

Other People's Practices: And More Besides is a high level summary of Other People's Practices (OPP) from its inception up to December 2020, what is defined as OPP *Phase 1* and its transitioning period to *Phase 2*. It is researched and written by Dr Sheelagh Broderick. Her writing gives a clear metanarrative on *Phase 1* of OPP; a series of socially engaged artist residencies which took place in Usher's Island, a National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS) community day centre for recovered and recovering service users of the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) in Dublin, Ireland.

In this publication, Sheelagh discusses the first generation of residencies undertaken by Visual Artists Emma Finucane, Glenn Loughran, and Jonathan Cummins. Sheelagh also incorporates feedback from patients, who took part in the project, and first-hand clinical insights contributed by Ann Dunnmurray, Forensic Community Mental Health Nurse and Usher's Island's Clinical Nurse Manager. Sheelagh then sets out the early stages of *Phase 2* of the project which will take place during 2021. *Phase 2* occurs in parallel with a historic move from the CMH's original location in Dundrum, a Victorian asylum designed by Jacob Owens and built in 1850, to a modern care facility in Portrane designed by Scott Tallon Walker Architects and due for completion in 2021.

I reached out to Sheelagh while researching my MFA dissertation having read her 2015 Doctoral Thesis *(Mis)Interpreting Arts and Health: What (Else) Can an Arts Practice Do?*¹. I wanted to bring her skilled and experienced approach to considering art projects in complex multi-party health contexts

to bear on OPP. Sheelagh's involvement in OPP began in 2019 with our successful joint application to the www.artsandhealth.ie Documentary Bursary Award. As part of this award, Sheelagh wrote *And More Besides* and will present an academic paper at the Association For Art History Annual Conference². She also chaired a podcast³ on the project which is being released alongside this publication.

CONTINUED
OVERLEAF →

I will briefly contextualise OPP before Sheelagh's in-depth exploration. It was devised in 2018 as one of my artistic responses to working in the NFMHS as a Visual Artist⁴; a challenging prospect in a largely under-explored field, which upon encountering and entering it, I found myself with more questions than the answers the field could provide. How might other artists navigate this space and produce work both with patients and in response to their experiences and the wider context of forensic mental health care⁵? What happens when you provide space, time, and resources to a spectrum of high quality artists to allow creative risk and failure within a risk-averse, outcome-driven clinical environment? How can a sustainable culture of high quality socially engaged visual arts be embedded in such a setting?

Many art projects occurring in health settings and with health communities are driven by the goal of enhancing wellbeing. The primary emphasis of OPP is the production and coproduction of visual artworks which critically explore and respond to the context of their creation, and engender new ways of looking and thinking about the setting and the experience of forensic mental health care. Secondary to this, is the development of a body of research and dialogue on the role of socially engaged visual arts in the field of forensic mental health. The improvement of wellbeing via the intrinsic and well researched benefits of participation in art-making comes as a very welcome tertiary outcome⁶. Indeed these tertiary attributes are achieved in numerous ways and are evidenced in Sheelagh's writing through feedback from clinical health care staff as well as participants.

If we consider forensic psychiatry to represent the interface of two worlds which identify and regulate deviance, that is traditional medicine and law⁷, we might consider OPP as

a platform for benign, radical art interventions in a setting which functions on routine, familiarity and structure. OPP impacts how we think about, with, and through art as we navigate the journey from long-term high secure care to community reintegration in partnership with healthcare staff and in collaboration with patients.

OPP is aligned with and inadvertently contributes to a goal-driven care system while distinguishing itself as not strictly care-focused. It positions itself as apart from the care system but a part of the care system. This essential distinction frames participant engagement and qualifies participation in the project not as patients receiving art therapy in order to recover, but as civilians and artists producing considered and critical art in response to a lived experience. How can this type of intervention impact the emerging sense of selfhood and deinstitutionalisation of the person-patient on their journey of recovery and into the community?

OPP's components are defined by nouns of continuity and transition; *Phase 1*, *Phase 2*, the first generation of resident artists, junctures between residencies, as well as acts, stages and scenes within this book (aptly titled *And More Besides*). This terminology is indicative of OPP's long-form episodic nature and its intention to symbiotically permeate the culture of the NFMHS, a part but apart, on an ongoing cumulative basis. *Phase 1* of OPP is intended as a demonstrable working model for a sustainable residency and research programme in a forensic mental health care community setting. Its focus was engagement with users at an advanced stage in their recovery journey in a community setting. *Phase 2* continues this paradigm and aims to see the realisation of flagship artworks in and around the new hospital by the first generation of artists alongside new and existing participants. *Phase 2* also prioritises

engagement with old and new stakeholders and partners to secure and develop the project in Portrane as a permanent resource.

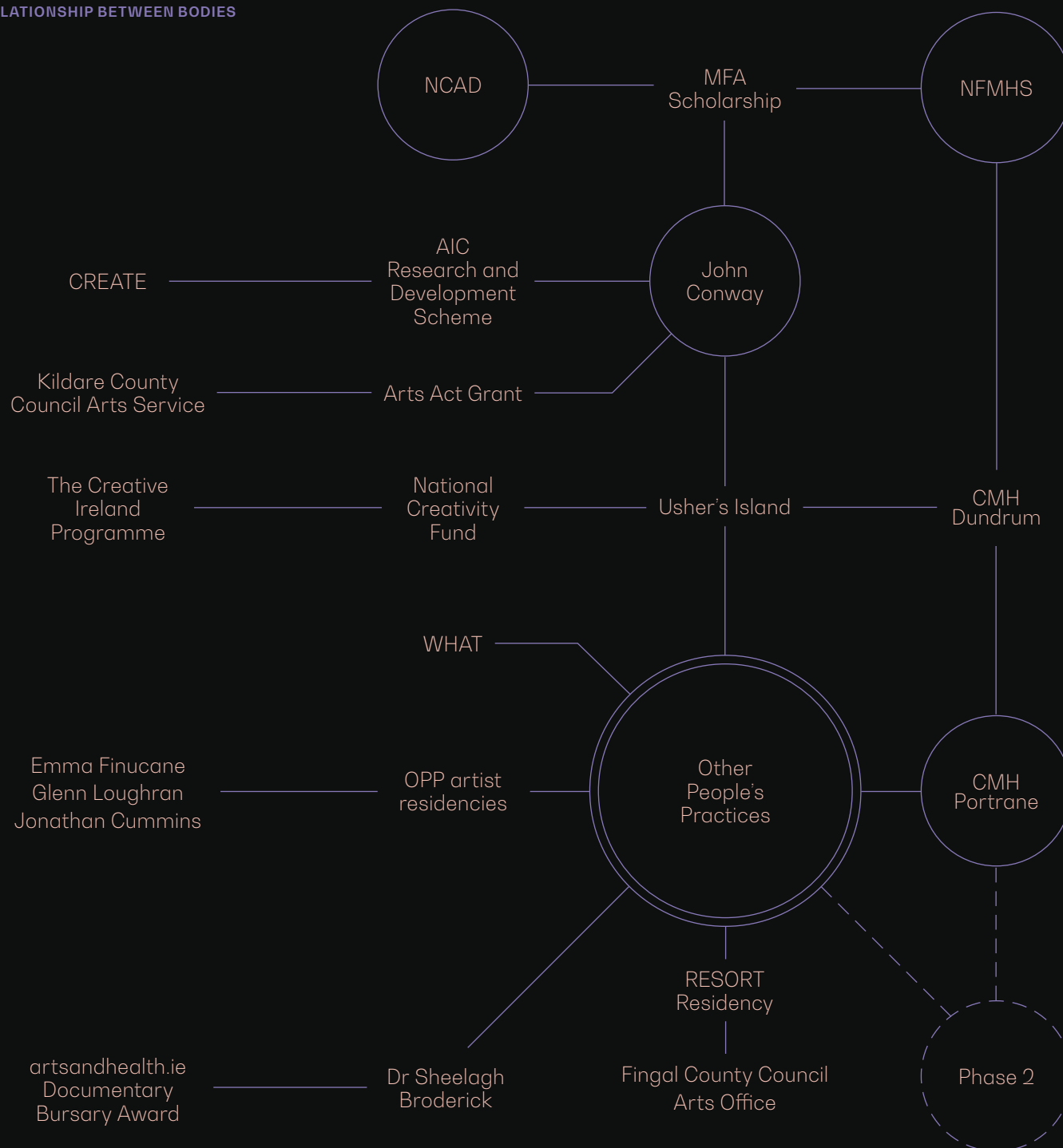
Future phases and generations of resident artists will expand OPP's remit to explore additional patient communities of the National Forensic Mental Health service and the local area they now inhabit. Each generation of resident artists will bring a new approach to thinking about and being in the space, while building on the knowledge and culture generated by their predecessors. In establishing OPP and securing future opportunities for artists to explore different aspects of the NFMHS alongside patients, their families, and staff, OPP's ultimate aim is to inculcate and sustain a pioneering, innovative and progressive visual arts culture in the NFMHS; a culture which is on par with its modern facility and its vision of care, and which puts the NFMHS at the forefront of socially engaged visual arts both nationally and internationally.

- 1 A research project concerning arts practices in healthcare settings and the encounter between artist, researcher, healthcare professional and institution. Rather than understanding arts practices as either therapeutic or recreational services, this research asks instead, what (else) can an arts practice do? This is accomplished by connecting two previously separate bodies of scholarship: health sociology and an art criticism of expanded arts practices.
- 2 Contemporary Art, Health & Medicine: Other People's Practices: Who are the Other People? Online event, April 2021
- 3 A conversation between John Conway, Ann Dunmurray and Caroline Cowley, Fingal Arts Office Public Art Coordinator, at the 2020 Arts + Health Check Up Check In. See QR code below.
- 4 Having been awarded the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) NFMHS Masters of Fine Art Scholarship
- 5 In this publication, the words 'health care' and 'healthcare' are both used. This is not a linguistic inconsistency or oversight in editing, but a purposeful discernment of the nuanced distinction between these two words. In a rather simplistic and reductionist manner, we shall define 'health care (noun)' as a set of actions on behalf of a person or persons to attend to the health needs of another person/patient/client and enhance their health; versus 'healthcare (noun)' which we define as a system, an industry, a field which formally organises the logistics of and facilitates the delivery of health care for persons/patients/clients.
- 6 Evaluating The Impact Of Participatory Art Projects For People With Mental Health Needs—Suzanne Hacking Helen Spandler & Jo Shenton. 2008 | Arts, Mental Distress, Mental Health Functioning & Life Satisfaction: Fixed-effects Analyses Of A Nationally-representative Panel Study—Senhu Wang, Hei Wan Mak & Daisy Fancourt. 2020 | The Art Of Being Mentally Healthy: A Study To Quantify The Relationship Between Recreational Arts Engagement And Mental Well-being In The General Population—Christina Davies, Matthew Knuiman & Michael Rosenberg. 2016
- 7 Care Or Custody? Ethical Dilemmas In Forensic Psychiatry, Gwen Adshead. 2000



Listen to *Dealing In The Reality: Other People's Practices Check Up Check In*³
(otherpeoplespractices.com/podcast)

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Filomila, Oriana and Orestis; in our arms and in our hearts. Giagia Maria, for making the time for me to write that original application in Harilaou.

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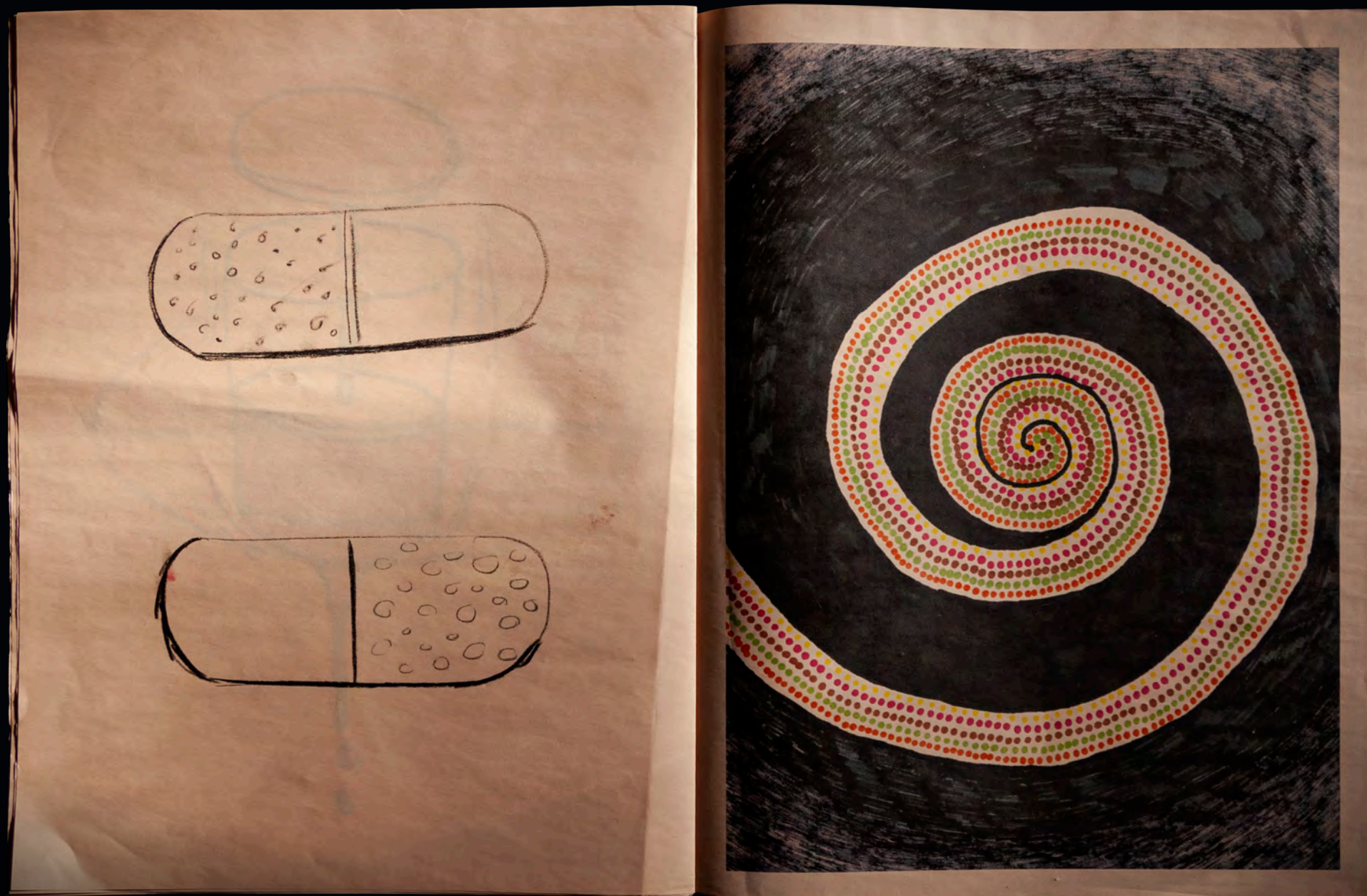


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OTHER
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Process image: Draft edition of a tabloid newspaper containing participant illustrations of medication.
Image courtesy of Jonathan Cummins.

Setting the Scene

The launch of this book signals a punctuation point in a durational art project called *All Other Places*. Since 2017, John Conway has been working as a socially engaged artist, researcher, documentary maker, producer, designer, curator and director on an artistic response to producing artwork in a secure forensic mental health care setting. This has entailed ongoing engagement with service users and staff at Usher's Island, a community day and outpatient centre for the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) in Dundrum¹. This series of ongoing work prompted John to consider the way in which art raises issues related to power and authority in health care, and also at the same time the way in which the healthcare environment can impinge on an artist's reputational economy as it is exercised in the art world. In the case of the former, institutional knowledge is exercised in a hierarchy that misunderstands arts practices often as therapy. In the latter, although there have been major shifts in arts practice to extra gallery settings, the health care setting is too often disregarded as a site for critical practice².

These considerations led John to create the conditions of possibility for an experimental work, *Other People's Practices* (OPP)³, which draws on the specificities of practice of critically acclaimed artists. Emma Finucane, Glenn Loughran and Jonathan Cummins were the first artists selected for residencies of four months duration through a competitive process. The selection of these artists was based on each having an established professional practice that focuses on collaborative, socially engaged processes and the production of high quality, critical, stand alone artwork. John himself assumed the role of curator and project producer to secure funding and support for the residencies through a broad partnership straddling sectors in arts, health and academia and to steer the project through the many different unknown challenges that lay ahead.

The three research residencies of Phase 1 of OPP afforded these artists the opportunity to develop works in socially engaged spaces and health settings by devising and creating work with service users in response to these users' individual experiences and the unique context of the site. In this way, OPP seeks to elevate participation in these artworks beyond formal occupational therapy

to an authentic, multi-layered activity that, crucially, takes place outside of the institutional frame of reference of both health and art. The location for the Phase 1 residencies was Usher's Island, a community day centre located in Dublin 8, one of the National Forensic Mental Health Service's (NFMHS) resources. Usher's Island acts both as a social site and as a clinical site. Its users are either current patients of the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) in Dundrum who are on day leave from the hospital site, or former service users who are in assisted living in the wider community. In all, twelve participants took part in the residencies, with a sustained core group of four throughout the project's duration. Service users who attend Usher's Island are typically at an advanced stage of recovery from profound and enduring mental health issues. They are seeking to normalise their lives and identity while contending with the impact of displacement, adverse life experiences, trauma, secure care, the side effects of medication and the risk of relapse.

Many art projects in healthcare settings rely on one member of staff to advocate for the work. Ann Dunmurray, Forensic Community Mental Health Nurse (FCMHN) and Programme Manager/Clinical Nurse Manager at Usher's Island Day Centre, was this person. She played an integral part in the project as broker and risk-taker and is uniquely placed to comment on the residencies as she saw each one unfold in turn. As part of routine service provision, the centre already offered craft-based occupational therapies, which were used to assess and enhance memory, concentration, task orientation, collaborative ability and social skills. These activities were functional in nature, but as she explains:

[Existing resources] provided little opportunity for participants to explore, and reflect, on their own creativity and their way of seeing and being in the world. My view is that the residency project

provided them with exactly that. And more besides. ANN DUNMURRAY

This observation clearly draws the line between art practice (critical interrogation and production of art) and art therapy (occupational and recovery-focused). The Arts Council had formalised this distinction as far back as 2003⁴. Later work by Brett and McHarg specified in detail the practice distinctions from the perspective of a therapist and artist respectively⁵.

Moving to an understanding of art as a discursive practice reconfigures questions from asking 'what is art', to foregrounding what a particular art practice can do. Emma, Glenn and Jonathan worked sequentially from March 2019 to December 2020 with service users as project participants researching and producing work collaboratively. Although each of the artists has a distinct practice, the project as a whole was cumulative, with each residency building on the work of the previous incumbent. Through these residencies, project participants began to change their sense of self and their understanding of their world and how they can act in it. As one participant commented, the project:

Challenged us to think outside the box and used what we had learned from time in the hospital to inspire our artwork. PARTICIPANT

Usher's Island, the community site in which the work took place, was changed too, both materially and culturally by the interventions wrought by the residencies. In *The Aesthetics of Affect*, O'Sullivan establishes a conceptual frame for participatory practices that establishes the possibility not only of making new relations but also of speaking to the way in which artists can strategically situate their work⁶. Choosing healthcare settings as a site of practice is one such strategy. By attending to the specificity of an artwork and the specificity of the milieu in which it operates, the artist opens up

the possibility of attending to the aesthetics of affect; of what the practice can do. Each of the residencies brought a specific focus; Emma looked outward at the space/place nexus; Glenn looked beyond the space at the wider global context of environment and labour; and Jonathan focused these ways of looking and critiquing inward and backward onto the project participants themselves and their mastery of their own regimes within the institution of the CMH.

The following text annotates observations from the discursive platforms created by John. These texts accompany the residencies to the specificities of each artist's practice and their attendant affects. The text in no way provides an account commensurate with the experience and effort invested by all concerned as such an endeavour would take up volumes.

1 The services of the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) in Dundrum, Dublin, were in the process of transition to a new site at CMH Portrane, North County Dublin during the period of these art projects. Usher's Island is now closed and did not participate in the move.

2 John's development of a Percent For Art commission with the service users of the National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS), through his MFA Scholarship with NCAD, focused on this critical attitude. His research led him to realise that project participants' were not invested in producing a fixed material artwork to be sited in the new CMH. Service users all hoped for an anticipated recovery which would mean that they would not transition to the site at Portrane when the move to the new facility was made. Additionally many service users in different stratas of care throughout the hospital may not have access to the fixed site of an artwork, or may encounter it while experiencing symptoms of their illness and side effects of medication. 'The possibility of occupying the new hospital did not hold the future they wanted for themselves', John explains. 'it was through engagement that I realised a static artwork didn't serve residents in a way that I thought was important. I found a need for more impactful engagement rather than a formal, singular and sole artwork for the lobby of the new hospital. OPP was con-

ceptualised as a way of figuring out together the type of art to produce from a participant's perspective and has been firmly rooted in the ethos of socially-engaged art whereby a process of engendering participant voices is just as important as any material outcome'. The initial research engagement leading to the conceptualisation of OPP was also supported in 2018 by Kildare Arts Service Arts Act Grant and The Arts Council's Artist in the Community Research and Development Scheme managed by Create.

3 OPP is funded by The Creative Ireland Programme with support from National Forensic Mental Health Service, National College of Arts and Design and Waterford Healing Arts Trust.

4 Arts Council of Ireland, 2003. *The Arts and Health Handbook: A Practical Guide*, Dublin: Arts Council of Ireland.

5 Brett, M. & McHarg, J., 2011. *Two Voices, Journal of The Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists*.

6 O'Sullivan, S., 2007. *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation*, Palgrave Macmillan.

ACT 1



Experimental zines produced by project participants with Emma Finucane.
Image courtesy of the artist.

Emma Finucane March—November '19



Photograph courtesy of Brian Cregan

Each residency was flanked by artist talks in the National College of Art & Design (NCAD), providing an opportunity for each artist to introduce their practice and intentions for the residency. Emma Finucane was the first artist to introduce her residency. As a printmaker who has been researching and making visual art in health contexts for over ten years, Emma's approach in Usher's Island initially involved print workshops to create dialogical space. The workshops were designed for all levels of abilities, providing opportunities for everyone to enter at their own level in a friendly, fun and social atmosphere. The insights that arose from these encounters on a weekly basis guided and informed the group in subsequent creative actions in each workshop from week to week. The aim of the workshops was to create an environment where new ideas, discourses and processes in contemporary fine art print and photography could be fostered in an open, exploratory and non-judgemental space for participants and staff. By doing this, Emma opened up the possibility of investigating new ways of using existing spaces and exploring concepts of space and place in both individual and group based settings depending on how the participants interacted. Emma describes the workshops as follows:

Time passed fast and discussion happened that created a sense of a group and most importantly we had FUN. The fact was that a lot of the work was experimental and therefore failure wasn't a fear, it was half expected and important to push works further. [When exposing screens with UV light] I myself had no idea

on the day what strength the sun would be or if it would work. It was fun testing and trialing and the fact we had no idea and there was a lot of problem-solving to come up with entertained and challenged us all. It put me on the same level as the participants as I had no clue what was going to happen when trying to expose an image. Problem-solving together worked well here. EMMA FINUCANE

This description of the workshops brings to mind the Spinozist claim that the affirmative affects of joyful encounters increases one's capacity to act in the world with the feeling of an increase in one's own power or agency. A sense of the shared understanding for the potential that lay unleashed within the group was beginning to emerge. Participant feedback relays this sense of enthusiasm:

It was exciting to work with professional artists... and... it was gripping to learn new things in various areas of the arts. PARTICIPANT

It is easy to imagine the sense of adventure and risk-taking experienced in these encounters. Unlike clinical protocols, there is no standard operating procedure, instead, the practice encompasses an open acceptance of success and failure and the value of both. Iterative process of experimentation can lead to unexpected outcomes.

Progressively Emma exposed the participants to the arts practices and ideas of other artists providing a critical context where interests intersected with those of participants. She created links and partnerships to art spaces through gallery and studio visits, including Black Church Print Studio where participants had an opportunity to use equipment not available in Usher's Island. The lack of reference material available to participants and a prohibition on use of the internet, prompted Emma to gift a digital camera to the group so that a library of reference images could be built between workshops. Emma brokered the provision of art reference books to Usher's Island through the Popup Library art project creating more links with adjacent communities of practice⁷. Throughout this process of rapidly evolving research and discussion, ever more sophisticated printmaking techniques were explored in Monoprint, Drypoint, Lino, Screen, Zine Making, Digital Photography and Digital Imaging using digital Software (photoshop and GIMP). With the support of Emma, the participants produced an exhibition of their prints and photographic work in November 2019, repurposing the internal and

external space of Usher's Island as a gallery. They titled the exhibition *Wednesdays Unlocked* as this was the day on which they met with Emma each week in Usher's Island. It also was the day in which they engaged in a process of open exploration and discovery, released from the relative confines of secure care.

By the end of Emma's residency the participants had learned new skills and grown in confidence in their own ability to make art, to work collaboratively, to engage in processes of research where outcomes are unknown and unanticipated. The space and place of Usher's Island had been unlocked and activated through processes of art making and exhibiting. Concurrently, Emma carried out a parallel programme of research accompanying the development and delivery of workshops on-site. This research exists as proposals for future work shaped by the experience on Usher's Island and with the intention of shaping the cultural and physical environment at the new hospital in Portrane during *Phase 2* of OPP.



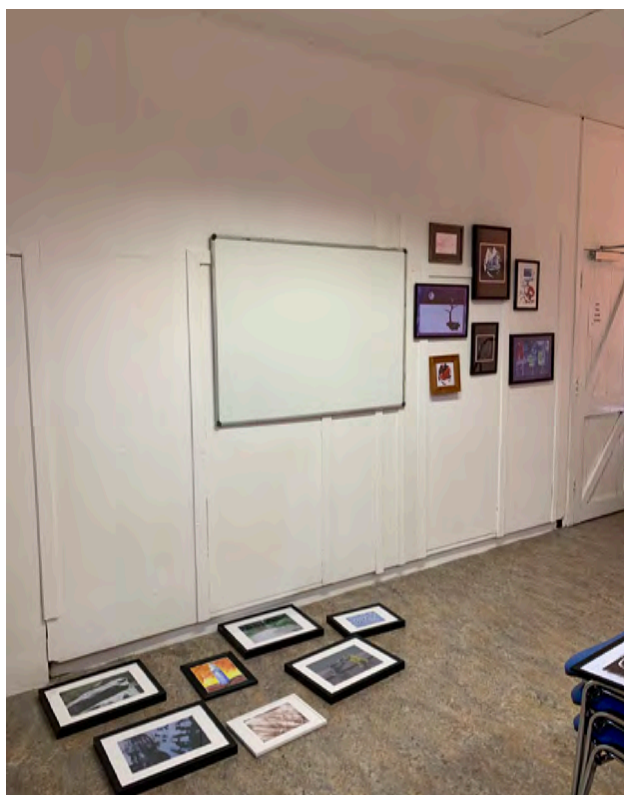
Emma Finucane during the launch of Other People's Practices.
Harry Clarke Lecture Theatre, NCAD, Dublin.
Photograph courtesy of Brian Cregan.

⁷ The art project *PopUp Libraries* is an initiative by Doreen Kennedy, a Photographer, Director and Designer based in Dublin, to encourage setting up libraries in public spaces. www.popuplibraries.com





- LEFT** Residency process image: Screen printing.
Image courtesy of the artist.
- TOP** Emma Finucane in her studio in NCAD's MFA Annex Studios, Thomas St., Dublin.
Image courtesy of John Conway.
- BOTTOM** Residency process image: Screen printing at Black Church Print Studio, Temple Bar, Dublin.
Image courtesy of the artist.



TOP & BOTTOM LEFT Participants installing their work for their *Wednesdays Unlocked* exhibition. Image courtesy of participants.

TOP RIGHT Process image: Experimental photography for print making. Image courtesy of Emma Finucane.

TOP Ann Dunmurray speaking at the launch of *Wednesdays Unlocked*. Image courtesy of participants.

BOTTOM Attendees of *Wednesdays Unlocked*. Image courtesy of participants.

ACT 2



Prints wheat-pasted to the exterior of Usher's Island.
Image courtesy of Emma Finucane.



Process image: Project participants fabricating a wooden sculpture.
Image courtesy of Glenn Loughran.

Glenn Loughran

Oct '19—Feb '20



Photograph courtesy of Brian Cregan

Juncture 1, a public talk in the NCAD Gallery, was presented as a bridging event between OPP's first and second artist residencies. Emma presented work still in process and plans for the planned exhibition of work in the following month. Initially Glenn's project had been going to focus on tactile, 'making' workshops, with an emphasis on sculptural forms, however, in response to and in conversation with Emma, the emphasis shifted more towards social sculpture through digital making. This segued well with the trajectory in Emma's work, which had finished with the development of digital printmaking. Glenn adopted a structured approach, developing a twelve-week programme introducing the participants to the video essay format in contemporary art making as a tool for critical analysis and aesthetic interpretation.

In his residency, Glenn distinguished his approach from art processes that exclusively focus on therapeutic modes of self-expression. Instead, his approach to social engagement sought to explore the psychological and social benefits of 'digital therapeutics'. A premise which posits that while increasing digitisation of life has led to increased inattention and individuation, it can also animate and activate collective intelligence and action. From the outset, Glenn clearly positioned this approach to art making within the context of the concept of 'contributory work' as developed by the philosopher Bernard Stigler. Glenn clarifies:

Contributory work can be understood as the merging of reciprocal modes of exchange with industrial and post-industrial modes of production. Reciprocal modes of exchange are non-alienating forms of exchange that support collective learning and collective knowledge production. GLENN LOUGHRAN

Importantly, the gifting of a suite of computers and digital editing software by the Technological University of Dublin, where Glenn is a lecturer, acted as an initial gesture of contribution and offered the means of producing video work on-site, in Usher's Island. The leveraging of digital resources arising from artistic agency is just one way in which the residencies impacted the material and cultural fabric of the institution. Participants took full advantage of this opportunity:

I had never used an advanced video editor before. I now have a video editor on my personal laptop and I have plans to put together a few videos for some of my songs. There is also a possibility of getting work producing videos. PARTICIPANT

The workshops developed by Glenn over the course of the residency introduced a series of video techniques used within the video essay format to enable a collective essaying of ideas and experience within the group. Accompanied by group screenings and video analysis, these introductory sessions led to experiments and exercises with video editing, drawing and scripting. While the different sessions were often generically focused on filming and editing techniques, they were also tailored specifically to particular themes emerging within the group, such as the concept of 'work', which emerged in response to an analysis of Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Other films about work and industrialisation were also included in the process of archiving and interpreting digital content. Eventually this led the group to focus on issues around the environment and climate change⁸. This relationship between industrial labour and environmental degradation was further explored through analysis of films such as *The Anthropocene*. These analyses were interpreted by the group collectively and used to develop individual video responses using the

computers provided. Aiming to install the video essay's in Usher's Island environment, the participants designed and constructed a series of sculptural objects to house their collective work⁹.

When people enter care in the Central Mental Hospital, it is for an undesignated period of time depending on the trajectory of their recovery. Many people stay for long periods of time over many years. When they emerge back into the community, they have missed out on the opportunity to keep up with social, cultural and, increasingly importantly, digital changes in everyday life. Mobile phones and access to the internet are severely limited and supervised. Emerging into a world which is so dominated by social media and mobile technologies without having the requisite skills adds hugely to the challenge of living and working in the community. The workshops with Glenn provided digital literacy and fluency for a subset of these technologies and in doing so it also opened the door to learning opportunities that might otherwise have seemed out of reach. In one video essay, a project participant scored the soundtrack which included him singing over his guitar as *Gaeilge*. The interplay of voice and technology is deeply affecting. The singer asks "Cén fáth?", "For which reason?". A loaded question in all of the contexts in play at the time.

During the *Juncture 1 Q&A*, Glenn cited his use of common technology in providing access to online learning for thinly populated marginalised communities in the Islands and Highlands of Scotland. In retrospect, this has curiously anticipated the current pandemic enforced practices that have revolutionised social, cultural and commercial exchange through online platforms. Subsequent to Glenn's workshops imparting digital skills, participants are in a better position to engage with online learning communities, providing there is access to sufficient resources. Furthermore, prior to the end of the residency, a new avenue of research had opened up to develop the video work as a live radio form to be broadcast in Portrane. This remains as a focus for future work in *Phase 2* of OPP to take place in Portrane¹⁰.



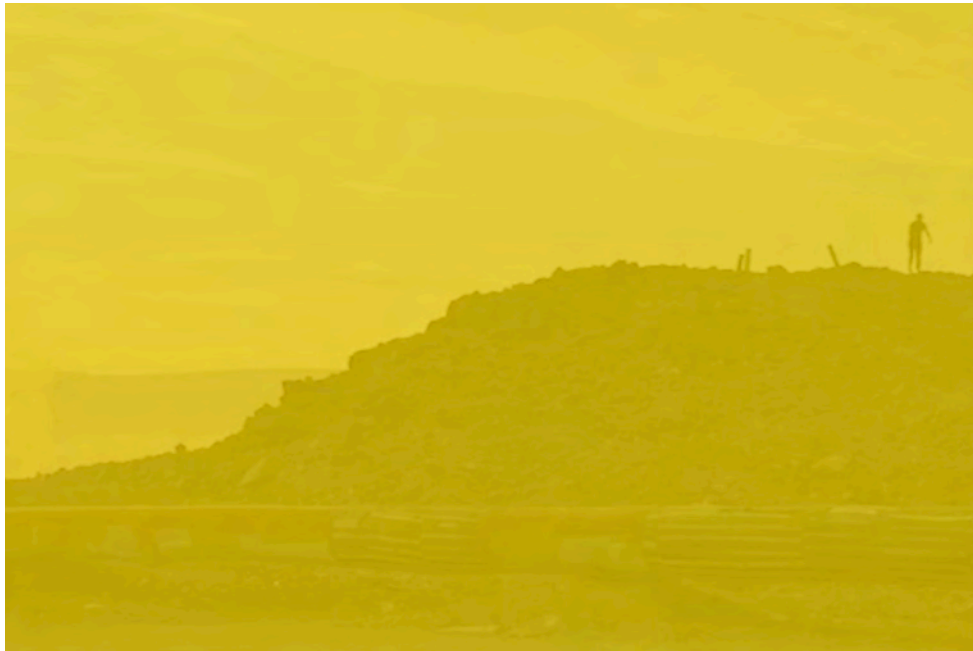
Glenn Loughran speaking at the *Juncture 2* event.
Harry Clarke Lecture Theatre, NCAD, Dublin.
Photograph courtesy of Brian Cregan.

8 Due to climate change protests which took place worldwide in and around September 20th 2019, inspired by the School Strike for Climate Movement by Greta Thunberg.

9 Two days before these works were to be installed and exhibited publicly the show was cancelled due to public health concerns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

10 The new CMH will be within broadcast range of St Ita's Hospital Radio. St Ita's Hospital, built 1903, is a mental health facility in Portrane about 1 kilometre from the new CMH.

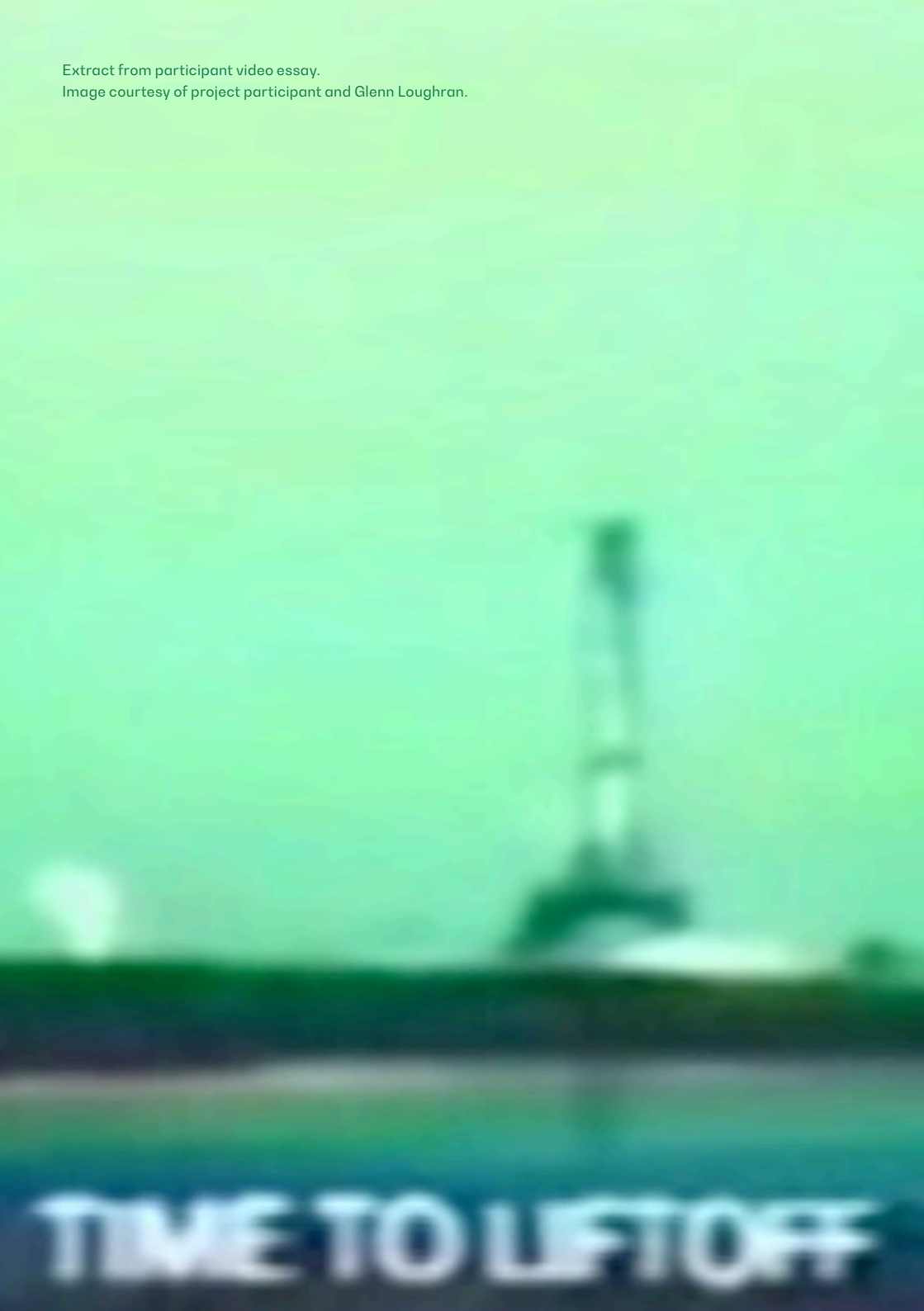


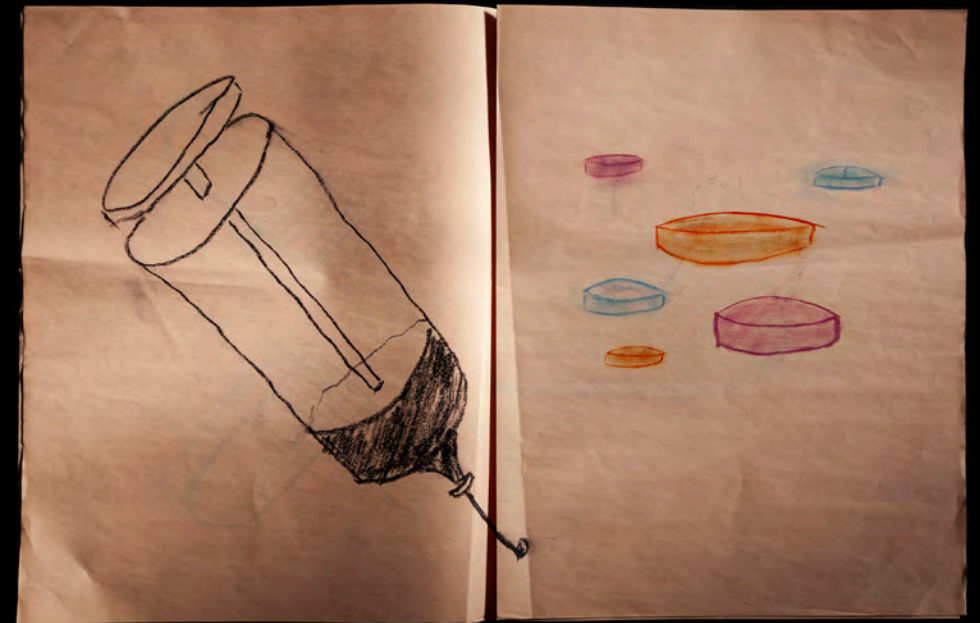




Extract from participant video essay.
Image courtesy of project participant and Glenn Loughran.

ACT 3





Process image: Draft edition of a tabloid newspaper containing participant illustrations of medication.
Image courtesy of Jonathan Cummins.

Jonathan Cummins
March '20—
COVID Hiatus—
June '20—Present



Photograph courtesy of Brian Oregan

Jonathan's residency was put on hiatus soon after its commencement due to nationwide restrictions on foot of the Covid-19 pandemic. In June 2020 socially distant contact through post and phone calls was reestablished and was continuing at the time of writing of this publication.

The *Juncture 2* exchange took place on 28TH February 2020 in NCAD Gallery signaling the end of Glenn's residency and the commencement, a few weeks earlier, of Jonathan's residency. There was no inkling at that time of what was to come as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Jonathan brought his experience of working with people in a high security context to bear on his approach to his residency in Usher's Island. Typically, this involved engaging in conversation with participants as the basis of a process of joint inquiry.

For most of our workshops, we simply sat together, spoke and drew. Around us, life at Usher's Island continued. Medications were administered from an office accessed through the dayroom where we worked, pool was played beside us and people came and went. Little by little, life in the CMH and one's trajectory through it was explained to me by the residents. Engagement highlighted expectations on the

part of the participants around what I needed to know, such as a recommendation that I read the *Mental Health Act* (2001) and familiarise myself with CMH's five pillars of care¹¹. JONATHAN CUMMINS

Understanding that the participants were experts in their own milieu, Jonathan explains that on these occasions he set out to gently disrupt day-to-day life in Usher's Island and to centralise residents as decision-makers in whatever was undertaken. A key focus in each day for participants was the regime of prescribed medications delivered at specific intervals and through specific mediums (tablet, syringe, liquid et cetera). An intense awareness of the associated physical properties of medications and their effects was disclosed by participants:

For a long time now I take medication almost automatically, like brushing my teeth. It was good to think of it again in focus. PARTICIPANT

Together they spoke about compliance with the medications prescribed, unwanted side effects, stages of treatment and insights into one's health, but mostly they spoke about just being in the world. The drawings that emerged from this process are a figuration of their discursive enquiries and insight into illness, produced in the format of a draft tabloid news sheet. Jonathan clarifies:

[The drawings] are part of the thinking space created between us and they point to a flickering phase space between worlds: they are lucky charms and effervescent talisman, promises of insights and wellness, the interior and exterior of worlds with their observations and observing selves. JONATHAN CUMMINS

Tabloid newspapers¹² of drawings produced offer a critical enquiry around medications by those taking them and of life inside institutions of care by those within a 'total institution' environment; as well as a patient's overall trajectory through the Central Mental Hospital's (CMH) five pillars of care. While mornings with Jonathan were for drawing and discussion, afternoons typically focused on the development of technical digital skills, such as scanning images, computer usage, filming techniques and camera use.

The group made one trip to see Brian Friel's adaptation of Chekov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, produced by Druid and broadcast at the Lighthouse cinema, a neighbour to the Usher's Island facility. The themes of the play were relevant in the context of the CMH's move from Dundrum to its new facility in Portrane focusing as it does on the challenges that come with moving on and pushing aside

the past for an unknown future. Travelling beyond the institution to engage with the outside world was an important part of the process¹³. Aligned to these ideas the participants spent time developing designs for a ring which would hold meanings invested in them:

We spent time designing rings as well and I'm excited to see the end result... wearing an "Usher's" ring will remind me of my journey in recovery. PARTICIPANT

Although Jonathan observed sometimes restrictive and heavily timetabled activities, as is the case in many institutional settings, he was pleasantly surprised by the level of freedom and trust afforded to the process of disruption. Requests to work in unusual parts of the facility including interview rooms and offices and trips off site which were a significant break with day to day routine were given significant support by the facility's staff involving rescheduling and rostering of staff. Jonathan remarks:

The discipline of art and its distinct methods can play a productive role in institutional settings; it allows for the disruptive and can provide a jolt to day to day routine and ways of doing and seeing. Not always listening to administration or assuming givens is important

in reframing perspectives and being in restrictive contexts, which I feel our work afforded participants. JONATHAN CUMMINS

The instituent practice identified by Jonathan carries with it the intention not to focus on set, already instituted ways of sociality, political relations, linguistic codes and imaginaries of possibility, but rather on changing the ways and how we institute, how we create our institutions. We know our institutions need to change, from inside and out. Indeed, the HSE CEO, Paul Reid announced in October 2020 the creation of a Disruptive Technology function at Executive Management Team Level, signaling an intention to radically depart from existing systems and practices with respect to this particular activity. It is remarkable that this kind of language is shared across institutions and foreshadows emergent institutional reconfigurations.

Jonathan's residency stopped abruptly after only six weeks as a result of the pandemic. Lockdown meant that Usher's Island closed overnight. Staff were redeployed and participants had to move residence on two occasions within a two month period. The changed circumstances dispersed residents who became further locked down across sites in Dundrum and Portrane. Reconnecting with participants took some time. In June 2020 they picked up where they left off, carrying on by phone and postal mail in a correspondence that was still continuing at the time of writing¹⁴. While Jonathan's residency has had very tangible outcomes, the process continues and foreshadows a deeper engagement with the participants and the sites of practice. There is more to come.

11 Each resident [of the CMH] had an individual therapeutic programme appropriate to their individual risks and needs and in accordance with their individual care plan. These therapeutic programmes were set out across five Pillars of Care: Pillar 1, Physical Health; Pillar 2, Mental Health, including psycho-education, through the Wellness Lite programme, Recovery, through the WRAP programme and a number of evidence-based psychotherapies; Pillar 3, Drugs and Alcohol, which included groups such as "Get Sorted", "Saying No" and smoking cessation groups; Pillar 4, Problem Behaviours, which were specialist programmes provided for those who had problems relating to violence, sexually inappropriate behaviour, arson and other high risk behaviours; Pillar 5, Self-Care and Activities of Daily Living and Education, Occupation and Creativity, which were led by occupational therapists providing individualised programmes of assessment and rehabilitation on each of the units [in the CMH] and in Usher's Island day centre. Taken from https://www.mhcirl.ie/File/IRs/CMH_IR2013.pdf

12 This work, currently being drafted, is intended for circulation to staff and patients of the CMH.

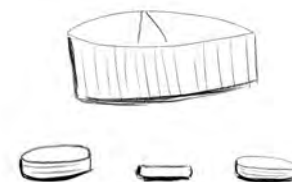
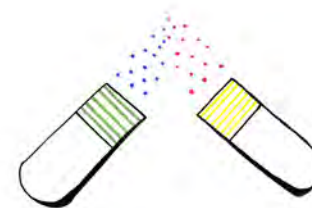
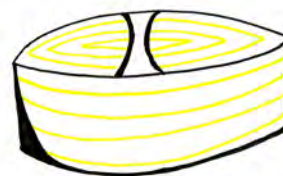
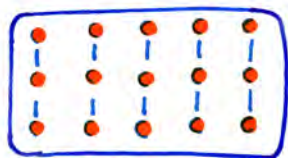
13 Jonathan's initial residency plan had been to attempt to work with service users to engage with the collection at Collins Barracks (National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts and History) across the river from Usher's island. He had hoped to work collaboratively with the service users to research and reflect on the traces of institutional life in the collection and propose low key public interventions. This approach was adapted to look at the institution of the CMH itself.

14 From June 2020, Jonathan traced the core group of four participants as they moved institutions with the goal of retaining relations and developing a method for working online. One participant remained at CMH during this period while three moved between Portrane for several weeks and then two other facilities. Online meetings, supported by Occupational Therapists mailing paper-based artworks, has facilitated continuity of the workshops and brought a new dimension to the project in terms of working with service users online, across closed institutions during COVID-19. These workshops/meetings of approximately 70-90 minutes have been taking place online.



Jonathan Cummins speaking at the *Juncture 2* event. Harry Clarke Lecture Theatre, NCAD, Dublin. Photograph courtesy of Brian Cregan.





ACT 4



Process image: letters exchanged between Jonathan Cummins and project participants during social distancing.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Set up of the *Juncture 1* event. NCAD Gallery, Dublin.
Photograph courtesy of John Conway.

Back to the Future



Photograph courtesy of Brian Grogan

During the development of OPP, John initiated contact with Caroline Cowley, Fingal County Council Arts Office's Public Arts Commissioner to foster connections with the new CMH's site in Portrane which lies within the jurisdiction of the local authority area. Fingal's RESORT Residency and RESORT Revelations commissioning programme provided an excellent opportunity to discuss extending OPP to CMH Portrane. The RESORT programme, hosted by Jerry Lynders on his Lynders Mobile Home Park, is a stone's throw from the CMH Portrane and many of the people working and living adjacent to it have long established connections to St Ita's, an existing psychiatric facility in the area, as their relatives had worked there over many generations.

The RESORT Residency at Lynders Mobile Home Park afforded Emma, Glenn and Jonathan the opportunity to share insights from their solo residencies, plan for a group exhibition and to extend their knowledge of the new services being developed nearby. Later in the summer of 2020, John spent time on residency there too. The ideas and conversations that followed led to a series of proposals for interventions in the delivery of services at the new hospital site, through a broadening of institutional interest to include the local authority's Arts Office. These plans are at an early stage of development, but signal an important generative affect. OPP sought to establish sustainable artist in residence programmes and establish a new arts culture in the new CMH in Portrane and to implement a strategy for the delivery of a sustainable socially engaged visual arts culture sited in the Portrane area. *Phase 1* in Usher's Island was intended as a demonstrable model. *Phase 2* seeks to implement the project in the long term. These measures provide instances of how institutions can be redefined through instituent practices, which, rather than fleeing the institution, re-imagine them, working with what already is in place, what is happening, in order to expedite new and different circumstances in a refusal of existing categories. Funding for *Phase 2* has been confirmed and ongoing artistic research and engagement with service users will be key to this. *Phase 2* opens up the potential for artists to work with healthcare professionals as part of and apart from the institution in their common articulation of practice. Ann Dunmurray observes these affects threefold on the following pages.

From my subjective perspective, the project was an enormous success and beneficial all round. The participants appeared to begin developing a better sense of themselves independent of their mental health history and forensic past and realised that there were alternative ways to construct their identity. They explored themes important and relevant to them in a way they had not been able to for a very long time. Their confidence, self-esteem, and pride increased. They were introduced to normalised relationships and collaborative creative working.

The day centre, generally, also benefited from the project as there was a new energy evident on the days the Artists were in residence. Their personality, creativity and positivity permeated beyond the group they specifically worked with. They had to overcome a number of challenges which they did with good grace and flexibility and this was good modelling for the participants.

The project also introduced us to community resources and networking opportunities which will assist us to develop further projects. In addition there is the probability of the previously mentioned projects being developed for the wider National Forensic Mental Health Service. This is very exciting and the staff and residents of the day centre look forward to the day we can realize this.



Attendees of the *Juncture 1* event. NCAD Gallery, Dublin.
Photograph courtesy of Brian Cregan.

Conclusion

The opportunity provided by each of the residencies to lever new institutional relationships, resources and practices is a key factor in thinking about OPP. For participants, the very experience of Usher's Island changed as a result of the residencies; the day centre was elevated to a place where new projects could be developed, where networking opportunities could arise, wherein they could think about themselves and the future differently and where the day centre itself could be reinvented anew and possibly as distinct to or adjacent to an institution-within-an-institution. The timing of this newfound capacity is indeed opportune as the move to CMH Portrane continues.

The question is, can this way of working be transferred too.

Securing funding for *Phase 2* brings this possibility ever closer.

At the outset of this essay the tensions that exist between institutions of health and art were identified as determinants in shaping OPP as a project. The conceptual language applied to the artwork that was actually being undertaken in health care settings was inadequate, the process of drawing upon the interests and experience of participants was more important than producing a predefined outcome, for example, in the form of a sculpture. A new lexicon to describe these practices, their methods and intentions, could facilitate a more critical exchange, drawing from perspectives of usership to retire seemingly self-evident terms and their associated institutions in favour of emergent concepts¹⁵. In following the trajectories of the three residencies through their processes, intentions and outcomes and, indeed, their future scope, one can see a mutuality in shaping and reshaping of institutions emerging. The specification of practices found in OPP and the affects arising invite deeper sustained engagement of artistic practice to open up a critical attitude to institutions of all kinds.

Bourriaud characterised participatory art practices for their radican nature, using a metaphor from botany of a creeping surface root to describe the way in which art practices insinuate themselves in social and cultural contexts¹⁶. The speed and direction of travel is self directed and no one knows where they will go. This attribute holds both the attraction for the novelty of what might happen, but also the deterrent for what it might overcome. The OPP residencies spread out through the social and cultural context of

Usher's Island and the adjacent academic and artistic communities. At this point in time they are teetering at the brink of entanglement with the new CMH service based in Portrane. When enacted in *Phase 2* this promises to be a robust exchange bringing disruptive challenges for all involved. There is much, much more besides.

¹⁵ Wright, S., 2013. *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*. Eindhoven, NL: Van Abbemuseum.

¹⁶ Bourriaud, N., 2009. *The Radicant*. New York: Lukas & Sternberg.

2017

JULY

NCAD NFMHS
Scholarship Awarded
to John Conway

2018

JANUARY

Conway begins
research in Usher's Island

APRIL

Irish Arts Council Artist in the
Community Research and
Development Scheme managed
by CREATE awarded to Conway to
support his research in Usher's Island

MAY

Kildare County Council Arts
Service Arts Act Grant 2018
Awarded to John Conway
to support his research
in Usher's Island

SEPTEMBER

Creative Ireland funding
awarded for OPP *Phase 1*

2019

MARCH

Inaugural Artist in Residence
Emma Finucane
takes up residency

JULY

Arts and Health
Documentary awarded
(Sheelagh Broderick
begins research)

OCTOBER

Glenn Loughran's
residency

2020

FEBRUARY

Jonathan Cummins'
residency

MARCH

Covid-19 pandemic
begins

AUGUST

Fingal Resort Residency
for OPP artists

SEPTEMBER

Fingal Resort Residency
for John Conway

2021

FEBRUARY

2021 Creative Ireland
Phase 2 Funding
Awarded

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

John Conway	Project Producer and Curator
Ann Dunmurray	Forensic Community Mental Health Nurse (FCMHN) and Program Manager/Clinical Nurse Manager at Usher's Island Day Centre
Patients of the Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum/Portrane	Project Participants
Emma Finucane	Artist
Glenn Loughran	Artist
Jonathan Cummins	Artist
Professor Harry Kennedy	Executive Clinical Director and Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist of the National Forensic Mental Health Service
Professor Philip Napier	Head of School of Fine Art in NCAD
Claire Meaney	Project coordinator, moderator and Director of Waterford Healing Arts Trust
Conor Foran	Designer
Brian Cregan	Photographer
Dr Sheelagh Broderick	Author Catalogue Essay, Arts & Health Documentation Bursary 2019
Caroline Cowley	Public Art Co-ordinator, Fingal County Council Arts Office
Resort Residency	Fingal County Council Arts Office and Lynders Mobile Home and Campsite, Portrane
The Creative Ireland Programme	Funder
NCAD	Project partner, artists studios, lecture theatres and gallery space
Kildare County Council Arts Service & CREATE	Supporters of initial research

