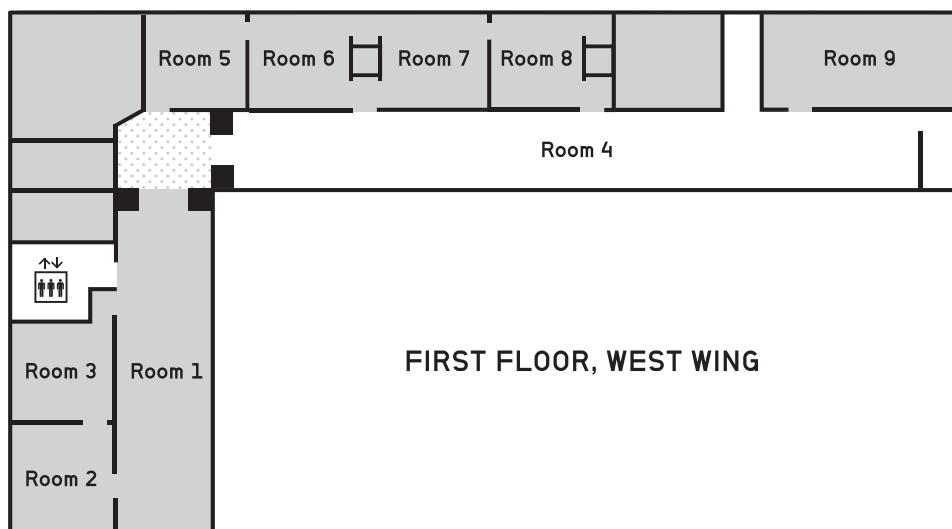


For more information on Janet Mullarney's work and a full listing of IMMA talks and events programmed in association with this exhibition, please see the IMMA website www.imma.ie

IMMA wishes to thank Janet Mullarney for her dedication and commitment to this exhibition. We are grateful to the lenders: Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda; Taylor Galleries, Dublin; RHA, Dublin; Kevin McAllister and Alison and Peter Lyons. Special thanks to Aoife Ruane, Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda; John Taylor, Patrick Taylor and Sabina Mac Mahon, Taylor Galleries, Dublin; Ruth Carroll and Kate McBride, RHA, Dublin; Anna O'Sullivan, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny; Mary Ryder; Catherine Marshall and Marcus Costello (lighting designer for *Another Mind's Eye*). We would also like to thank our invaluable IMMA members and patrons.

The exhibition is co-curated by Claire Walsh, Assistant Curator: Collections, Care and Access, Johanne Mullan, Collections Programmer and Christina Kennedy, Senior Curator: Head of Collections.

Have a question about an artwork? Want to know more? Ask a member of our Visitor Engagement Team, easily identifiable through their blue lanyards.



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IMMA
MAIN GALLERIES, WEST WING
15 FEBRUARY – 29 SEPTEMBER 2019

IMMA Collection: Then and Now Janet Mullarney



This exhibition by Janet Mullarney is part of the *Then and Now* series, a curatorial approach to exploring the IMMA Collection where artists are invited to place their early work among their current practice. Presenting a selection of Mullarney's work from the 1980s to 2018, it also provides the opportunity to showcase the recent acquisition by IMMA of her sculptures *All Ears* (1995) and *Domestic Gods I* (1997).

Although the works on display are diverse in scale, form and materials, they clearly belong to the distinctive world of Mullarney's imagination. Her underlying concerns with the strangeness, darkness and fragility of the human condition form a connecting thread.

Born in Dublin, Mullarney studied wood carving and furniture restoration in Florence and since then has spent most of her time between Italy and Ireland. Her work draws on personal experiences of early life in Catholic Ireland as well as the iconography of Italian religious art. It is also informed by extensive travels in Egypt, India and Mexico.

A background in wood carving and restoration gave her a deep understanding of materials and of traditional craftsmanship. It also illuminated the relationship between art making and repair; a defining aspect of her engagement with art as a means of exorcising the past and working through trauma.

Mullarney works with found and recycled objects as well as a range of traditional materials. Her description of these reflects a deep interest in the individual powers of materials; "from the earlier works in wood holding a human warmth; wax seems bound with sadness; papier-mâché is humble and fragile; video is purely essential."

The video *Urban Print* (2009) plays at the entrance of the long gallery. It was filmed while Mullarney was travelling through an area of Southern India where there is a tradition of decorating household

thresholds in patterns for the harvest festival of Pongal. It shows a vendor demonstrating his product, a perforated tube filled with chalk, which he uses to create intricate lace-like patterns in a circle around his own body.

On the right hand side as you enter is a small drawing with the unambiguous title, *a very old sketch done on a very old envelope*, with no date. This drawing of a mountain and lake made on the inside of an envelope was recently exhibited at Taylor Galleries in Dublin alongside a number of new works which it inspired. A selection of these works are on display here, including paper collages from the *Amygdala* series. The *Amygdala* is an almond-shaped region of the brain primarily associated with emotional processes. It can also refer to a flint-stone because of its shape.

A series of ceramics from the same body of work are titled *Monte Analoghe*. The novel *Mount Analogue* by French writer René Daumal tells the surreal tale of the search for an elusive mountain (geographically located yet hidden) that is said to form a link between Heaven and Earth. It can only be seen in strangely specific circumstances, such as being viewable only from a particular point when the sun's rays hit the earth at a certain angle. As described by Father Sogol, leader of this bizarre expedition; "the unaccustomed eye hardly perceives it. But to anyone who seeks it with sincere desire and true need, it reveals itself by its sudden sparkle, like that of dewdrops."

Further down the room, two figures stand atop a wooden table in the sculpture *Domestic Gods II* (1998). With this work Mullarney hints at the negative influences that religion and social norms have on the true expression of our desires and imagination. The Madonna-like figure wears a mask - the face of religion or of good behaviour. The patterned wallpaper on the body of the figure was included to convey a sense of stifling domesticity. Mullarney has said that she wanted, "to deliberately connect this piece with cloying sitting rooms, places where the truth is not told, where

things are glossed over, where comments are overheard by the child-like figure."

Another important theme of Mullarney's practice is an interest in inner worlds and the mysteries of the human psyche and its expressions in art. In an interview, she describes the emergence of imagery and forms via her subconscious, "they surface in the studio...and things get put on or struck off or broken on purpose and they just make sense and I leave them at that. I don't want to know what they're saying. This is what I'm looking for; freedom, to move around fluidly like the strange thoughts that go through our mind."

The titles of two works in the exhibition refer to the 'mind's eye', the idea that we visualise or 'see' things with the mind. These works, *Another Mind's Eye* (2015) and *My Mind's I* (2015), both contain carved and painted wooden figures in light installations. The diminutive figures in *My Mind's I* stand on a light box designed especially to eliminate shadows, an effect which she writes, "reinforces an anarchic and otherworldly sensation." The lighting in the more theatrical *Another Mind's Eye* at the back of the room deliberately overpowers the figures with strong beams of light so that their forms are obscured and the shadows take over.

Animals and animal-human creatures appear in other works throughout the exhibition including the downbeat dogs on mattresses in *Ubiquitous Undesired Friend* (2007) and *Unequivocal* (2003), the wax creature encased in glass. The juxtaposition of animal and human elements is found in both Hindu and Christian religion and mythology. Mullarney notes that she finds using animals to express human feelings more effective than describing an individual human trait through representation.

Mid-way down the room is a collection of objects and spontaneous plants transported for the exhibition from the artist's garden. The work *Lenience (paessaggio di compassione)* (1988-2018) which was 30 years in the making, is described by Mullarney as "a table full of rejects come together as the landscape of a long journey."

Artist Biography

Janet Mullarney (b. 1952) studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti and Scuola Professionale di Intaglio in Florence. Her work is represented in many public collections including that of IMMA, the Arts Council, the OPW and Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. She divides her time between studios in Ireland and Italy. Mullarney has exhibited extensively in both Ireland and abroad and recent exhibitions include OZIO, Taylor Galleries, Dublin, with artists Nataly Maier and Helen O'Leary and the touring solo exhibition *My Mind's I*, curated by Aoife Ruane, Director, Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda which travelled to Wexford Arts Centre, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny and FE McWilliam Gallery, Banbridge. She is a member of Aosdána and an Associate Member of the Royal Hibernian Academy. Mullarney is represented by Taylor Galleries, Dublin.

Image credit:
Janet Mullarney
Domestic Gods I, 1997
Wood, mixed media, chair, gold leaf
145 x 43 x 39 cm
IMMA Collection: Donation, 2018