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Artwork.

Hidden Histories
5 C Prints, 2018
About the Artwork.

Dara McGrath’s series of 5 Hidden Histories photographic portraits capture the sitters in reflective moments. The photographs position the sitter staring off to the left, as they contemplate what they see as advances in women’s rights during their lifetime and consider the role women have played in shaping Cork city. Created as part of the Hidden Histories project at the Glucksman in 2018 to mark 100 years of women’s right to vote in Ireland, the portraits celebrate the storyteller/sitter as well as the story being told. In taking the portraits, McGrath drew inspiration from the Barrack Obama ‘Hope’ poster designed by artist Shepard Fairey, with the sitter looking ahead to further progress. In the portrait, the artist is also referencing the style of portraits that were taken in the many photographic studios that lined Cork city’s main streets in 1918.

The Hidden Histories portraits were created in collaboration with older people from Mahon Community Development Project. Through a series of workshops and interviews at the Glucksman, the artist explored the progression of women’s rights since 1918 and the role of women in shaping Cork city. The photographic portraits celebrate the storyteller as well as the story being told and were originally presented alongside a documentary film as part of the 2018 Bealtaine Festival.
About the Artwork.

When originally exhibited in civic spaces across Cork city, a quote by each of the sitters was hung adjacent to the portrait.

“It made a big difference because women could then pursue an extended education or career, and we can see the benefits of this now.” Larry Cullinane recalls how when he was married in 1963, his wife had no choice but to give up her job. Larry believes that a change from this ruling in the mid-1970s was crucial in the advancement of equal opportunities.

“We have a come a long way, since the suffrage movement. They started the ball rolling and it only rolled very slowly for a while, but it has levelled out. It’s much better for women now. It’s not perfect, but it’s getting there” Rita Kelly reflects on how far we have come in 100 years.

“In this present day and age, men do as much work around the house as women do. You can see a change there. When both are out at work, both have to look after the house when they come back.” Patricia McNamara is struck by the changing role for both men and women in society and the household.

“If we didn’t have the suffrage movement, if women didn’t do what they did, where would we be today in 2018? We wouldn’t have the vote, we would be downtrodden, we would be nobody.” Dorothy O’Sullivan was delighted to be part of the centenary celebrations recognizing and honouring the women who brought about change.

“I think it was a great thing at the time, they fought hard for equal rights and it made it a bit easier for the generations that came after.” Jerry O’Sullivan, a retired member of An Garda Síochána, was in awe of the women involved in the suffrage movement.
Dara McGrath is a photographic artist based in Cork. His work explores transitional spaces, those in-between places where the landscape and the built environment often intersect, and where a dialogue – of absence rather than presence – is created. His practice is driven by overlooked human interruptions in urban, suburban and rural contexts. Dara works primarily with the photograph but also uses documentation, archive video, interviews, objects and creates his own video.

McGrath has exhibited at the FotoHof Salzburg; Gallery of Photography, Dublin; Thessalonika Photo Biennale; FotoWeek Washington; Copenhagen Photo Festival; Centre des Beaux Arts Brussels; Singapore Photo Festival; and Yokohama City Museum; and has represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale of Architecture. He has received the Solas Award, numerous bursaries from the Arts Council of Ireland, and the AIB Prize, and has been shortlisted twice for the Lange-Taylor Prize.
“The connection of image and text within the public realm was very very important because you want [people] to engage in some way and I think it can only be positive because it gets them thinking. That’s what the essence of art and creativity is; trying to understand the meaning of something beyond its visuality as you see it in front of you.”

Dara McGrath
“I mainly use history as a means to reinterpret history.”

Dara McGrath
Artist film.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMG7n90ed7o&t=23s
Film.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKPpyGLQb4s
Pictures of Artwork.
Artwork Info.

Dara McGrath
Hidden Histories

5 C Prints, 2018
75cm x 50cm
Audio.

https://www.glucksman.org/content/files/Files_Audio/DaraMcGrath_HiddenHistories.mp3
Pedagogy.

Materials

- Journal/sketchbook
- Pencil
- Colouring pencils
- Roll of paper/or large sheet
- Markers – variety of colours
- Old magazines/newspapers
- Coloured paper
- Ruler
- Canvas board/canvas/heavy card
- Paint – variety of colours
- PVA glue
- Glue sticks

Overview

The creative exercises in this toolkit invite students to consider equal rights and to respond to historical and contemporary women’s rights movements. Through research, writing and artmaking activities, students will develop a better understanding of equality and inequality and will be encouraged to communicate their support for contemporary campaigns. The three stages of the project allow students to develop connections with the artworks, the story behind their creation and the history of women’s rights. They will draw on their own research, including interviewing family and friends, to create a better understanding of the change that has happen in Ireland over the past 50 years. They will be encouraged to look at the ways artists have communicated messages and fought for change before creating their own individual and collaborative artworks.

Links to curriculum

Links to curriculum - (Junior Cycle Post Primary)


**Politics and Society** –

**Visual Art** – Elements. 1. Critical and visual language. 2. Drawing. 3. Visual culture and appreciation. 4. The art elements and design principles
Worksheet.

Three Classroom Exercises

1. Hidden Histories. Discussion. (20mins)
   This discussion is designed to encourage students to look carefully at the portraits, to consider the artist’s intentions and the background to the artworks.
   What is the most striking feature of the Hidden Histories portraits?
   How are the sitters presented?
   What is the overall mood of the portraits?
   Consider the angle from which the photographs were taken. How does this affect the way you read the work?
   What if the sitters were staring into the camera lens? Would this change the mood of the work?

2. Women’s Rights. Research. (overnight or weekend)
   Hidden Histories was a response to the centenary of women’s right to vote in Ireland. This research exercise invites students to identify significant moments in women’s rights. What role did the suffragettes play? How did they take their fight to governments? What type of change did the introduction of the right to vote have in Ireland?
   Now look at the world today, can you find an international situation where women’s rights are under threat? Maybe you can identify a situation in Ireland where women are still treated unequally?
   Document your findings in your journal and share with the group.
Worksheet.

3. Changemakers. Creative exercise. (60mins)
Artists have long been drawn to represent and highlight issues of unfairness in society. Artists like Jeremy Deller or Barbara Kruger use large scale banners/posters to comment on issues they see in the world.
Can you come up with a slogan based on your research findings. Use pencils and colouring pencils to design one of your journal pages like an elaborate banner that includes your slogan.
Project.

Three Stages

Stage 1
This exercise looks at the differences in our lives to that of grandparents, parents etc. The Hidden Histories project reflected on these changes and the students too will reflect on changes by carrying out research with their families or neighbours.

Discussion
When the sitters in the Hidden Histories portraits were attending Secondary School it was in the 1950s and 1960s. What do we think Ireland was like then? How was it different? What are those main differences? How would school have been different? What opportunities would have been there for young people? What careers could women pursue? Did Irish society provide equal opportunities?

Research
Your task for the weekend is to ask your parents, grandparents, neighbours about what Ireland was like when they were young. Do they have any interesting stories? What significant changes have they experienced over the years?

Is Ireland a better place now? In what way? Is it a more equal society? What advances have they seen in women’s rights? Maybe you can get copies of some old photographs of from your interviewees? Add everything you collect to your journal. Students can be given the weekend to track down stories and it can be discussed on the Monday.

Creative Activity - Mapping Change
Students will create a timeline of the past 50 years, identifying the significant changes that Irish society has undergone. Draw on the stories and information that you get from family and friends and merge it with important moments in the history of Ireland. Take a large sheet of paper, and draw out your timeline. Once you’ve identified the important dates, mark them in. Use found images, drawings, text, printouts etc. to populate your page. Students should compare their timelines for common events and significant changes.
Project.

Stage 2

Discussion/written exercise
The Hidden Histories project explored equality by looking at women’s right to vote. 2018 was the centenary of women being allowed to vote in Ireland. This activity looks at ideas of equality and rights and uses simple tasks so students can understand what it is like to be treated unfairly or unequally.

You’ll need a large number of coloured items like colouring pencils/crayons/pins, or something you have in your store. These represent sweets.

You’ll also need another set of objects eg. pencils that will represent money.

The coloured objects are divided amongst the group unfairly.

Some students get one while others get 15.
Students write down their feelings about the number of items they have been given.
Students are asked how they feel about their allotted amount of items.
Do they feel this is a fair distribution?
How could we redistribute the objects so it is fairer?

Next the class is divided into two groups. One group represents adults, the other children.
Who should get the bigger share of the sweets/objects?

Finally, all the sweets are taken back. The group that represent adults are given money, the children none. Each sweet costs one penny.

How do the group feel about the divide now?
Is this fair?
How can we ensure fairness in our lives, in school?
How does it feel to be treated unfairly?
Project.

Stage 2

Research exercise – Inequality in Ireland
In 2018, Ireland celebrated the centenary of women’s right to vote in Ireland. Before this time women were not allowed to vote in elections. This is an example of inequality.
Your research task is to research examples of inequality in Ireland today. Write down your findings in your art journal and we’ll share in class.

Creative Activity - Showing Solidarity
Through your research what particular instance of inequality in Ireland stands out? Is there a common consensus amongst the group? Vote to see what campaign to end inequality, the class would like to support.
Together, the group are going to create a banner that shows solidarity to the people being treated unequally. Take a large roll of paper. Decide on a clear message and this text will occupy the main portion of your banner. Consider your font and colours. Students can then populate the remainder of the banner with drawings, short messages, symbols etc.
Display your banner in your classroom. Consider taking a photo and sending it to the group you are showing solidarity to.
Project.

Stage 3

Research.
There are many different types of portraits from Renaissance paintings like the Mona Lisa to selfies taken on our smart phones. This session is about understanding all the different types and inviting students to record portraits they find at home or online through quick drawings/sketches in their journals.

You can give students the opportunity to collect materials at home over the weekend.

Students should try to find an example of each of the following –

- **Traditional portrait** (sitter posing for camera or artist) Most common in painting

- **Environmental portrait** (person working or completing a task that best defines them i.e. chef cooking a dinner)

- **Candid portrait** (a person captured while they aren’t expecting it)

- **Glamour portrait** (used most frequently in Fashion but now common in social media, where a person is presented in a beautiful light)

- **Lifestyle portrait** (to capture where a person is coming from, it is a cross between environmental and candid)

- **Abstract portraits** (not a straight forward depiction of a person, might be a section of a person’s arm or an object that represents them or a photo of their face cut up and rearranged)
Project.

Stage 3

Writing Exercise.
The students now must decide who they want to choose to create a portrait of. Continuing the theme this should be an important female in their lives, a sister, mother, aunt, grandmother, friend, teacher or trainer. Or a famous women in contemporary society or in history. Students should write a short paragraph explaining why they chose this person.

Research and writing exercises.
Artworks often contain messages. Sometimes these are obvious, sometimes hidden. Now you know who you are creating a portrait of, what message do you want to say about them? Do you want this message to be a large part of your portrait or is it going to be hidden away.
Eg. Artists have often included objects in the background of paintings that contain certain meanings, maybe says something more about the person.
Write another short paragraph about the message your portrait will carry.

Creative Activity.
Take a canvas board, canvas or piece of strong card. Consider the portrait style you wish to adopt, the message your portrait will carry and how you plan to convey it. Use sketches or photos of your chosen person and begin to map out the portrait using pencil. Combine different mediums to create your portrait. Think about collaging found images, words or colours to your piece. Don’t glue anything down until you are happy with your composition. Pick a medium (paint, pastel, charcoal, pencil) you are most comfortable with, consider the colours you use. Arrange a display of your portraits in school as a way of sharing all you have learned about equality and women’s rights.
Discover more.

Dara McGrath –
https://daramcgrath.com/

100 Years of Change –
https://www.glucksman.org/events/100yearsofchange-womensrights

Dr Finola Doyle O’Neill -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Th3LFw64uMc

Amnesty International

Irish Council of Civil Liberties
https://www.iccl.ie/equality/womens-rights/

National Women’s Council
https://www.nwci.ie/
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