



Hope and Rebirth

McAuley Place

17 March – 04 April 2022

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MANIFESTO

collaboration – disruption – creativity

Grid Collective, formed in 2015, is a multi-disciplinary group of professional artists with a combined age of over 200 and many years of experience in their individual fields. Its aim is to harness the creativity of the older professional artist and to promote their representation in contemporary, mainstream art in Ireland and abroad.

Through our life experience and varied skills, we are exploring new forms and developing innovative techniques. Our curatorial approach is to bring elements of our different practices together by creating individual pieces and a group piece in a broad critical response to a theme or criterion.

Our work tends to the abstract and conceptual, but we aim to maintain an underlying coherence reflecting the collaborative process. We believe that the interaction of our very different practices gives Grid Collective a unique perspective.

Helen Blair

oil – cold wax – texture – gold leaf – mixed media

Following a long period of gloom brought upon us by the Covid epidemic, I have tried in my work to focus on the future as we draw towards the end of the crisis. Using an abstract language of primary colours combined with gold leaf and calligraphic marks as symbols of optimism and joy, my work has become a form of therapy helping me to focus on the positive aspects of life.

Having recently become a grandmother, I am drawn to those bright and childlike colours and forms. They represent to me the fact that life always reverts to growth, rebirth and joy after a period of setbacks and difficulties. Life goes on, children smile, the sun inevitably shines after a storm and human beings heal after adversity, pain and loss.

<http://helenblair.net/>

Mary Catherine Nolan

acrylic – wood – tactile – palette knife

My thoughts on the theme of hope and rebirth were formed by an article I'd read in *The Guardian* (21 November 2020), about a plant which had evolved a form of camouflage to avoid extinction by being over-harvested for use in traditional Chinese medicine. *Fritillaria delavayi* retains its vivid colour in an area with little harvesting, but in more intensively worked environments, it produces grey and brown leaves which make it more difficult to spot. What an extraordinary example of the drive for survival!

The pieces I've created for this exhibition attempt to reflect nature's (and by extension, our) ability to evolve and survive. While the landscape may seem bleak, there is always a small, strong, surge of growth possible from roots deep within the earth. It may be hard to spot, it may appear to be quite distant, but it is there. What is hope but a determination to find and focus on that tiny speck of life, however insignificant it may look at first glance?

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Fifi Smith

kinetic projections – experimental film – mixed media

My works for this exhibition contemplate questions of hope and regeneration. Using mixed media and watercolour, each work explores different aspects of this theme. Overall, they take a wry look at the inherent ambivalence contained in many people's optimism.

I believe that the real generator of change is in fact hope. Only in the spirit of hope can rebuilding and improvement of our circumstances take place. If we recognize pessimism as merely a place of pause, then we can acknowledge optimism as the engine of hope. With these thoughts, and a little wry humour, I created the works for *Hope and Rebirth*.

<http://fifismith.net/>

HOW WE WORK

How does an art collective work? We cannot speak for others, but this will give some idea of how Grid Collective goes about creating collaboratively.

Our approach is to bring elements of our different practices together by creating individual pieces and a collective piece, or pieces, in a broad critical response to a theme or criterion. Our work tends to the abstract and conceptual, but we aim to maintain an underlying coherence reflecting the collaborative process.

As part of its practice, Grid Collective spends some time exploring ways of collaborating. This often involves one member beginning a piece, than handing it over to another for 'intervention', and so on, until all members have worked on it. The rule is there are no rules - if one member takes apart what another member has done, so be it!

MCAULEY PLACE – HOW WE GOT HERE

In 2012, I was commissioned by Kildare Arts Service to write a series of essays on art projects in the county. One of these projects, *Inversion/was the nook warm* (architect Laura Harty and artist Jennie Moran) involved McAuley Place, or Nás na Ríogh, as it was known then.

I was truly impressed by the ethos behind McAuley Place as explained to me by Margharita Solon, and she and I continued to collaborate on various projects elucidating the concepts which it embodies. I've often cited it as an exemplar of good practice in the care for our older members of society, and indeed have brought friends to see it for themselves.

So participation in the Artist in the Lobby Programme was on my wishlist and it was great to be given this slot. I believe Grid Collective is a good fit for McAuley Place, which has always emphasized the importance of creativity and collaboration, and this exhibition is an ideal opportunity for us to meet our aim of promoting the work of the older professional artist.

Mary Catherine Nolan

Grid Collective

HOPE AND REBIRTH

The theme for this Artist in the Lobby Programme is *Hope and Rebirth*. How each artist worked on the theme is explained in their personal statement.

However, while Grid Collective's approach to a given theme is for each artist to respond individually, we also aim to include a collective piece to represent our collaborative practice.

For this exhibition, we have created the work, *Our Conversation*, which represents the continuing discussion we have about our work, our approach, and our understanding of what it is to create.

Another element here is the presentation of the work. The pieces are grouped together, representing the notion of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. However, there is no attempt at 'harmonizing' the works within the implicit frame: they 'go together' because they don't 'go together' – disruption is a favourite Grid Collective motif!

