



A Disentailing Deed
Ruth Clinton and Niamh Moriarty
7 August – 10 October 2026

A Disentailing Deed is an exhibition of new and recent works by collaborative artists Ruth Clinton and Niamh Moriarty. Informed by a detailed research process, the artists examine various legacies of colonialism and imperialism, of which Irish people have been both victim and perpetrator. They question how narratives of history, domestic and diasporic, have contributed to a national self-image and how, in turn, this comes to influence contemporary political decisions.

The works in this exhibition engage with experiences of alienation, overwhelm in the face of global power systems, and resistance to cultural imperialism and environmental destruction. An ongoing series of replica objects, made by the artists, embody the loss of detail inherent to the copying process, subtly evoking diminishing understandings of the past, while archival objects trace lines through a complex history of emigration and proximity to empire.

One forgotten remnant of imperialism in Dublin is the Royal Hibernian Military School, which opened in the Phoenix Park in 1796 to house the children of soldiers. After the Act of Union in 1801, its purpose shifted to training pupils for military service in the British Army. Following Irish independence, staff, students and furniture were removed by ship, its log noting, 'she carried to England the RHMS, after a short but pleasant stay in Ireland for 150 years.' The school's records were sent to London and subsequently destroyed during the Blitz, their absence echoing the loss of young peoples' lives to the fronts of imperial wars. One of the last remaining objects from the RHMS, a stained glass window depicting a 'boy soldier' is replicated here. The school motto appears backwards, from outside, serving as a warning against submitting to present military industrial interests. The 'St. Patrick's Day March', which was routinely played at the school, and in Irish regiments of the British Army, has been reimagined as a contemplative score for the exhibition.

In 19th century Ireland, as in the rest of Europe, there was an effort to construct a 'national character,' whose stereotypical traits came to be seen as a motivating force in shaping a country's future. In Ireland's case this also meant focussing on aspects of culture that were considered distinctly non-British. Anglo-Irish middle class artists and politicians adopted a romanticised vision of a Gaelic past which, although meant to demonstrate historical continuity and therefore the right to self-determination, was the very same national essentialist perception used by the British government to justify its rule over a land of supposedly wild and irrational people.

The video piece, 'Táimse im' chodladh is ná dúistear mé' (2025-26) evokes simultaneous feelings of discomfort with tropes of Irishness and a longing for connection to its culture and language. Featuring a newly composed *aisling*, a historic poetic form used to allegorically express nationalist sentiment, the video considers recurrent themes of private property and resistance in north Sligo. Central to the text is *an briathar saor*, an autonomous verb form used in the Irish language to avoid naming the subject of an action, intentionally or otherwise. This omission is employed to explore various registers: authoritative, subversive, and ghostly, harnessing the *saorbhriathar's* inherent ambiguity to simultaneously critique power and recognise protest. Presented here as an invitation to perform a bilingual song, the work explores a feeling of estrangement from land and language resulting from colonisation, church oppression, and landlord greed. Translation, both linguistically and in the religious sense of moving the relics of a saintly body, is used to invoke an in-between zone of ambivalence and misunderstanding as well as playfully referencing the disputed resting place of poet W.B. Yeats.

The western seaboard, which came to be seen as the 'real' Ireland, has subsequently been advertised at home and abroad through tourism campaigns that draw on the same colonial imaginings of Ireland as a land untouched by civilisation. Early 20th century images by Irish painters likewise elevated the rural over the urban, contributing to an idealised vision of Ireland remote from the everyday realities of economic hardship and the legacies of empire. Seán Keating's 'Men of the West' depicts three men in traditional Aran Island clothing, yet Keating nods to modernity, posing his figures with guns and a tricolour, looking uncannily like characters from a western film. The original painting was first publicly displayed in 1917, when one thousand posters were also sold in aid of survivors of the 1916 Rising. During the Irish War of Independence, British authorities banned these posters, which they deemed seditious, and destroyed any found in circulation.

American colonisation, beginning with its own mythic western frontier, is deeply entangled with Irish history and has had far reaching consequences, from Irish settlers' role in the genocide of Indigenous people and the destruction of their lands, to ongoing cooperation with the US military, who since 1990 have used Shannon airport to land and refuel planes carrying weapons, cargo and prisoners, to US influence over Irish economic policy. Two bricks, containing the hand and footprint of a child, point to an uncomfortable history of Irish Catholic involvement in 19th century enslavement in North America. Replicated from bricks belonging to a settler home that was disassembled in Tennessee and rebuilt in the Ulster American Folk Park in County Tyrone, these stowaway objects defiantly display an index of their maker, rendered here in bronze, the material of public commemoration.

America's largest military propellants plant, Radford, is located on the New River (*chinodacheta* or 'river of death' in the Native Algonquian language) close to the town of Dublin in the Appalachian Mountains. The Radford Arsenal provides material for ninety percent of the explosives used, and distributed, by the United States Armed Forces. 'America's First Family of Fireworks', the Gruccis, also operate from the Radford lot. Founded by an Italian immigrant to the US in 1870, they have created spectacles for seven consecutive presidential inaugurations beginning with Ronald Reagan, and simulated atomic bomb attacks for the US Department of Defence in 1950. Radford practices open-pit

burning, casting a yellow fog over local communities, and untold pollution to one of the world's oldest waterways. The video work 'indirect fire' (2025-26) began when the artists visited Virginia in 2024, meeting with the New River Valley Citizens for Arsenal Accountability and hearing stories of the double violence inflicted by the military industrial complex on all forms of life, from where these weapons are manufactured to where they are deployed. Accompanied by a pipe organ soundtrack, this piece presents dramatic shows of patriotism as a mirror image of the state violence they commemorate.

Works (clockwise from entrance):

St. Patrick's Day March (2026)

5' 31" experimental score

replica stained glass window (2026)

after window presented by Lady Lyttelton to the Royal Hibernian Military School, Phoenix Park, Dublin (1912), later removed to the Duke of York Royal Military School (after 1922)

replica painting (2026)

after Seán Keating's *Men of the West* (1915)

original in the collection of the Hugh Lane Gallery

John F. Kennedy visit to Ireland commemorative tea towel (1963)

fine Irish linen, 'A Phelan Product', woven and printed in Ireland

artists' collection (2026)

indirect fire (2025-26)

HD 18' 2-channel video loop with surround sound

mild steel reflecting pool, water, barium sulphate

Táimse im' chodladh is ná dúistear mé (2025-26)

HD 10' 32" video installation with sound

parabolic speaker, spotlight, microphone

floor board from the Galtymore Dancehall, Cricklewood London (1952 - 2008)

retrieved by Ronan Galvin from BG Salvage, South Circular Road, Dublin, c. 2015

bronze bricks with indentations (2026)

cast from digital prints of Rogan plantation house bricks, Sumner County, Tennessee (c. 1825)

3D scans courtesy of the Ulster American Folk Park

campaign poster (c.1980s) *Impiriúlachas Cultúir. Feachtas Craolacháin* (Broadcasting Campaign), © Conradh na Gaeilge Archive, University of Galway (G60/7/4/4/3)

About the artists

Ruth Clinton and Niamh Moriarty are collaborative artists based in the north-west of Ireland, working together since 2010. They make exhibitions and events that combine visual art, experimental film, music and performance to contemplate power and complicity, ecology and loss. Their recent work tests the possibility of creating a new narrative identity for Ireland and the Irish diaspora that acknowledges adversities and complicities in order to build capacity for solidarity.

Recent presentations include: *Forty-five Seconds*, film screening at 'A Phenomenon Only Slightly Strange', exhibition by C  il  n O'Connell at Thkio Ppalies, Nicosia, Cyprus, 2026; *A Collection of Disarticulated Bones*, TULCA Festival of Visual Arts and Galway City Museum, 'The Salvage Agency', curated by Michele Horrigan— touring to Solas Nua, Washington D.C. and Moss Arts Centre, Virginia Tech, USA, 2024; *Last of the Visioners*, co-curated exhibition for The Model, Sligo, 2023; *In a Contrary Place*, solo/collaborative exhibition, Hyde Bridge Gallery and Sligo Cairde Arts Festival, 2022, and *Time (Ireland) Act*, year-long residency and exhibition at Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh, including an Irish-language film, interactive computer game, performance and installation, curated by Miranda Driscoll as part of the Art: 2016 Centenary Programme.

Credits

A Disentailing Deed was originally commissioned as two video installations across two venues for the **41st EVA International—Ireland's Biennial of Contemporary Art** as part of the guest programme, 'It Takes a Village' curated by Eszter Szak  cs in collaboration with the EVA team. This presentation has been reconfigured and extended for Project Arts Centre.

Video installation

Irish language translation: Saileog N   Cheannabh  in, Aoife N   Ghloinn

Additional footage (USA): Andrew 'Drew' Geraci at District 7 Media, and Pond5 stock footage library

Captions: Atkinson Hyperlegible typeface by the Braille Institute of America

Sound

Organ for *indirect fire* performed by Ruth Clinton at St. Mary's Cathedral Limerick, recorded by M  iche  l Keating, with thanks to Peter Barley

St. Patrick's Day March gallery score by Ruth Clinton and Cormac MacDiarmada

Research

National Library of Ireland; National Museum of Ireland; Irish Military Archive; Irish Traditional Music Archive; Andrew Nunn at Duke of York Royal Military School, Dover;

Hugh Lane Gallery; Niamh Ní Charra at University of Galway; Jamie Mag Fheargail at Conradh na Gaeilge

Studio mentorship

Sculpture

Fire Station Artists' Studios, Bronze Art Dublin, John Coll, and Liam Correy at the Ulster American Folk Park (bricks); Leitrim Sculpture Centre (steel tank)

Glass

Katharine Lamb, Renata Izabela Pękowska, Angy Treacy

Exhibition setting

Graphic design

Padraig Cunningham / Pure Designs

Frames

Jane Lives / Fox Framing

Plinths

Cian Corcoran / Design Goat

The artists thank: the whole team at Project Arts Centre, A Disentailing Deed band with Aoife Hammond, Cormac MacDiarmada and Eleanor Myler, Francisco Jose Jimenez Alcarria, Geoff Armstrong, Liz Austin, Alyssa Carpenter and New River Valley Citizens for Arsenal Accountability, Patricia Doyle and Tom Moriarty, Andrew Dolan, Ailbhe Drohan, Teresa Collins and Olan Monk, Sara Greavu, Dany Guest, Michael Hill and Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Conn Holohan, Paddy Jackson, Alison Kelly and Mark Clinton, David Kelly, Owen Kilfeather, Joe McGowan, Maja Moser, John Moriarty and Gareth Morris, Gerry Murphy, Andrew Nunn, Eimear Nic Reamoinn and Doug Thorpe, Matt Packer, Mark Patton, Ber Quinn, Logan Sisley, Owen Sherwin and Vincent Doherty, and Willie Stewart.

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