

Luan Gallery in collaboration with Westmeath Arts Office presents

# SA LÁR

## 30 NOVEMBER – 8 FEBRUARY

A Westmeath Artists Awards group exhibition featuring work by  
30 Westmeath Artists selected by Guest Curator, Emer McGarry.

Luan Gallery, Elliott Road, Athlone  
Tues–Sat 11–5pm Sun 12–5pm  
090 6442154 @luangalleryathlone



Fiona Kelly  
Tina Hayes  
Seán Guinan  
Clare Guinan  
Mel French  
Paul Flaherty  
Mark Duffy  
Bertille de Lestrade  
Jessica Daly  
Alan Crowley  
Rachel Coyne  
Martina Coyle  
Rachel Marie Cleary  
Eoin Butler  
Anne Marie Burke

Hilary Kinahan  
Keely McLavin  
Kevin Meehan  
Lorraine Mirmagh  
Muiris Moyrhan  
Aishling Muller  
El Putnam  
Amanda Ralph  
Catherine Rock  
Paul Roy  
Celine Sheridan  
Annette Treacy  
Lorcan Walshe  
Keith Watts  
Ann Wingfield

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The precise centre of the island of Ireland was once a contentious issue. According to mythological sources, the Hill of Uisneach, where ceremonial artefacts that date back to the Neolithic Age have been uncovered, lay in the very middle of the country. For many years however, it vied with the Hill of Berries and Carnagh East in County Roscommon to lay claim to the title of Ireland's mid-point. Thanks to mapping technology, it can no longer be disputed that the centre of the island lies within the rich and storied county of Westmeath. The ancient waters of the Shannon bordering its western edge; Lough Derravaragh, home to the Children of Lir to the North; and Uisneach, the ceremonial meeting point of the earliest provinces, at the heart of the county.

It is not surprising then that this exhibition reflects the way in which the ancient and the contemporary rub up against each other here in Ireland's mythological heartlands. Universal concerns such as the environment, war, and politics go hand in glove with local, more personal perspectives on life and the human condition.

Care for the natural world is particularly evident in the work of several artists in this show. Eoin Butler and Lorraine Mimmagh are amongst the artists who offer us new perspectives on ancient landscapes. Fiona Kelly's accomplished work gives voice to the earth itself, specifically the Split Hills Esker, in Co. Westmeath. Kelly examines questions surrounding the human 'exploration' of landscape, understood as both a relationship with nature and an extractivist approach to natural resources. Her sculptural objects are composed from her archive of waste matter, with pieces of remnants displayed as museological artefacts.

Perspectives on gender politics are apparent within the selected works. Celine Sheridan, Keely McLavin and Rachel Marie Cleary are just some of the artists responding to such themes. Rachel Coyne deals with everyday gender realities within the context of art-historical narratives, while Rachel Marie Cleary's provocative and positive pieces explore femme power past and present.

This contemporary moment of global extremes is also reflected in the show. Amanda Ralph and Mark Duffy both give us a sharp take on the hollowness of political leadership in today's world. Other works stand out for their individualism, and Paul Roy's *Things I Have Actually Seen* series deserves a special mention for the way in which it gives us pause to think, and to smile, at the same time.

Elsewhere quotidian things like light on lake waters, fruit on a table, or a girl at rest catch the artists' eyes and imaginations. Above all, what binds the selected works of art is a reminder that it is our relationship with mythology, the landscape, and one another that gives life resonance, and connects us as human beings.

I was delighted to select the work for this exhibition from the fantastically diverse, rich and creative submissions received. The standard of work was extraordinarily high. Credit is due to all of the creative individuals who submitted pieces for consideration, and congratulations to the artists who have been selected for inclusion in the exhibition.

Many talented professional practitioners had to be omitted due to the constraints of the awards' parameters. I would like to acknowledge these artists who, in other circumstances, would have been included. Capable non-professionals demonstrated the sheer joy of creative expression in their pieces, though they could not be included due to the context of this award.

As the numbers were so vast, the selection process was highly competitive. We had a maximum threshold of artists that could be shortlisted and a strict criterion of 'living in' or 'from' Westmeath, thus it was not feasible for everyone to be selected for exhibition.

Westmeath Arts Office and Luan Gallery have created a meaningful and valuable way to support artists in, or from, the county through this open submission initiative. Warm thanks to everyone at Luan, especially Carmel Duffy and Aoife Banks, and to Arts Officer Miriam Mulrennan, for the invitation to curate this exhibition.

It has been a pleasure to gain this insight into the vibrant visual art world of County Westmeath, and to find the concerns of artists here in Ireland's ancient heartland, to be very much at the centre of contemporary discourse.

Emer McGarry

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Aishling Muller

EL Putnam

Amanda Ralph

Catherine Rock

Paul Roy

Celine Sheridan

Annette Treacy

Lorcan Walshe

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As the municipal art gallery and hub of visual arts activity in County Westmeath, Luan Gallery plays a vital role regionally and nationally by presenting a wide range of contemporary visual art exhibitions, public engagement and outreach programmes.

The Westmeath Artists Award is a partnership between Luan Gallery and Westmeath Arts Office, aiming to celebrate, showcase and support the development of Westmeath visual artists' practices and careers with funding support from the Arts Council of Ireland.

*SA LÁR*, the Westmeath Artists Awards exhibition is the 81st exhibition presented by Luan Gallery. As the municipal gallery for Westmeath, Luan promotes a dynamic contemporary visual art programme of both established and emerging artists on a county, national and international level. It aims to make visual art accessible to all and offers a unique cultural tourism experience for the community and visitors to Athlone.

LUAN GALLERY



funding  
visual arts

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Open: Tues – Sat 11.00 – 17.00  
Sun 12.00 – 17.00

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info@luangallery.ie 090 6442154

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