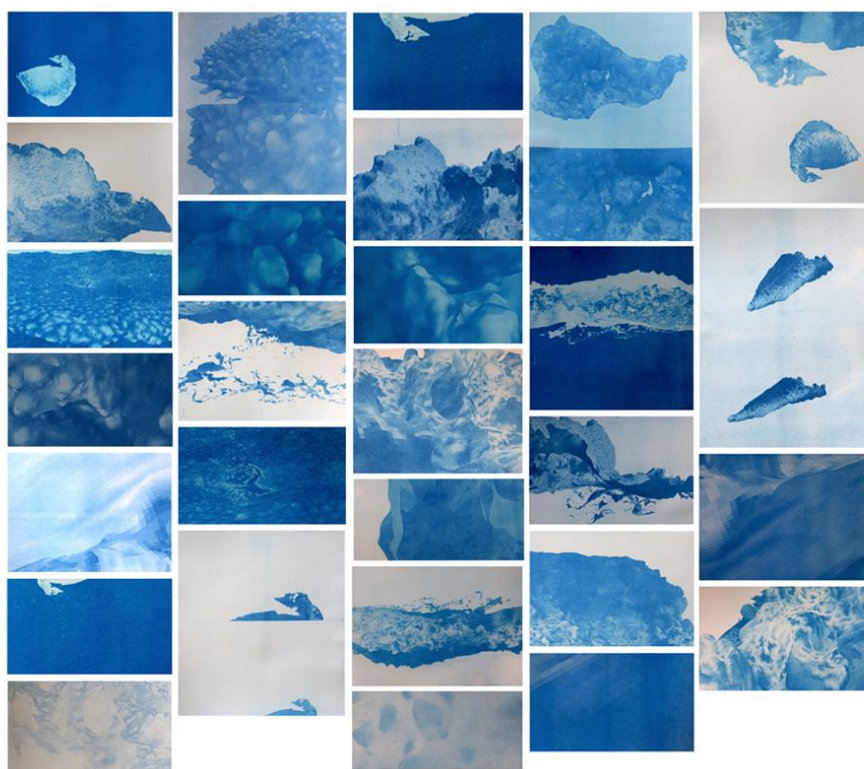




THE GALLERY QUESTION
ART APPRECIATION – LEAVING CERTIFICATE PAPER
A Post Primary School Resource



New Era

A group exhibition exploring climate change

Rachel Doolin, Siobhán McDonald, Martina O'Brien, Méadhbh O'Connor

12th September – 22nd December 2020

AIM OF OUR GALLERY RESOURCES:

This learning resource is designed to assist Leaving Certificate students and teachers interested in opting for the gallery question in Section III of the History & Appreciation of Art paper. It includes background information on Solstice Arts Centre and its current functions, as well as an in-depth look at the exhibition, the artists, the artworks and the themes and ideas involved. It covers the technical and **curatorial** requirements of the exhibition including display and layout, lighting, signage, and the gallery's role in interpreting the exhibition for visitors.

It should facilitate students in identifying the key points to cover when approaching the gallery question and how to assess and evaluate an exhibition in a gallery space.

Normally used in conjunction with a visit to our gallery to view the artworks, this document highlights our current show 'New Era', a group exhibition exploring climate change with Irish artists Rachel Doolin, Siobhan McDonald, Martina O'Brien, Meadhbh O'Connor.

During this time of Covid restrictions we have produced a virtual gallery tour for you and your students to see the artworks discussed. You will find all the information and links in relation to New Era here:

<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/new-era-exploring-climate-change>

A resource is created for each exhibition and past exhibitions and documents can be accessed through our website or by contacting me directly at deirdre.rogers@solsticeartscentre.ie

We hope you find this resource and information on our website helpful. We encourage feedback from schools and teachers to assist us in developing these documents, tours and workshops to best meet your needs so please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours,

Deirdre Rogers

Visual Arts Facilitation & Engagement Curator

Solstice Arts Centre

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SECTION 1:

THE GALLERY QUESTION:

When sitting the Art Paper on the Leaving Certificate exam, ensure to read the exam question carefully. Focus on exactly what you are being asked to remember and analyse in relation to the exhibition you visited. Each year the question can be phrased differently, requiring different information in your answer.

In general, they will ask you to consider the following areas:

- Name, location and function of the centre hosting the exhibit.
- Exterior and Interior architecture of the building, it's history and its original and present-day purpose if applicable.
- General facilities for visitors i.e. disability access, lighting and signage.
- Title of the specific exhibit you saw (in-person or virtually) and will review.
- The style, scale and medium used by the artist or artists.
- Information within the building and within the gallery e.g. brochures, leaflets, catalogues, maps, labels and so on.
- The layout i.e. floor plans of gallery, how the artworks are presented, how visitors move or are directed through the space.
- Display i.e. how the artworks are hung, displayed and viewed by visitors e.g. frames, TVs, plinths, height, arrangement etc.
- Lighting i.e. positioning and effects, does it enhance the work?
- Programming i.e. are there workshops/talks/tours or other events programmed alongside the exhibition.
- Use of technology i.e. touch screens, interactive activities, information on gallery website.
- Is there is an entrance fee for the gallery, and do you need to book tickets?

After your visit to the exhibition, refer to all the above important aspects you might need to address in your exam answer. If possible bring information, brochures and material from the gallery that might help you with your answers. You can download these from our website. You can also search for reviews of the exhibition in newspapers and online to see how art critics have analysed the show. These can be found on the web or in printed productions such as FRIEZE, the Irish Times or Irish Art Review magazine.

SECTION 2:

INFORMATION ON SOLSTICE ARTS CENTRE

In your introduction to the gallery question include a brief, concise overview of the Solstice Arts Centre, including its name, location, function and history.

NAME: SOLSTICE ARTS CENTRE

LOCATION: Railway Street, Navan, Co. Meath C15 KWP1

CONTACT DETAILS: +353 (0)46 909 2300 www.solsticeartscentre.ie

FUNCTION: Solstice is a multi-disciplinary arts centre. This means it hosts a number of art forms - Visual Art, Music, Film and Theatre. The building functions as a space for the people of Meath and surroundings areas, to access and celebrate life, art and culture in the county.

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.

During the pandemic Solstice moved many of its events on-line, supporting artists and communities to engage in artistically rich experiences during lock-down. Under the title Outside IN this included newly commissioned dance and poetry works, community performances, highlighting Meath artists through social media platforms and a series of creative activities for our younger audiences inspired by professional artists, writers, and musicians.

You can view these here: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/whats-on/outside-in/>

HISTORY & ARCHITECTURE: Solstice was designed as a **purpose-built** arts centre by Grafton Architects and was opened in April 2006. Solstice consists of a 320-seat tiered theatre, three purpose-built gallery spaces, a workshop studio, and a café space open to the public. 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.

GENERAL FACILITIES: Solstice has disability access with two lifts, one to access each floor in the main building and one from the basement to the ground floor at the back of the building. There are also two disabled toilets on site.

The box office and reception desk is on the ground floor, straight in front of you as you enter the building so visitors can ask questions, book tickets and find out information.

GENERAL SIGNAGE: Signage is visible outside the centre and throughout the building. There is vinyl lettering on the wall to your right inside the main entrance informing you where the toilets and gallery are and stating gallery opening times. There is signage in the lift explaining what is on each floor as well as up-and-coming events. There is also signage on entry to the gallery space.

GENERAL LIGHTING: Lighting is provided on each floor, in hallways and in stairwells.

CENTRE LEAFLETS AND INFORMATION:

Solstice Arts Centre has a number of ways of providing information to visitors. We have general tourist information for visitors, arts centre information and additional information related to the gallery. Gallery information is explained in section 4.

General Arts Centre Information:

- **Brochure:** The Solstice brochure is printed three times a year, to include four months of theatre, art and music programming. This includes all events happening in Solstice, with information on times, dates, costs, ages and how to book. It divides events into different categories such as 'Cinema at Solstice', 'Arts Programming', 'Children's Events & Activities' and 'Visual Arts'. These divisions make it easier for visitors to find the type of options they are looking for. The printed brochure will be produced again when Covid restrictions are lifted, the centre has reopened and all in-house events resume.
- **Online Engagement:** Responding to necessary changes in engagement due to Covid-19, emphasis on online content creation through photography, video and 360° virtual reality tours of Solstice work enables interaction with audiences far beyond the Centre. Solstice will continue to develop content for dissemination across all our digital channels, as well as for use in classrooms across all levels of education and community groups.
- **Website:** The Solstice website displays all information that is in the printed brochure as well as other activities and commissions. It is updated regularly to show visitors what events and exhibitions are upcoming, provides further information on shows and includes any schedule changes. It also gives links for visitors to book online and access resources such as this one. The website has been the main source of information for our audiences during 2020 including changes in events, postponements, and cancellations due to Covid-19.
- **Social media:** Solstice uses platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to advertise and showcase our exhibitions and events. It is a quick, easy and practical way for Solstice to engage directly with our audiences, giving them live information and updates on what is happening in and around the centre on a daily basis.
- **Newsletter:** Visitors can also sign up for our newsletter which provides monthly emails about the Solstice programme. This helps visitors to stay informed about what is on in the centre and subscribers have the opportunity to book in early for popular events.

SECTION 3: THE SOLSTICE GALLERY

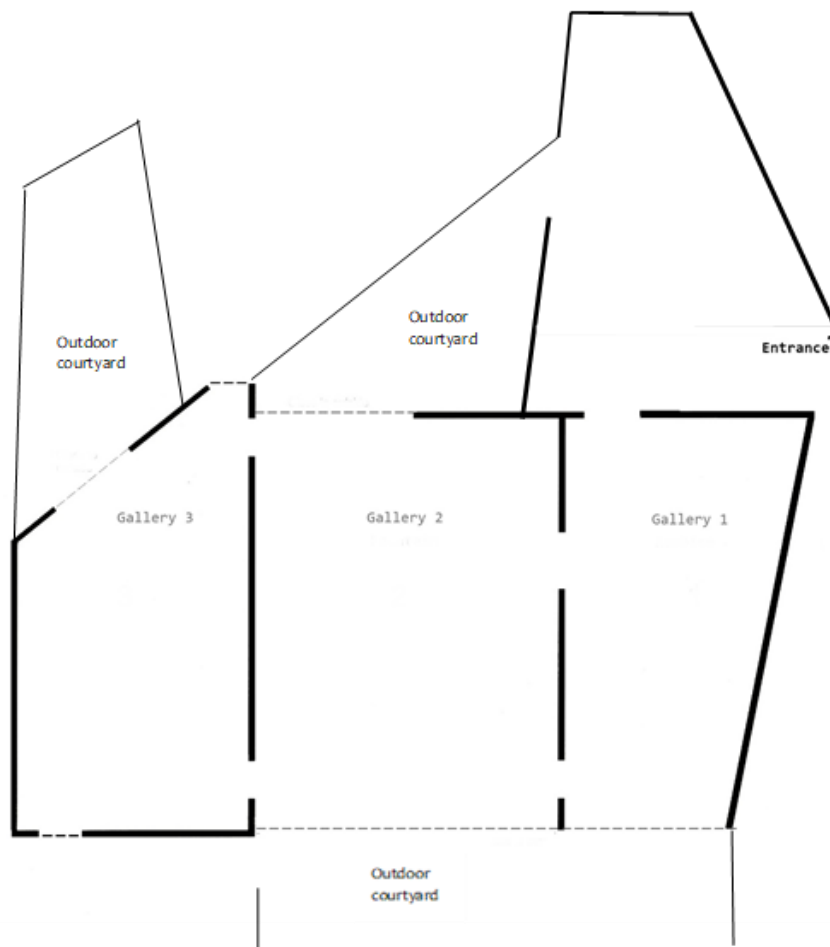
BACKGROUND:

Solstice gallery is a **contemporary arts** gallery that hosts approximately five exhibitions per year. It exhibits artwork from local, national and international artists. The exhibitions are usually **thematic** group shows or large-scale solo exhibitions by **established** Irish and international artists.

LOCATION & FLOOR PLAN:

Sometimes artworks from the exhibition are hung on the café wall on the ground floor. However, the main Solstice gallery is located on the third floor of the Arts Centre. You can access the gallery by stairs or lift. This area consists of a gallery foyer and reception desk, with the main exhibiting spaces Gallery 1, 2 and 3 through the double doors on your left.

The gallery has three rooms with open access into each as well as three enclosed courtyards where artworks can also be displayed outdoors. Please see the floor plan below.



GALLERY LEAFLETS & INFORMATION:

Leaflets, information and text is especially important in the gallery space. It helps us to explain or interpret our exhibitions and artworks for visitors. It can provide background information on the exhibition, information on the artists, the themes and ideas of the work, the materials used and the price of the artwork if applicable. It is also available on our website under the relevant exhibition details in our What's On pages.

Here are some methods we use:

VINYL TEXT: Vinyl text is the text you see on the café and gallery entrance walls. It provides basic information on the exhibition, dates etc. Vinyl is also used in the children's area of the café or gallery foyer; it gives children and families a suggested activity to complete that links to our exhibition. If possible, take a look at this text on the walls and see if you find it helpful.

LABELS: Labels within the exhibition have smaller text and give information on individual artworks. Usually each individual artwork is either labelled with a number, or a title and short description. If numbered, this will relate to an A4 printed description or gallery handout available at the desk with further information. Title and text labels assist visitors as they walk through the gallery, reading the descriptions on the wall. Both allow visitors to easily see what each artwork is called and read further information on it.

GALLERY ESSAY: The gallery essay is a fold out resource for visitors to the gallery. It contains an essay or information written by the curator, describing their interpretation of the exhibition, the artist(s), the artwork and the themes. This is a different type of information for visitors, it is less fact based and instead functions as a personal response from the curator to the exhibition, giving their personal insights and understanding of the work. It may give visitors new ways of looking at an artwork or artist.

GALLERY MAP: The map is generally a one-page floor plan of the exhibition. It shows visitors where each artwork is situated. The numbers on the map will correspond to the numbers on the wall, making it easy for visitors to access further information on an artwork. The map includes a list of numbered artworks, with information such as title, year, dimensions, materials, and sale price.

VIRTUAL GALLERY TOURS: As you navigate the gallery tour on-line you will see two icons, one an image icon and the other a book, near each piece of artwork. When clicked, the image icon displays a static photograph of the artwork and the book icon displays specific details including the artists name, title, medium and description of the artwork, similar to the labels on the gallery walls.

LEARNING RESOURCES: Solstice has a number of learning resources. These are for children and schools, to assist them in understanding and interacting with the exhibition. The learning resource for young children is called 'Look Draw Think Respond'. It is aimed at children aged 5-12 years and contains some simple questions to answer about the current exhibition and activities to complete in Solstice or at home. A learning resource for secondary school students, a document such as this one is also compiled for each exhibition.

SECTION 4:

New Era - A group exhibition exploring climate change

Rachel Doolin, Siobhán McDonald, Martina O'Brien, Méadhbh O'Connor



Opening 12th September 2020

Exhibition continues from Tues. 15th to Tues. 22nd Dec. Opening times Tues.- Sat. 11:00am – 4:00pm

Curated by Brenda McParland, Solstice Curator in Residence and funded by Creative Ireland

New Era is an exhibition featuring four Irish visual artists **Rachel Doolin**, **Siobhán McDonald**, **Martina O'Brien** and **Méadhbh O'Connor** whose work explores different aspects of climate change in the natural world. The exhibition includes new and recent art works by these artist/activists and advocates for both local and global climate change.

The exhibiting artists are all involved in explorations of wide-ranging issues including biodiversity, ecology, weather forecasting, climate modelling, governance of natural disasters, and the **Anthropocene** (recent consequences of our treatment of nature and the environment). The exhibition features a range of artworks including painting, print, photography, sculpture, installation, film, video and the written word.

Individually Doolin, McDonald, O'Brien and O'Connor have undertaken Artist's Residencies in Universities and Institutions such as UCD Parity Studios with UCD School of Sciences, Trinity College Dublin School of Natural Sciences and School of Botany, Maynooth University, The European Space Agency, Svalbard Global Seed Vault, Norway, Irish Seed Savers, and Crann -Trees for Ireland. The artists have also undertaken varied research expeditions to Iceland, Italy, Norway and Switzerland in collaborations with scientists and experts which have informed and expanded their art practices.

The exhibition is accompanied by a live and online curated Participation and Engagement Programme comprising of film screenings and biodiversity themed workshops and events.

STYLE: Contemporary / Representational / Conceptual / Installation

MEDIUM: Multiple mediums including audio, video, painting, print, photography, mixed-media sculpture and written word.

THEMES:

- Research-based artworks marrying art and science
- Artistic representations of Anthropocene
- The fragility of nature and the destruction created by man to our natural world

EXHIBITION LAYOUT:

When walking through the gallery space, virtually or in-person, think about how the rooms are laid out and how visitors are guided through the gallery. For this group show careful consideration was given to all the artworks, how they are placed in each room, giving a respectful amount of space to each artist's work. All four artists have video or sound work that requires a dark space. This is complimented with smaller light sensitive artwork, photography, works on plinths, wall and floor. What do you think the curator, artists and technicians had to consider when planning the layout of this exhibition? Do the dark spaces draw you into the gallery?

Note the information displayed on the walls alongside each artwork. This information is accompanied by an A5 booklet detailing the show, short biographies on each artist and associated workshops and events.

EXHIBITION DISPLAY/HANGING:

Information about each artist and the exhibition is displayed on the café wall on the ground floor. This gives visitors a taste of what is upstairs in the main gallery. A children's creative space is not possible in the café due to Covid-19. However, a 'comment' space is provided asking viewers to consider their role in tackling climate change. This is displayed beside a project called 'Purls of Wisdom', a Meath County Council initiative based on Climate Stripes, a visual representation highlighting the change in the earth's temperature through knitting and crochet. See the New Era Photo Gallery on our website for an image of this wall.

Upstairs on level 3, the exhibition begins in the gallery foyer. Living sculptural works **Biosystem VI**, 2020 and prose **Vignette No. 23 (the unknown woman)** by Meadhbh O'Connor and four small oil paintings, **Andrée's Arctic balloon**, **The ice silenced them**, **Snow bones** and **Laid exposed to the Arctic Sky**, 2018 by Siobhan McDonald hang in this bright space.

In contrast Gallery 1 is darkened. This is to accommodate Martina O'Brien's two-channel + low res video **B-scope**, 2019 and **neither fully self nor other**, 2020, a series of light sensitive cyanotype prints on the floor. On the wall Siobhán McDonalds photogenic light sensitive drawings **A History of Time** are shielded from direct light while Rachel Doolin's photographic diptych **The Weight of Mountains**, 2019 are heightened with spotlights.

To house two video pieces, Gallery 2 is also a dark space with wall and small sculptural works highlighted with direct artificial lighting. A majority of the floor space is empty to allow audiences to move freely around the space and view the video pieces, **Rendered Landscape (The Other's Mountain)**, 2020, a new computer generated environment by Méadhbh O'Connor and **At the Edge of Visibility**, 2016, shot by Siobhán McDonald while in the Arctic Circle.

Rachel Doolin's work dominates the final room. Gallery 3 features her film, sculpture installation, and photographs, all produced following her research residency in 2017 to Galleri Svalbard, an Arctic Art Institution located in Svalbard, Norway. Projected onto a large screen **Temporal Landscapes** 2018 is an audio-visual work. On individual grey plinths sit **Evolutions of Uncertainty**, 2018 – 2020 is a series of six sculptural works. Two limited edition photographic glacial landscapes entitled Ablation Zone (I and II) hang on the white walls.

EXHIBITION LIGHTING:

Pay close attention to the lighting in this exhibition and see what the technicians, artist and curator have chosen to do. Lighting is used to draw attention to the artworks in each gallery space as well as highlight the video pieces. The audience travels from a bright gallery foyer to 3 darkened rooms, providing a dramatic backdrop that is heightened by audio recordings that subtly flood each space. Spotlights are used to highlight smaller sculptural or wall pieces.

EXHIBITION SOUND:

Accommodating four different audio-visual artworks throughout the main three rooms is challenging as headphones are not permitted due to Covid restrictions. The curator and technicians worked carefully to avoid the overlapping of sounds, giving each artists work the listening space required. In Gallery 2 only **Rendered Landscape (The Other's Mountain)** by Méadhbh O'Connor has no sound, allowing Siobhán McDonalds **At the Edge of Visibility** to be shown in the same space. Note where the technicians have placed the speakers and how the video works are situated either on the wall or mobile screen so they can be viewed individually, without distraction.

SECTION 5: ARTWORKS IN DETAIL

ARTWORK 1:

Rachel Doolin

Evolutions of Uncertainty

Description: Series of eight Sculptural Works

Materials: Polyurethane Packaging Foam, Cement, Mortar Plasticiser, Acrylic resin, grown crystals, stainless steel, limestone.

Dimensions: Variable



Evolutions of Uncertainty is a series of crystallised forms grown using an industrial fertilising solution on carved polyurethane (a **thermoplastic** used for padding and insulation in furniture, clothing, and packaging) forms. Doolin has purposely embedded industrial packaging materials into these formations to highlight the contrast between a material that is generally designed to preserve or protect but once discarded has detrimental effects on our environment. The sculptures evoke the **aesthetic** qualities of an earth formed or mineral specimen, and yet are manmade.

The artist further draws on the alluring qualities of crystals as an evocative language. Their **diaphanous** attributes embodying a sense of wonder, mystery and spiritual transcendence. The very word 'Crystal' derives from the ancient Greek word 'krystallos' meaning 'coldness drawn together' or 'ice'. Mystics of the past deemed ice to be a source of revelation, believing that through a method of **divination** known as scrying or crystallo-mancy ice could reveal our future. Doolin further finds synchronicity in the future telling of methodologies of the past and contemporary scientific studies of ice cores, where paleo climatologists are drawn to the ends of the earth in their quest for knowledge about where our planet has been, where it is, and where it might be going.

DISPLAY & LAYOUT: This artwork is displayed in a large, darkened room as it is accompanied by a film piece projected on a large screen, also by Doolin. Displayed individually on low grey plinths, *Evolutions of Uncertainty* creates a backdrop for this projection. Tall stainless steel 'arms' raise the work several feet off each plinth, as if growing and protruding from the earth.

LIGHTING: Blackout blinds have been used on all windows in this room. This maximizes the impact of controlled spotlighting on each of the pieces, highlighting their crystallised, mystical qualities.

THEMES:

- **Anthropogenic** (caused by or produced by humans) verses natural formations
- Man's use of plastics without regard for their environmental impact
- The mythical and scientific practice of attempting to foretell future events

ARTWORK 2:

Siobhán McDonald

At the Edge of Visibility, 2016

Description: Film, original footage shot in the Arctic Circle in 2015.

Duration: 4 minutes



Siobhán McDonald's film **At the Edge of Visibility, 2016**, was shot in the Arctic Circle in 2015. The work includes sound recordings of dying glaciers by Professor Chris Bean, and sounds recorded in space by ESA (European Space Agency). Sound composition is by Irene Buckley, featuring sound samples from the Arctic recorded by the artist. Edited by Christopher Ash.

Siobhán McDonald's practice draws attention to contemporary topics dealing with air, breath, and atmospheric phenomena, weaving scientific knowledge into her art in a poetic and thoughtful manner. She is interested in the changeable nature of landmass, historical events and their interconnection to time. Working with world-leading research facilities such as The European Space Agency (ESA) and The JRC European Commission, her art practice calls on notions of what is still unknown to science, exploring the **Anthropocene** and the recent consequences of our treatment of nature. McDonald's work with glaciers and other natural phenomena deploys a unique artistic language that gives form to intangible and richly varied processes including painting, drawing, film and sound.

DISPLAY & LAYOUT: Situated in a room with other artworks, by other artists, this film is projected onto a wall. There are no other artworks on this wall, giving the piece total domination over that area of the room.

LIGHTING: All windows are blacked out in this space. The only light is from the film itself.

THEMES:

- Marrying science and art to communicate the urgency of climate change
- Symbolism, using the circle as a visual representation of a ship's porthole, a window into the unknown, and an opening into the future devastation of our planet

ARTWORK 3:

Martina O'Brien

neither fully self nor other 2020



Description: Series of thirteen Cyanotype prints, light boxes

Dimensions: variable

This artwork is a series of **cyanotype prints** depicting newly discovered coral colonies in the Porcupine Bank Canyon, 320km off the coast of Ireland. The images are based on three dimensional models generated by the Marine Geology Research Group UCC, integrating video footage with acoustic and mapping data from this biodiverse cold-water reef ecosystem.

Sensitive to light, each print is framed within a small lightbox. Placed on the gallery floor the viewer experiences the feeling that they are looking down into the sea, somehow encountering the coral reef from the safety of the gallery. Displayed beside the lightboxes, on two TV screens, another of O'Brien's artworks, **B-scope, 2019**, shows footage of her expedition with scientists in March 2019 on the research vessel The Celtic Explorer. Using the Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) on-board to gather scientific data on the ocean bed, her lightboxes purposefully have long power cables to mimic the underwater vehicle, physically linked to the host ship by an umbilical like cable, that relays information and imagery back to the scientists on-board.

DISPLAY & LAYOUT: In contrast to the other gallery spaces, when you enter this room you are made aware of the large number of artworks on display. Two TV screens straight ahead encourage you in, with lightboxes on a large area of floor to the left. Two artworks by other artists are hung on the walls.

LIGHTING: Entering this darkened space, the lightboxes subtle glow draws your eye to the floor and the dark moving imagery on the TV screens suggests their connection. Wall pieces are spot lit on the right and left.

THEMES:

- Perceptions of time, the earth sciences, **futurology** and **divination**.
- The influence of measurement technologies and data-driven practices of **quantification**.
- How ways of describing the world through computational structures affect the possibilities for our being, acting and thinking in the world.

ARTWORK 3:

Méadhbh O'Connor

Rendered Landscape (The Other's Mountain) 2020

Description: Computer-generated environment, 3-minute loop video with no sound



Meadhbh O'Connor's artworks are an exploration of natural phenomena and our attempts to understand these through the lens of both art and science. Her recent work has taken a new turn in which she is exploring and revealing the experiences that ferment her deep connection to the land. All are situated in mountain settings, often in the company of companions, loved ones or 'Others.'

In this video piece she uses the spoken word as a device to speak to and enact a merging with a technological 'presence.' This work sought to find a way to unify the natural, the spiritual, the body and the technological in anticipation of the forthcoming **Singularity**. Made during the Covid-19 lockdown from the confines of her dorm room in Oxford, this performative work uses prose poetry to speak to the technological 'Other' – as an 'input' that tries to share with it experiences it is denied by the lack of a body. The technological 'Other' tries to **synthesise** and render an understanding of the natural world by producing entirely artificial environments. Nature, the artificial and the psychological are viewed in the work as not necessarily irreconcilable, but potentially part of the same spiritual existence.

All elements in this work were created and performed by O'Connor and can be viewed on our website in our Solstice New Era virtual tour – Gallery 2.1

DISPLAY & LAYOUT: This darkened room highlights the video projection taking place. The large free-standing screen was **purpose-built** by the technicians in Solstice to display this work. This is placed away from the wall so the viewer can move freely around the space.

LIGHTING: Blackout blinds have been used on all windows in this room. This maximizes the impact of the film projections.

THEMES:

- An exploration of natural phenomena and our attempts to understand these through the lens of both art and science
- Adapting ones artform in a time of a pandemic to explore our experiences and restrictions.
- Combining performative elements, prose poetry and computer-generated environments (new technologies—and the potential birth of A.I.) to connect to the land.

SECTION 6: ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Rachel Doolin is a multi-disciplinary artist, educator (early years) and environmental activist based in Cork. Her multifaceted practice marries art, experimentation, and ecology to explore themes concerning materiality, habitation, and the environment. Employing a methodology of making that she describes as 'simple complexity', Doolin gathers, manipulates, and combines various media to realise her often poetic provocations. She regularly incorporates found or discarded materials into the creation of her work that is simultaneously delicate and complex, pertaining to the vulnerability and persistence, fragility, and tenacity of biological life in the **Anthropocene**.

Having completed a research trip and residency to Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a secured storage facility carved into solid rock of Plateau Mountain permafrost on a Norwegian archipelago midway between Norway and the North Pole in the Arctic Ocean, Doolin is currently embarking on a self-directed residency with Irish Seed Savers. A project entitled 'Seed Cloud' Doolin will explore the concept of seeds as archives of cultural memory.

Doolin is also developing a community project with children living in a Direct Provision Centre in Ireland. Recently shortlisted for stage two of a Percent for Art commission, which involves a community planting project in partnership with Crann - Trees for Ireland, Doolin's range of works includes sculpture, film and photography.

Siobhan McDonald is currently Artist in Residence in Trinity College Dublin in the Botany Department (2020-2023). McDonald completed an artist in residence programme in the School of Natural Sciences at Trinity College Dublin (2017-2019) working with world-leading research facilities such as The European Space Agency (ESA); The JRC European Commission and The European Research Council to explore ecology in light of current ecological concerns. Across these research labs, she pursued knowledge to ask questions about the structure and history of the earth. McDonald has made artworks inspired by expeditions to Vatnajökull, Iceland, Europe's largest glacier and Mount Etna, Italy as well as works focusing on Irish landscape such as Black Pig's Dyke, Co. Monaghan.

Her art practice calls on notions of what is still unknown to science, exploring the Anthropocene and the recent consequences of our treatment of nature. She is interested in the changeable nature of landmass, historical events and their interconnection to time. In her studio, she works with a diverse group including historians and scientists. Her works manifest in many forms including painting, drawing, installation, film and sound.

Siobhan McDonald holds a master's in Visual Arts Practices from IADT. In 2018 she received the Trinity Creative Challenge Award from Trinity College Dublin. In 2017 she received a Bursary from The Arts Council of Ireland and was the recipient of a Creative Ireland Award and a Culture Ireland, GB18 2018 award.

www.siobhanmcdonald.com

Martina O'Brien is a visual artist whose **interdisciplinary practice** stems from an intrinsic interest in perceptions of time, the earth sciences, futurology and divination. Over the last number of years her work has frequently examined measurement technologies and data driven practices of quantification such as climate modelling and, as an extension of this, considered how ways of describing the world through computational structures affect the possibilities for our being, acting and thinking in the world.

These concerns are further evident in recent projects, where she explores the methodology of voluntary weather data collection and governance surrounding natural disasters. She is currently involved in the

exploration and quantification of previously unmapped deep ocean. O'Brien has made video works following an expedition on the research vessel The Celtic Explorer in the North East Atlantic Ocean and another which focuses on Ireland's first Inexpensive Device Sea Level measurement (IDSL) recently installed off the island of Inishmore on Ireland's west coast in the North East Atlantic Ocean. Martina will embark on a marine expedition residency with the Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geoscience through Parity Studios UCD to monitor the Moira Mound Coral Reef off the Irish coast in winter 2020/2021. She is currently making a new film and associated drawings which focus on the impact of climate change on black coral (*Antipatharia*).

Selected exhibitions and residences include Quotidian, Illuminations Gallery, Maynooth University, 2019; Datami, European Commission Science Hub, Joint Research Centre, Italy, 2019 & BOZAR, Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, 2019/2020; Tactical Magic, TULCA Festival of Visual Arts, 126 Artist-run Gallery, Galway, 2019; Artist in Residence, Monitoring Change in Submarine Coral Habitats Marine Expedition, North East Atlantic, in association with Parity Studios, UCD & The Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geosciences, Dublin, 2019; Artist in Residence, The European Centre for Medium-Range Forecasting, UK, 2019 and At Some Distance in the Direction Indicated, The Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, 2018. Awards include an Arts Council of Ireland Visual Arts Bursary Award 2019; an Arts Council of Ireland Travel & Training Awards 2019 & 2017; a Creative Ireland Bursary Award 2018; Kildare County Council Arts Award.

www.martinaobrien.com

Méadhbh O'Connor, born 1984, is an Irish artist whose work consists of an extended exploration of natural phenomena and our attempts to understand these through the lens of both art and science. Her projects vary between carefully designed projects to others that explore materials with changing, living or other less controllable qualities. These range from large-scale sculptural installations with plants to ephemeral, biological or temporal works.

O'Connor is interested in exploring parallels between the creative arts and natural sciences whilst acknowledging the autonomy of and specialities unique to each discipline. She has worked alongside scientists for a number of years, with whom she shares mutual interests in the natural world and environmental topics. This led to her develop **cross-disciplinary** educational programmes which she taught to undergraduate science students from 2015–2019. She was Artist in Residence at the University College Dublin (UCD) College of Science and is, to date, the only artist to receive this award twice, in 2013 and by invitation in 2017.

Méadhbh has exhibited her work in many solo and group exhibitions. In a recent breakthrough, she was selected to exhibit at the supranational Antarctic Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale of Art (2017). She was selected by a jury of influential figures including the Commissioner of the Antarctic Biennale and artist Alexander Ponomarev (RU), curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist (CH/U.K.), architect Hani Rashid (U.S.A./CA), curator Sheikha Hoor al-Qasimi (UAE) and curator Nadim Samman (DE).

Following almost a decade of professional practice working from Ireland, Méadhbh has recently completed graduate study at The Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, UK (2019-20). O'Connor is working on an ongoing series of photographic landscapes of geological phenomena and is developing a new area of interest, in written and spoken word.

www.meadhbhoconnor.info/projects

SECTION 7: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

INDIVIDUAL ARTWORK:

- **Size/Format:** How does the size/scale of the artwork affect the way it is viewed? How is it different to other pieces in the show? Is its format different, on the wall, plinth or floor? Is it large or small in scale?
- **Display & Layout:** How is the artwork placed in the space? Describe the framing (or non-framing), plinth or screen used; does it add a certain effect to the work?
- **Lighting:** How is the gallery space lit? Describe the way the artwork is lit in contrast to the space? Is there a reason the artwork is lit this way?
- **Composition:** How are the composition/forms arranged in the artwork, whether it is video, photography or sculptural based. If relevant, describe the foreground, middle ground and background. Is the composition symmetrical or asymmetrical? Is the artwork balanced, and how is that achieved?
- **Art elements:** Give an analysis of the work examining the artist's use of line, shape, tone, texture, imagery, pattern and form.
- **Process, materials & techniques:** Describe a process used to create this artwork. How were the ideas developed for the work? What was the inspiration? What are the narratives involved? What type of materials, techniques or software were used?
- **Context:** When was the work created? Who or what do you think may have influenced the artist in creating this work?

INDIVIDUAL ARTIST:

- **Style:** How would you describe the style of one of the artists? Representational, abstract, surrealist, conceptual? Give reasons for your choice.
- **Theme & Subject Matter:** What idea(s) do they portrayed in their artwork? What theme(s) are explored?
- **Colour Palette:** Are there any colours that dominate or reoccur in the work? What do the colour(s) convey?
- **Interpretation / Symbolism / Meaning / Message:** What do you think the artist is trying to convey? Are there symbols or representations in the artwork? What do you think they mean? Does the work connect with you and your life in some way?
- **The Artistic process:** What do think has inspired the artist when making these artworks? What type of imagery is used? If you were creating an artwork, what research methods would you use?
- **Information:** How do you feel about the information available at Solstice? Was it easy to find and understand? Did it give you new ways of understanding the work?

Sample Question:

If you were given the opportunity to curate and organise an exhibition in your school or community:

- What kind of artworks/style would you include and why?
- Describe the location you would use?
- What should you consider due to Covid-19 e.g. social distancing, crowd control etc.?
- How would you display the works?
- What type of audience would you expect to visit your exhibition?
- How would you advertise and promote the exhibition?
- Describe the variety of ways you would provide information to visitors?

SECTION 8: Glossary of Terms

Aesthetic: a particular individual's set of ideas about style and taste, along with its expression.

Anthropogenic: caused by or produced by humans

Composition: The act of combining parts or elements to form a whole

Context: The circumstances that create the environment within which something exists, is created or takes place. In terms of an exhibition it is important to put the artist's work into context. This could mean the historical, cultural or political context. Text or images from the artist can give information that help determine the artwork's meaning and the artist's intentions and give it context.

Cross-disciplinary: involving two or more academic disciplines.

Curator: A gallery curator is a person who acquires, cares for, develops, displays and interprets a collection of artefacts or works of art. The curator will oversee the organisation and presentation of an exhibition in order to inform, educate and inspire the public. When a curator is organizing an exhibition they will make a series of choices on how they will display the artwork.

Curatorial: Relates to the selection and organization of a gallery, museum or other collection.

Cyanotype prints: Cyanotype is a photographic printing process that produces a cyan-blue print. One of the oldest forms of photography, cyanotype print dates back to the 1840s and uses light to create the blue images. Engineers used the process well into the 20th century as a simple and low-cost process to produce copies of drawings, referred to as blueprints.

Diaphanous: very sheer and light; almost completely transparent or translucent.

Divination: the practice of attempting to foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge by occult or supernatural means

Established: An established artist, means someone who has been recognised within the arts world. This might mean that they have exhibited widely or won certain awards.

Futurology: the study or forecasting of trends or developments in science, technology, political or social structure, etc.

Interdisciplinary practice: combining or involving two or more academic disciplines or fields of study.

Interpretation: An explanation or opinion of what something means

Narrative: A visual, spoken or written account of connected events; a story.

Purpose-Built: Something that is designed with one purpose in mind.

Quantification: to determine, indicate, or express the quantity of.

Singularity: The state, fact, or quality of being singular.

Synthesise: To form (a material or abstract entity) by combining parts or elements

Thematic: Means organised in terms of themes. For example, the theme of light or climate change. There might be recurring ideas or motifs in a thematic show.

Thermoplastic: a plastic that is soft and pliable when heated.

VISITING SOLSTICE:

Solstice Gallery is open Tuesday-Saturday 11am-4pm. However, the gallery will not be open during Phase 3,4 or 5 Covid-19 restrictions.

Class groups or students can visit the gallery or book a tour free of charge. Tours are generally for groups up to a maximum of 30 people. However, this is subject to change and must coincide with current Covid-19 restrictions on gatherings.

Solstice also offers a number of curriculum linked workshops and events for schools during each exhibition. These are facilitated by qualified and experienced artists and educators. These can happen at Solstice, in the classroom or virtually.

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

Please note: changes to our programme, details of all current and forthcoming exhibitions and education programmes can be found on our website <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/whats-on/>

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.

Thank you for engaging in our New Era Exhibition.

