

# SMASHING TIMES NEWSLETTER

[www.smashingtimes.ie](http://www.smashingtimes.ie)

A vibrant collage of diverse individuals, likely actors or models, posed in various expressive ways. The background is a soft, textured wash of red and pink. The people are dressed in a variety of styles, including traditional headscarves, modern casual wear, and theatrical costumes like a white wig and a red turtleneck. Some are looking directly at the camera, while others are in profile or looking away. The overall mood is dynamic and artistic.

## Connecting citizens to the arts, human rights, climate justice, and gender equality

A chairde,

Welcome to the **August 2025** edition of the Smashing Times Newsletter. **Arts and the Environment: Part II** is our theme this month.

In my introduction to our June newsletter, Arts and the Environment: Part I, I touched upon how climate change happens and why the United Nations think it's not too late to save the planet, in addition to the role artists can play in addressing the massive existential threat the climate crisis poses. In this introduction, I will dig a little deeper into this existential threat.

'If we continue on our current path,' David Attenborough told the United Nations Security Council in 2021, 'we will face the collapse of everything that gives us our security: food production, access to fresh water, habitable ambient temperature, and ocean food chains. . . If the natural world can no longer support the most basic of our needs, then much of the rest of civilisation will quickly break down.'

The climate crisis is regarded as the biggest threat to humankind since the close shave with nuclear war during the Cold War, or the ravages of World War II and the Holocaust, which left 70–85 million dead (about 3% of the world's population). Neither involved the collapse of human civilisation in its entirety, however (which has never before occurred in history), something that could very well occur as a result of the climate crisis. Some even speculate that civilisational collapse would be followed soon after by human extinction.

# RÉAMHRÁ ÓN EAGARTHÓIR

## INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITOR



Féilim James,  
Smashing Times  
Newsletter and  
Tintreach Editor



Carmen Ortiz  
Victorino, Smashing  
Times Assistant  
Newsletter Editor



How would the climate crisis precipitate the collapse of civilisation, and what would this collapse look like? A number of direct and indirect consequences of the climate crisis are key here. Direct consequences include resource scarcity – due to droughts, desertification, and rising sea levels – and extreme weather events such as floods, heat waves, and storms, which would disrupt supply chains, damage infrastructure, and displace populations. These direct consequences, combined with overpopulation and indirect climate-crisis consequences like famine, economic instability, mass migration and displacement, and increased conflict, could initiate a rapid succession of institutional failures, leading to a breakdown of complex societal structures.

When states fail, law and order disintegrates. We would find ourselves in an anarchic, everyone-for-themselves scenario, in which our most primitive, animal tendencies come to the fore, and we are forced to fight for every meal – all of this in a world of excessive heat, where many cities and island nations are submerged, and winter means floods and summer debilitating heat. Mass fatalities would ensue, from extreme weather, starvation, disease, and widespread violence. Only the strongest, most well-armed, and most ruthless individuals or groups would survive. Over time, 'everyone for themselves' would give way to 'every tribe for themselves', as association with capable others would become essential, and only the most well-stocked doomsday prepper could go it alone – and even then, not indefinitely. In short, it would be an apocalyptic nightmare.

While the potential for civilisational collapse is alarming, history also shows that humans are capable of extraordinary cooperation in times of crisis. Communities often come together to share resources, protect the vulnerable, and rebuild what is damaged. Neighbours support one another during floods, wildfires, and storms; grassroots networks provide food, shelter, and medical aid when official systems fail; and local and global collaborations emerge to solve urgent problems. In the face of scarcity or disaster, empathy, solidarity, and collective action can thrive, creating bonds that not only sustain life but also foster resilience and innovation. Even amidst chaos, people have repeatedly demonstrated the capacity to act for the common good, proving that collaboration can be a powerful antidote to catastrophe.

Climate action involves working together to save the planet, for the sake of humanity, our children and grandchildren, and life forms. In this edition of the Smashing Times Newsletter, we explore reasons for hope and avenues through which we can avert the climate crisis. In **10 We Admire** specifically, we profile artists who engage with the climate crisis in constructive and compelling ways. Also included below are **Quotes, Spotsolas: Smashing Times News, Opinion, News From the Network, and Grants and Opportunities.**

*Féilim James, Smashing Times Newsletter and Tintreach Editor*

*Mary Moynihan, Smashing Times Artistic Director*



# Sleachta

## QUOTES



Photo credit: Zdeněk Macháček

‘The poetry of the earth is never dead.’

John Keats (1795–1821)



Photo credit: Alex Moliski

‘Nature shrinks as capital grows. The growth of the market cannot solve the very crisis it creates.’

Vandana Shiva (Born 1952)



Photo credit: Fabio Menduni

‘Nature is a haunted house – but Art – is a house that tries to be haunted.’

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

**Má tá an nuachtlitir seo á léamh agat tríd an nasc inroinnte, agus más mian leat síntiús (saor in aisce) a ghlacadh lena fháil, agus na heagráin atá le teacht de Tintreach: The Smashing Times Arts and Literary Journal, díreach chuig do bhosca isteach, cliceáil anseo le do thoil.**

**If you are reading this newsletter via the shareable link, and would like to subscribe to receive it, and the upcoming editions of Tintreach: The Smashing Times Arts and Literary Journal, direct to your inbox, please click here.**

# SPOTSOLAS: SMASHING TIMES NEWS

Every month, in addition to bringing you the latest updates from Smashing Times, we also highlight a specific element of our work. This month, we're focusing on our eco-art environmental programme for this year's Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival.

**Irish Arts and  
Human Rights  
FESTIVAL**

## **Eco-Art Environmental Programme for This Year's Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival**

Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality, Front Line Defenders, and a range of partners present the seventh, annual, international Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival from 10–19 October 2025. The festival features exciting and innovative events that promote equality, human rights, and diversity throughout Ireland, Northern Ireland, and internationally. Below is some information on the eco-art environmental programme for this year's festival.

### **The Art of Trees by Mary Moynihan**

*Live multidisciplinary performance outdoors at Pearse Museum and St Enda's Park, Rathfarnham and indoors at the Smashing Times International Arts and Human Rights Centre, Sandycove*

*The Art of Trees* is written by Mary Moynihan, a writer, poet, and creator of art and photography. The play enjoyed a successful run at The Pearse Museum, St Enda's Park, in October 2024, as part of the annual Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival. Its powerful message was subsequently brought to audiences across Europe as part of an international tour to Athens, Greece on 18–22 June, and Frankfurt, Germany on 30 July–3 August. It will also be performed in Seville, Spain, on 8–12 October 2025. Now, it returns to the 2025 festival due to popular demand.

*The Art of Trees* by Mary Moynihan is an immersive performance, blending theatre, poetry, and movement to celebrate the beauty of trees and forests, the importance of biodiversity, and our connections to nature. It beautifully intertwines performance art with environmental themes and Celtic traditions. *The Art of Trees* invites us to walk in nature; to leave behind a world filled with straight lines, computer screens, concrete blocks, and clock time; to explore why tree cover in Ireland has fallen so low; and to reflect on the role trees play in our ecosystem. Audiences are invited to join us as we walk through history and nature, and rediscover the magic of woodlands.

**Artists:** Mary Moynihan, writer; Carmen Ortiz Victorino, actor and director; Fiona Bawn Thompson, actor; Carla Ryan, actor; Freda Manweiler, producer; Ciara Hayes, producer

**Outdoor Venue:** The Pearse Museum, St Enda's Park, Grange Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16, D16 Y7Y5. Outdoor show suitable for all ages. Meeting point outside the entrance to Pearse Museum reception. Please note, if the weather stops outdoor performances, the full show relocates indoors to The Pearse Museum.

**Outdoor Performance Times:** Wednesday, 15 October 2025, 10am and 12pm; Thursday, 16 October 2025, 10am and 12pm; Friday, 17 October 2025, 10am and 12pm; Saturday, 18 October 1pm

**Outdoor Performance Bookings:** Tickets on sale on Friday, 29 August.

**Price:** €15/10

**Indoor Venue:** Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Centre, 30 Sandycove Road, Dublin, A96V9P1

**Indoor Performance Times:** Saturday, 18 October 2025, 7.30pm; Sunday, 19 October 2025, 1pm

**Indoor Performance Bookings:** Tickets on sale on Friday, 29 August.

**Price:** €15/10





## **From the Forest to the Ocean**

*Multidisciplinary exhibition with artists Mary Moynihan and Hina Khan at Rathfarnham Castle Gallery*

Following their successful exhibition in 2024, artists Mary Moynihan and Hina Khan are delighted to return to Rathfarnham Castle Gallery for a new multidisciplinary exhibition titled *From the Forest to the Ocean*. This is a stunning collection of visual art, photography, poetry and film inspired by physical landscapes and the interconnectedness of life from forests to the ocean. The exhibition is inspired by reflections on nature and journeys of interconnectedness and the art of 'letting go', linking physical landscapes of nature from the forests to the ocean to landscapes of the soul.

**Artists:** Mary Moynihan, writer, poet, creator of art and photography; Hina Khan, visual artist

**Venue:** Rathfarnham Castle Gallery, Rathfarnham, Dublin, D14K3T6

**Dates and Times:** Tuesday, 16 September to Sunday, 2 November 2025, Wednesday to Sunday, 10.30am–5pm

**Public Launch and Artist Talk:** Thursday, 18 September 2025, 6–8pm

**Bookings:** Admission free. No booking required



## **Smashing Times Creative Arts Eco-Conference at Rathfarnham Castle Ballroom**

*Exploring connections between the arts, nature, biodiversity, ocean literacy, and climate justice: Where Art Meets Action*

This unique eco-arts conference delves into the powerful role of creativity in shaping a more sustainable world. Through artistic expression, we reflect on synergies and intersections between the art, environmental justice, nature, social change, and ways to influence policy-makers. The gathering explores ways to harness the power of arts and culture to address climate change, biodiversity, and marine loss, and to protect the natural world and make real change for the planet we live on.

**Venue:** Rathfarnham Castle Ballroom, Dublin, D14 K3T6

**Dates and Times:** Tuesday, 14 October 2025, 10am–4pm

**Bookings:** Tickets on sale on Friday, 29 August. Admission free

# SPOTSOLAS: SMASHING TIMES NEWS



*Image: Seascape 1 by Mary Moynihan*

## **Launch of Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Centre at Sandycove, Dublin, with Multidisciplinary Exhibition *Landscapes of the Soul***

Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality are delighted to announce that we are opening a new, intimate, multifunctional arts space at 30 Sandycove Road, Dublin, A96V9P1. The Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Centre is a dual-purpose space serving as both a visual art gallery and a venue for live events. The centre is dedicated to professional arts practice and community engagement inspired by the arts for equality human rights, diversity, democracy, and peace. It fosters a connected atmosphere, encouraging engagement between artists and audiences. The centre's hybrid nature makes it ideal for artists working across disciplines and for organisations seeking to integrate different artforms under one roof. This adaptable set-up supports a wide range of practices, from visual and installation art to live performance, spoken word, professional art workshops, and comm-

unity workshops. We are delighted to launch the space with the opening of an exhibition, *Landscapes of the Soul: Part One* by artist Mary Moynihan. The exhibition runs from Friday, 5 September to Sunday, 28 September 2025, Wednesday to Sunday 2–6pm daily. The opening reception with launch and artist talk takes place on Friday, 5 September 2025, 7–9pm.

### **Exhibition**

*Landscapes of the Soul: Part One* is a multidisciplinary exhibition by artist Mary Moynihan, featuring visual art, photography, poetry, and film. The exhibition maps physical landscapes of nature to landscapes of the soul, reflecting on ways to have the courage to be who we truly are and to let ourselves shine. A homage to the human spirit, *Landscapes of the Soul: Part One* is a journey of exploration inspired by an engagement with landscapes and seascapes. It is a gentle provocation to all of us to reimagine the landscapes of our natural environment, the vast lands and oceans we call our home, linked to the landscapes of our internal wellbeing. This unique exhibition premiered in 2024 at Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin to great acclaim and is now on show at the Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality at 30 Sandycove Road to mark the opening of the new space.



# SPOTSOLAS: SMASHING TIMES NEWS

## *Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Radio Show*

**Smashing Times Arts and Human  
Rights Radio Show, 23 and 30 July  
2025**

The Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Radio Show broadcast on Wednesday, 23 July (repeated on Wednesday, 30 July 2025 and available as a podcast), features lively chat by co-hosts Mary Moynihan and Freda Manweiler on arts, culture, sport, and equality. Highlights of the show include a presentation on the excellent Irish podcast series *Stolen Sister*, which delves into the 1976 disappearance and subsequent murder of Elizabeth Plunkett. Our featured interview is with Ciara Hayes, a producer with Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality and a producer for the annual international Irish Arts and Human Rights festival. This year's festival runs from the 10–19 October 2025. The Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Radio Show is broadcast every Wednesday 6–7pm with Dublin South FM, with each episode also available as a podcast. **[Listen back to this episode here.](#)** Tune in to Dublin South FM 93.9 or listen online at **[www.dublinsouthfm.ie](http://www.dublinsouthfm.ie)**. **[All past episodes can be listened to here.](#)**

## *Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Radio Show*

**Smashing Times Arts and Human  
Rights Radio Show, 6 and 13 August  
2025**

The Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Radio show broadcast on Wednesday, 6 August 2025 (repeated on Wednesday, 13 August 2025 and available as a podcast), features lively chat by host Freda Manweiler on arts, culture, and equality, including a tribute to the late, great broadcaster and actor Seán Rocks. We discuss the harsh tactics used by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in the USA in relation to how they target individuals. We also highlight our June and August newsletters, both of which are themed 'Arts and the Environment', with Ciara Hayes discussing some of our 10 We Admire selection this month. Our featured interview is with Aoife McAtamney, a musician, singer-songwriter, and interdisciplinary artist based in Dublin. Aoife chats about her journey from her work as an actor in Paula Kehoe's TV documentary *An Diabhal Inti (The Devil's in Her)* alongside Olwen Fouéré for BBC NI and TG4, and her upcoming performances in The Lexicon Library. **[Listen back to this episode here.](#)**

# SPOTSOLAS: SMASHING TIMES NEWS



## Edition Three of Tintreach: The Smashing Times Arts and Literary Journal

The third edition of *Tintreach: The Smashing Times Arts and Literary Journal* was published on Thursday, 24 July 2025. Appearing quarterly online, *Tintreach* features work from across the artistic spectrum, and includes multiple artworks by each of the published artists. The third edition showcases the works of Featured Artist **Shreya Gupta**, in addition to **Jessica Rodrigues**, **Rowan Tate**, and **Noah Sex**. The theme is **Voices of Peace**. The four successful artists will be **Voices of Peace Artists** at **Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival 2025**, which takes place from 10–19 October 2025 across Dublin, the rest of Ireland, and internationally, and is run by Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality, Front Line Defenders, and a range of partners. Artists will have some of their work featured in the 10-day festival and will be interviewed about their work on the Smashing Times Arts and Human Rights Radio Show on Dublin South FM.

The introduction to the third edition of *Tintreach* by editor Féilim James lists a number of actions the Irish government could take to put pressure on Israel to stop the genocide in Gaza, before giving his thoughts on the role of artists in responding to atrocities.

# SPOTSOLAS: SMASHING TIMES NEWS



***Tintreach III Cover Artwork:*** *Detail from Where Scars*  
*Sing by Jessica Rodrigues*

Following this are three poems by Featured Artist Shreya Gupta, which address the intersection of war, economic hardship, religious and ethnic conflict, and the struggle for peace. Shreya also gives an in-depth Featured Artist Interview where she outlines her creative process with regard to the three poems, her influences, what peace means to her, and more.

This is followed by two colourful and striking paintings by Jessica Rodrigues, which frame peace not just as an absence of conflict, but as resilience transformed.

After this, two poems by Rowan Tate explore how political violence is processed by those who bear its brunt. Finally, two paintings by Noah Sex grapple with the psychology of war and the compassion it prevents us from accessing until it is too late. [\*\*Click here to read this edition of Tintreach.\*\*](#)

[\*\*Click here to read all previous editions of Tintreach. Click here to receive Tintreach and the Smashing Times Newsletter for free.\*\*](#)



# SPOTSOLAS: SMASHING TIMES NEWS



## **The Art of Trees: European Tour**

Smashing Times were delighted to bring *The Art of Trees* by Mary Moynihan to the Fallen Trees festival in Veikou Park, Athens, Greece from 18–22 June 2025, and the Sommerwerft Festival at Weseler Werft, Frankfurt, Germany from 30 July–3 August 2025. *The Art of Trees* is an immersive performance blending theatre, poetry, movement, and live music to celebrate the beauty of trees and forests, the importance of biodiversity, and our connections to nature. The performances were part of a tour for the TREES project, led by DAH Theatre, Serbia, and funded by Creative Europe.

Performers at the shows included Carmen Ortiz Victorino, Fiona Bawn-Thompson, Carla Ryan, Martin Shannon, Hina Khan, and Ciara Hayes. Both performances had a full house, while the audience reception was fantastic. From 8–12 October, it will be performed in Seville, Spain, before returning to Dublin in October 2025 for the annual, international Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival.

*Image: (L–R) Carmen Ortiz Victorino, Fiona Bawn-Thompson, and Carla Ryan performing The Art of Trees in Weseler Werft, Frankfurt*

# Deichniúr Thar Barr

## 10 WE ADMIRE



### Lisa Fingleton

Lisa Fingleton (born 1971) is an Irish artist, film-maker, writer, and farmer who has spent decades making connections between art, food, and farming. Her projects are socially engaged, collaborative, and performative, with all kinds of creative processes involved. She currently runs a project called The Barna Way, which engages with diverse communities through social farming and cultural events while protecting wildlife habitats. Her project titled *What If We Were Brilliant?*, run in collaboration

In this month's 10 We Admire, we focus on 10 artists – some of whom are not yet well-known – from a wide range of countries, including Scotland, Germany, Palestine, Ireland, and more. Through film, music, visual art, comedy, and more, their art addresses – in unique and innovative ways – the existential reality of a world that may be dying. From trash fashion to floating flood models, these are creators who show us that another world is possible, one in which humanity comes together to survive and prosper.

with Brilliant Ballybunion, will be shown at this year's flagship festival at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Earth Rising 2025, which is focused on sparking climate conversations and inspiring action through art and culture. *What If We Were Brilliant?* explores how communities facing biodiversity loss and climate change can thrive. This exhibition includes an immersive drawing installation, a participatory workshop on 'The Future We Want to Be', and a conversation panel featuring ecologist Dr Joanne O'Brien.



### **Tiffany Chung**

Tiffany Chung (born 1969) is a Vietnamese American contemporary artist who works in thematic cartography and multimedia installations. She has created many works addressing climate change and social justice. Recently, her large-scale installation titled *Stored In a Jar: Monsoon, Drowning Fish, Color of Water, and the Floating World* (2010–2011) was featured in an exhibition in Los Angeles, California. This exhibition, titled *Breath(e): Toward Social and Climate Justice*, connects environmental and social issues through contemporary art by depicting natural disasters. Chung's installation represents the dangerous reality of rising sea levels through miniature models of communities in Asia suspended in the air. Her work not only emphasises the dangers of climate change, but also proposes modern solutions to help work towards a better future.



### **Madame Gandhi**

Kiran Gandhi (born 1989), stage name Madame Gandhi, is an American musician and activist. Most of her art and activism focuses on female empowerment. Her most recent album *Let Me Be Water* showcases not only her musical talent, but also sends a message about the state of the environment. She went on expeditions to record different water sounds from Antarctica, the Arctic, and Columbia for the track. Her efforts to record these natural sounds promote bigger conversations around glacier conservation and the immediate effects of climate change. The sounds she recorded are accessible to other artists where streaming royalties from certain tracks will be donated to conservation efforts.





**Björk**

Björk Guðmundsdóttir (born 1965), known mononymously as Björk, is an Icelandic musician and actress. As one of the most influential pioneers in electronic and experimental music, she has sold over 40 million records worldwide. She uses her prominent platform as a singer to fight for her many chosen causes, the most recent being against commercial salmon farms in Iceland. To spread awareness, she donated proceeds from her song 'Oral' to ongoing lawsuits against commercial fishing companies. She works closely with environmental groups in her native Iceland on a wide range of issues, but her activism extends to the global level too. In the past, she's incorporated the sounds of endangered animals into her songs, expressing her creativity while intimately engaging with causes she's passionate about. She inspires her fans to focus on small environmental solutions that are achievable.



**Evelyn Sorohan**

Evelyn Sorohan (born 1975) is an Irish visual and environmental artist who focuses on the climate crisis. Blending art, science, and social engagement, she works across photography, painting, installation, and participatory art to provoke reflection and inspire action. She uses studio art and active engagement to spread environmental awareness, and is a lecturer and workshop leader for the Clare and Limerick Education Centres. She combines creative expression with action to address one of the planet's biggest threats. Sorohan has completed many solo and group exhibitions, the most recent being *Change of Climate*, which used recycled materials to address ecological damage. Sorohan collaborates with organisations such as Creative Schools and the Department of Education to empower others and promote community engagement with environmental issues.



### **Marina DeBris**

Marina DeBris is the alias used by an Australian-based artist who creates art and fashion pieces from beach trash to spread awareness about ocean pollution. Her art advocates for sustainable lifestyles and visualises the sheer amount of waste discarded in a single day. She is also an activist for animals, particularly marine life, and uses her art to spread awareness on the harm caused to them from human-made waste. Her work prompts viewers to question their contribution to pollution and encourages them to reuse and recycle as much as they can. Her art has been in exhibitions around the world and has won many awards, such as the Waverley Council Mayor's Prize. She uses dramatised fashion and humour to engage viewers, ultimately using creativity and art to improve the environment.



### **Sliman Mansour**

Sliman Mansour (born 1947) is a Palestinian painter, sculptor, author, and cartoonist, regarded as a leading figure among contemporary Palestinian artists. His paintings have been exhibited around the world, reflecting the Palestinian struggle and depicting women in traditional Palestinian clothing and Levantine tree-filled landscapes. Mansour draws inspiration from the subject of the olive tree and has focused on the theme of 'land' since 1970. His more recent work revolves around the individual figure in an attempt to convey the 'different states of exhausting anticipation or loss' which arise from the experience of living under occupation. While often highlighting the beauty of the land, Mansour's work also subtly addresses the impact of conflict and occupation on the environment. He uses his art to highlight the environmental violations that have occurred and the denial of Palestinians' access to their natural resources.





**Matt Winning**

Matt Winning (born 1985) is a Scottish comedian, author, and environmental activist who incorporates climate change discussions into his comedy. He has a podcast called *Operation Earth* and an environmental comedy book called *Hot Mess*. His use of comedy in his book makes the current environmental situation more understandable so they may learn. In the book, he calls out policy-makers to take action and hopes to encourage readers to advocate as well. His writing educates readers on the dangers of climate change and on steps towards a solution, while keeping the mood light and fun. Winning uses many forms of media, such as books, TV, and radio, to expand his reach and spread awareness as far as the internet can take it.



**Astrid Adler**

Astrid Adler is a German artist, actress, and musician. She has a passion for nature and syntropic agriculture which she connects with her art, using nature to explore how humans engage with their environment and finding creative ways to celebrate this relationship. Her work often explores the spiritual side of nature. Adler has had many solo and group exhibitions around The Netherlands, Ireland, and Germany. She has worked on various projects for the Embrace Arts and Disability Programme, helping people with disabilities through the arts. On her website, she posts different plants she's grown to educate others about syntropic agriculture and forestry. She works at different agroforestry companies in Ireland and shares her experiences online.





## **Síomha Brock**

Síomha Brock is an Irish musician who focuses on revitalising the Irish language, which she incorporates into her music. She uses her platform for activism as well, recycling for her merchandise and fundraising for various charities. Her home in the West of Ireland is a huge inspiration for her work, while she frequently engages with local communities. She was one of seven artists in the Dinnseanchas project, which explores Ireland's upland communities through the arts. The project is supported by Creative Ireland's Creative Climate Action Fund and celebrates Irish culture through different forms.

Dinnseanchas emphasises the importance and beauty of Irish landscapes while educating on the depopulation and ecological destruction of these areas. Brock's collaboration on this project, with her creativity and musical talent, is a perfect example of how art can be rooted in the environment, and used to save it.

# Why Are There So Few Forests Left in Ireland?

By Mary Moynihan



*Image: Detail from Flower by Mary Moynihan*

*A reflection on the importance of trees, why there are so few forests left in Ireland, and what can we do to protect trees and nature into the future*

In 2024, I wrote a new script called *The Art of Trees*. The script had its world premiere in the beautiful St Enda's park, Rathfarnham for the annual, international Arts and Human Rights festival. The show is an immersive performance blending theatre, poetry, movement, and live music to celebrate the beauty of trees and forests, the importance of biodiversity, and our deep connections to nature.

As part of my research, I discovered the importance of trees, together with answers to the question: why are there so few forests left in Ireland? The reasons are a mix of natural causes and human activity, but human hands have played a key role in the destruction of our forests since the last ice age.

Forests have been gradually cut down because of people, first with stone axes and bare hands, then machines. People wanted open spaces to live in, fields to grow crops in such as oats, barley, and wheat, and places to raise cattle and sheep. Trees played a key role in people's survival. They ate fruits, hazelnuts, and acorns from the forest, and used leaves and bark for medicinal purposes. Wood was used for fuel, to cook with, to make weapons, and to build houses and shelter. Ash and oak were used to make boats, hazel for firewood, and yew to make the handles of daggers and knives.

Vikings who settled in Ireland from 800 AD established several fortified bases along the Irish coast, and many of these grew into towns, including the city of Dublin. Vikings cut down forests to make ships. A Viking ship 30 metres long, and capable of carrying up to 70 warriors, was excavated in Denmark in 1962.

Danish researchers discovered the ship had been made in Ireland and was built of oak in the vicinity of Dublin around 1042, possibly in Wicklow. The ship, called the *Skuldelev 2*, was long and narrow, with graceful curving sides. It could travel at great speeds. Described as a war machine, it is one of the longest Viking ships ever found. It is now on display in the Viking ship museum in Roskilde. A reconstruction of the ship is known as *The Sea Stallion from Glendalough*.

Forests played a key role in people's survival, but human greed went too far. The colonisation of Ireland, from the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland (1649–1653) to the early twentieth century, contributed to the destruction of our forests. Large areas of land were cleared and given to English settlers. Many of them became wealthy through deforestation, as tree felling and land clearing became a profit-making industry. Timber-processing factories, ironworks, and ship-building sites were set up as wood was cut down, extracted, and shipped abroad for financial gain. The burning of wood was used to make charcoal for iron smelting, wood was used to build houses and ships, and bark was used to tan leather.

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1. <https://www.vikingskibsmuseet.dk/en/visit-the-museum/exhibitions/the-five-viking-ships/skuldelev-2>



Irish rebels often fought and hid in forests, which were cut down by the invaders in an attempt to 'civilise' the land and its people.

This destruction of forests happened right across Ireland until many of our native woodlands were lost. By the time the Irish Free State was established in 1922, forest cover in Ireland had fallen to about 1.2 per cent. From the 1900s on, Ireland started to plant trees again. Today, forests cover almost 11 percent of the Irish landscape. This is an improvement on one per cent, but it is still very low compared to other countries in Europe. Ireland has put in place ambitious planting and conservation programmes, but more needs to be done to protect our natural habitats and wildlife.

Forests are under threat. Problems include tree felling, resource extraction, clear-cutting, overgrazing by goats and deer, and the invasion of non-native plants. In Ireland, the practice of clear-cutting, the clearing of land to plant fast-growing imported trees for profit, is destroying forests.

There are solutions. As citizens, we can make changes to care for the planet that supports us; to reduce, reuse, and recycle. There are numerous stories of local people taking action against climate change.

People can get involved in campaigns to drastically reduce tree felling and resource extraction, and lobby politicians to protect wild nature and give it space, to set aside half of the land and seas in Ireland and around the world for nature.

Trees are a vital part of our survival. Without them we are at risk. We need trees to give us air; trees provide 50 per cent of the oxygen we breathe, while the other 50 per cent comes from the ocean. More trees can make the world carbon-neutral. Trees support our water systems, protect our soil, and regulate world temperatures. They provide shade for billions of people, homes for birds and animals, and calm spaces to walk in. Trees are beautiful.

*Mary Moynihan (she/her) is an award-winning author of novels, poetry, films, and plays, and a creator of art and photography. She is Artistic Director of Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality and Artistic Curator for the annual, international Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival.*

# The Rights of Nature

By Mary Moynihan



*Image: Detail from Breath by Mary Moynihan*

*'Modern life can be too fast and hectic. Take time to slow down and breathe, to appreciate the beauty of the natural world around us, to be present in ourselves and in nature. Take time to see, listen to, and feel what may be invisible.'*

*– Mary Moynihan*

Nature is beautiful and powerful. It plays an integral role in the survival of humans. However, nature does not belong to us – nor does it exist simply to serve us. There has to be mutual respect; we have to find ways to live in harmony with nature and protect it. We exist because of the co-existence and mutual dependency of trees and oceans, via the photosynthesis that takes place to provide us with oxygen.

We are one of millions of species that co-exist within nature, all playing their part in the ecological system upon which our survival depends. We need to learn from nature, not destroy it.

‘Ecological compassion’ is important. Our world today needs less focus on profit and greed, and more focus on compassion for each other and for nature. The destruction of planet earth is symptomatic of the lack of care and compassion that exists in the world today. We are living in difficult times, in which we damage each other and the planet itself. We need a change in our world-view. Together we can find a way to protect the beauty of nature and work in harmony with the planet we live on.

We are embedded within a diverse web of life. We share the planet we live on with a multitude of creatures and eco-systems; our very survival depends on this ‘sharing’.

I support the idea of ‘The Rights of Nature’. The rights of nature movement is a call to give nature its own rights. This would mean we embed the rights of nature for example in the Irish constitution, formally recognising ecosystems (bogs, rivers, forests, wildlife, mountains) as entities with inherent rights. Such an action would be transformative, as it would strengthen environmental protections by enabling

citizens and NGOs to challenge state decisions with implications on biodiversity through the Irish courts. This perspective challenges traditional views of nature as mere property, promoting a harmonious relationship between humans and the earth. By legally acknowledging nature’s rights, we aim to protect and preserve the planet for future generations.



# How to Protect Biodiversity



*Photo credit: NEOM*

Biodiversity refers to the vast variety of living organisms on Earth and the interconnectedness between them. It represents the intricate web of life, illustrating how all species work in harmony to sustain life and maintain ecological balance on the planet. This includes not only the diversity of life forms, but also their genetic differences and the relationships they share. Biodiversity is often called the 'web of life' because it reveals how species are interdependent in supporting Earth's ecosystems. As human beings, we are deeply and inherently connected to nature. However, biodiversity is declining at such a rapid pace that it is being described as a pathway toward a sixth mass extinction event.

The loss of biodiversity is driven by both natural and human-made factors. Natural causes include extreme weather events and volcanic eruptions. However, much of the damage is a result of human activities: climate change, for example, is caused by human actions. These include pollution in both land and marine environments; deforestation for mining and industrial expansion; the draining of wetlands and mangrove forests; the spread of invasive species, agriculture, and intensive farming practices; and unsustainable methods of food production, including meat and dairy industries that require vast tracts of land. Other threats include ocean acidification, coral bleaching, and other environmental changes leading to habitat destruction and species extinction. Although Earth may host up to a trillion species, humans represent just 0.01 per cent of the planet's life – yet our actions are responsible for the loss of millions of plant and animal species each year.

According to the **World Wildlife Fund's Living Planet Report 2022**, global wildlife populations have declined by 69% since 1970 due to factors such as land-use change, over-exploitation, habitat fragmentation, pollution, and invasive species. Additionally, 75% of terrestrial land has been significantly altered, 66% of ocean areas have been negatively impacted, and 85% of wetlands have been lost.

## **Solutions to Biodiversity Loss:**

### **1. Awareness-Raising and Education**

Raising awareness and educating people about biodiversity and the urgent need for action is essential, both at the individual and policy-making levels. Individual actions can include making intentional and sustainable lifestyle choices – such as bringing reusable bags when shopping, using biodegradable straws, minimising plastic use, choosing sustainable fashion, and participating in rewilding projects where possible. Education can empower individuals and communities to support biodiversity through daily decisions and informed advocacy.

### **2. Biodiversity Conservation**

It is crucial to protect biodiversity that is under threat of extinction by implementing effective conservation strategies. Habitat protection plays a key role in conservation efforts – this involves identifying and addressing threats to habitats, minimising disruption to wildlife, adapting agricultural activities, conserving wetlands by reducing irrigation, and managing livestock grazing to maintain healthy range conditions and preserve ungrazed zones. On a domestic level, individuals should take responsibility for the wildlife within their control.

Maintaining gardens by managing and reducing invasive weed growth can greatly benefit local biodiversity. Other actions include minimising disturbances to wildlife and monitoring how household pets interact with wild animals to avoid harm.

### **3. Pressure on Business and Government**

Individuals and communities can focus on ensuring local businesses operate in eco-friendly ways, using sustainable supply chains and transport systems, and directing investments toward biodiversity protection. Governments need to be urged to draft, implement, and enforce laws that safeguard biodiversity. Policymakers should also foster collaboration with international organisations to advocate for global biodiversity initiatives. Because unsustainable food systems contribute heavily to biodiversity loss, governments can support sustainable practices by regulating industries – for instance, through certified sustainable fishing practices. Additionally, protecting natural reserves and biodiversity hotspots through legislation and offering incentives and subsidies to farmers can encourage sustainable land use. Businesses and governments can also invest in innovation and research, such as deploying restoration drones to address habitat fragmentation and deforestation.

### **4. Substitute Products**

A major issue lies in the mass production of cheap clothing, widespread use of palm oil, single-use plastic products like straws and bags, and high meat consumption. These should be replaced with sustainable and environmentally-friendly alternatives – for example, switching to lab-grown meat, reducing meat intake, and using microalgae as a substitute for palm oil.

### **5. Support Rewilding**

Rewilding is a conservation approach aimed at restoring and protecting natural processes and wilderness areas, often by reintroducing native species and allowing ecosystems to regenerate with minimal human intervention. It is a form of ecological restoration aimed at increasing biodiversity and restoring natural habitats. While human intervention may be needed, its aim is to reduce human influence on ecosystems or to replace human interventions with natural processes. The aim is to create resilient, self-regulating, and self-sustaining ecosystems.



## **6. Vertical Ocean Farming**

Marine life is severely affected by pollution, climate change, and overfishing – particularly when fish are harvested faster than populations can regenerate, or when destructive techniques such as bottom trawling damage the ocean floor. A promising solution is restorative vertical ocean farming. This approach mimics natural ocean ecosystems by creating ‘underwater gardens’ that grow kelp, mussels, scallops, and oysters. These systems require no fresh water, feed, or fertilisers, and they avoid harmful seabed trawling, offering a sustainable method for cultivating ocean-based food sources.

## **7. Linking Forests to Oceans**

We cannot address biodiversity and climate in isolation. Forests, oceans, and industry form one living system. Protecting biodiversity requires rethinking industrial practices to restore balance across all ecosystems – from treetops to ocean depths. Trees absorb carbon dioxide that would otherwise accelerate ocean acidification, while oceans regulate climate patterns essential for forest health. These systems are being disrupted by industrial practices that disregard environmental responsibility.

Industrialisation has historically driven both deforestation and ocean degradation through resource extraction (timber, fossil fuels, minerals), pollution (air, soil, water), and land-use changes like urbanisation and intensive agriculture. Industrial runoff – containing plastics and toxic chemicals – flows into rivers and seas, damaging marine ecosystems. Meanwhile, emissions from production and transport alter global temperatures and weather, affecting ecosystems worldwide.

Forests – especially tropical rainforests – are biodiversity hotspots and vital carbon sinks. They stabilise soil, influence rainfall, and provide habitat for countless species. Deforestation reduces biodiversity and weakens these functions. Oceans, too, are major carbon sinks, absorbing around 25–30% of global CO<sub>2</sub>. Their health is linked to forests through climate regulation; for example, emissions from deforestation contribute directly to ocean acidification. Coastal ecosystems like mangroves and kelp forests bridge land and sea, offering protection, habitat, and carbon storage.

# Nuacht Ón nGréasán

## NEWS FROM THE NETWORK



### Tuairisc.ie: Laureate Nua ag Súil le hAird a Tharraingt ar Scríbhneoirí 'Dofheicthe' na Gaeilge

*Tuairisc.ie: New Laureate Aims to Draw Attention to 'Invisible' Irish Language Writers*

'Beidh mé ag freastal ar fhicsean na Gaeilge chomh maith le ficsean an Bhéarla,' a deir Éilís Ní Dhuibhne agus í ag breathnú chun cinn ar a tréimhse mar Laureate nua don Fhicsean Éireannach go dtí 2028. Tagann sí i ndiaidh Colm Tóibín, a bhí ina Laureate ó 2022-2024, agus is í an ceathrú scríbhneoir sa ról sin. **Léigh alt iomlán Bridget Bhreathnach i dTuairisc.ie anseo.**

'I will be serving Irish language fiction as well as English language fiction,' says Éilís Ní Dhuibhne as she looks ahead to her term as the new Laureate for Irish Fiction until 2028. She succeeds Colm Tóibín, who was Laureate from 2022-2024, and is the fourth writer to hold the role. **Read Bridget Bhreathnach's full article (in Irish) in Tuairisc.ie here.**



### Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2025

Cuireadh Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2025 i láthair ón 3ú go dtí an 10ú Lúnasa i mbaile Loch Garman. Líon an ceiliúradh is mó ar domhan ar cheol agus ar chultúr traidisiúnta na hÉireann gach sráid, lána, agus cúinne ar fud an bhaile. Bhí imeachtaí agus comórtais oifigiúla ar siúl in os cionn 18 ionad agus teach tábhairne éagsúla, agus ceoltóirí agus taibheoirí de gach aois (**agus Ed Sheeran ar ndóigh**) ag bailiú le haghaidh féile dhochreidte san oirdheisceart grianmhar.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2025 was held from 3-10 August in Wexford town. The world's biggest celebration of traditional Irish music and culture filled every street, lane, and corner across the town. Official events and competitions took place in over 18 different venues and pubs, with musicians and performers of all ages (**and Ed Sheeran of course**) gathering for an unforgettable festival in the sunny southeast.

# Nuacht Ón nGréasán

## NEWS FROM THE NETWORK



### GAZE International LGBTQIA Film Festival 2025

GAZE, Ireland's largest LGBTQIA film event, is a queer film festival hosted in the Light House Cinema and Irish Film Institute every summer. Initially formed in 1992 as an underground film club, the festival itself predates the legalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. Today, it is Ireland's biggest LGBTQ gathering aside from Dublin Pride. This year's festival ran from 31 July 2025 to Monday, 4 August 2025. The Irish Film Institute and The Lighthouse Cinema screened a range of films such as *Baby*, *High Art*, and *Sandbag Dam*.



### Nature Boy: A Journey of Birdsong & Belonging with Seán Ronayne

Ornithologist Seán Ronayne from Cobh, County Cork, is on a mission to record the sound of every bird species in Ireland – that's nearly 200 birds. He travels to some of the country's most beautiful and remote locations to capture its most elusive species and soundscapes. In this sound-packed, illustrative talk, Seán will bring you on a beautiful journey through Irish birds, sharing their sounds, stories, and struggles. At once inspiring and cautionary, Seán's journey illustrates the beauty and importance of sound, and what listening can tell us about the state of our natural world, and how it can also heal and nourish the soul. This event takes place in Station House Theatre, Clifden, at 8pm on Friday, 29 August 2025. [Click here to learn more.](#)



# Nuacht Ón nGréasán

## NEWS FROM THE NETWORK



### Mortal Sin at Bewley's Café Theatre

In the wake of JFK's assassination, Colm and Peggy, two best friends in the town of Cundannon hatch a plan: stage a protest and get a day off school to honour the fallen US president. *Mortal Sin* by Benjamin Reilly is a bold, heartfelt, and sharply witty exploration of what it means to grow up different in an Ireland where the Church controls everything from the classroom to confession. The play is performed in Bewley's Café Theatre, Dublin from 18 August to 6 September 2025, Monday to Saturday. [Click here to learn more.](#)



### IMMA Announces Programme for Earth Rising 2025 and Signs Up to Culture Declares Emergency

The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) is delighted to announce the full programme for the fourth Earth Rising festival, taking place from 12–14 September 2025 on the grounds of IMMA at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. All events are free of charge, with some requiring advance booking. Established in 2021, Earth Rising explores the intersection of climate, culture, and collective action. IMMA is also announcing that it has officially signed up to Culture Declares Emergency, becoming the first major cultural institution in Ireland to do so. This global movement calls on the cultural sector to respond to the climate and ecological crisis with urgency, imagination, and solidarity. [Click here to learn more.](#)

# Deontais agus Deiseanna

## GRANTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



### National PPI Festival Fund 2025

*Deadline: Monday, 18 August 2025*

The overarching goal of this seed funding is to offer supports of €1000 to assist University of Galway staff or students, all patient and community organisations, and individual PPI contributors to host a National PPI Festival event in October that aligns with the festival's aims. The support funds can be used for a wide variety of purposes, including refreshments and catering, design and print, creating accessible information, venue hire, PPI contributor involvement, equipment hire, facilitators hire, interpreters hire, and software or equipment costs. **Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.**



### Disrupt Disability Arts Festival: Creative Access Production Programme 2025

*Deadline: 1pm Monday, 18 August 2025*

Calling all artists, arts workers, and producers with a passion for Creative Accessible Production. In 2025/26, Disrupt Disability Arts Festival will offer a groundbreaking opportunity for paid professional development. We want to revolutionise the role and skill sets of producers in Ireland, upskill people's current creative practices, and provide the training to make these more accessible. The Creative Access Production Programme will offer mentorship, training, support, and work placements over 14-18 months. **Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.**

# Deontais agus Deiseanna

## GRANTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



### Taibhsín Residency & Seed Bursary Opportunities at An Taibhdhearc

*Deadline: 5pm Thursday, 21 August 2025*

An Taibhdhearc, Amharclann Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, is delighted to invite applications for two artist development opportunities for writers, theatre-makers, and performance-based artists working professionally in the Irish language. These opportunities are open to individual professional theatre-makers, writers, and artists, and we are happy to consider proposals from duos, provided the project is feasible within the available resources. We welcome artists at all career stages and from all backgrounds. **[Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.](#)**



### dlr Mill Theatre: Evolution Residency

*Deadline: 5pm Friday, 22 August 2025*

This residency is designed for one mid-career playwright who wishes to dedicate time to developing their craft and a new theatrical work. It offers time, space, and resources to support an ambitious creative project, encouraging exploration of new forms, larger-scale productions, or multimedia integration. The residency begins with participation in the Next Stage Programme during the Dublin Theatre Festival, providing intensive exposure to international performance work, as well as engagement with fellow participants through workshops and discussions. **[Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.](#)**



# Deontais agus Deiseanna

## GRANTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



### What Works Enhancing Quality Fund 2025

*Deadline: 5pm Friday, 22 August 2025*

The What Works Enhancing Quality Fund has been established under the Quality strand of the What Works initiative. The aim of the Quality strand is to align, enhance, and sustain quality in prevention and early intervention as it relates to the development and delivery of policy, provision, and practice for children and young people. The fund is open to practitioners and service providers in not-for-profit organisations working with children, young people, and their families and who have a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention. **[Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.](#)**



### Arts Council of Northern Ireland: Small Capital Grants Programme

*Deadline: 12 noon Thursday, 28 August  
2025*

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has designed this programme to enable organisations to purchase equipment and/or carry out minor works to their premises which will provide opportunities to upgrade equipment and carry out necessary works to ensure they maintain a presence in the arts sector. The scheme aims to provide grants which will help to: maintain/improve the quality of artistic activities delivered; improve the accessibility of the arts; improve the environment for the arts sector; or enhance or broaden the audience/participants' experience. **[Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.](#)**

# Deontais agus Deiseanna

## GRANTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



### **International Theatre Exchange (ITX)**

*Deadline: 5pm Thursday, 28 August 2025  
and 2pm Monday, 1 September 2025*

Returning for its 32nd edition, International Theatre eXchange (ITX) is a vital platform that connects leading Irish theatre artists and companies with international presenters, programmers, and collaborators. Over several dynamic days during Dublin Theatre Festival 2025, ITX offers artists and programmers the chance to experience outstanding Irish theatre, forge global partnerships, and spark future touring and co-production opportunities. **Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.**



**Maynooth University**

National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

### **Maynooth University: Dr Sinéad McGrath Memorial Scholarship Scheme**

*Deadline: Monday, 1 September 2025*

The Department of International Development, Maynooth University welcomes applications for a Masters bursary, which is worth €2500 for the winning student. The bursary will be granted to an outstanding individual who has been accepted for a place on either the full-time taught MA in International Development or MA in International Peacebuilding, Security and Development Practice. **Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.**

# Deontais agus Deiseanna

## GRANTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



### Music Network and Ionad Cultúrtha Musician-in-Residence Programme

*Deadline: 2pm Monday, 1 September 2025*

Applications are now open for the Music Network and Ionad Cultúrtha Musician-in-Residence Programme (Baile Mhúirne). On this occasion, we welcome applications solely from professional musicians who are resident in Ireland, who are autistic/people with autism, and who have a strong track record in music performance. The appointed Musician-in-Residence will receive a bursary of €8,000 and the residency will provide support for the Musician-in-Residence to devote time in October and November 2025 to develop their creative practice, create new work and/or artistic collaborations which engage with the Irish language and/or the Gaeltacht in a creative way, and more. [Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.](#)



### Arts Council of Ireland: Strategic Funding

*Deadline: 5:30pm Thursday, 4 September 2025*

The Arts Council of Ireland's Strategic Funding supports key arts organisations, ensuring their sustainability and capacity to deliver high-quality arts experiences. It focuses on the delivery of excellent artwork, services, events, and activities that provide more people with the opportunity to enjoy high quality arts experiences. [Apply via our Grants and Opportunities page.](#)

*This is only a selection of our listed grants and opportunities. For more, [please visit our Grants and Opportunities page here.](#)*



Sin é don eagrán seo. Thank you for reading. The next edition of the Smashing Times Newsletter comes out on **Thursday, 4 September**, under the theme of **Human Rights Defenders**.

Beir bua agus beannacht,

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