

Arts in Context, with community groups in Dublin's inner city.

DIT Lecturers: Ann Creavin (previous years staff included Patricia Hurl, Bernadette Burns Jessie Jones).

The Fine Art department in DIT has a long history of students learning With communities, particularly with diverse community groups in Dublin's inner city.



For several years Arts in Context operated as collaboration between four 3rd level institutions, [NCAD](#), [IADT](#), [TISH/NYU](#) and [DIT](#). This inter-institutional collaboration was led and administered by [CREATE](#) which is the national agency for collaborative arts in Ireland. 3rd year students from the Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Fine Art in DIT had the option to partnered with other students of various artistic disciplines from the different 3rd level institutions and also with a community group. They all worked together over a period of ten weeks which was front loaded for a period of two weeks with seminars and tutorials for the students as they prepared for their work with community partners. The collaborative work was then exhibited. This usually took the form of video documentation, photography and installation as well as public events. See below for **student project examples from 2008/2009**.

At other times the Arts in Context module has operated solely as a module within DIT for DIT students. In 2010 this elective module was extended for the first time to include students from the BA in Visual Communications and the BA in Interior and Furniture. Students worked closely with a local creative writing centre [Fighting Words](#) to generate ideas for collaborative art and design projects which explored new ways to support and develop the work of Fighting Words.

What do students get from it?

Students develop interpersonal skills and facilitation skills around art practice. They learn how to work collaboratively, and learn from the community about different approaches to, and understandings of, art. They deepen their understanding of the effects of art as a means of expression and as a way to build community.

What does the community get from it?

The community participants learn to produce a piece of art, working individually and in groups under the instruction and supervision of students. They also learn how to work with the students to gain skills and knowledge of arts practice that is applicable to their local context. They use the resources of

their local culture, community and environment, and make an important contribution to traditional learning contexts and institutions.

Example community groups working on Arts in Context projects:

- [Fighting Words](#)
- [Whitefriar Street Community Centre](#)
- [National Drug Treatment Centre, Trinity Court, Pearse Street](#)
- [Foroige](#)
- [The Larkin Centre](#)

Examples of 2009 Arts in Context Projects:

Project 1

Psycho geography was defined in 1955 by GuyDebord as “a whole toy box full of playful, inventive strategies for exploring cities...just about anything that takes pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape.” Together, Emma Jayne Geraghty, (BA Fine Arts, Dublin Institute of Technology) and Casey Craig, (Dramatic Literature Major, New York University), in conjunction with the Larkin Community Centre, have devised a Psycho geographical performance piece entitled “Discover Ballybough”.

The artwork is a performance-based walking tour that is centred around the neighbourhood of Ballybough. This collaborative community arts project examines community and place with a hope that people will leave their preconceptions at the door and go home with a greater insight into the real Ballybough and its' surrounding areas.



Project 2

'Freedom of Silence: In recent years, there has been increased media attention on Islam throughout the world. Stories about Islam often contain themes of terrorism, religious extremism, and oppression. The issue of women in Islam has been particularly controversial and negatively portrayed. Muslim women are painted as repressed, subservient figures not allowed to pursue their own happiness. Their observance of hijab, the covering of the head, often provokes frustration, anger, and even fear. Why don't they want to be seen? What are they hiding? Why are women forced to wear it? Why do they want to stick out? These questions, whether they come from a place of prejudice or just ignorance, have permeated the public consciousness. Unfortunately, the answer to these questions found in many news sources are often skewed by sensationalism, providing a biased and extreme perspective on the lives of these often silent subjects. In compiling *The Revealer*, we sought to provide an alternative representation of Muslim women in Ireland.

We asked several women in the Dublin Mosque community to provide us with articles that said something about themselves as a Muslim woman in Ireland. We told them that they could be about anything - a personal story, an event that happened to them, or any piece of information that they thought needed to be said about them. When asking for the articles, we assumed (and probably hoped) that many of the pieces would be very controversial, recounting tales of terrible discrimination and prejudice from a community that misunderstood them. However, although the pieces we received sometimes mentioned a feeling of alienation, they were far from revealing any kind of anger. The collective representation produced by the women was not one of a minority group who wanted to rail against their oppressors. The part of themselves that they felt so badly needed to be represented was not their frustration, but their happiness. Their articles dispel the stereotype of the Muslim woman as a silently unhappy figure. They speak of themselves as incredibly content individuals who have become who they are as a result of their own free choices.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Fear always springs from ignorance." So much of the cultural conflict in the world is simply a result of misunderstanding. Therefore, misrepresentation must be combated. We hope that the pieces here may shed some light on some of the less heard sides of Muslim life, and that they may perhaps take us one step closer to a more truthful representation of their world.'

by Nadia Shah, Catherine Clark - Editors, *The Revealer*



Project 3

For the Arts in Context programme 2009, artists Camilla Kane and Meghan Griffin worked with the Aisling Project Ballymun. They collaborated with six young people aged 8 to 12 to produce a piece of art, challenging their perspective on their lives and their futures.

Throughout the six weeks Camilla and Meghan worked with these young people through performance, film, sculpture, painting and drawing. They then focused this towards a final film in which the young people took on the role of members of a town council, in a town they themselves created called 'Daly Town'.

The art discussed the everyday concerns and responsibilities of a community. Through this the public concerns were brought forward and the young people's response, although initially seeming absurd, proved at times most effective.