

LIVING ARTS

ARTS IN EDUCATION

11 March – 29 April 2025

In 2013, the Living Arts Project was established as an artist-in-residency scheme in primary schools, supporting the existing partnership between the Arts Department of Wexford County Council and Wexford Arts Centre. The aim of this project is to provide children with an understanding and appreciation of contemporary visual art. The Living Arts Project exhibition represents a selection of work produced by the participating primary schools and offers pupils a chance to see their work presented in a professional gallery.

The following artists and schools were selected for the 2024-25 programme: Deirdre Meehan-Buttimer and Ilaria Berardi with St Garvan's National School, Kate Murphy and Shannon Jade Wilson with New Ross Educate Together, Brid Colloton and Laura Flood with Gorey Central School, Deirdre Travers and Sonya Weston with Barntown National School, and Sonya Weston and Kate Tyrell with Wexford CBS.

The residencies focused on the children's local environments and explored many themes including history, home, the environment and sustainability. The activities focused on promoting artistic and interpersonal skills enabling pupils to recognize the potential of art to be used as a tool for communication and learning.

A mentorship programme ran alongside each residency which helped to ensure the effectiveness of the project while also providing a positive critique for the resident artist. In addition, it served to refine methods of engaging with the children throughout each residency. The mentors involved were David Begley, Orla Barry, Ruth Carroll, Els Dietvorst, Doreen Fitzmaurice, Michael Fortune, Martina Furlong, Emma Roche, Karla Sánchez Zepeda, Sarah Scallon, and Gerda Teljeur.

The Arts Department of Wexford County Council and Wexford Arts Centre would like to take this opportunity to thank all schools, artists and mentors involved in the project, and the local community for their support and interest in the project to date.

The Living Arts Project is a partnership initiative between the Arts Department of Wexford County Council, Wexford Arts Centre and the Arts Council.

Wexford CBS, Thomas Street, Wexford
With thanks to Principal Michael McMahon, Deputy Principal Mairead Parle, and Teachers Mary Coady and Kevin Crean.

Artists Sonya Weston and Kate Tyrell

Drawing inspiration from their local natural environment and referencing the beautifully illustrated books, *The Great Irish Biodiversity* and *Drawn to Nature*, 2nd class students created aquariums from large water bottles, soft clay, shells, seaweed, and acrylic markers. They imagined what creatures might live in our oceans and what their environment might look like. The students from 6th class explored what 'home' meant to them, drawing inspiration from artists Joseph Cornell and Louise Nevelson. Learning that art can be made from anything, both classes had the opportunity to explore a range of different materials.



SONYA WESTON

Based in Wexford, Sonya Weston graduated in 2019 from Wexford Campus School of Art & Design, SETU. Sonya's specialist areas of research are in social inclusion, socially engaged art practices, and other creative projects that empower communities. Her multidisciplinary practice includes photography, film, print, sculpture, and installation. Sonya has worked with a variety of publicly funded and private organizations in her capacity as a socially engaged artist. These include Wexford Mental Health Association, CAMHS, the Collective Sensory Group, Wexford Arts Centre, and a number of schools throughout the county. The aim of her art practice is to help develop the creative potential and voice of every individual. To share the magic that is art and hopefully pass it forward.

KATE TYRELL

Kate Tyrell is a self-taught artist and works from her studio by the sea in Ballinoulart, Co. Wexford. Her practice is very much influenced by where she lives. She creates unique pieces of art using materials found along the coastlines, reflecting the colour palette and textures of the Irish landscape. Seaweed, driftwood, sea glass, stones, and shells can all be found within her work. The process of gathering these natural materials is both weather-dependent and tide-dependent and further drying and preserving is needed in order to preserve their natural colour and texture.



Gorey Central School, Gorey corporation lands, Gorey, Co. Wexford
With thanks to Principal Clodagh Busteed, and Teachers Siofra Byrne and Luke Morgan.

Artists Brid Colloton and Laura Flood

Gorey Central School 3rd and 4th classes explored a range of different drawing materials. Using graphite and charcoal, they looked at tone, and, focusing on native trees, created tonal drawings of horse chestnut conkers. Oil pastels were also used in creating collaged storybooks from varieties of leaf texture rubbings. The students explored tree branches and leaf structures one week and roots and their underground connecting networks the next. Then, using Gelli plates, they created monoprints on paper and fabric with handmade stencils. The residency also included a week of eco-printing using natural waste materials and drawing with inks made from oak galls and alder cones, referencing the wisdom of our ancestors.



BRID COLLOTON

Brid Colloton returned to college in 2012 to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming an artist and chose printmaking as her focus. She continues exploring new and traditional processes in printmaking studios around Ireland and in her home-based studio. Brid facilitates children's art workshops in Wexford Art Centre as well as in schools and community groups and is currently artist in residence in Wexford General Hospital, working with long-term patients. Her recent solo exhibition in Wexford Library for WexArt festival and Opera festival was titled Red Thread to symbolise what is often connecting and consistent throughout our lives.

LAURA FLOOD

Laura Flood graduated with a BA Hons in Art from the Wexford Campus School of Art & Design in 2019 and an MA in Art & Research Collaboration at IADT in 2024. She is currently completing a one-year professional Natural Dyers course with Apple Oaks Fibreworks. She also studied permaculture design in Portugal in 2020 after graduating from college. She is a recipient of the ArtLinks Bursary 2023 and has previously shown work at IMMA Earth Rising Festival, The LAB gallery, and Wexford Arts Centre. She will be the artist in residence for the Art & Play programme at Wexford Arts Centre in 2025. Laura has organically grown flowers to make her natural dyes. She works with natural materials and is informed by permaculture theory.



New Ross Educate Together, Barrett's Park, New Ross
With thanks to Principal Therese White, and Teachers Rachel Lyng and Shelly Ralf.

Artists Kate Murphy and Shannon Jade Wilson

The children in 4th, 5th, and 6th classes chose to use the project time to improve their drawing skills and began with exercises and pencil drawing techniques to help build confidence in their own abilities. The children worked steadily in individual notebooks as they learned different techniques that enabled them to record their progress and ideas over time. The classes also explored how texture, colour, and mixed materials can add context and interest to a pencil drawing. Each child chose a beloved person, place, animal, or object to learn to draw in pencil. Then they used texture-rubbing, mixed collage materials, and acrylic colours to further reflect the qualities of their subject. The resulting artworks are a blend of the children's dedicated technical learning and their madcap, fun self-expression!



KATE MURPHY

Kate Murphy graduated from the National College of Art & Design in 2000 with an honours degree in Fine Art. She has had with a number of solo exhibitions in galleries in Dublin and Wexford and has shown nationally and internationally. Most recently she exhibited her work at Claremorris Gallery, Co. Mayo, in December 2024 and had a solo show at the Molesworth Gallery in Dublin in March 2024. Her paintings have been purchased by the Office of Public Works, Bank of Ireland, Wexford County Council, Wicklow County Council, and by private collectors. She has worked collaboratively with communities, schools, and institutions for the past 14 years.

SHANNON JADE WILSON

Shannon Jade Wilson is an artist, poet, and educator in science and the arts. Working across painting, printmaking, murals, and media, she is trained in visual arts from the National College of Art & Design, with a master's degree in Visual, Material and Museum Anthropology from Oxford University. Her work is expressionist and impressionist, aiming to capture the magic of life and put feelings at the heart of everything she does. Her mission is to make creativity accessible to all and to help change the way it is viewed by people—not just a talent for the few, but an important aspect of life and wellness for everyone.



St. Garvan's National School, Carrowreagh, Co. Wexford
With thanks to Principal Keelin Egan and Teacher Amanda Power.

Artists Deirdre Meehan-Buttimer and Ilaria Berardi

The residency at St. Garvan's National School explored 'hidden worlds' as a theme. The classes concentrated on early medieval Ireland, linking local history, folklore, and place. This period spans from the 5th to 8th centuries to the beginning of the Viking Age with the gradual emergence of primitive Irish Ogham inscriptions. Ringforts were the main communities of place, and wildlife included stags, hares, and wild boars. This research inspired monotype prints of landscapes, Ogham inscriptions, and imaginative creatures, as the children explored 'interpreting' versus 'copying', abstraction and realism, movement and context. They also researched mythological early medieval creatures, for example, the *Cata* (the River Shannon monster), *Oilliphéist* (dragon-like monster), and *Ellén Trechend* (triple-headed beast), resulting in large free-flowing fine pen drawings collaged into a collaborative piece on paper, and air-drying clay sculptures.

DEIRDRE MEEHAN-BUTTNER

Deirdre Meehan-Buttimer graduated from Wexford Campus School of Art & Design, SETU, in 2016 and successfully transitioned to build a strong participatory arts practice. Projects include a lead artist role on the Living Arts Project in St Garvan's NS, Caroreigh, an arts-in-education initiative run by Wexford County Council, Wexford Arts Centre, and participating primary schools. She was also the lead artist in the programme in 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24. Deirdre was awarded Creative Communities Awards by Wexford County Council to undertake projects with Wexford Women's Refuge, exploring coercive control and intellectual disability isolation with adult service users of Windmill Therapeutic and gender-based violence with Soroptimists International, Wexford.

ILARIA BERARDI

Ilaria Berardi is an Italian artist based in Wexford, where she graduated from the Wexford Campus School of Art & Design, SETU, in 2023. Since then, she has engaged in a variety of workshops based on sustainability and natural materials. She works across multiple mediums, such as photography, painting, and sculptural installation, and through research and documentation, aims to explore the connections between humans and nature from different perspectives, be it cultural, sociological, or environmental. Ilaria's true aspiration is to explore the world of sustainable art by avoiding or repurposing waste. In her work, she prefers to focus on the creative process, experimenting with unconventional materials such as nature finds, found objects, paper, cardboard, or anything that comes into her hands, and wishes to develop her practice through the inclusion of the community in her projects. In 2021, Earth Bin, a community project in collaboration with Wexford Tidy Towns, appeared on Green-Campus Ireland.



Scoil Mhuire Barntown, Barntown, Co. Wexford
With thanks to Teachers Ms. Brazzil, Mr. Cadogan, Ms. Tierney, and Ms. Byrne, and SNA Assistants Sonya, Sarah, Suzie, Kathleen, Vicky and Derek.

Artists Deirdre Travers and Sonya Weston

Pupils from Scoil Mhuire Barntown worked with clay, gel plate printing, and drawing and explored themes on ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, where they learned to write their name in the ancient alphabet on clay tiles. They also delved into Irish mythology and learned about the Celtic cross and Ogham writing and investigated their local area, its landmarks, and places of interest. Local folklore historian and artist Michael Fortune spoke to the children about old maps and place names, encouraging them to explore their own locality more deeply. Stemming from this, students worked in groups to produce large, colorful map drawings of their homes, what's around them, and what they see on their journey to school. The students also took inspiration from the fantastic view of the Leinster mountains that they see every day, and they created a collaged landscape with textures and colour.

DEIRDRE TRAVERS

Based in Wexford, Deirdre Travers is a graduate of Wexford Campus School of Art & Design, SETU. She is a multidisciplinary artist whose work involves elements of performance, sculpture, video and sound, and photography. Through her practice she takes a critical view of social, political, and cultural issues and has worked with widely diverse sections of ages and abilities in the local community. She has participated in creative schools Ireland projects in both Wicklow and Kildare primary schools and has also been assistant artist in the living arts project in 2019-2020 and 2022-2023. Deirdre is also on the Creative Communities artist panel and has been awarded grants by Wexford County Council over the past three years and has undertaken projects with CAMHS young teens in both Enniscorthy and Wexford, Dementia Ireland and Saltmills Community Group.

SONYA WESTON

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The Living Arts Project exhibition runs in the lower and upper galleries of Wexford Arts Centre from Tuesday 11th March to Tuesday 29th April 2025. Gallery hours are Tuesday to Friday from 10am-5pm and Saturday from 10am-4pm.

If your school is interested in participating in the Living Arts Project 2025-26, please contact Catherine Bowe, Curator, on +353 (0)53 9123764 or email catherine@wexfordartscentre.ie.

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For further information on Wexford County Council's full arts programme please visit www.wexfordcoco.ie/arts-and-culture or call +353 (0)53 9196441 or email arts@wexfordcoco.ie.

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Photography by Frank Abruzzese

