilience and visibility. Her work speaks to the hostile climate faced by LGBTQI people in Uganda today, while also resonating with wider struggles for justice, dignity, and human rights.

### **Bio**

Leilah Babirye's multidisciplinary practice transforms everyday materials into objects that address issues surrounding identity, sexuality, and human rights. The artist fled her native Uganda to New York in 2015 after being publicly outed in a local newspaper. In spring 2018, Babirye was granted asylum with support from the African Services Committee and the NYC Anti-Violence Project.

Composed of debris collected from the streets of New York, Babirye's sculptures are woven, whittled, welded, burned and burnished. Her choice to use discarded materials in her work is intentional – the pejorative term for a gay person in the Luganda language is 'abasiyazi', meaning sugarcane husk. "It's rubbish," explains Babirye, "the part of the sugarcane you throw out." The artist also frequently uses traditional African masks to explore the diversity of LGBTQI identities, assembling them from ceramics, metal and hand-carved wood; lustrous, painterly glazes are juxtaposed with chiselled, roughly-textured woodwork and metal objects associated with the art of blacksmithing. In a similar vein, Babirye creates loosely rendered portraits in vivid colours of members from her community.

Describing her practice, Babirye explains: "Through the act of burning, nailing and assembling, I aim to address the realities of being gay in the context of Uganda and Africa in general. Recently, my working process has been fuelled by a need to find a language to respond to the recent passing of the anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda."



## Patricia Cronin

### *Memorial To A Marriage: Radical Imagination and Monumental Protest*

At a time when same-sex marriage was illegal in the United States and public monuments to women and LGBTQ+ individuals were virtually non-existent, *Memorial To A Marriage* (2002) by Patricia Cronin emerged as a ground breaking act of artistic resistance and imaginative defiance. This 3-ton Carrara marble mortuary sculpture—permanently installed on the artist's burial plot at Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx—depicts Cronin and her now-wife, artist Deborah Kass, in a tender, entwined embrace. Recasting the neoclassical tradition of sculptural memorials, the work intervenes in historical narratives that have long excluded queer lives and loves from public commemoration.

Cronin created *Memorial To A Marriage* not only as a deeply personal act of love, but also as a poetic protest institutionalized homophobia and misogyny. At the time, same-sex couples were forced to simulate marital rights through costly legal documents that only held weight in illness or death. Denied dignity in life, Cronin imagined permanence in death, insisting on visibility, presence, and equality where the law refused it. The work became the world's first—and still only—monument to marriage equality.

Now widely exhibited and part of major museum collections in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe, *Memorial To A Marriage* continues to resonate as an icon of queer resistance, creative reconstruction, and enduring love. As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of Ireland's Marriage Equality referendum, Cronin's work reminds us that queer rights are hard-won, always under threat, and in constant need of protection and reassertion. In this paper, Cronin will discuss *Memorial To A Marriage's* oscillating cultural positions initially from protest to celebration in 2015 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruling legalizing same sex marriage and now sadly back to protest. With the resurgence of anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-women legislation globally, the radical imagination that birthed this monument remains vital. Who is remembered, and how, continues to be a critical battleground—and *Memorial To A Marriage* asserts that queer love belongs eternally in the public square.

## Bio

Patricia Cronin is New York based award winning interdisciplinary visual artist whose paintings, sculptures and public art examine issues of gender, sexuality, and social justice. In 2002, Cronin created *Memorial To A Marriage*, the world's first Marriage Equality monument and it is the centerpiece of the LGBTQ+ VR Museum.

Cronin's work has been exhibited widely in the U.S. and internationally, including *Shrine For Girls*, an Official Solo Collateral Event at the 56th Venice Biennale, Italy (2015) that travelled to The FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2016), The LAB Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (2017) and Catherijne Convent Museum, Utrecht, The Netherlands (2021). Other solo exhibitions were presented at the Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL (2018-19), Capitoline Museum's Centrale Montemartini Museum, Rome, Italy (2013), Newcomb Art Museum, New Orleans, LA (2012), Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY (2009), and American Academy in Rome, Rome, Italy (2007), Deitch Projects, New York (2002), and White Columns, New York (1998).

The artist has taken part in important group exhibitions, including National Academy of Design, New York (2024), David Zwirner, New York (2022 & 1993), LGBTQ+ VR Museum (2022-ongoing), American Academy in Rome Gallery, Rome, Italy (2019), Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC (2018-19 & 2017), New Museum, New York (2013), Station Museum of



Contemporary Art, Houston, TX (2010), Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, Scotland (2009), Cobra Museum, Amstelveen, The Netherlands (2008), Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Roma (MACRO), Rome, Italy (2007), Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT (2002), and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT (2002).

Cronin is the recipient of numerous awards including the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, Anonymous Was a Woman Award, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award, and Civitella Ranieri Fellowship. Additionally, she has served as a trustee at American Academy in Rome, Civitella Ranieri Foundation, Carolee Schneemann Foundation, Augustus St. Gaudens Memorial Foundation, and the Woodlawn Cemetery Conservancy.

Her work is in the permanent collections of the National Gallery of Art and Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, both in Washington, DC; Kelvingrove Art Galleries and Museum, Glasgow, Scotland, Leslie Lohman Museum, New York, Perez Art Museum Miami, FL, and Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL, among others.

She has held numerous teaching positions including at Yale University and Columbia University and many art schools. In 2003, she began teaching as an Associate Professor at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York and in 2023 she was appointed Distinguished Professor of Art.

## **Samir Mahmood**

### Transcendence without Labels

In this presentation, Samir Mahmood will reflect on his artistic practice, which seeks to imagine a transcendental space where bodies and identities are not confined by categories. Born and educated in Pakistan, he trained as a medical doctor before migrating to Ireland in 2008. He began his art practice in 2014, informed by this trajectory through different cultural, legal, and religious frameworks. Although raised within the Islamic tradition, he has moved beyond formal belief systems, and his work investigates how our interactions with legal, social, and cultural structures shape our intellectual and psychological realities.

His practice draws on the Indo-Persian tradition of miniature painting, engaging with its visual grammar while adapting it to his own lived experience. He works across large-format scrolls and small-scale miniatures, depicting solitary figures in states of transformation. These figures are often surrounded by star-like halos, mystic vapours, and ecstatic fluids—visual metaphors for transcendence. As these elements expand across the picture plane, they connect individuals to one another and to imagined architectures: the paradise garden, the courtroom, the archive. These structures collapse into a single, fluid landscape where the distinctions between sacred and profane, personal and institutional, no longer hold.

He argues for a form of art that articulates a space beyond identity—where the violence of classification is replaced by interconnectedness. In this vision, transcendence offers a way of imagining universal humanness: not as a neutral category, but as an ecstatic, enmeshed state in which bodies are free to transform.

## **Bio**

Samir's work explores experiences of identity, migration, and spirituality. He uses the queer body to consider human vulnerability and assess its connection to the world as an attempt to

offer a liberating new reality. He blends religious references in his work, which hint at the experience of migration and the necessity to come to terms with new, old, and similar ideas and qualities represented in different cultures. Samir's recent exhibitions include a solo show *Of Other, and Possibility*, curated by Rachel Botha (2023), and *Braid* at Lord Mayor's Pavilion, Cork (2022). Recent awards include Visual Arts Bursary Award, The Arts Council, Ireland (2022) and Artist Support Scheme, Galway County (2023).

## Seán Kissane

*Before Equality: Agency and Power in the Art of Patrick Hennessy and Henry Robertson Craig*

Patrick Hennessy (1915–1980) and Henry Robertson Craig (1916–1984) met as students at Dundee College of Art in 1935 and sustained a lifelong relationship until Hennessy's death. In biographies their partnership has often been diminished to 'friendship' or 'companionship,' yet their art offers clear evidence of intimacy, depicting each other, their pets, their home, and traces of shared life. Exhibited in Ireland during the 1950s–70s, their work also registered queer experience, honestly representing the realities of same-sex desire at a time when such relationships were rendered impossible by law and society.

This paper explores their transnational depictions of sex workers and sites of cruising in Ireland, France, the UK, and Morocco from the 1950s onwards. The works are read through close visual analysis, alongside queer literary contexts and primary sources. Central to the discussion are Craig's correspondence with an Irish sex worker, 'Fitzgerald,' from 1951, and testimony from 'Ali,' a Moroccan sex worker interviewed by the author in 2024, which provide rare perspectives on queer histories absent from conventional archives.

Hennessy and Craig's work is considered both as a positive expression of queer agency during a period when homosexuality was outlawed, and through a critical lens that addresses their position as wealthy, white male artists in a colonial context, the exploitation of local men, and the disruption of Muslim sexual norms in Tangier. Their significance as modernists emerges through a reconsideration of their academic style in relation to queer agency. This approach, which challenges earlier dismissals by critics such as Dorothy Walker, opens the possibility of rewriting the canon of Irish modernism.

## Bio

Seán Kissane is Curator of Exhibitions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin, and a PhD candidate in Art History at T.U.D. He describes his curatorial practice as 'curating the edges,' producing deeply researched exhibitions that foreground the work of female and queer artists whose contributions have, often for reasons of gender or sexuality, been critically neglected. At IMMA, he has developed the Modern Masters Series, staging major touring retrospectives for Leonora Carrington, Derek Jarman, Mary Swanzy, Hamad Butt, and others. He has also curated projects with contemporary artists including Alice Maher, Isaac Julien, Shahzia Sikander, Romuald Hazoumè, and Alan Phelan. Recent curatorial work includes the group exhibition *Queer Embodiment* for IMMA's 30th anniversary and *Self-Determination: A Global Perspective* (2023–24).

His doctoral research, *Art in the Closet: Patrick Hennessy, Visual Agency and Resistance in Irish Art, 1939–1980*, provides the first sustained queer reading of Irish modern art. Framed by queer theory, it traces a lineage of queer Irish artists and situates their work within international



networks, challenging assumptions of mid-century Irish culture as closed and insular. His writing has been published by IMMA, Dublin; Thames & Hudson, London; D.A.P., New York; Charta, Milan; Irish Arts Review, Dublin; Royal Irish Academy, Dublin; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Barbican, London; Hirmer Verlag, Munich; Mimesis International, Milan; and British Art Studies, Paul Mellon Centre / Yale Center for British Art.



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