TOGETHER IN COMMUNE

DAVID BEATTIE
ALA BUISIR
CECILIA BULLO
PAULINE CUMMINS
LAUREN KELLY MARIA
MCKINNEY FIONA
WHELAN

Together in Commune, is the first exhibition of Rua Red's Studio Programme, curated by Marysia Więckiewicz and featuring work by Rua Red's current resident studio artists: David Beattie, Ala Buisir, Cecilia Bullo, Pauline Cummins, Lauren Kelly, Maria McKinney, and Fiona Whelan.

This exhibition marks an important moment for Rua Red, highlighting the depth and breadth of the practices nurtured and supported within these walls. Working closely with the curator in the months leading up to the exhibition, each artist presents work that reflects their individual practice, while collectively exploring themes central to socially engaged contemporary art.

Rua Red's Studio Programme, awarded through panel selection for a period of one to three years, is a core pillar of the organisation's mission; to support artists at every stage of their career. The studios at Rua Red provide artists with time, space, and a supportive community that encourages sustained and critical artistic practice. In turn, the presence of these artists in the building fundamentally shapes Rua Red as a centre for enquiry and experimentation. Their work contributes to a vibrant and evolving ecology of ideas that extends beyond the studio walls, enriching both the organisation and the wider cultural landscape of South Dublin County and beyond.

Maolíosa Boyle
Executive Director, Rua Red

the arts council an chomhairle ealaíon funding the arts

SDCC
Comhairle Contae Átha Cliath Theas South Dublin County Council

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland Programme



She grew the tree plant, she grew the plant, she grew the primeval mother: The plants of lamentation have sprouted, (2023)—Cecilia Bullo. Photo by: Ros Kavanagh and courtesy the artist and RHA Gallery

TOGETHER IN COMMUNE

TEXT BY MARYSIA WIĘCKIEWICZ

Together in Commune
In a world fractured by hyper-individualism and increasing precarity, the idea of the *commune* represents both an alternative practice and a proposition. To be *in commune* is not simply to share space, but to engage in a collective way of working, grounded in collaboration, mutual curiosity, compassion, and care. The studio artists selected by Rua Red embody this ethos, through practices that are socially engaged, politically situated, and deeply committed to questioning our place in the world.

This is not an exhibition of finished artworks. Instead, it focuses on studio practice and the methodologies that shape artistic processes. It centres on the work-in-progress: the research, conversations, and collaborations that underpin art-making. The studio is presented not just as a site of production, but as critical infrastructure for dialogue, experimentation, and communal interaction. In Dublin, where access to affordable studio space is increasingly limited, such shared environments become all the more vital.

At Rua Red, artists are not merely working side by side, but engaging in active exchange with their collaborators, mutual reflection, and shared inquiry. The studio operates as a site for critical dialogue and collaborative knowledge production. Care is not just an abstract ideal, but a concrete, political practice embedded in the processes of making, thinking, and working collectively.

Mapping Collaboration: Process as Practice
A key example of this commitment to communal processes is *The River*, Fiona Whelan's large-scale visual mapping that synthetises twenty years of her methodological approach to collaborative arts practice, dedicated to exposing and reconfiguring systemic social inequalities. Rooted in durational collaborations with communities, individuals, and organisations, this work makes visible the deep, often hidden, labour of social engagement in art.

The River is a development of the artist's PhD research, *Reconfiguring Systemic Power Relations*, completed in 2019. This new work was realised in the Rua Red studio through an initial process of recursive mapping and conceptual refinement with artist and researcher Dr Ciaran Smyth, where the pair explored cartographic strategies that could hold the multiplicity of this practice: political commitments, affective labour, methodological shifts, and ethical negotiations, and later with visual artist Orla Whelan, as visual metaphors were refined, and materials explored. Its final form - a large-scale acrylic drawing on linen, charts this terrain like a living archive of the artist's process. It is an active field of engagement; brought to life through dialogues and workshops. Fiona Whelan's drawing becomes a pedagogical site, a space for knowledge exchange. Here, the personal becomes political, and vice versa. In *The River*, we do not just see process; we are invited to enter it, discuss and dissect it.

Flags of Belonging: Part of the Fabric
With *Part of the Fabric*, Ala Buisir responds directly to her lived experience of being racially abused and othered in Ireland. She uses the Irish flag as a canvas: sublimating the textures, patterns, and symbols of migrant cultures directly onto it. The result, often assembled with other collaborators, is a powerful act of reclamation. These altered flags assert that migrants are not peripheral to Irishness, but central to it. By weaving these elements into the fabric, both literally and symbolically, Buisir reshapes the narrative of belonging.

The tricolour's original symbolism – green for the Catholic tradition, orange for the Protestant, and white for peace, between the two – finds new resonance here. Buisir extends the white stripe's vision of peace to include migrants and multicultural communities. Her flags incorporate acts of visibility, solidarity, and insistence.

Identity, Performance & the Political
For the past year, Lauren Kelly has shared a studio with Ala Buisir, a space that became a mutual playground for cross-pollination of ideas and ongoing dialogue. Kelly's *Mapping* originally featured in a walking-based



Part of the Fabric (2025)—Ala Buisir, photo courtesy of the artist.



Ireland's China, Ireland's Taiwan (2025)—Lauren Kelly, photo courtesy of the artist.

performance, *Ireland's China Ireland's Taiwan* (2024), navigates the complex terrain of identity, heritage, and embodied resistance. Through performance, sculpture, video, and textile, Kelly explores the politics of mixed heritage in Ireland, situating her practice in the body as both a site of oppression and a source of strength. Her activism is not supplementary to her art, but central to its purpose.

Drawing from historical and personal lineages, Kelly addresses urgent concerns around power dynamics, discrimination, and bodily autonomy. She situates her body as both archive and site of protest. *Mapping* is a meditation on the forces that drive artistic creation: pain and love, discrimination and autonomy. Through her work, Kelly creates a space for herself and others, where the politics that inhibit and mark us can be made visible.

Material Mythologies: Ritual, Resistance, & Repair

Cecilia Bullo's work is rooted in both research and lived experience, exploring everything from the complex, often troubling terrain of the mind to broad historical, mythological, psychoanalytic, and ecofeminist ideas. Her practice is shaped by narratives of social resistance drawn from folklore, myth, and cross-cultural histories, alongside an investigation of intense rituals of healing and transformation.

In recent works, Bullo has reclaimed mythological figures like Medusa as powerful symbols of defiance and renewal, using them to explore the political body of women in all its forms, especially within the urgent context of the climate crisis. Her approach is hands-on and sustained, with materials chosen for their layered symbolic and physical histories, reflecting on cycles of restoration, decay, and connection and nurturing a vital relationship between our wounded planet and the fractured human experience.

Her more recent Repository *Apparatus for Magical Thinking* delves into the porous boundaries between psychosis and mysticism, reinterpreting Artaud's "organised anarchy" through an ecofeminist lens.

Bullo's studio explorations of votive garlands and bucrania act as rhizomatic objects - connectors between time periods, cultures, and states of being. Her material processes are slow and intentional; they trace decay and restoration as twin forces. Bullo's work insists on the political in the spiritual, and the communal in the mythic.

Economies of Care: Livestock, Capital, & the Body
Maria McKinney's *Cattle* and *Capital* examines the intertwined histories of livestock, genetic heritage, and economic systems. Set on the island of Jersey and developed in collaboration with local farmers and institutions, the short video documentation and sculptural intervention revive overlooked connections between these two keywords, *cattle and capital*; between animal bodies and financial markets.

Wearing a sculpture built from artificial insemination straws and a nineteenth-century milk yoke, McKinney leads a Jersey cow around a cattle competition ring. The lo-fi video documentation is a performative work in progress, capturing an act of provocation and social engagement with the local community during the annual summer fair and forcing a fresh look at the relationship between human and bovine species.

By foregrounding local histories, laws, and economies, McKinney's practice asks broader questions about stewardship and control within various structures, including the economy and the ecosystem.

Growing Together: Land, Food, & Collective Action
That idea of stewardship, of growing together, also anchors *Along the Camac*, an ongoing project between David Beattie and Clondalkin Global Garden. Emerging from the earlier project *Bó Mhór*, this collaboration focuses on food sovereignty, ecological care, and knowledge exchange.

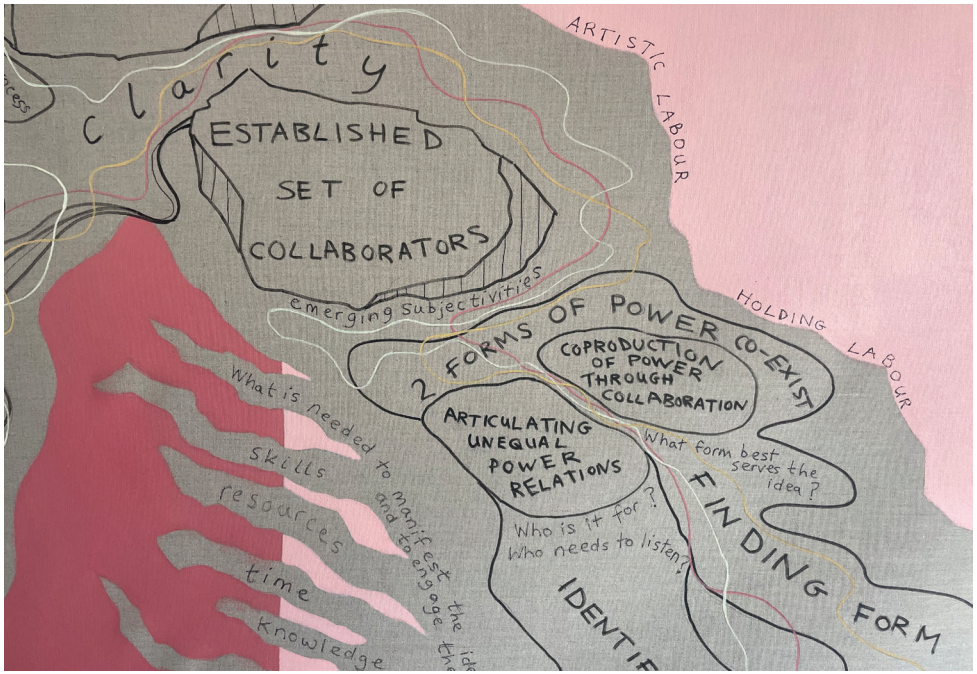
The community garden in Corkagh Park, which serves as a site for this project, is both sanctuary and pedagogical tool - rooted in seasonal rhythms and shared labour.



'Cattle and Capital' (2019)—Maria Mc Kinney, live sculptural performance, RJA&HS Cattle Competition



Tracings—Pauline Cummins



The River—Fiona Whelan

Here, the studio expands beyond its walls. It becomes a field, a workshop, a table. Along the *Camac* offers a living model of communal sustainability, challenging the logic of industrial agriculture through acts of local, intentional care.

Tracing the Invisible: Studio as Threshold

In Pauline Cummins' *Tracings*, the artist reflects on beginnings: what it means to enter a new studio and feel its pull. She explores the joy of experimenting with new materials and the synergy that can emerge while doing so. Using tracing paper, raw pigments, and plaster, Cummins makes a gesture of presence and permeability.

The work references genealogy and artistic legacy, testing the boundaries of material and memory. It is a quiet but profound statement on continuity, fragility, and artistic resilience – themes that are ever-present in Cummins' practice. Her work is centred on the human condition, exploring the themes of political body, activism, human rights and gender.

It is also specific and urgent in its response to our political moment. The vivid use of blue and yellow recalls the horror of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing war.

Together in Commune: Reprise

Across these diverse practices, a set of shared values emerges: commitment to process, a refusal of hyper-individualism, and a faith in the power of working together. What becomes evident is the artists' sustained engagement with collaborative practice and their exploration of the shared human condition. Their studios are sites of encounter, not only with materials, but with ideas and collaborators.

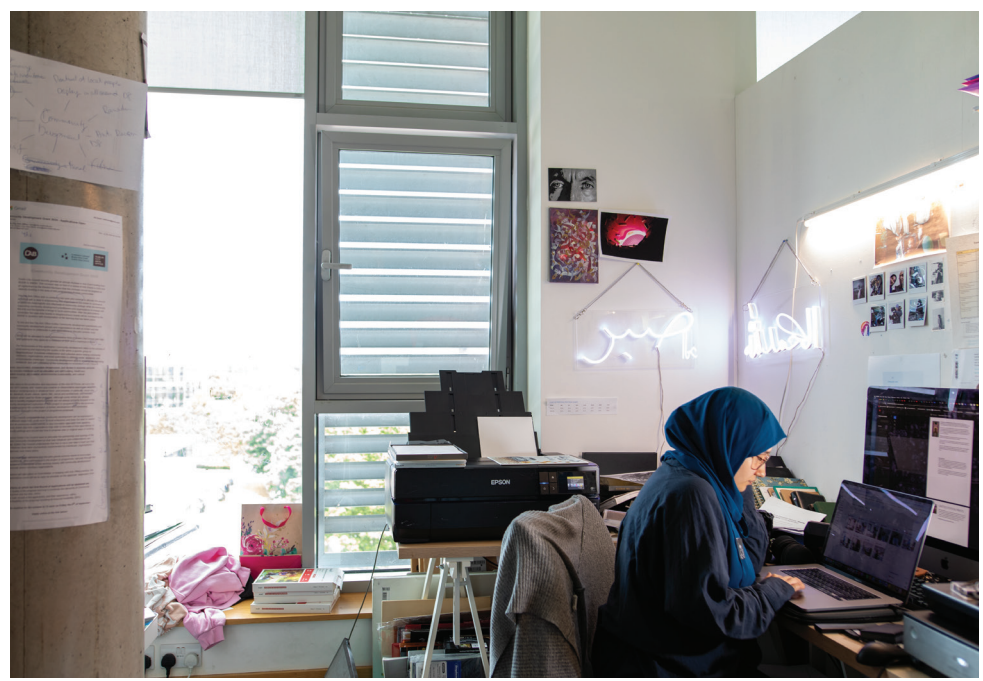
In times of political fragmentation, housing insecurity, and environmental crisis, *Together in Commune* proposes that art can be an act of stewardship; that the studio can be a shared commons. That collaboration through practice is not a strategy, but a way of being.

David Beattie
David Beattie is an artist and lecturer in Art and Research Collaboration at Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology and TU Dublin, Ireland. Beattie's artistic practice explores the material world through experiential, physical engagements with objects and non-objects. Recent projects have focused on the social and environmental impact of digital technologies, agroecology, psychoacoustics and the communal listening experience. He was awarded the Harpo Foundation Award in 2010 and was a recipient of the Hennessy Art Fund for IMMA collection, 2016.

In recent years, he has been commissioned to produce a number of temporary and permanent public artworks including VOID Commissions, Derry (2021), *Reflectors,* Bray, Co.Wicklow and *Patterns of Illumination,* Griffith Barracks Multi-denominational School, Dublin. Exhibitions include The Glucksman (2019), Berlin Opticians (2018+2019) TULCA Art Festival, Galway (2017), CCA Derry-Londonderry (2017), Irish Museum of Modern Art (2017+2013), Rubicon Projects, Brussels (2013) All Humans Do, The Model Sligo and Whitebox, New York (2012), The Mattress Factory Art Museum, Pittsburgh (2010), Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2010). Recent work includes *Future Light from Distant Stars,* the focal point of which is a large greenhouse which is utilised as a growing environment, a meeting place, and a workshop space.



David Beattie


Ala Buisir

Ala Buisir

Ala Buisir is an award-winning visual artist & journalist. Born in Ireland with Libyan roots, Ala holds a BA in Photography from TU Dublin and MA in Journalism from DCU. She is currently undertaking a PhD by practice at the University of Limerick, in which she investigates the 'othering' of Muslim women in the Western world by societal Islamaphobia and Western tropes of Islam. In doing so, she aims to use this research to inform participatory arts-based interventions that challenge Islamaphobia against Muslim women by amplifying Muslim women's voices and creating avenues for digital storytelling in which these voices are agents in their narrative. Ala's work documents the social and political tension around us today. The aim is to raise awareness by presenting events through different perspectives in hopes that it may also bring about change.

She is also the co-founder of Gorm Media. An impact-focused digital media start-up with a mission of unifying across differences and advancing belonging for marginalised communities. And a board member of the Amal Women's Association. A Muslim women-led organisation. It provides front-line services to Muslim women connected to the Muslim community nationwide.

Cecilia Bullo

Cecilia Bullo is an Irish/Italian visual artist whose multidisciplinary practice spans sculpture, installation, sound, and performance. Classically trained and grounded in research, her work draws from ecofeminist theory, mythology, psychoanalysis, and ritual to examine healing, transformation, and the politics of care. Through cross-cultural references—ranging from Greco-Roman votive traditions to Irish folklore—Bullo explores ecological memory, collective trauma, and the symbolic power of material through apotropaic forms, botanical magic, and embodied gestures.

Recent solo exhibitions include Being Haunted by the Breezes, Now How Will You Exist? (Royal Hibernian Academy, 2023); LEIGHEAS–LIMINALIS (The Dock, 2023). Selected recent projects and group exhibitions include Connections: OPW State Art Collection Cross Border Exhibition Farmleigh Gallery, Dublin / Luan Gallery, Athlone / Down Arts Centre, Downpatrick / Braid, Ballymena (2025, EI); Repository Apparatus for Magical Thinking (2024, Dublin); WARP Artist Village (2024, Eindhoven, NL); Material Stories (2022, Vienna); Biomedia (2020, Querétaro, MX); and Transgender, Gender & Psychoanalysis (2017, Freud Museum, London). Awarded residencies include Fire Station Artists' Studios, the Red Stables and she has recently completed a three-month residency at the Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris (2025).
www.ceciliabullo.com



Cecilia Bullo



Lauren Kelly



Pauline Cummins



Maria McKinney

Pauline Cummins
Pauline Cummins is an artist whose work explores the human condition from a feminist perspective. Her interest lies in socio-cultural relations, where she examines identity, gender and socio-cultural relations connected to different communities in society. Her examination of locations questions how the self is constituted and how people act within a group either chosen or determined in social situations such as work, education, leisure time "social activities" or the basic structure of the family.

She was the first visual artist to work with prisoners in Mountjoy's Women's Prison in a scheme initiated by the Dept. Of Justice and the Irish Arts Council in 1986. She has had video installations commissioned for the Neo-natal unit, National Maternity Hospital, Dublin and with Firestation Artists' studios and the community of the North Inner City, Dublin. This work was shown in Our Lady of Lourdes church, where her video installations were shown in Confession Boxes. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is in the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

Lauren Kelly
Lauren Kelly is an award-winning visual artist from Dublin, Ireland, primarily working in performance art. She is the founder of the Performing Activism Collective and works both solo and in socially engaged projects. Lauren approaches her practice as a mode of activism, using the vast landscape of performance art to articulate politics rationally, addressing the oppressed states of the body.

Currently undertaking an MA in Art and Social Action at the National College of Art and Design. Research provides the roots for her work, offering historical, personal, and political depth. It involves connecting with other researchers, archivists, and activists.

Maria McKinney
Maria McKinney's multidisciplinary practice includes sculpture, installation, photography, and video, and often involves direct collaboration with scientific communities and farmers.

Her practice frequently integrates traditional craft techniques with contemporary materials, creating works that critically examine the social, historical, and scientific frameworks through which humans have shaped and manipulated the natural world—particularly in the context of agriculture.

McKinney's solo exhibitions include the Wellcome Collection, London; the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin; Lokaal 01, Antwerp; La Permanence, Clermont-Ferrand; The MAC, Belfast; The LAB, Dublin; and the Context Gallery, Derry. Her work has featured in group exhibitions at institutions such as the Gregg Museum, North Carolina; Sunderland Museum, UK; Bozar, Brussels; and Pace University Gallery, New York. Her artworks are held in several public collections, including the Arts Council of Ireland, the Museum of English Rural Life, Europol, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Office of Public Works, and Bank of Ireland. McKinney has participated in numerous residencies, including Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture (USA), Temple Bar Gallery + Studios (Dublin), Parity Studios at University College Dublin, Fire Station Artists' Studios (Dublin), Banff Centre (Canada), and The Red Stables (Dublin).

Fiona Whelan
Fiona Whelan is an artist, writer and Programme Leader of the MA/MFA Art and Social Action at NCAD. Her arts practice is committed to exploring and responding to systemic inequalities through long-term collaborations with diverse individuals, groups and organisations. These processes are rooted in complex relational networks and typically accumulate over time through a series of public manifestations, including text-based, visual, performative and dialogical artworks, that take direction from the collaborative process and lived experiences of those involved. Common to all work is an interrogation of multiple power relations, such as those between police and young people; state-run medical services and patients; national housing policy and those experiencing housing injustice; as well as less tangible power relations experienced as social norms related to class and gender.

Notable works include Boys in the Making (2025, with Rialto Youth Project/RYP and others, NCAD Gallery); The forest that won't forget (2024, with John Conway, 221+ and Hometree), The Apology (2022, with Feidlim Cannon and Housing Action Now), What Does He Need? (2020/2022 with Brokentalkers and RYP, The LAB/IMMA) and Policing Dialogues (2011, with RYP, The LAB). Fiona is also a committed writer of books, book chapters and journal articles focused on the complex relationality, labour, methodology and ethical challenges of collaborative arts practice.
See www.fionawhelan.com



Fiona Whelan

Marysia Więckiewicz

Marysia Więckiewicz (she/her) is a curator and art writer, with nearly fifteen years of experience, both in public and private sectors. She has organised numerous exhibitions and projects in Ireland and abroad, independently and in partnership with various institutions and local authorities, including Hugh Lane Gallery, The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Temple Bar Gallery + Studios and Wexford Arts Centre. She worked as Assistant Curator in Hugh Lane Gallery and IMMA. Marysia was the founding director and curator of Berlin Opticians Gallery – a contemporary art gallery that showcased artistic practices both online and in non-traditional exhibition spaces. She co-edited Paper Visual Art Journal (PVA) between 2014-2018. Marysia has received awards from the Arts Council of Ireland and Culture Ireland. She has recently been appointed Curator of Visual Art at Project Arts Centre.



Marysia Więckiewicz

Curator Tour with Marysia Wieckiewicz
Saturday 19 July, 2—3pm

Join curator Marysia Wieckiewicz for a walk-around gallery tour of Together in Commune as she explores the processes of research, dialogue, experimentation, and collective exchange that unfold within the artists' studio.

Against the Oppressor: Performance by Lauren Kelly
Friday 27 June, 6pm, 40mins

Against the Oppressor is a live performance by Lauren Kelly as part of her gallery installation that highlights the current political conflict in Ireland. The flag that represents all backgrounds shows us the path to peace. Kelly calls on people to remember the original meaning and history of the Irish flag.

In a climate of blame toward the individual victims of an unjust system Kelly advocates for a middle ground where we can coexist peacefully and instead direct our focus towards the source of the power that oppresses us all. Ireland is now a home to many, but once the Irish had to emigrate. Refugees in Ireland are falling victim to anger that should be directed at the government.

Whose flag? Our flag.

Urban Talismans: Collective Rituals of Making
Drop-in Workshops with Cecilia Bullo
Saturday 5 July and 6 September

The artist will be at work from 2 – 5pm. All are welcome to drop-by and join in; most suitable for adults and young people (13+)

This workshop explores the creation of sculptural talismans and garlands as gestures of protection, healing, and connection. Rooted in ecofeminist ideas, cross-cultural folklore, and ritual practices, participants are invited to work with natural materials such clay, fibre, botanical elements, and found objects to develop tactile forms that hold personal or collective meaning.

Participants will be encouraged to consider what rituals or protective gestures feel relevant to them within contemporary urban life, migration histories, or ancestral memory. The resulting works (written intentions, small symbolic objects/sculptures) will be activated throughout the exhibition and could become part of a time-durational installation as part of the artist's exhibited work.

Visualising your Practice as Process and Method:
A One-day Workshop for Artists with Fiona Whelan
Friday 18 July and 22 August, 10am – 12pm

Artists are invited to engage in a reflective one-day workshop to explore the methodological and processual features of their practice as an artist. Facilitated by Fiona Whelan, each workshop will begin with participants being introduced to The River, a large scale drawing that visualises the continuous processual features of her collaborative arts practice. Each artist will then be invited to engage in a visualisation of their own practice, leading a focused critical dialogue that considers the labour and processes, both visible and invisible, that underpin artistic practice.

An 'In Conversation' event with artists Fiona Whelan and Ciaran Smyth
Friday 5 September, 11am – 1pm

In this 'In Conversation' event, artist Fiona Whelan will reflect on the content and process of making The River – a large-scale visual mapping of the processual features of her arts practice which engages with systemic power relations and inequalities through long-term collaborations. Fiona will be in conversation with artist and researcher Dr Ciaran Smyth who supported her in a process of recursive mapping, as the pair explored new cartographic strategies for visualising this collaborative and socially engaged practice. The conversation will be moderated by Carolann Courtney (Create).

Contribute to Teagasc Research with Maria McKinney
1 – 8 August

As part of Cattle and Capital, McKinney invites visitors to take part in a short survey in response to her gallery installation. Visitor feedback will contribute to ongoing research by Teagasc, helping us explore the connections between art, agriculture, and society.

Share your perspective and be part of the conversation.

Along the Camac

Over the duration of the exhibition, Along the Camac will share some of the conversations and activities of an ongoing engagement with Clondalkin Global Garden. A series of workshops to include making bioplastic from milk, creating natural dyes for fabric and producing cheese from surplus milk, will be held in the gallery as a way of thinking about stewardship and collective care for land.

Part of the Fabric: A One-Day Workshop with Ala Buisir
Saturday 12 July, 26 July, 8 August, and 23 August, 1 – 4pm

Part of the Fabric invites migrant and/or second-generation communities to take part in a one-day workshop exploring collective and archival ancestry through a guided sublimation printing process. Images of family heritage and cultural motifs will be embedded into the fabric of the Irish flag, reclaiming space, resisting exclusion, and redefining belonging. It's a declaration: we are here, and we are part of the peace the flag promises.

Participants are asked to bring materials to create individual ancestral maps: this can include photographs of family members and ancestors, documents, objects, or anything that may represent your culture. We will use a copy machine and printer to ensure that original photographs are not damaged; digital images/documents are welcome; there will also be online resources available for ancestry research and image finding.

The flags will be taken home by each participant; those willing will also have their finished pieces documented for the ongoing project.

Part of the Fabric challenges who gets to claim Irish identity by reimagining the national flag as a shared symbol, not a gatekeeping tool. It highlights the presence, histories, and contributions of migrants in Ireland, showing that their stories are not separate from the national narrative—they are woven into it.

Go to ruared.ie for information on workshops and events surrounding Together in Commune.

Special thanks to curator Marysia Wieckiewicz for her work in realising this exhibition and her insightful text to accompany this publication. Thanks to each of the resident studio artists: David Beattie, Ala Buisir, Cecilia Bullo, Pauline Cummins, Lauren Kelly, Maria McKinney, and Fiona Whelan.

Rua Red is very grateful to funders; South Dublin County Council Arts Office, the Arts Council, and Creative Ireland, for the ongoing support that makes all of this possible. Along the Camac by David Beatty is supported by the Creative Ireland Programme South Dublin. Fiona Whelan's process is supported by an Individual Artist Bursary Award from South Dublin County Council.



Along the Camac—David Beattie



ruared.ie