

Resource Supporting Content Area 3: Today's World
Junior & Senior Cycle New Appreciating Art Visual Studies



Dumbworld presents

If We Could See Ourselves As Other See Us

A Community Arts project commissioned by Solstice Arts Centre in
partnership with Meta.

14 – 27 January 2023

Engagement & resources for students & teachers

Using cross-curricular links, and learning through art, this resource supports students completing their Junior and Senior Cycle studies. Designed to assist teachers and students in how to assess and evaluate an exhibition or event in our gallery, it includes:

- Background information on Solstice Arts Centre and its functions;
- The technical and curatorial requirements of the event including display, layout, lighting, signage, and the gallery's role in interpreting the display for visitors.
- An in-depth look at the current show and content.

Assisting Senior Cycle students to investigate, analyse and reflect on multiple perspectives, this information embraces the three strands – Research, Create and Respond, with particular focus on Unit 14 in Content Area 3: Today's World of the New Appreciating Art Visual Studies for Leaving Certificate curriculum.

To help understand and analyse the work of artists and assist in the development of imaginative and innovative ideas, we encourage students and teachers to combine this resource with our associated events:

- A Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) class tour of the works in the gallery. Booking required: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/school-gallery-tours-primary-and-secondary-1>
- *Improvised Musical Adventures* workshop with composer Brian Irvine on Thur 26 Jan. This is a free event for class groups but booking is required. For more information see: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/improvised-musical-adventures>

Words highlighted in bold/italic within this resource are explained in the glossary.

We hope you find this resource, your gallery tour and information on our website helpful. We encourage questions and feedback from schools and teachers to assist us in developing these documents and events to best meet your needs, so please do get in touch with suggestions.

Best of luck to all pupils in their creative studies.

Yours,

Deirdre Rogers

Visual Arts Facilitation & Public Engagement Coordinator

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Solstice Arts Centre, Railway Street Navan, Co. Meath 046 9092300 www.solsticeartscentre.ie

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Section 1: Information about Solstice Arts Centre

Solstice Arts Centre, Railway Street, Navan, Co. Meath C15 KWP1

+353 (0)46 909 2300

www.solsticeartscentre.ie

Function

Solstice is a **multi-disciplinary** arts venue hosting a wide number of art forms - visual art, music, film and theatre. The building functions as a space for people to access and celebrate life, art and culture in the county, supporting artists and communities to engage in artistically rich experiences together.

Facilitating theatre shows, music performances, visual art exhibitions and films, it has a vast programme of **participatory** activities such as workshops, talks and events, catering for all ages, individuals and groups. Presenting local, national, and international events in visual art, theatre, music and dance, Solstice also supports professional artists with access to space, resources, and expertise to develop and explore their practice.

History & Architecture

Designed by World-renowned Irish Architectural firm Grafton Architects, Solstice opened in April 2006 as a **purpose-built** arts centre. Over four levels, Solstice consists of a 320-seat tiered theatre, a three-roomed gallery space, a workshop/studio, and café. Solstice presents and produces over 300 arts events per year, welcoming over 60,000 visitors and audience members annually.

The name 'Solstice' references the ancient rituals associated with the county and the cultural 'light' the arts brings to the community.

Solstice Gallery

Opening times Tues - Sat 11:00am – 4:00pm daily.

Solstice gallery is a **contemporary art** gallery that hosts five major exhibitions per year. Solstice does not have a permanent collection of artworks but exhibits work from local, national and international artists. Exhibitions are usually **thematic** group shows or large-scale solo exhibitions by one artist. The Director, resident **Curator** or an invited **curator**, selects the artworks for each exhibition,

The main Solstice gallery is located on the third floor, with some artworks hung on the café wall on the ground floor. Access to the gallery is by stairs or lift. The gallery consists of three large rooms and three enclosed courtyards for displaying artwork and an engagement area for children in the gallery foyer.

Exhibition information for visitors

Leaflets, information and text is especially important in the gallery space. It helps explain or **interpret** the exhibitions and artworks for visitors. This information is available in the gallery and on our website. The **curator** decides what type of information and printed material to produce for the public. This includes:

- Vinyl text on the café and gallery entrance walls providing a brief overview of the exhibition.
- Wall labels within the exhibition, gallery essay and floor plan written by the artist(s) and **curator**.
- A Virtual Gallery Tour on our website.
- Learning Resources for students, teachers and the public to understand, learn and interact with the exhibition.

Visual Arts Learning & Engagement Programme

Exhibitions are accompanied by associated events; workshops, talks, seminars and tours throughout the year. Public gallery engagement enables audiences of all ages to connect directly with art and professional artists, and engage in new artistic and creative experiences. Full details of our exhibitions and accompanying learning and engagement events are available on Solstice Arts Centre's website and advertised on Solstice social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Section 2: A Community Arts project



Dumbworld presents

If We Could See Ourselves As Others See Us

**Brian Irvine & John McIluff (Dumbworld), Vera Ryklova, Aislinn Delaney,
Jonathan H.S. Ross and Jasmin Marker**

14 – 27 January 2023 at Solstice

Opened on Sat 14 January until Fri 27 January 2023

In contrast to Solstice visual arts exhibitions in the gallery, this installation is the result of a two-year **community arts** project. Heightened by our experiences of a global pandemic, the outcome is a sound/video and living installation. *If We Could See Ourselves As Other See Us* is a space to join together in a moment of reflection on our necessary connectedness - a **Möbius** strip of ponderment.

2020 was marked by the necessity to keep our distance, to avoid gatherings, to hide the subtlety of our expressions behind masks. The unspoken fabric of public space that we previously negotiated silently and unconsciously was a terrain of both hyper-awareness and a new strain of social blindness.

In partnership with Meta, Solstice Arts Centre commissioned Dumbworld to create a special community arts project with groups and individuals across Meath. The resulting project empowers people to reconnect with the strong spirit of community, engaging in new experiences through workshops, gatherings, music and film.

Collaborating with artists working in visual art, bio-art and woodworking, Dumbworld explored themes of unconscious exchanges, our taking of space, assembly, belonging and places that are of importance and questioning the reasons 'why'. Through music and spoken word, one-to-one interviews, field recordings, workshops, film footage and photography examining these themes took place.

Inspired by the journey through these moments of assembly across Meath the result is an installation that integrates expressions from each of the participant groups, a final touring experience for audiences, beginning at Solstice in January 2023.

This installation will tour to multiple venues across Meath throughout the year.

Display & layout of installation

Unlike exhibitions where a curator decides on the artworks and the layout in the gallery, Dumbworld and the collaborating artists designed the presentation of the project to the public. Careful consideration was given to the types of media and techniques to best showcase the project, to combine film, photography, music, song and artistic practice in a complimentary and cohesive manner. Having visited Solstice numerous times during the year, Dumbworld planned the format and display to best inform and engage the public within the gallery spaces. Working with the gallery technicians, the positioning and hanging of the work takes 3 to 5 days.

The installation begins on the ground floor, with a large framed photographic print by Vera Ryklova on the café wall and a brief description of the project. This gives visitors a taste of what is upstairs in the main gallery.

On your gallery visit, consider:

- The positioning of the artworks and installations within each space;
- How a visitor might be self-guided through the exhibition and encouraged to linger and engage;
- The information displayed and available to tell you about the project.
- What Dumbworld had to ensure when planning the layout of this project in the gallery spaces to include the wide range of participants and ways of engagement with the work?

Installation lighting

To highlight each of the works, limited or no natural light is used in each of the spaces. Spotlights shine directly onto works or areas of importance. The light box in gallery 3 houses its own light source and the room is devoid of natural light.

Installation sound

In gallery 2 the audio video work can be heard throughout all spaces. This shows the importance of this piece, and connects the project as a whole. There is a subtle musical recording playing in gallery 3.

Learning & Engagement during the Installation at Solstice

The creators of *If We Could See Ourselves As Other See Us*, John McIlduff and Brian Irvine will engage schools and the public in six creative workshops while the project is on display at Solstice:

- **This Is Our Place led by John McIlduff - Fri 20 Jan / Audience: Adult Groups**

Experience this video & sound installation together with writer and director John McIlduff. Following the screening, participants will engage in conversation and contemplation with John, exploring the themes of this piece. Creating new conversations and exchanges in a space that reflects the experiences of others, rethink your sense of belonging, and importance of place.

- **Improvised Musical Adventures led by Brian Irvine – Thur 26 Jan / Audience: School groups**

Join award-winning composer Brian Irvine in the gallery for a workshop packed with musical experimentation, exploration and creation. Surrounded by the installation and immersed in its musical themes, Brian will inspire students to create outrageous and imaginative improvised ideas through music.

Section 3: The Project Creators & Collaborators



John McIllduff - Dumbworld



Brian Irvine - Dumbworld

Established in 2009 by composer/conductor Brian Irvine and filmmaker/writer/director John McIllduff, Dumbworld is an artist led, **multidisciplinary**, creative production company that makes work found at the intersection of music, image and words. Dumbworld creates artistically ambitious and exciting pieces that involve working closely with significant practicing professionals as well as people of all ages, experiences, and backgrounds.

Their body of work includes film, opera, documentary, oratorio, animation, **public art** installation, performance pieces, theatre and curatorial projects, feature films, feature documentaries and installations.

www.dumbworld.co.uk

www.instagram.com/dumbworldltd/

<https://twitter.com/dumbworldltd>

<https://www.facebook.com/dumbworldltd>

Collaborating Artists:

- **Aislinn Delaney** is a photographer based in Dublin. She studied Documentary Photography at the University of South Wales, Newport (2008) and more recently, Art Direction for Film & TV with the Limerick School of Art and Design (2020). Her collaborative arts practice comes out of a history of working in a community context both as an artist and as a youth and community worker. Her photography projects explore identity, history and representation to create alternative narratives.
- **Vera Ryklova** is a visual artist working in *lens-based media*. She is currently a studio residency awardee at Dean Art Studios (Dublin). Vera has participated in three solo exhibitions and several group shows in Ireland and the UK. Her work features in photography journals and art publications, art collections by OPW, the Arts Council of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin. Her practice explores the concept of the self and the events that impact its social construction <https://www.veraryklova.com/>
- **Jasmin Marker** is an artist working at the cross-section of bio-art and environmental art. She employs 'foraging' as a research strategy. Her work challenges how we classify and divide things - into human/non-human, species and territories - and through the lens of **ecology**. Her practice incorporates diverse media and processes such as sculptural installation, **chromatography**, collaging of organic matter and **mark making** with organisms and life processes. <http://jasminmarker.eu/>
- **Jonathan H. S. Ross** is an artist and furniture maker based in Belfast. Interested in the points where traditional woodworking techniques intersect with a contemporary arts practice, he makes structural

interventions - obstacles or solutions influenced by people's freedoms and restrictions, both emotionally and physically, within public spaces. He enjoys the process and pace that hand making sets, the qualities inherent in craft, and the idea of **deferred value**.

<https://www.pssquared.org/studios/jonathan-ross>

Production Team:

Sound Recordist: Aaron McGlinchy

Camera Man: Rai Santosa

Editor: Peadar Ó Goill

Producer: Susanna Lagan

Production Assistant: Rhian Cooper

Production Manager: Michael Stapleton

Participant groups and individuals:

- Youth Work Ireland, Navan, providing youth clubs and programs for the young people of Meath.
- Dunshaughlin Choral Society, formed in 1975, with a current membership of 45 singers.
- Meath Music Academy, providing piano, guitar, drums, singing and violin tuition in Navan.
- Cultur Migrant Centre, community organisation working with migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.
- Sea Swimmers, Laytown
- Trim Family Resource Centre, a locally based family support and community development project.
- 4th Year Students, Colaiste na hInse Secondary School.
- Moira Dineen
- Manita Mewa
- Margaret McCann
- Mark Jenkinson, The Cider Mill, producer of Award Winning Cockagee Irish Cider, based in Slane.
- Sonairte Eco Centre & Gardens, an interactive visitor centre promoting ecological awareness and sustainable living in Laytown.

Solstice Arts Centre commissioned this project in partnership with Meta.



Gallery 1: Photography by Vera Ryklova



Artist Vera Ryklova with photographic works at Solstice

Medium: Photographic prints **Size:** 135 x 90cm each

Description: Seventeen large photographic prints dominate Gallery 1. Equal in size and hung close together, their proximity implies they are connected, telling a story. The photographs document experiences within this project; capture moments of time, gatherings and encounters with the people and locations. A majority of the imagery is devoid of humans, evoking a sense of stillness and peacefulness, echoing the essence of 'lockdown', when we remained behind closed doors and nature occupied spaces of calm. Project participants included in these large visuals are women at Trim Family Resource Centre, Sonairte Eco Centre & Gardens and children from Meath Music Academy.

Process & media: Len-based media printed in colour and black/white on Kells Matt photography paper.

Subject matter & composition: Documenting a community arts project over a two-year period, this series of large photographs capture events that influenced our social construction through the pandemic and the the artists collaborative process with the participant groups and locations.

A single image of a door at the resource centre represents the beginning of the series. Four of the prints, displayed together are portraits of women who attend Trim Family Resource Centre. Interspersed with black and white photographs, twelve colour prints of nature interrupt the uniformity of the imagery. As a whole, the images evoke spiritual feelings, symbols of hope, sadness, and the fragility of life.

The final two photographs, one in the gallery and one downstairs on the café wall, depict Meath Music Academy in the theatre at Solstice, creating music with composer Brian Irvine, Dumbworld, during one of the projects many workshops. The women and children depicted, represent old and young generations.

Display & Layout: Hung close together in Gallery 1, twelve prints dominate one wall, while four portraits hang together opposite. Displayed downstairs, one framed print introduces viewers to the installation.

Artist Statement about this work: The life experiences people laid bare in front of me is what inspired my work for this project. It is the universal journey that each of us must embark on. We learn to embrace the singularity of one's existence and brace our own sense of belonging.

It is the darkness and the light that the transition from one point to another brings on, while we strive to move ahead. We go, we search. We cry, we hope. We fight, we wait.

It is the fragility of every moment that gives us the strength to continue the path we set upon. It all takes courage. Until it all finds Us. Finds You. Finds Me.

Gallery 2: Circular sound & video installation



Description & media: *If We Could See Ourselves As Other See Us* is an installation consisting of two semi-circular benches and a looped 8 movement immersive audio and video work on 6 screens. It is a place to gather. A space of continuance for a project that charts moments of assembly across Meath.

Influenced by anarchist philosopher Peter Kropotkin's writings on mutual aid, this audio and video work is a journal and narrative response that explores interconnectedness and support across human, spiritual and other living systems. A transcript of the 30min audio work is available on request.

Layering documentary footage, personal observation, photography, interview, field recordings, and collective musical creation and composed elements, into eight movements that creates an immersive viewing and listening experience:

1. **A Swim to Begin** - Vicky and the Sea Swimmers of Laytown, Music Brian Irvine, Narration John McIllduff
2. **Portraits** with ALPS, Trim Family Resource Centre
3. **Youth Orchestra Jam** with Meath Music Academy
4. **Tea & Angels** with Margaret and friends / Music by Brian Irvine
5. **Unrealistic** created by Youth Work Ireland, Meath
6. **No Table before the Famine** with Mark Jenkinson, The Cider Mill, Slane / Music By Brian Irvine
7. **Listen All You Who Love**, Dunshaughlin Choral Society/Lyrics by John McIllduff/Music by Brian Irvine
8. **The Orchard**, Teresa Stack, Sonairte Eco Centre & Gardens/Music Brian Irvine/Narration John McIllduff

Subject matter & composition: The circular design invites the viewer into the centre of the encounters while also making them participants in a new collective moment. The handcrafted benches by Jonathan H. S. Ross act as a functional object within a controlled setting but should also experiment with how form itself can influence or dictate use, and facilitate confident and comfortable personal and community interaction between strangers.

Artist statements about this work:

John McIllduff (Dumbworld) - This is a place to gather. A space to sit, connect and reflect. It holds the traces of a journey around Meath into moments of assembly and creation. A celebration of accumulation and entanglement that happens when there is proximity.

Brian Irvine (Dumbworld) - Often it is because we know too much that we lose the ability to attend to what is going on around us with sensitivity and care. In this co created multi-layered work, we peel back the layers of knowing and paint from a broad canvas of raw. Co-creating, collaborating, and nurturing fragile nuggets of sonic/musical ideas like plants. Each occupying its own, rightful space in the greenhouse, we watch the journey of it becoming with wonder, love, and care and in doing so we begin to understand something more than we once did.

Gallery 3: Yeaststories by Jasmin Marker



Yeaststories with Jasmin Marker at Solstice

Size: 124cm wide x 144cm high each / 372cm wide x 144cm high overall

Description: Yeaststories is a collaged triptych consisting of black laser cut card and small circular preserved microorganisms illuminated through light boxes. The work connects four project participant stories through the yeasts we consume, smother and ferment. The work tells a fable of a **sybiotic** landscape - alive and fluid through the interactions of human and non-human. The layered design invites the viewer to look below the surface of visibility and reveals the microorganisms that unite us in a common narrative.

Process & media: Three light boxes depicting the project journey with donated yeast samples from:

1. Soil and apples from Sonairte Ecological Garden;
2. Dust and lichen from gravestones at St Seachnaill's graveyard Dunshaughlin;
3. The ferments at The Cider Mill, Slane;
4. The skin of the members of Youth Work Ireland, Meath.

The samples were subjected to lengthy agar plate preparation. Sealed into petri dishes, they grow and morph, becoming visible. Each dish is coloured and inserted into the artwork, highlighted by the black card imagery and white lit background.

Subject matter & composition: Jasmin Marker works at a cross-section of **bio-art** and **environmental art**. Using 'foraging' as a research strategy - literally and **metaphorically**, the yeasts collected and the projects context dictate the image making seen in black. Resembling contemporary landscape 'painting' that uncovers the unseen - as well as a form of 'mapping' - the work is a collage that seeks to record the project participants stories, make connections between the different groups and locations, and ultimately change over time, mirroring human and the natural world's response to time, adjustment and evolution.

Display & Layout: Hung on the wall, these three light boxes are displayed as one piece.

Artist Statement about this work: Microorganisms play a magnificent role in our lives; they digest our food, protect our health and even affect our behaviour. However, due to their small size and resulting invisibility their acts often removed from the story. The aim of *Yeaststories* is to integrate the contributions of microorganisms into our narratives - from the yeasts that make the cider to the mycorrhiza fungi that recycle nutrients into the ground.

Section 4: Glossary

Bio-art is an art practice where artist's work with biology, live tissues, bacteria, living organisms, and life processes.

Community arts, also known as social art, community-engaged art, community-based art, is the practice of art based in and generated within a community setting.

Contemporary art is art of the present time. Contemporary art practice is usually attributed to the periods from the 1970s to the present time.

Chromatography is a method commonly used for separating a mixture of chemical substances into its individual components, so that the individual components can be thoroughly analysed.

Curator: The exhibition curator oversees the organisation and presentation of an exhibition in order to inform, educate and inspire the public. They make a series of choices on how they will display the artworks.

Deferred value is the value which a good or service will deliver at some future time.

Environmental art addresses social and political issues relating to the natural and urban environment.

Foraging is the act of gathering wild food or materials.

Inherent refers to the constitution or essential character of something: belonging by nature or habit.

Interpret is to translate or explain something for another person.

Lens-based media is the use of visual media forms using the lens, such as a camera, film or video recorder.

Mark making is the process of creating lines, dots, marks, patterns, and textures used by artists, often with unconventional drawing tools.

Metaphorically

Möbius is a one-sided surface constructed from a rectangle by holding one end fixed, rotating the opposite end through 180 degrees, and joining it to the first end.

Multi-disciplinary artists combine different artforms. Multidisciplinary art is often experimental, seeking new forms of expression.

Participatory is characterised by the involvement or participation in something.

Permanent collections consist of objects, artifacts, or pieces of art collected and owned by a museum or gallery.

Public art is art in any media whose form, function and meaning are created for the general public through a public process.

Purpose-built is something that is designed with one purpose in mind, in this case an arts centre.

Subject matter is the topic dealt with or the subject represented in an artwork.

Symbiotic means denoting a mutually beneficial relationship between different people or groups. In biology, it involves interaction between two different organisms living in close physical association.

Thematic exhibitions are organised in terms of themes e.g. the theme of light or recurring ideas or motifs.

Triptych is an artwork made up of three pieces or panels. Often used to impart narrative, create a sequence, or show different elements of the same subject matter.

Section 5: Questions to consider

This community arts projects asks us to 'rethink our sense of belonging, and importance of place'. How important do you think it is for an Arts Centre like Solstice to host a community project such as this?

The aim of this community arts project was to bring people together, and empower them to tell their stories.

Do you think this has been achieved? In your answer, consider the following:

- The projects theme and context as a whole;
- The processes and media used by each of the artists to highlight each participant group's involvement;
- The theory and thinking behind how the work is displayed in the gallery spaces, for visitors to explore.

Do you think the handcrafted benches by Jonathan H. S. Ross in gallery 2 act as functional and decorative objects within the space? Analyse their form and function as part of an artwork.

Jasmin Marker combines art and science in her piece *Yeaststories*. She describes her making process as 'resembling contemporary landscape 'painting' that uncovers the unseen'.

What do you think she means by this?

Find out more about her process of making on her website <http://www.jasminmarker.eu/>

Useful links:

<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/>

www.dumbworld.co.uk

www.instagram.com/dumbworldltd/

<https://twitter.com/dumbworldltd>

<https://www.facebook.com/dumbworldltd>

<https://www.veraryklova.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/jonathanhsross/?hl=en>

<http://www.jasminmarker.eu/>

Visiting Solstice:

Solstice Gallery is open Tuesday-Saturday 11am-4pm.



Individual students and teachers can visit the gallery during opening times. Class and group gallery tours must be booked in advance.

Facilitated by qualified, experienced artists and educators, Solstice offer a number of curriculum linked workshops and events for schools during each exhibition <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/whats-on/>

To arrange a visit, tour or book a workshop, please contact Deirdre Rogers, Visual Arts Facilitation & Public Engagement Curator at deirdre.rogers@solsticeartscentre.ie or 046 909 2308.

If you, your school or an individual teacher wishes to be contacted directly about upcoming events and opportunities, please let Deirdre know and we can add you to our mailing list.

NOTES: