

Claire Halpin

Panorama Europa, 2024

Oil on canvas, diptych
University College Cork Art Collection

Claire Halpin's *Panorama Europa* presents a wide-ranging view of Europe that encompasses geographic, historic and cultural relationships. The painting shifts from images that evoke the religious traditions and conflicted histories of the island of Ireland on the far left through to the civic realm architecture of Eastern Europe and the Belt and Road initiative on the right, moving through affecting depictions of war, public protest and totalitarian gatherings.

In partnership with UCC's Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for EU Integration & Citizens' Rights, the Glucksman invited artist Claire Halpin to create a new work for the UCC art collection that responded to the centre's research and civic engagement. The work also acknowledges imagery that came through creative

sessions devised for community participants, notably the experience of Ukrainian emigrants and concerns about the unclear motivations of the Chinese government come to the fore.

There are references to celebrated paintings such as Bruegel's *The Tower of Babel*, Caravaggio's *Head of Medusa* and Keating's *Men of the South*, as well as other cultural signifiers for Halpin's painting is filled with allusions to military history, cartography, religion, past civilisations and contemporary society. These diverse narratives compete for space across the canvas, and encourage us to understand the plural, and often contentious, perspectives of what it means to be European today.

Rachel Fallon and Claire Halpin

To Never Look Away, 2024

Hand stitched wool felt box, kiln formed black glass, oil on gesso tondo panel
University College Cork Art Collection

In *To Never Look Away* a small round felted wool box rests on a pale shelf. Inside, a black glass surface, like a Claude Glass, gently reflects a miniature tondo depicting migrants on a raft, its composition drawn from Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* and overlaid with contemporary images of crossings in the Mediterranean. On the exterior, the words "to never look away" are hand-stitched into the felt. The reflection in the glass is partial and unstable, depending on angle, light, and the viewer's choice to look.

The work is a collaboration between Rachel Fallon and Claire Halpin, made in conjunction with Halpin's 2024 exhibition of the same name at TØN Dublin. It emerges

from shared research and a common field of political inquiry. The object itself references the Claude glass: a small, slightly convex, dark-tinted mirror once used by artists and travellers to simplify and aestheticize landscape, often by turning away from the scene itself.

The felt construction also recalls the "Act for Burying in Woollen" (1666), which mandated wool shrouds for burial in order to support the English wool trade, displacing local textile traditions in Ireland and Scotland.

Portable and intimate, the work echoes manuports, devotional icons, and memento mori carried by pilgrims, migrants, and those lost or unrecorded at sea.

Ursula Burke

Blue Sphinx Winged, 2021

Porcelain, Merino Wool, Embroidery thread & Polystyrene
Courtesy of the Artist

Blue Sphinx Winged is a powder blue sculpture of the mythical creature with a porcelain, bruised and wounded bust. Its body is hand-knit in Merino wool, and on its chest sits a hand-embroidered breastplate of cherub figures circling a cloudy blue sky. A line cuts across the embroidery, dividing it in two.

The form of Burke's *Blue Sphinx* is inspired by the French Mannerist sphinx, a significant decorative element in royal palaces and gardens across Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. Typically adorned in garments and decorative elements, these sculptures were sometimes used to represent the enigmatic nature of powerful women in the French court. However, the artist also draws upon the classical mythology of this creature as a guard who poses riddles to those wishing to enter the city of Thebes, with death a certainty if answered incorrectly. In Burke's hands, this figure becomes less a symbol of ornament or authority and more a troubled and unstable guardian, its wounded porcelain surface suggesting a body marked by violence rather than permanence.

The embroidered breastplate is based on *Camera degli Sposi Oculus* by Andrea Mantegna, located in the Ducal Palace of Mantua, and made between 1465 and 1474. This masterpiece of painted fresco uses the *trompe-l'œil* technique to make the walls and ceiling appear to open onto a sky, creating a convincing illusion of depth. Burke disrupts this image through the insertion of a Peace Wall embroidered down the centre, dividing the composition. The Peace Wall, a structure designed to separate communities during and after The Troubles, interrupts the utopian vision of the Renaissance sky. The line that cuts across the breastplate echoes both the architectural barrier and the continued presence of division in a post-conflict society.

Blue Sphinx Winged draws upon tropes of pan-European visual language in the use of classical mythology, Renaissance painting, and aristocratic decorative sculpture. Burke bends the traditional association of European art history as that of harmony, instead offering it as a structure through which histories of conflict and power are both concealed and revealed.

Ursula Burke

Arcadian Series

Brown Riot, 2014

Pink Disappeared, 2015

Blue Protest, 2021

Watercolour and pen on Fabriano paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Ursula Burke's *Arcadian Series* features three drawings in pen and watercolour, framed like small windows within large white mounts, with illustrations of dripping liquid from the top of each frame. Each drawing is individually hued in brown, pink, and blue, and depicts scenes of conflict familiar to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

In *Brown Riot*, an idyllic forest landscape occupies the foreground, with thickened tree trunks and tall canopies. Flowing from the background, a river winds through the scene, with a valley on its opposite side. Some buildings occupy this valley, one with a portico façade, and in the distance a rising, Babel-like tower with scattered flags staked along its tiers. In the front right of the drawing, three masked figures in puffer jackets fight while three riot police shield their faces from the assaulting limbs. Two dogs, one a red setter and the other a Staffordshire terrier, look out at the viewer.

Pink Disappeared depicts a similar scene of diminished violence disjointed in a pastoral peace. Hues are more muted, however, in shades of grey accented by sharp, bright pink lines. This natural paradise is disrupted by a digger in the foreground and an area cleared of foliage marked with the word 'BODIES' and an arrow.

In the calm composition of *Blue Protest*, a dreamlike landscape painted in shades of blue leads the viewer

to a cluster of characters. Three men in green overalls and black ski masks constrain another in civilian clothing. One of the masked men hits the captive's head with a folded red and white flag. Sprouting from the point of conflict is a bloom of poppy red. Behind them, a figure dressed in blue holds up a camera documenting the scene, the lens pointing out towards the viewer beyond.

In this drawing series, Burke references traditional images of Arcadian landscapes by European artists such as Jan Willem Pieneman, Carlo Labruzzi, and Thomas Cole. This classical style of landscape painting typically represents utopian scenes containing trees, rolling hills, and distant architecture in serene arrangements. In her use of this imagery, Burke subverts the notion of utopia through the lens of the political contemporary in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Here, the serenity of nature is entrenched with a past and present of conflict and social upheaval, tapping into a pan-European cultural memory with a visual language that has been used for centuries to talk about mortality, memory, and civilization.

Akin to Burke's wider practice, her *Arcadian Series* creates tension through the use of traditional modes of artmaking. Instead of being met with the expected serenity of the idyllic, we find disruption, and a reminder that the same Europe which produced Arcadia also produced repeated episodes of violence.

Genieve Figgis

After Gainsborough Lady in a Landscape, 2025

After Fragonard The Joys of Motherhood, 2025

After Boucher The Abduction of Europa, 2025

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech

After Gainsborough Lady in a Landscape presents a seated female figure in a garden setting, echoing the structure of 18th century portraiture. The figure, dressed in an elaborate pink gown, sits slightly off-centre on a green cushion. Facial features are only loosely articulated, giving her an ambiguous, almost ghostly presence. The surrounding landscape is lush yet unsettled. Paint is applied in loose dabs, drips, and smears, creating a surface that feels in constant motion. The environment feels as if it is forming and falling apart, heightened and surreal.

This work is a direct reference to the 18th century British painter Thomas Gainsborough, in whose portraits the sitter often becomes blended into the natural landscape surrounding them. This melding of subject and environment was seen as interpretation of the sitter's identity, aligning refinement with the beauty of nature and signifying the intertwining importance of land ownership and status.

In *After Fragonard The Joys of Motherhood* a woman and child are set within a soft, pastel, blue-toned environment. The central figure stands slightly turned, wearing a pale dress, while a small child leans close to her side. Their faces are simplified and somewhat mask-like, with rosy cheeks and minimal detail, giving them a doll-like and slightly uncanny appearance. The surrounding space is filled with loose brushstrokes in blues, whites, and greens, creating a sense of instability.

This work is based on *The Joys of Motherhood* by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, an 18th century Rococo painting

that presents an idealised image of maternal affection. Fragonard's work sought to explore themes of love, intimacy, and leisure and his figures often belong to an imagined aristocratic world in which labour, class inequality, and social tension are absent.

In *After Boucher, The Abduction of Europa* a female figure with blonde hair wearing a short pink dress sits atop a bovine creature. She is flanked on either side by accompanying figures who, like her, dissolve into the surrounding ground through the artist's use of fluid, seeping brushstrokes. At the feet of the central figure is the impression of a young child or cherub gazing upwards.

The work draws on *The Abduction of Europa* by François Boucher, a Rococo painting which depicts the mythological story of Europa being abducted by Zeus, who has transformed himself into a bull. In Boucher's version, the scene is theatrical and sensual, Europa surrounded in soft drapery and a beautiful landscape depicting the act of abduction and sexual violence through a divine and deceptive lens.

Figgis' reinterpretation of these works unpacks how inherited cultural narratives surrounding gender, power and myth are reconsidered today. By loosening the figures and allowing them to blur into their surroundings, Figgis disrupts the aesthetic pleasure that characterises these paintings and suggests that these canonical scenes are not neutral, but rather embedded with histories of domination and representation that can be questioned and reimagined.

Michael Canning

The Presence of Mind, 2023-2025

Angel Painting, 2023 – 2025

Kataskopos, 2026

The Deeper Air, 2018 - 2023

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist

These three smaller oil paintings by Michael Canning each depict a hedgerow weed floating centrally against a natural landscape which rolls into skies marked by different times of day and night. In *The Presence of Mind*, four stems of Common Spearmint rise in symmetrical formation above a low green patchwork of fields which sit beneath a dawn sky. *Angel Painting* shows the same landscape later in the morning, with a deeper blue descending from above and three branches of Common Dock suspended in the centre. In *Kataskopos*, the scene brightens into a clear blue day, where three White Valerian plants stand upright and persistent. The title, a Greek term for a spy or observer, suggests watchfulness. Across all works, small birds are seen flying in migratory patterns in the distance.

By the use of the same background and differing times of day we notice this space is very familiar to the artist, a local landscape frequented and watched. Through this body of work Canning explores how painting can operate as a site of meditative attention and transformation. Referencing the traditions of European landscape painting by masters such as Lucas Cranach, Hans Memling and Joachim Patinir, Canning's work echoes a moody, rugged environment. By juxtaposing this tradition with the haunting foregrounding of common, often unremarkable Irish

wildflowers and weeds, he instils a sense of both mystery and familiarity, creating an invocation to notice that what surrounds us.

In *The Deeper Air* Canning has incorporated the lengthy stems of the Willowherb into the shape of the work itself. We recognize the landscape in the background from Canning's smaller paintings, yet here it lies in dusk, an elongated sky inviting in the night. Across these works the artist incorporates the weeds and plants as memory triggering devices, to elicit the moment of recognition in the viewer which notes significance and meaning.

Wildflowers and weeds are made monumental in Canning's works and are positioned with a compositional care that recalls long-held traditions of European painting. Through his use of still life conventions and classical landscape structures, the artist creates a dialogue between the overlooked and the historically celebrated. By re-examining and reworking the same Limerick landscape, the artist draws upon the transformative power of light to produce luminous, textured surfaces. In his subtle reconfiguring of attention Canning produces an image of the Irish countryside filled with a quiet complexity which deconstructs the act of seeing.

Isabel Nolan

The wolf who made a city tremble c.1216 (After Sassetta), 2023

Hand-tufted 100%, New Zealand Wool
Collection of Ikumi & John Ryan

The tapestry *The wolf who made a city tremble* shows a detailed landscape scene which composes a single story from foreground to background. In the foreground, there is a light pink, winding path that curves across the bottom of the image. Alongside the path are clusters of pale rocks with small orange flowers scattered among them. On the right side, a grey wolf sits pointing toward the middle of the scene. Slightly farther back a smaller dark wolf walks along the path.

To the left, a tall, dark tree with bare branches rises vertically, with a few thinner trees nearby. Behind these trees is a body of water with a textured surface suggesting ripples. Moving toward the middle ground, there are green hills with visible brush-like textures. Nestled among the hills is a small village composed of tightly packed buildings. Two sloping pale hills rise behind the village and atop the middle one another small, dark wolf sits. In the background, there are patchwork-like fields in shades of green and yellow, divided into rectangular sections. Beyond the fields are distant mountains and above, the sky transitions from warm colours near the horizon to deep blue at the top. A large, bright sun sits low in the sky, surrounded by orange, yellow, and pink hues. Dark, curved lines resembling birds or branches spread across the upper portion of the sky.

This painterly tapestry by Isabel Nolan is made in direct response to the 15th-century Sienese painter Sassetta and his work *The Wolf of Gubbio*. In Sassetta's original, St. Francis of Assisi is shown taming a wolf that had been terrorizing the Italian town of Gubbio. According to the hagiography (saints' tale), St. Francis intervenes through calm address: he approaches the animal peacefully, makes the sign of the cross, and greets it as "Brother Wolf."

Nolan's tapestry reconfigures this story to remove the moment of direct encounter by humans but keeps the wolf's presence. The scene is dispersed across a wide terrain where human communities and the natural, wild world sit adjacent without an obvious point of resolution.

Through this shift, Nolan translates the earlier story of spiritual authority over nature into a contemporary reflection on our shared environment lived in co-existence. The tapestry shows a world where the boundary between human and nonhuman is not resolved through domination but through an ongoing, unresolved proximity, where peace is implied as a fragile balance with the wild ever near.

Eleanor McCaughey

Beyond Beyond, 2022

Shadows hold their breath, 2022

Earthbound, 2022

Here before, 2022

Oil and gouache and glitter on Fabriano
Hand painted mural by Artist
Courtesy of the Artist and Kevin Kavanagh

This series of four small, framed paintings by Eleanor McCaughey reworks familiar Catholic iconography through abstraction and texture. *Beyond Beyond* references the pietà, with a faceless, Madonna-like figure holding the infant Jesus, rendered through swirling cross-hatched forms rather than bodily detail. *Shadows hold their breath* recalls the second station of the cross, depicting Christ carrying the cross beneath heavy, plum-coloured drapery, surrounded by fragmented figures. In *Earthbound*, a dreamlike cast of rapturous creatures and symbols occupy the scene: a grinning, green-striped figure, an overturned bird and a glowing hooded form with raised arms. The final work, *Here before*, presents a haloed figure emerging towards an orange, human-like silhouette within a dense, layered surface of folded cloth, animal-like markings and textured material. All four works are installed upon a hand painted mural by the artist which has reconfigured shapes and patterns contained within the works.

McCaughey frequently engages with Catholic iconography and in particular the visual language of

Renaissance painting as a source material and structure. Drawing from the devotional compositions of Fra Angelico, McCaughey abstracts and rebuilds familiar scenes through texture and the flattening of form. Halos, drapery, saints and symbolic figures become transformed into unstable and often playful compositions.

Created during a period of serious illness and recovery, the works emerged through a process of breaking painting down to its most basic elements and rebuilding it again. This act of reconstruction is healing and restorative, retaining the reverence and spirituality of Fra Angelico but also introducing humour and irreverence to disrupt traditional ideas of sacred representation.

Sian Costello

The Model, 2025

The Mime, 2025

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist

Sian Costello's *The Model* presents a hunched young female figure set against a bright, lime-yellow backdrop. Her knees are drawn up to her chest, while her hands stretch down to the ground to steady her pose, one extending beyond the edge of the frame. Her face remains unfinished, with only a suggestion of features, as if caught in a blurred moment of movement or mid-fall. Her long hair falls down her back, and her entire figure appears silhouetted, almost as though she herself is luminous.

In *The Mime*, the same figure stands with a slight slouch, her arms loosely crossed in front of her. Her feet sit hip-width apart, turned outward in opposite directions. She wears dark underwear and pale pink tights, with no top; her outstretched arms cover her breasts. The figure's dark, thick hair is tied low at the nape of her neck, falling past her hip. She looks out of the frame to her left with a faintly disinterested expression, her mouth slightly open. Behind her, a red sheet hangs like a studio backdrop, while an artificial light, coming from the same direction as her gaze, illuminates her right hand and lower body.

Sian Costello's paintings continually question how images are constructed through histories of figuration and hierarchies of authorship. In direct reference to the French Impressionist Edgar Degas' ballet dancers, Costello uses photography to capture their subjects

and scenes. Following the rise of photography, artists such as Degas used the medium to bridge Impressionism and realism, often drawing attention to the overlooked hardship and lived reality of their figures rather than presenting them in an idealised form. This is echoed here through asymmetrical cropping, unexpected viewpoints, and the artificial lighting associated with photographic imagery.

Similarly, Costello draws influence from the work of John Singer Sargent, particularly his society portraits of the Edwardian elite. Like Sargent, the artist employs a version of the 'sight-size' method, allowing for a direct translation of what is observed onto the canvas. This approach lends the figures a sense of immediacy as though they occupy the same space as the viewer and introduces tension between performance, observation and self-awareness.

By placing us in this behind-the-scenes moment of portraiture, the work invites us to reconsider contemporary representation through the lens of European Impressionist and portrait painting, alongside the mimicry of figuration, status, and gaze.

David Eager Maher

If Bonnard is Dead, 2021

Hotel Regina, 2021

Oil on panel, artist frame

Collection of Yvonne Pettitt

Collection of Shay and Margaret Garvey

These two paintings by David Eager Maher feature vibrant, ornate and flattened scenes. In *If Bonnard is Dead*, the figure of a woman sits with her back to us, her hair tied up. She wears a long-sleeved dress with a starry, floral pattern. The scene she is enmeshed in confuses perspective, with hot pinks and blue denoting texture and space. To the right a large green monstera plant peeks from outside the painting's edge and two rugs to the forefront are intricately detailed with shapes of pineapples. Surrounding the figure are flattened bottles in rainbow hues.

This painting directly references Pierre Bonnard, a French painter who was a leading figure in the transition from Impressionism to Modernism. Well-known for his use of intense colour, Bonnard had a fondness for representing domestic interiors that expressed the unusual aspects of everyday life. The title of this work is from a poem written by Adrian Henri which lists the names of the poet's favourite artists, philosophers and musicians, dismantling the divide between the elite and everyday arts.

In *Hotel Regina* a small, classical sculpture spliced at its pelvis is positioned in a still life alongside a flattened

vase with the protrusion of a patterned flower silhouette. Underneath is a surface of bold and simplified leaf shapes in white, lime and black on bright green. In the background, swirls of a sharp green wash over a darker brown. The frame of the work extends the leafed motif beyond the edges of the painting in green and blue. Eager Maher pays direct tribute to Henri Matisse in design and technique through his use of collage, colour and the distortion of perspective. The title of the work takes its name from the hotel in Nice where Matisse lived and created some of his most iconic pieces.

A constant in David Eager Maher's work is the inclusion of art historical references which he subverts for his own creative ends. In this way he appropriates motifs, imagery and stylistic choices to question what it means to quote and the nature of art itself.

David Eager Maher

Light of Days, 2023

Suite, 2022

Pencil and watercolour and oil on paper
Courtesy of the Artist and Jarmuschek + Partner
Collection of Michael Corrigan

David Eager Maher's *Light of Days* features a pencil drawing of a path bending past an overarching tree, descending to a distant, mountainous landscape. In the foreground is a woman in red, cropped at the shoulder. To her right is a small watercolour study of Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary*. Underneath the drawing a short text is offered to us; like the picture above it appears collaged, mysterious and dreamlike. The text names Caravaggio as a character and references the circumstances of his death on a beach, appearing as if from the thoughts of the woman pictured, stating 'A good day was a drawing day. But she kept thinking about Caravaggio's decisions.'

Eager Maher's *Suite* is part of the same series, yet here a biblical assumption scene fills the entire page,

rendered in line drawing, watercolour and oil. Much of the image remains uncoloured, with only the central figures painted in the artist's signature bright palette. Underneath is another text, equally as occluded. A man is described to us as living in a hotel, alluding to reclusion, wealth and eccentricity. An assertion that feels fitting to the work reads 'the truth is boring'.

These narratively ambiguous texts create a strange and cryptic relationship to the visual works. David Eager Maher utilises imagery of canonical art history and storytelling to combine reality and fantasy, dystopia and utopia and remind us that we perceive experience through layers of truth and fiction.

Geraldine O'Neill

Díláthair, Solastalgia, Folly, 2022

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of the Artist and Kevin Kavanagh

Díláthair, Solastalgia, Folly by O'Neill centres a young man wearing a blue t-shirt and black shorts. He holds a mop and appears to be mid-cleaning with a yellow bucket at his feet. Behind him is a sheet of yellow-gold fabric, pinned impossibly to a lush, painted landscape akin to the Flemish *Weltlandschaft* of Joachim Patinir and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. These imagined pastoral views incorporate mountains, lowlands, water, and tiny figures, often biblical or historical. To the right of the painting is a fantastical aquatic creature that directly references the hybrid monsters of Hieronymus Bosch. Other figures and actioned objects dot the scene, such as a paintbrush to the bottom left, a burning tree house in the distance and a childlike drawing of a rainbow that floats above the foreground.

This work's title, *Díláthair, Solastalgia, Folly*, speaks to non-attendance, futility and the existential distress caused by negative environmental change. By referencing the art historical works of Bosch, Bruegel and Patinir, O'Neill extends the technique of constructing imagined symbolic landscapes to articulate contemporary human ontological concerns, particularly our current time of climate catastrophe.

O'Neill portrays her own children in her fantasy worlds as disconnected protagonists within a reality that contradicts itself both playfully and menacingly. By preserving their vulnerability and innocence she highlights her family as the centre of her universe in an affirmation that she can shelter and protect them while knowing that so much is outside of her control.

Geraldine O'Neill

Flicker, Flicker, Age Of Unreason, 2025

Oil on linen

Courtesy of the Artist and Kevin Kavanagh

In *Flicker, Flicker, Age of Unreason* a young girl stands looking out at the viewer holding a vacuum cleaner in her hands. She wears a bright orange t-shirt, navy capris and red trainers. Her expression is one of disinterest or resignation. Her contemporary appearance is contrasted by the imagined panorama that surrounds her. Behind her are hanging fabrics, reminiscent of a set that appear to be attached to the flat terrain, evocative of Flemish landscapes with high horizons and outcroppings of pointed rock. The scene is strewn with various objects and figures: an animal skull, a newborn, a Peppa Pig balloon, a mallard duck. The scene creates a sense of unease, in a blending of timescales and place that is uncanny.

Artist Geraldine O'Neill responds to the escalating tension between humanity and the natural world. Her work speaks directly to the Anthropocene, our current

epoch where human presence is inscribed into the geological fabric of the earth. In her work she directly uses art historical references, borrowing figures such as Patinir's St. Jerome in this composition. In common with Patinir's painting, the presence of figures within the landscape alludes to the fact that we are all pilgrims in life. The littered materials speak to the detritus of our environment, with weeds and plants proliferating despite humanity's attempt to contain the wild.

O'Neill describes: "At the core of my work is a message that decay is inevitable, our time limited and our fragility exposed."