

alice  
maher  
*becoming*

---

information and resources about the exhibition  
*alice maher becoming*

Introduction

*Becoming* is a mid-career **retrospective exhibition** of the work of Alice Maher, one of Ireland’s most respected and influential artists. Featuring painting, sculpture, photography and animation, the exhibition includes art works created over the course of Maher’s career such as *Berry Dress*, 1994, *The History of Tears*, 2001 and *Mnemosyne*, 2002. It also features a number of new works including a major commission, *Cassandra’s Necklace*, 2012, a two-screen film **installation** inspired by a short script by author Anne Enright, made in collaboration with film maker Vivienne Dick and composer Trevor Knight. Maher has created a new **site-specific** work, *L’Université*, 2012 and has re-created *Cell* which was initially commissioned for the exhibition *In a State* in Kilmainham Gaol in 1991 where the original work is still situated.

A **retrospective** is an exhibition of an artist’s practice over a period of time. It usually features the work of a well-established artist who has built up a body of work over time.

**Installation** is a term used to describe the placement of objects in a space. The combination of the objects and the space comprise the art work.

**Site-specific** work is work that is created for a specific space. The meaning of the work would change if it was removed from that space.

Catalogue

A fully-illustrated publication *Alice Maher Becoming* accompanies the exhibition. It documents the artist’s practice over the past twenty-five years and includes essays and images providing information about the artist and her practice.

These include texts by Dr. Penelope Curtis, Director of Tate Britain, London; Booker-Prize winning author, Anne Enright; Dr Ed Krčma, Lecturer Modern and Contemporary Art, UCC; Dr David Lloyd, Professor of English at the University of Southern California; Dr Catherine Morris, Cultural Co-ordinator, Trinity College Dublin & National Library of Ireland; and Seán Kissane, Curator of the exhibition. The catalogue is published by IMMA and distributed by D.A.P., New York.

Curation

The exhibition is curated by Seán Kissane, Curator: Exhibitions.

Exhibition space

Royal Hospital Kilmainham

The Irish Museum of Modern Art is based in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. During 2012/13, the Museum is undergoing major refurbishment therefore IMMA is using a temporary space at Earlsfort Terrace in Dublin’s city centre.



Royal Hospital Kilmainham

Earlsfort Terrace

Earlsfort Terrace was home to several faculties of University College Dublin (UCD) between 1883 and 2007 after which they moved to its larger campus in Belfield. IMMA’s temporary gallery spaces in Earlsfort Terrace still show traces of its former functions - the doors leading into the gallery spaces have name plates suggesting former lectures and course topics.



Earlsfort Terrace

The spaces were also used by the Garda Síochána Forensics Laboratory and, from 1981, a large section of the building houses the National Concert Hall.

## The Artist: Alice Maher

### Artist's Biography

Born in Co. Tipperary in 1956, Alice Maher studied at the University of Limerick and the Crawford College of Art, Cork. She was awarded a Masters degree in Fine Art from the University of Ulster and a Fulbright Scholarship to the San Francisco Art Institute. She has exhibited widely in Ireland, England and the United States and has represented Ireland in the 22nd São Paulo Biennial, 1994.

Maher's practice includes sculpture, painting, drawing, photography and film animation.

Maher has a long association with the Irish Museum of Modern Art with work in the following exhibitions: *From Beyond the Pale*, 1993; *Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political*, 1998; *Shifting Ground: Fifty Years of Irish Art*, 2000; *Tír na nÓg*, 2004 and *Altered States*, 2009.

### Exhibitions

Other exhibitions include *Familiar* at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 1994; *Swimmers* at Le Credac Centre d'Art, Ivry-sur-Seine, 1996; *Knot* at Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, Dublin, 1999; *Gorget* at the David Nolan Gallery, New York, 2000; *Portraits* at the Purdy Hicks Gallery, London, 2003; *Rood* at the Green on Red Gallery, Dublin, 2005; *Orsola*, an installation at the Oratorio di San Lodovico, Venice, 2006; *Natural Artifice* in the Brighton and Hove Museum, 2007; *Hypnerotomachia* a solo exhibition at the David Nolan Gallery, New York, 2008; and *Godchildren of Enantios* in the Galway Arts Centre, 2010 and the Purdy Hicks Gallery, London and the David Nolan Gallery, New York, 2011.

Maher's work is included in many national and international collections including the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Pompidou, Paris; the British Museum, London; and the Hammond Museum, Los Angeles.

## Influences and Themes

### Becoming and Transformation

**Video animations** are drawings created on a single page through a process of drawing and erasure recorded over time using a form of stop/go video recording.

**Metamorphosis** is the process of transformation by which something changes its appearance, characteristics or function. It comes from the Greek meaning transforming or changing form.

The theme *Becoming* refers to Maher's ongoing concern with the process of transformation and change. This is evident in many of her works, for example the drawings in the *Bestiary Series*. Influenced by Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, (c. 1500), Maher's silhouette figures take on human, animal and plant-like characteristics. In her **video animations**, *The Music of Things (Sleep)*, 2009, and *Flora*, 2009, this concern with change and transformation can be seen in the process of mark-making and erasure: we see figures transform, grow, shrink, dissolve and **metamorphose** while the traces of their earlier forms remain visible. In the series of works entitled *The Thicket*, 1991, we see an adolescent girl wrestle with the challenges of becoming an adult.



Alice Maher



Hieronymus Bosch *Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500 (detail)



Alice Maher, *Cockatrice Bestiary Drawings 9*, 2007.

Many of the works in this exhibition such as *Cell*, 1991, and *Berry Dress*, 1994, are made from delicate and perishable materials, and they will transform through the processes of decay and disintegration. The artist also uses ordinary and often overlooked objects, such as snail shells, berries, thorns and nettles, which are transformed through the art-making process.

The retrospective nature of this exhibition provides an opportunity to explore this sense of becoming in the artist's practice over time, where we can see how her work and her ideas continue to evolve and to become.

**Philosophy** The term *Becoming* is associated with the work of many philosophers including Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, and with Hegel's theories of **dialectics** in which 'becoming' emerges from the oppositional forces of 'being' and 'not being'.

**Dialectics** is the philosophical understanding of development as an ongoing process through the combination of opposites, for example human development which takes account of the contradictory tendencies of reason and instinct.

**Time** References to the passing of time and its relationship to becoming and transformation are evident in many works. The time it takes to grow the long hair, for example, features in *Andromeda*, 1999, and *Ombres*, 1997. Time standing still is suggested in the suspended animation of *Running Girl*, 1995. The passing of time is also indicated in the labour involved in creating works such as *Berry Dress*, 1994, *Staircase of Thorns*, 1997, and *Mound*, 2000 – gathering and assembling numerous berries to form a dress or thorns to create a staircase or mound.



Alice Maher, *Andromeda*, 1999.

**Memory** Memory is an important theme in Maher's work, evident in the animated drawings of *Flora*, 2009, where she creates a series of drawings which she continuously erases so that the marks or memory of earlier drawings can still be seen. This is known as a **palimpsest**. The location of memory is also suggested by some of the materials she uses – hair, the coils of a snail's shell as well as in works such as *Mnemosyne*, 2002, referring to the Goddess of memory and *The Dome of Forgetfulness*, 1997.

A **palimpsest** is a page or text which has been written and erased to make way for a new text.

**Ephemerality** **Ephemerality** is another recurring theme in Maher's work. It is evident in her use of delicate materials such as snail shells and perishable materials such as nettles and rose hips, which change and disintegrate over time. These works are very fragile, and they require a lot of care in their display and storage. As they will inevitably disintegrate, they present interesting challenges for collection, preservation and display.

**Ephemeral** refers to things that are temporary, brief or short-lived. The term comes from the Greek meaning lasting only one day.

**Scale** The artist manipulates the scale of works to challenge the viewer's expectations and to go beyond the literal, for example in the giant hair-like flax that hangs beside the tiny figure of a girl in the red painting of *Familiar I*, 1994.



Alice Maher, *Familiar I*, 1994.

**Myths and Fairy Tales** Myths and fairy tales are an important source in Maher's work and are a means of linking past and present concerns. Some of the titles of her works - *Andromeda*,

*Aphrodite, Mnemosyne and Cassandra's Necklace* - refer to female characters from Greek mythology. Similarly, in her use of materials (berries, hair, thorns, nettles) and her subject matter (small girls, woods and thickets) she makes reference to fairy tales, for example Rapunzel, Hansel and Gretel and Snow White. She also draws on medieval sources in many of her works such as **Camail** and **Cuirass**, from *The History of Tears* series, 2001.

**Camail** is a medieval hood of metal chain to protect the head and neck.

**Cuirass** is a medieval armour plate worn over the chest to protect the front of the body.

**Balance** Seeking and maintaining balance is evident in works such as *Double Venus*, 2005, and also in the **juxtaposition of opposites** in works such as *Godchildren of Enantios*.

**Juxtaposition** is the positioning of two objects or ideas next to each other.

**The Uncanny** Maher is interested in drawing our attention to aspects of an object that may often be overlooked by putting familiar objects in unfamiliar or strange presentations. This combination of familiar and strange is known as the **Uncanny**. Examples include *Berry Dress*, 1994, which appears to be a clothing item for a small child. On closer inspection, however it turns out to be made from rose hips attached to the fabric of a dress with sharp pins which would cause pain rather than comfort if worn. Similarly, in *Helmet (Portrait)*, 2003, the fragile structure made of snail shells yet it would provide no protection on impact; on the contrary, it would probably cause damage.

**Enantiodromia** is a concept introduced by the psychiatrist Carl Jung, founder of Analytical Psychology, which refers to a conflict of opposites, where there is a tendency to counter a dominant force by its opposite in the pursuit of balance.

**The Uncanny** is a term associated with Freudian psychology (The German word 'unheimlich' literally means 'unhomely') where something that is familiar is presented in a way that makes it seem strange and unsettling.

**Materials and Methodologies**

Maher's practice includes sculpture, painting, drawing, photography and film animation. She is constantly exploring and experimenting with new materials and methodologies to create her work. Maher uses both conventional materials such as chalk, bronze, acrylic and charcoal and unconventional materials such as snail shells, nettles, berries, eggs, brambles, flax and rose thorns. She also experiments with new technologies, including video animation, to expand her practice.



Alice Maher, *Helmet (Portrait)* 2003.

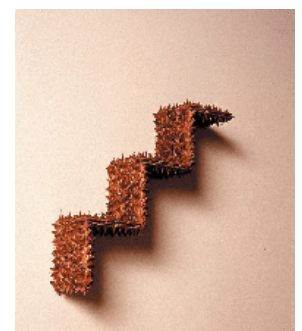
**Titles** Titles are an important element in Maher's work. She uses titles which can have multiple or **ambiguous** meanings and associations, for example *Cell*, 1991, and *Familiar I*, 1994, to facilitate the viewer in drawing out meaning from the work. The titles function in many ways: some describe the work (*Staircase of Thorns*, 1997, or *Running Girl*, 1995), others indicate the work's reference points or influences (*Andromeda*, 1999, or *Mnemosyne*, 2002). Titles can also challenge the viewer's perception where they may suggest something that is at odds with, or doesn't fully describe, what the viewer is seeing (*Godchildren*, 2010).

**Ambiguous** means something that can have several meanings or interpretations.

**Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

Interdisciplinary Collaboration is the collaboration between artists from two or more artform disciplines such as music, architecture or dance.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is a regular feature of Maher's work. All of her video animations are set to sound tracks by composer Trevor Knight. She also works with lighting designer Aedín Cosgrove of Pan Pan Theatre who designs lighting for her installations. Maher's latest commission *Cassandra's Necklace*, 2012, involves a collaboration with composer Trevor Knight, writer Anne Enright, filmmaker Vivienne Dick and editor Connie Farrell.



Alice Maher, *Staircase of Thorns*, 1997.

About the Exhibition

**Display** The exhibition consists of a diverse body of work by Alice Maher including drawings, paintings, sculpture, installation and video animation. It features a range of display strategies. Framed works are hung in configurations on the walls, sculptural objects are displayed on tables and shelves (*Berry Dress*, 1994) or are suspended from the ceiling (*The Wilful Planet*, 1997) or secured to a wall (*Running Girl*, 1995). The way in which the artworks are displayed and the means by which they are displayed are very important to the artist. For example, the long wooden table on which *Godchildren*, 2010, is displayed was designed specifically for that artwork and is part of the artwork.



*Running Girl*, 1995, Annex.

Many of Maher's works are underpinned by a theme or form part of a series, therefore they need to be displayed in such a way that the works can be given consideration both individually and as part of a larger theme. For example, in Room 2, *The Thicket*, 1991, is a series of mixed media drawings on paper featuring an adolescent girl undertaking a number of activities. The works are individually framed and hung on the wall very close together in a horizontal line. This linear format, similar to a comic strip, enables the works to be viewed individually but also as part of larger **narrative**, where the same figure – an adolescent girl – features in each work.



*The Thicket*, 1991, Room 2

**Narrative**, similar to story, is a term used to describe a linear, sequential method of providing information.

Maher takes into consideration the space in which her work will be seen and incorporates the mechanisms for display into her work. For example, the installation *Cell*, 1991/2012, was originally created in response to the dimensions and conditions of the prison cells in Kilmainham Gaol where the space itself became part of the work. Instead of using a neutral, white **plinth** to show sculptural works, she uses purpose-built objects such as the table in *Godchildren*, 2010, or she bypasses the need for a plinth by placing the work on the floor or attaching it to the wall.

A **plinth** is a rectangular object used in a gallery space to display three-dimensional objects such as small sculptures.

**Lighting** The building on Earlsfort Terrace has many large windows and tall ceilings which allow natural light to enter. The separate gallery spaces make it possible to change the lighting conditions in each space. A darkened space can be created to facilitate the presentation of film and animation works alongside naturally-lit gallery spaces.



Gallery space in Earlsfort Terrace

Lighting is a very important element in Alice Maher's work, and she has commissioned lighting designer Aedin Cosgrove of Pan Pan Theatre Company to design theatrical lighting for this exhibition. Natural light is kept to a minimum, and **spot lighting** is used throughout the exhibition to highlight specific art works and to create lighting environments in each space.

**Spot lights** are lights which can be manipulated to direct the light at a very specific area such as an artwork without illuminating the rest of the space.

**Layout** The exhibition is laid out in fourteen gallery spaces on the ground floor of Earlsfort Terrace which were formerly used for lectures and teaching. The layout of the exhibition spaces is along a corridor which leads to a linear encounter of the artworks. To balance this linear approach, the layout of the exhibition mixes styles, media and periods in each room.

**self-directed** means that you decide in what way and in what order you wish to look at the works.

**Open-ended** means that there are many possibilities and rather than a fixed approach to the exhibition.

There is no designated starting or finishing point to the exhibition, and the viewer is encouraged to engage with the exhibition in a **self-directed** and **open-ended** way.

Works from different time periods have been placed in the same spaces to encourage new associations and to highlight recurring themes such as memory, time and transformation.

Less familiar works have been chosen over those exhibited more frequently, so as to introduce the audience to different parts of the artist's practice and to challenge the audience's expectations.

Each artwork is intended to be viewed independently; however, there are a number of **overarching themes and** narratives which emerge as the viewer travels through the exhibition. (*see Themes below*)

An **overarching theme** is a one which refers to a large, general topic such as memory and which may be referred to in several works.

The layout of the artworks in the exhibition is intended to enable the viewer to see them closely while ensuring their preservation.

**Audience / Viewer** The audience's experience of the artworks is very important to the artist. She is interested in engaging the viewer both physically and psychologically. Maher acknowledges that objects have different meanings and associations across cultures and that viewers bring their own history and feelings to bear on the artworks. She believes that the artist can learn from the viewer's experience.



Main corridor in Earlsfort Terrace



**Title of Artwork** Godchildren of Enantios  
**Date** 2010  
**Materials** Bronze and Wood  
**Location** Room 5

**Description** This work consists of a matching pair of bronze statues of a male and a female child with a number of severed heads at their feet. The multiple heads are cast from the severed head of each of the figures. The figures are placed at either end of a long wooden table created specifically for this work. Perhaps brother and sister or playmates, the children are dressed in traditional clothing suggestive of an earlier era. They are similar to the porcelain figurines found in souvenir shops. Associated with Victorian memorabilia, they depict sentimental and idealised representations of childhood.

**Kitsch** is a term used to describe mass produced objects that imitate traditional forms of high art such as sculptures and paintings and which tend to be sentimental and superficial.

**High art** refers to cultural objects considered to be of value in a society such as painting and sculpture. In contemporary art this term and its association with elitism has been challenged.

Such objects, often referred to as **kitsch**, are usually created in porcelain which is delicate and light-weight and can be painted; yet these figures are made in bronze, a material associated with large-scale, heavy, monumental sculptures. Maher plays with these notions of **high art** and kitsch by inverting them. By recreating these objects in bronze, a material associated with high art, she is thus transforming them back into high art. The figurines are enclosed in glass domes which protect them and also refer to processes of collection and display.

**Themes**

This work employs many contradictions. The two small children suggest childhood innocence yet the severed heads at their feet suggest violent actions. Their relaxed poses suggest they are unperturbed by the severed heads at their feet. The latent cruelty and violence of childhood is suggested in many of Maher's works and is also a recurring theme in Grimm's fairy tales.

Decapitation and severed heads feature in several of Maher's works such as *Flora* (2009) and *Gorget* (2001) suggesting the separation of mind and body, head and heart.

**Archetype** is a universally recognised symbol such as the hero, the wise old man or the wicked witch.

**Jungian psychology** refers to the psychoanalytic theories developed by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung in the early 20th century. Although originally collaborators, Jung's theories present an alternative psychoanalytic approach to those of psychiatrist Sigmund Freud.

The representation of male and female figures in this work can suggest opposites or two sides of the same coin, the yin-yang of Chinese philosophy or the archetypes of anima (female) and animus (male) associated with Jungian psychology. They emphasise the combination of opposites in the creation of the whole self. The male and female figures can also be associated with the multiple representations of male and female figures in fairy tale and mythology, such as Hansel and Gretel or the prince and princess, where gendered roles are affirmed.





<b>The Art Work</b>	Mnemosyne (pronounced ne-mos-en-ee)
<b>Date</b>	2002
<b>Materials</b>	Stainless steel, copper piping, condensing unit, corian refrigeration gas
<b>Location</b>	Atrium

**Description** Mnemosyne is situated in the main corridor space. The work consists of a refrigeration unit, similar to a household fridge, turned inside out and constructed by a refrigeration engineer in the shape of a bed. Like a fridge, it condenses and freezes moisture in the air over the course of the day and defrosts during the night. The work is cold and moist to the touch. Mnemosyne was originally created as a site-specific work for an exhibition in Swansea Museum in Wales. Maher created it in response to a nineteenth-century painting by C. R. Leslie Richard Morris, *The Death of Sarah Dillwyn*, which depicts the death bed scene of a young girl. While this painting inspired the original installation of *Mnemosyne*, Maher does not believe it is central to an understanding of the work, the meaning of which evolves over time and in new contexts.

**Themes** This work refers to the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, a figure from Greek mythology. The daughter of Gaia and Uranus and the mother of the nine muses, she is also considered to be the mother of the arts. Mnemosyne was also one of several rivers in Hades (the underworld of the dead). The souls of the dead had to drink from the river Lethes (also known as the 'Ameles Potamos' river of forgetfulness) to forget their earthly lives so that they could be reincarnated. But if the souls drank from the river Mnemosyne instead, they would remember everything in their later reincarnation.

The work suggests the contradictory desires to remember and forget. The frozen bed suggests the relationship between sleep, death and forgetting and the desire to freeze time, to hold onto memories or the elusive details of dreams before they fade. It makes reference to fairy tale figures such as Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, who succumb to a death-like state of sleep as a result of poisoning.

The work also suggests death rituals and memorials such as catafalques and cenotaphs and medieval tomb effigies, many of which can be found in the region of Maher's home.

The 'Rin- Daughters of Mnemosyne' is a Japanese anime television series and manga cartoon about an immortal female private detective Rin Asougi based in Tokyo.

A **Catfalque** is a raised platform, like a bed, upon which a dead person is laid out before burial.

A **Cenotaph** is a memorial to commemorate absent dead.

A **tomb effigy** is a sculptural representation of a deceased person usually depicted lying on top of the tomb.



<b>The Art Work</b>	Cell
<b>Date</b>	1991 / 2012
<b>Materials</b>	Brambles
<b>Dimensions</b>	152 x 152 x 152 cm (variable)
<b>Location</b>	Room 6

**Description** This work is a site-specific work which was first created for the exhibition *In a State* in Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin, in 1991. The work comprises brambles sourced from the grounds of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, which was under refurbishment prior to the opening of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1991. The original work was situated in one of the prison cells in Kilmainham Gaol. It is still in place; however, over time, it has shrunk and is now considerably smaller. This draws attention to the ephemerality of the art work and the materials employed.

This new work has been created specifically for the exhibition space in Earlsfort Terrace. It consists of brambles sourced from Co. Wicklow. The brambles are manually woven into a ball shape which gradually builds into a large circular form. The work has a very strong smell and will shrink and decay over the course of the exhibition.

**Themes** The artist created this work in response to the bleak conditions of the prison cells in Kilmainham Gaol and their long history of incarceration. The work corresponds to the dimensions of the cell and will deteriorate and diminish over time acknowledging the diminishing experience of imprisonment on the individual. The title of the work *Cell* is deliberately ambiguous, referring to growth, incarceration, containment, energy, renewal.

The intertwining of the brambles is similar to the intertwining of the long tresses of hair in Andromeda, suggesting a knot or something looping back on itself, something unresolved or going round in circles.



<b>The Art Work</b>	Berry Dress
<b>Date</b>	1994
<b>Materials</b>	Rose hips, cotton, paint, sewing pins
<b>Dimensions</b>	25 x 32 x 24 cm
<b>Location</b>	Room 10

**Description** This work consists of rose hips attached to cotton fabric with sewing pins to create the form of a dress. The berries make up the skirt of the dress and the top part of the dress is painted red. Maher refers to this as a child's dress rather than a girl's dress acknowledging the gender neutrality of the term child.

The work is displayed on a transparent shelf at a height so that it is possible to see underneath and inside the dress. The multiple pins are visible as they pierce the interior of the dress and are suggestive of medieval torture. They draw attention to contradictory associations; the dress as something worn to keep a child warm and look pretty, but also a something that would cause harm.

**Themes** This work is very fragile, and despite the care taken in its storage and transportation, it will disintegrate over time. States of fragility, decomposition and disintegration are evident in many of Maher's works, such as *Bee Dress* (1994), *Nettle Coat* (1995) and *Cell* (1991/2012). The work mixes various elements which have multiple, often contradictory associations, such as rose hips (they can be used in food and drink but the hairs inside the berries can be an irritant) and pins (also useful but potentially harmful).

Drawing on myths and fairy tales, this work suggests the innocence and cruelty of childhood explored in fairy tale stories such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*.



<b>The Art Work</b>	Cassandra's Necklace
<b>Date</b>	2012
<b>Materials</b>	Two-screen video installation
<b>Dimensions</b>	variable
<b>Duration</b>	7.5 mins
<b>Location</b>	Annex

**Description** *Cassandra's Necklace*, 2012, is an interdisciplinary collaborative film work commissioned by the Irish Museum of Modern Art. The work was inspired by a script for a play called *Cassandra* by writer Anne Enright and involved a collaboration between Maher, composer Trevor Knight, filmmaker Vivienne Dick and editor Connie Farrell.

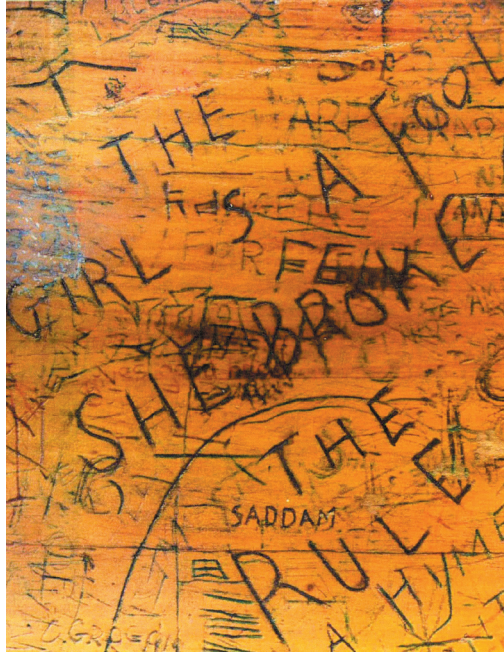
**Themes** Cassandra was the daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy. The god Apollo was so taken with her beauty that he gave her the gift of **prophecy**, but when she angered him, he put a curse on her so that her powers of prophecy would never be believed.

**Phrophecy** is the process by which a person (a prophet) is understood to be incommunication with a devine force and is associated with being able to predict the future.

The Cassandra metaphor refers to a situation where a warning is dismissed or ignored. The figure of Cassandra is associated with the experience of knowledge, disempowerment and insanity. The tongues which form the necklace in this work are lambs' tongues. They refer to the capacity to 'speak/speak in tongues' but not to be understood. Instead of functioning as tools for communication, they form a decorative but useless necklace or noose.

In the film we see a young girl looking at her own reflection in a large silver platter. She does not speak. In Greek mythology, the young nymph Echo loses her ability to speak except to repeat what someone else says. She falls in love with the beautiful Narcissus who has fallen in love with his own reflection in a pool.

Contemporary references to the myth of Cassandra can also be found in popular culture. For example, in the US television series *Homeland* the character of the CIA agent Carrie Mathison, played by Clare Danes, attempts to resolve a terrorist threat drawing on her considerable intuitive and cognitive skills, but her psychiatric condition (manic depression) seems to effect her decision-making and her credibility. The US marine, Nicholas Brody, played by Damien Lewis, is associated with the figure Apollo.



<b>The Art Work</b>	L'Université
<b>Date</b>	2012
<b>Materials</b>	graffiti, spot lights
<b>Dimensions</b>	variable
<b>Location</b>	Lecture Room 2

**Description** *L'Université* is a site-specific art work in one of the two lecture rooms. It was created by the artist in response to the site of Earlsfort Terrace and its history as a former campus of University College Dublin (UCD). Over the years, many students attended lectures in these spaces, and the benches are covered in their comments and mark-making in the form of **graffiti**.

Graffiti is a form of writing or mark making, usually on public walls or public spaces without permission. It is a very old form of public mark making and can indicate social discontent, gang rivalry or personal expression.

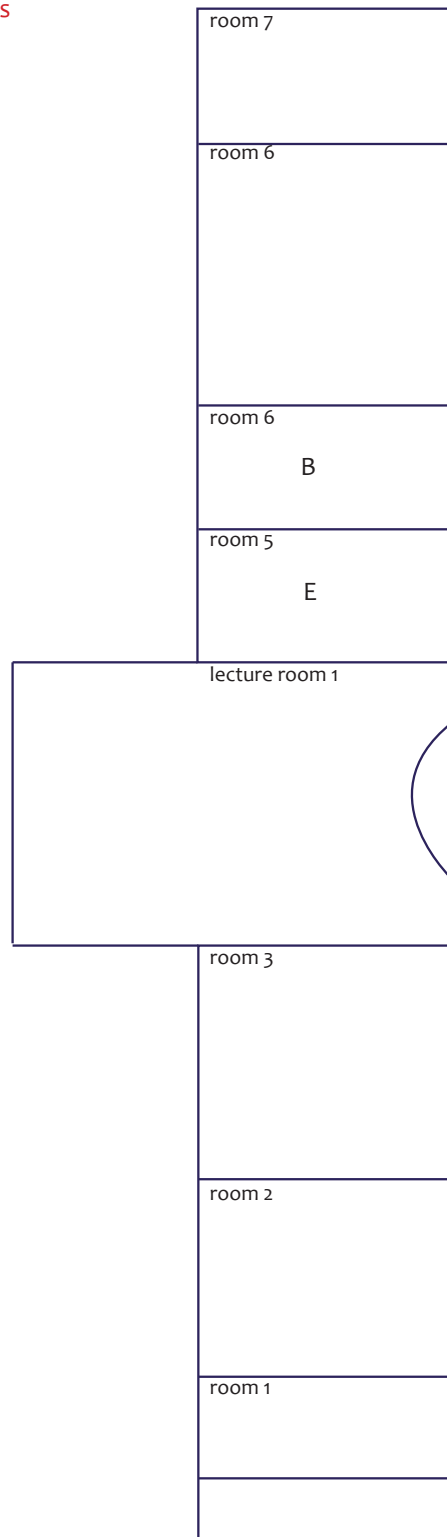
The artist selected 120 items of graffiti which are highlighted by low-hanging spot lights suspended from the ceiling. The numerous suspended lights provide the only light in the lecture room and create a particular atmosphere.

**Themes** The artist selected the title *L'Université* in reference to the site as a former place of learning; part of UCD whose past pupils include James Joyce and Flann O'Brien. The title also makes reference to the wider concept of the 'university of life' acknowledging the learning gained from experience.

Spanning a 60-year period, some of the graffiti items refer to important social and political events, such as the Hunger Strikes in 1981 and the Divorce Referendum in 1995. Many refer to personal experiences, such as lost love, while others - names, declarations, song lyrics - may simply be the result of lecture-induced boredom. They are markers of the history of the place and its wider context. Like the erased drawings in Maher's video animations, they show layers of mark making indicating the passing of time.

Location of featured art works

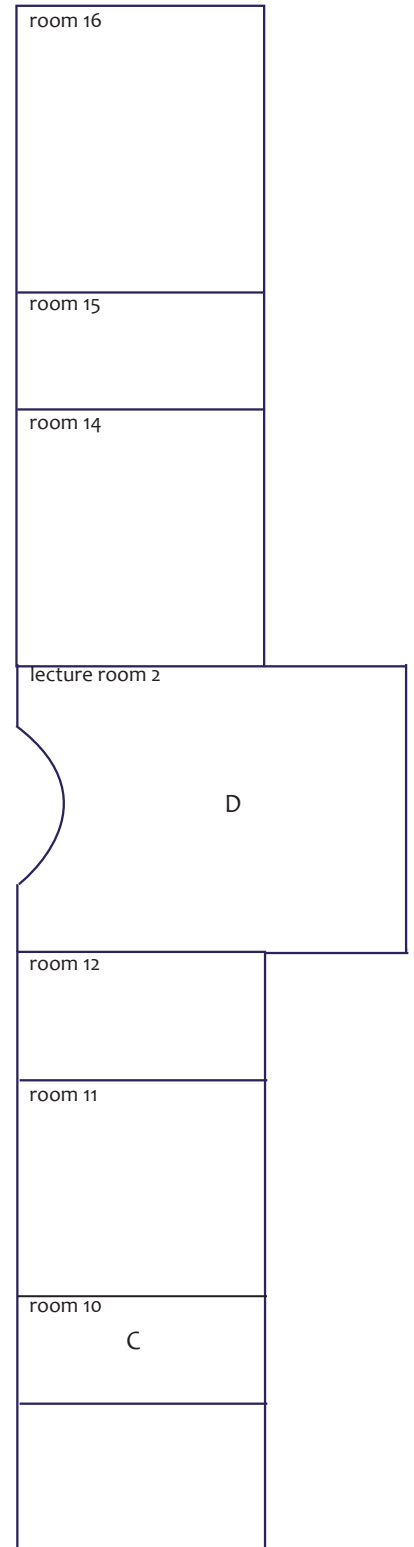
- A. Mnemosyne
- B. Cell
- C. Berry Dress
- D. L'Universite
- E. Godchildren of Enantios
- F. Cassandra's Necklace



Education spaces



Reception



Gallery spaces

To Annex --> F

**Room 1: My Empire of Dirt**

*The Four Directions* (2004-2005)  
Snail shells and polystyrene

**Room 2: The Thicket**

*The Music of Things (Sleep)* (2009)  
Video animation with sound by Trevor Knight

*The Hedge of Experience* (1997)  
Polysilk, wood

*The Thicket* (1991)  
Mixed media on paper

*The Thicket* (1991)  
Mixed media on paper

*The Thicket* (1990)  
Mixed media on paper

*The Thicket* (1991)  
Mixed media on paper

*The Thicket* (1991)  
Mixed media on paper

**Room 3: Ombres**

*Ombres* (1997)  
Charcoal on paper

*The Wilful Planet* (1997)  
Bronze

*Staircase of Thorns* (1997)  
Rosethorns and wood

**Atrium: Mnemosyne**

*Mnemosyne* (2002)  
Stainless steel, copper piping, condensing unit,  
corian refrigeration gas

**Room 5: Godchildren**

*Godchildren* (2010)  
Bronze, wood

*Nightgarden Series* (2007)

**Room 6: Cell**

*Cell* (2012)  
Brambles

**Room 7: History of Tears**

*The History of Tears 3* (2001)

*The History of Tears 4* (2001)

*Camail – The History of Tears* (2001)

*Cuirass - The History of Tears* (2001)

*Ankle deep woman – The History of Tears* (2001)

**Room 8: Plenty of Air**

*Red Loop* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Hedge* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Lasso Overhead* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Red Arch/Archway* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Plenty of Air* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Bathtime* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Cowtail and Gesture* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Under the Carpet* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Three Objects* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*Aphrodite* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*The Pleasures of Dancing* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

*The Mistake* (1994)  
Acrylic on paper

**Room 10: Time**

*Berry Dress* (1994)  
Rose hips, cotton, paint, sewing pins

*Shard*, (2001)  
bronze and gold leaf

*Les Jumeaux*:

*Leda* (2010)  
Etched Ostrich Egg

*Worms* (2010)  
Etched Ostrich Egg

**Room 11: The Garden**

*Hypnerotomachia - Bestiary Series* (2007)  
Charcoal on Arches paper

*The Pecking Order - Bestiary Series* (2007)  
Charcoal on Arches paper

*Double Jigger - Bestiary Series* (2007)  
Charcoal on Arches paper

*The Coral Tent - Bestiary Series* (2007)  
Charcoal on Arches paper

*Omnium Gatherum - Bestiary Drawings* (2007)  
Charcoal on Arches paper

*Cockatrice - Bestiary Series* (2007)  
Charcoal on Arches paper

*familiar II* (1994)  
oil and acrylic on canvas; bronze

**Room 12: Becoming**

*Mound* (2000)  
Rosethorns and wood

*Dome of Forgetfulness* (1997)  
Bronze, crystal, wood

*Chaplet (Portrait)* (2003)

*Mound (Portrait)* (2003)  
Lambda print

*Helmet (Portrait)* (2003)  
Lambda print

**Room 14: The Music of Things**

*Flora* (2009)  
Dual video animations with sound by Trevor Knight

*The Double* (2009)  
Video animation and sound by Trevor Knight

**Room 15: Changeling**

*The Changeling* (1988)  
Acrylic on paper

*Double Venus* (2005)  
Patinated cast Bronze

**Room 16: familiar**

*familiar I* (1994)  
Acrylic on canvas; flax and wood

*familiar II* (1994)  
Oil and acrylic on canvas; bronze

*Andromeda* (1999)  
Charcoal on paper

*Gorget* (2001)  
Chrome-plated cast bronze  
Nine pieces

**Lecture Theatre: L'Université**

*L'Université* (2012)  
Installation

**Annex**

*Cassandra's Necklace* (2012)  
Video Installation

*Running Girl* (1995)  
Bronze

## Further reading and resources

### Catalogues

*Alice Maher Becoming*, IMMA and D.A.P. Publishing, New York, 2012.  
*Alice Maher: Natural Artifice*, Brighton and Hove Museum, RPL+M, Brighton 2007.  
*Alice Maher: Necklace of Tongues*. Butler Gallery, Kilkenny; Green on Red Gallery, Dublin; Purdy Hicks Gallery, London; Coracle Press.  
 Caoimhin MacGiolla Leith, *Shifting Ground: Selected Works of Irish Art 1950-2000*, Dublin; Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2001.  
*Knot: Alice Maher Draws from the Collection*, Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, Dublin.  
 Declan McGonagle and Fintan O'Toole, *Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political*, New York; I.C.I. New York in association with the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.  
 Medb Ruane, *Alice Maher: Profile 6*, Kinsale; Gandon Editions, 1997.

### Magazine articles

Barbara A. MacAdam, 'Alice Maher', *ARTnews*, Volume 110, June 2011.  
 David Galloway, 'Alice Maher', *ARTnews*, May 2010.  
 Jennie Guy, 'Alice Maher; Bestiary', *Circa*, No. 122, pp 83 – 85.  
 Brian Curtin, 'Skewed Visions; an interview', *Art-Signal*, No. 5.  
 Patrick T Murphy, 'Fables & Foibles', *Irish Arts Review*, Autumn 07.  
 Jaqui McIntosch, 'Spectres in the Night', *Magill*, September 07

### Essays

Gill Perry: 'Tales, Trails and Transformations: The Work of Alice Maher' in *Alice Maher: Natural Artifice*, RPL+M, Brighton 2007, pp.10-19.  
 Fionna Barber: 'Familiar: Alice Maher' (1995) in Fintan Cullen, ed., *Sources in Irish Art, A Reader*, Cork University Press, Cork, 2000, p.157.  
 David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.  
 Shirley Madill, *Mask and Metamorphosis: Aspects of Surrealism in Contemporary Art*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication.  
 David Lloyd, 'Enantiodrama: On Alice Maher's Metamorphoses', 2011, essay to accompany *The Godchildren of Enantios* exhibition at the Galway Art Centre, 2010.

### Publications

Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self*, Oxford University Press, 2002.  
 Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales And Their Tellers*, Vintage, New Edition, 1995.  
 Christa Wolf, *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays*, trans. Jan Van Heurck, New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1984.  
 Bettelheim Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Penguin, 1991.  
 Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and the Story of Modern Art*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 2008;  
 Jon Bird (ed.), *Other Worlds, The Art of Nancy Spero and Kiki Smith*, Reaktion Books, London, 2003,  
 Rosemarie Trockel: *Dessins*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2000.



### Myths and Fairytales

Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt, Canterbury Classics, 2011.

Hans Christian Andersen, *Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*, Simon & Brown, 2011.

Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, Anchor, 1991.

E. M. Berens, *Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011.

Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1963.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raeburn, Penguin, 2004.

### Websites

Alice Maher's website: [www.alicemaher.ie](http://www.alicemaher.ie)

Green on Red Gallery, Dublin: [www.greenonredgallery.com](http://www.greenonredgallery.com)

PurdyHicks Gallery, London: [www.purdyhicks.com](http://www.purdyhicks.com)

David Nolan Gallery, New York: [www.davidnolangallery.com](http://www.davidnolangallery.com)

*Altered Images* exhibition, [www.alteredimages.ie](http://www.alteredimages.ie)

RHA exhibition *The Night Garden*, 2007, [www.rhagallery.ie/html/exhibitions/maher\\_07.html](http://www.rhagallery.ie/html/exhibitions/maher_07.html)

Alice Maher speaking at the National Library of Ireland, 8 March 2011, <http://catherine.morrisiculturalcoordinator.wordpress.com/>

Alice Maher on the influence of Louise Bourgeois, [www.rte.ie/radio/agiantatmyshoulder/](http://www.rte.ie/radio/agiantatmyshoulder/)

Some of Maher's archival material is available at the National Irish Visual Arts Library, [www.nival.ie](http://www.nival.ie)

### Art Terms

IMMA, What is ? Glossary of Art Terms

[www.imma.ie/en/subnav\\_112.htm](http://www.imma.ie/en/subnav_112.htm)

Tate Modern, Glossary

[www.tate.org.uk/collections/glossary](http://www.tate.org.uk/collections/glossary)

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Index of Art Terms

[www.moma.org/collection](http://www.moma.org/collection)

Content and Layout: Lisa Moran, Curator: Education Programmes

Specialist Advice: Rebecca Devaney, Second Level Art Teacher

With thanks

Alice Maher, Sean Kissane, Curator: Exhibitions; Mary Cremin, Curatorial Co-ordinator;

Christine O'Neill, Assistant Curator: Education and Community Programmes.