

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



Monument No.2, oil on canvas, 182 x 182cm. Image courtesy of the artist, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin & 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel, New York.

Deep Mapping: Unseen Landscapes
Solo exhibition by Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh

11 February - 31 March

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 in our gallery, it includes:

- Background information on Solstice Arts Centre and its functions;
- The technical and curatorial requirements of the exhibition including display, layout, lighting, signage, and the gallery's role in interpreting the exhibition for visitors.
- An in-depth look at the current exhibition and three of the artworks.
- A glossary of words **highlighted in bold font** to help students understand their meaning.

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 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 other artists and assist in the development of imaginative and innovative ideas, we encourage students and teachers to combine this resource with our associated Learning & Engagement events:

- **In Conversation with artist Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh**
Join Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh in the gallery on Fri 24 Feb where she will discuss her methodical painting process. A unique opportunity to ask the artist questions, this event is aimed at secondary level students. Free, but booking essential: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/in-conversation-with-artist-sinead-ni-mhaonaigh>
- **A Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) class tour** of the artworks in the gallery. Booking required: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/school-gallery-tours-primary-and-secondary-1>

We encourage 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.

We hope you find this resource, your gallery tour and information on our website helpful and if you have any questions, please let me know.

Best of luck to all pupils in their creative studies.

Yours,

Deirdre Rogers

Visual Arts Facilitation & Public Engagement Coordinator

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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 centre hosting a 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.

Solstice facilitates theatre shows, music performances, visual art exhibitions and films. It also has a vast programme of participatory activities such as workshops, talks and events. It caters for all ages including children, young people, families, adults, schools, youth groups, and the elderly.

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

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 artwork 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,

Gallery location & layout

The main Solstice gallery is located on the third floor, with some artworks hung on the café wall on the ground floor. You can access the gallery by stairs or lift. The main gallery has 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. The **curator** decides what type of wall labels and printed material to produce for the public. Each exhibition usually includes:

- Vinyl text on the café and gallery entrance walls providing a brief overview of the exhibition.
- Wall labels beside each artwork, a gallery essay and floor plan.
- A Virtual Gallery Tour on our website.
- Learning Resources for students and teachers to learn, understand, 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 professional artists and the artwork, and engage in new artistic and creative experiences. Full details of current 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: The Exhibition



(l-r) Structure, Monuments (in foyer), Vessel, Stack & Monument 2, Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh, 182 x 182 cm (c) Gillian Buckley

Deep Mapping: Unseen Landscapes By Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh

Curated by Belinda Quirke & Brenda McParland

Opened on Saturday Sat 11 Feb, until Friday 31 March 2023
Gallery opening times Tues - Sat 11:00am – 4:00pm

Based in Co. Roscommon, art writer, editor and researcher Joanne Laws wrote the following opening text for this exhibition:

"We need more fluid ways of perceiving the layers that are everywhere, and new ways of calling attention to the passages between old and new, of weaving the old place into the new place." – Lucy Lippard (i)

In his book, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, American scholar Kent C. Ryden reminds us that landscapes have 'unseen components', made up of **subjective** experience, memory, and narrative.(ii) According to Ryden, our sense of place consists of deeply ingrained, experiential knowledge, and an awareness of our communal and personal histories. In many ways, it is these hidden aspects of place that Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh summons each time she paints. Over the course of several decades, the artist has cultivated a **semantically** rich visual language, comprising three distinct but overlapping strands: that of structure, landscape, and pure abstraction.

For her solo exhibition at Solstice Arts Centre, Ní Mhaonaigh presents a series of new paintings that **characteristically** feature prominent elements of the built environment: **vernacular structures**, houses, factories, sheds. However, one notes that over time, some of these buildings have been demolished, therefore reframing the durational function of painting as one of recording a landscape in flux. These works portray absent forms in a moment prior to their erasure; however, they also trace the enduring hum of subatomic particles, or the ways in which enigmatic shadows continue to haunt the horizon. Movingly, the artist describes this kind of spatial and temporal dislocation as "working with an ever-present void."

Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks describe deep mapping as attempting to “record and represent the grain and patina of place through **juxtapositions** and **interpenetrations** of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the discursive and the sensual.”(iii) This intuitive and embodied form of mapping allows Ní Mhaonaigh to dig deep into a place. When observed through a spatial lens, landscape becomes a limitless container of knowledge; a site where material and immaterial remnants converge and coexist.

These paintings also consider present-day human relations to the land at a very basic level: How do we dwell? Who determines the value or usefulness of knowledge? How do we cultivate sustainable communities and authentic lives? Representing only the **empirical** physicality of landscape, traditional maps fail to convey how place is perceived and inhabited by different people over time.(iv) By contrast, through the non-linear act of painting, Ní Mhaonaigh traces unseen layers across exterior and interior registers to purposefully situate herself in the world.

i.) Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentred Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997)

ii.) Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 1993) p 17

iii.) Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2001) pp 64-65

iv.) Leticia Sabino et al., ‘Empathy Walks’ in Phil Cohen and Mike Duggan (eds.), *New directions in radical cartography: Why the map is never the territory* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021) p 183

Curation & selection of artworks

Through research and studio visits, the exhibition curator is responsible for inviting the artist to exhibit in a gallery, and collaboratively selecting the artworks to show to the public. They consider where and how to position art in the gallery spaces, lighting, the colour of the walls and different display areas. It is the curators roll to make sure all the artworks ‘sit’ together in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Artworks with sound should not be too loud and distract from the other artworks, or supplied with headphones for individual listening. The curator may decide on an overall theme or colour palette, such as a room of modern artworks or a wall of paintings that complement each other in colour or subject matter. The Curator introduces the artist to the public at the opening ceremony. For this exhibition, Solstice director Belinda Quirke invited Sinead Ni Mhaonaigh to exhibit. Together with Brenda McParland, Solstice resident curator, they liaised with the artist, and curated the hanging of the artworks in the gallery spaces.

About the curators –

Belinda Quirke is a curator, producer, musician, singer, and artistic director of Solstice Arts Centre since opening in 2006, Belinda is a graduate of NCAD, (MFA ACW), UCC Music and Crawford College of Art, Cork. A classically trained vocalist, she is currently a trustee of the Golden Fleece Award; an independent artistic prize fund established as a charitable bequest by the late Helen Lillias Mitchell. In June 2021, Belinda continues to perform and record music and released “The Black Hill” in June 2021. Her direct involvement in creating art and being part of a wider community of people contributing to all creative industries is crucial to the unique essence of Solstice Arts Centre. She is instrumental in the programming of a diverse range of events and exhibitions by local, national and international artists and performers.

Brenda McParland is the curator of this exhibition. An independent curator, she is Project Curator at Solstice Arts Centre and Gallery Producer at Municipal Gallery, dlrLexicon (Dun Laoghaire). A former Senior Curator, Head of Exhibitions, IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art), she has extensive experience curating in Ireland and UK. Exhibitions include Kathy Prendergast, Willie Doherty, Andy Warhol, Sol le Witt, Kiki Smith, Rebecca Horn, Marina Abramovic, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov and Louise Bourgeois.

Exhibition location:

The exhibition begins with six artworks, 'Landscape Series 1-5' and 'Macalla' on the ground floor plus information on display. This gives visitors a taste of what is upstairs in the main gallery spaces.

Upon entering the gallery foyer and reception area on level 3, the main exhibiting spaces, Gallery 1, 2 and 3 are through the double doors on your left with access to three enclosed courtyards off each space.

A Creative Engagement area for children is located in the gallery foyer. This gives children and families the opportunity to respond through art, to the exhibited artworks on display.

Display & layout of Deep Mapping: Unseen Landscapes

All of the artworks are wall mounted. The curator and artist considered how the artworks look together in each of the gallery spaces, moving from oldest work in gallery 1 to most recent work in gallery 3. Working with the gallery technicians, it can take up to five days to decide on the positioning of the work and hang. They also reflected on how the viewer may walk through the spaces.

Exhibition lighting

There is a mix of strip and spot lighting throughout this exhibition. Natural light also pours in from the high windows and floor to ceiling glass doors in the three spaces.

Gallery plan & information for visitors

The artist requested no wall labels or numbering. To help audiences navigate the work, a gallery plan was created showing the title, size and year each piece was made. This plan is available in hard copy at the gallery desk or a QR code that visitors can scan and follow on their devices. An A5 booklet contains the essay written by Joanne Laws, associated learning and engagement events and a short biography on the artist. All information is also available on the Solstice website.

On your gallery visit, consider the following:

- The positioning of the artworks within each space;
- How a visitor might be self-guided through the exhibition;
- The information available to tell you about the artist and artworks.

What do you think the curator, and technicians had to consider when planning the layout of this exhibition?

Learning & Engagement for the public

Programming a wide range of associated events for each exhibition to assist the public in learning and understanding the work on display, this exhibition includes:

- Gallery preview for teachers and artists.
- Gallery tours and workshops.
- Workshops for children and adults with additional needs.
- Primary school workshops.
- Sensory gallery experience for those with a visual impairment.
- Artist talk: Sinéad will give two talks in the gallery on Friday 24 February. For more details and to book see: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/in-conversation-with-artist-sinead-ni-mhaonaigh>

In reference to this exhibition, Sinéad gave a short interview on RTE radio 1, Arena Arts & Culture show on 13 February. Listen back here: <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22212312/>

Section 3: About the artist - Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh



Photo credit Amelia Stein RHA

Artist statement - Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh is **innately** concerned with the material qualities of paint, and the physical act of painting itself. Resisting the confinements of **allegory**, she earnestly engages with painting as its own **autonomous** language. Much like a poet, Ní Mhaonaigh is interested in **ambiguity** and in **anachronisms**. She is a painter who suggests rather than represents.

Over the past two decades, Ní Mhaonaigh has presented solo exhibitions whose titles comprise of singular words derived from the Irish language that describe the lived environment. These include *Struchtúr*, *Cnuasach*, *Imlíne*, *Eatramh*, *Imeall*, and *Ardán* – which translate into English as Structure, Cluster, Contour, Interval, Margin, and Platform. This litany of nouns serves to emphasise prevailing concerns in her work, relating to the exploration and elaboration of bounded space. One is free to **interpret** this in formal terms, as the construction of pictorial architecture, or as a gesture towards more **symbolic** or **enigmatic** spaces. Indeed, rather than addressing the particular or the **parochial**, Ní Mhaonaigh's paintings achieve an 'opening up' of landscape to consider universal themes of language, ancestry, and timeless depictions of place.

Biography - Born in Dublin in 1977, Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh graduated with a BA in Fine Art Painting from Dublin Institute of Technology in 2001. In 2010, she was recipient of the Hennessy Craig Scholarship and awarded The HOTRON Award 2019 by VISUAL Carlow for outstanding work. She was shortlisted for the Marmite Prize for Painting 2016, the John Moore's Painting Prize 2018, and elected as Associate Member of the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) by her peers in recognition of her work.

Represented by the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin and 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel, New York, her work is held in many important public collections including the Office of Public Works, the Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris, the Highlanes Art Gallery in Drogheda and The Arts Council as well as private collections in Ireland, across Europe and the USA.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Structure* (2022) at 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel; *Struchtúr* (2022), *Dúil Series* (2021) and *Teorainn* (2020) at Kevin Kavanagh Gallery; *Cnuasach* (2021) at Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre; and *Macalla* (2020) at Mermaid Arts Centre. Ní Mhaonaigh exhibited as part of VOLTA New York in a solo presentation in 2016, and her work has been presented at major international art fairs, including Art Market Budapest and VOLTA Basel.

A substantial publishing archive has developed around Ní Mhaonaigh's painting practice over the years, with her exhibitions attracting significant media coverage, as well as critical and scholarly engagement. Ní Mhaonaigh is regularly invited to deliver public lectures and participate in conferences, while she also widely contributes to Irish language broadcasting across radio and television.

Process & media:

'Painting is a verb as well as a noun, and it makes sense to see Ní Mhaonaigh's paintings as a performance.'
- Aidan Dunne

Sinead's practice is process and studio based where the act of painting is paramount. Working on multiple canvases at a time, each artwork takes months to complete as she paints, stores and revisits a canvas over long periods.

Working solely in oils on canvas, she can take up to 90 minutes to prepare her colour pallet before she begins a canvas. Drawing with paint to begin, her abstract style of painting suggests rather than represents, building shapes and line to create structure. Constructing and deconstructed layers of paint during the process, she gouges out and scrapes back the previous layers, to repaint over again. This gives her works a sense of mystery, hinting at something under the visible surface, mirroring her depiction of landscapes long since removed or buried. Using large brush strokes, her tactile approach means the density of paint is **synonymous** with her work, gathered in raised textures on and around the canvas.

Subject matter & composition:

Carrying a common theme, Sinead always works on a series of paintings together. All of the works in this exhibition are a response to landscape. Many depict a solitary subject, isolated, displaced and highlighted in the centre of the canvas. Using strong words such as Monument and Structure as titles, they are vague in their description, yet universally recognisable.

Line is important in her composition; it can begin and end a painting. Framing the work with a painted line, usually wider at the base, announces the work and its completion.

While inspired by local experiences or topics of interest, her work translates to audiences worldwide. Stating that 'oil is a traditional toolbox of materials' her medium is recognisable and familiar to the viewer.

Scale & layout:

The paintings in **Deep Mapping: Unseen Landscapes** are three sizes – 182 x 182 cm, 120 x 120cm and 40 x 50cm. The four large works displayed in Gallery 1 have space to be viewed together or separately, their scale demanding attention. The smaller works, displayed together in other areas of the gallery, invite the viewer to compare and contrast their execution and subject matter. The mix of canvas sizes in Galleries 2 and 3, slows the viewer, and uniformity is regulated by the layers of detail, colour and form depicted.

Themes: Landscape, structure and abstraction, language, ancestry, and a sense of place.

Style: Modernist Abstraction

Read more about Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh's artworks on her website: <https://sineadnimhaonaigh.com/>

Artwork 1: *Monument No. 1*



Year: 2018

Medium: *oil on canvas*

Size: 182 x 182cm

Description: Part of a series in response to M3 being built near the Hill of Tara in Meath, and the intrusion of a national heritage site, this painting is a representation of 'before' the construction of the road began. Monument 2, seen on the cover of this resource, depicts the 'after' effects, where a pile of rubble is all that remains.

Display & Layout: This painting stands alone on the wall in the gallery foyer. Its large scale announces it presents and introduces the viewer to the other works in the gallery spaces.

Artwork 2: *Structure*



© Gillian Buckley

Year: 2023

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size: 40 x 50 cm

Description: One in a series of small paintings, the artist describes this work as being ‘on the edge of abstraction, yet we know what they are’. A visual response to a building no longer there, she reimagines the structure and form of this non-descript building. Existing in any landscape inhabited by humankind, using tones of pink as a background has become a signature colour in this body of work. The thick brush strokes show confidence in their execution, and the multiple layers of paint add interest to its simple form.

Display & Layout: This small painting hangs with three others in Gallery 3. Spaced apart they can be viewed together or each as a stand-alone artwork sharing a common theme.

Artwork 3: *Unseen Landscape 3*



Year: 2023

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size: 120 x 120 cm

Description: Number one of four in a series exhibited together in Gallery 3, these are the most recent of Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh's artworks in this exhibition. Describing them as 'a translation of time in paint', Sinéad is representing 'nature re-consuming everything in a post-industrial revolution'. Using layers of imagery and a deconstructed landscape the main setting, seen in black-grey lines and circles, are being eaten by time as nature takes back the site.

Display & Layout: Displayed in a row on the long wall in Gallery 3, these artworks can be viewed individually. However, their common theme, colours and **subject matter** connects them as a solid body of work. They are lit from above with natural and artificial lighting.

Section 4: Glossary

Allegory - a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

Ambiguity is the quality of being open to more than one interpretation.

Anachronisms is the action of attributing something to a period to which it does not belong.

Autonomous - independent and having the power to make your own decisions.

Characteristically - in a way that is typical of a particular person, place, or thing.

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

Curator: The exhibition curator oversees the organisation and presentation of an exhibition in order to inform, educate and inspire the public.

Empirical is something based on, concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic.

Enigmatic - something that is difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious.

Innately as an inborn characteristic; naturally

Interpenetrations is the action of penetrating between or among.

Interpret is to translate or explain something for another person.

Juxtaposition is an act of placing two elements close together in order to compare/contrast the two.

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

Parochial - having a limited or narrow outlook or scope.

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

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

Represented by a gallery means the gallery will exhibit, advertise and sell artworks on the artists' behalf. As an artist, having galleries represent or exhibit your art gives you more credibility than you representing yourself. Gallery representation is like a seal of approval or a branding of sorts, and an indication that they consider your art good enough to publicise, exhibit, and present to the world.

Semantically is the study of reference, meaning, or truth.

Subjective is to be based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions.

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

Synonymous means two things that are closely connected or associated with each other such as the artist and their style of painting.

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

Section 5: Questions to consider

How important is the curators' role in an exhibition?

How important is it for an artist to be represented by a gallery?

In her artist statement, Sinead describes herself as a painter 'who suggests rather than represents'. What do you think this means?

How important are the titles given to these artworks? Do they give a descriptive meaning?

Using the environment, past and present as a source of inspiration, the artist describes it as "working with an ever-present void." As a class group, discuss this further in relation to the meaning, technique and context behind her artworks.

When visiting the gallery consider the theory and thinking behind Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh's work as well as the processes and media she uses.

Using the useful web links below, read more about Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh's work, follow on social media and gain additional insight into her artistic development leading up to this exhibition.

Useful links:

<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/>

<https://sineadnimhaonaigh.com/>

<https://www.thejournal.ie/culture-magazine-navan-5924489-Nov2022/>

<https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22212312/>

<https://joanelaws.com/about/>

<https://www.kevinkavanagh.ie/>

<https://www.532gallery.com/>

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.