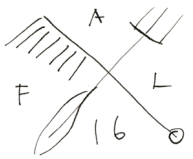
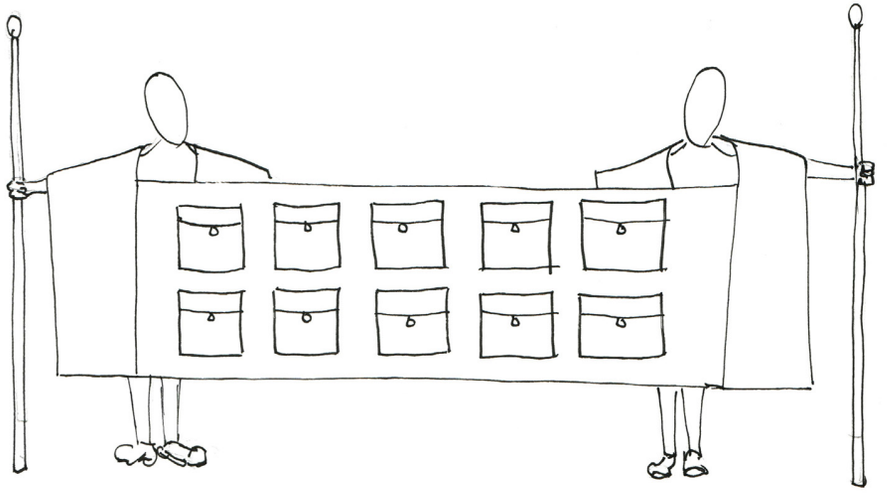
A FAIR LAND

Issue 1: Eating



BUILDING

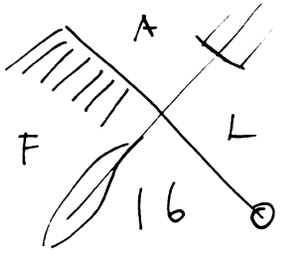


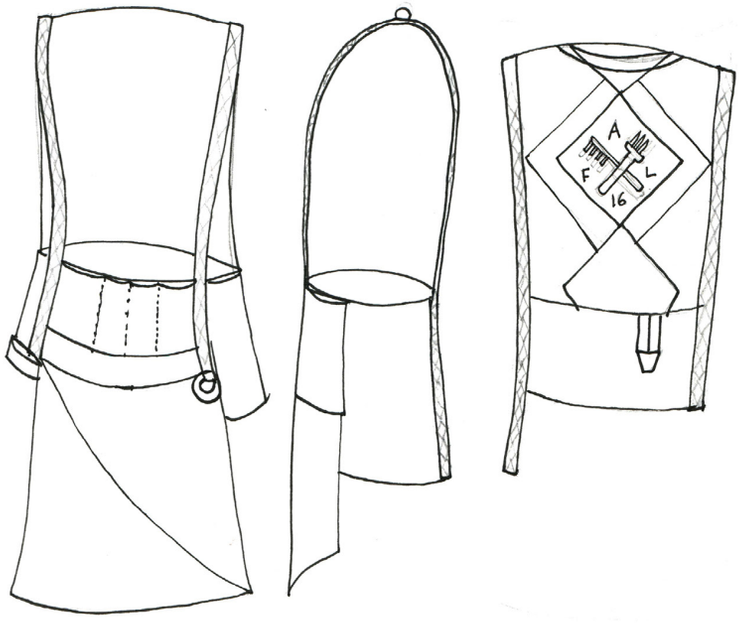
the village safe

A Fair Land is a project conceived as a viable living system; one that might be established and functional within a matter of days. The system produces food, creates its own product and industry, its own income, and finally a house to suit the requirements of a person servicing the system. The ambition of this venture is to create a way of life to learn from, with all elements of the system becoming a learning experience. For many people today such an education might prove fundamental – that food can be grown and things can be made that work. These are curious, almost miraculous, activities.

These initial moments are only the beginning, and from hereon a continuing education might be extrapolated. There is no need of a teacher; the learning process is communal and the Internet holds the knowledge. This is a kind of utopia – one that does not expound tinted windows and personalised number plates, but instead is a stripped down, elemental vision that few people would be really satisfied with - one that offers no luxury, but life and learning. Such ascetic visions have often been advocated, from the Jains of India to the early Christian Anchorites, and many, many times since. The offer is super flawed: If you have too much then it might seem attractive, even life-styley; if you have too little it may hold even less appeal. And we all more often feel that we have too little.

So, if the idea is that the system supports you, then what? What purpose are you supported for? What is the real product of your life? Many utopias have been torn apart wrestling with this dilemma. It is not enough just to live well and lightly in the world – we are programmed to desire more, to wrest territory, to create capacity. Perhaps an alternative means might be to resist this impulse and instead work to improve distribution and fairness, and most problematically of all to accept there is no particular aim in being. As John Ruskin vapidly said: 'there is no wealth but life.' That's it. That's all you really get – make the most of it. The value is in the miracle of birth, growth and death. See it here, try it, experience it, and learn from it. But don't do the death bit – I promised the healthy and safety people you wouldn't.





VILLAGE UTILITY WEAR

THE PROJECT IS....

Being creative is incredibly easy, it's fun, people love to have ideas. Everyone does it, it's not special it's a human response (and by the way it's not always a good thing.) In recent years it has become more apparent to me that people need the creative in their lives, and more apparent that is has become increasingly lost to us. As art or the creative become professionalised, we are made to feel unable to engage with it, or use it. Artists have taken the best job and then made out that it is really hard and that the rest of us couldn't do it. Grizedale has taken an approach that the professional artist is a person familiar with the creative approach, a valuable contributor to the projects but that the core activity can be undertaken by anyone and is often actually conceived and made by the staff, volunteers, and of course the participants.

A Fair Land is a piece of theatre adapted for a museum, its wider value is as a research project that will feed into many other initiatives in very many ways across all the groups and individuals that have worked on it, there is a hope that it might inspire, motivate - or what as a child I always got from museum visits – the desire to go home and make my own version.

The Grizedale way of working is also and importantly generated as a response to invitations and requests, not from art museums but from small-scale communities, a lunch club, mothers group etc. This pre-set means that the projects are owned and wanted, the creative is a means to an end not an end in itself. This very obvious but little used approach has been revelatory for both artists/arts organisations as well as the public. The idea of having a value, being needed, valued is novel for artists and the notion that life is fuller, richer works better by the very simple shift in thinking and acting in a creative way when faced by 'problems'.

Moreover the project has a determined domestic element, the undervalueing of this creative and once ubiquitous aspect of all our

lives adds richness to the simplest of actions, laying a table, putting a napkin in a napkin ring for future use, these symbolic gestures with practical application underpin a way in which we value each other – not doing these little actions illustrates that we don't value each other.

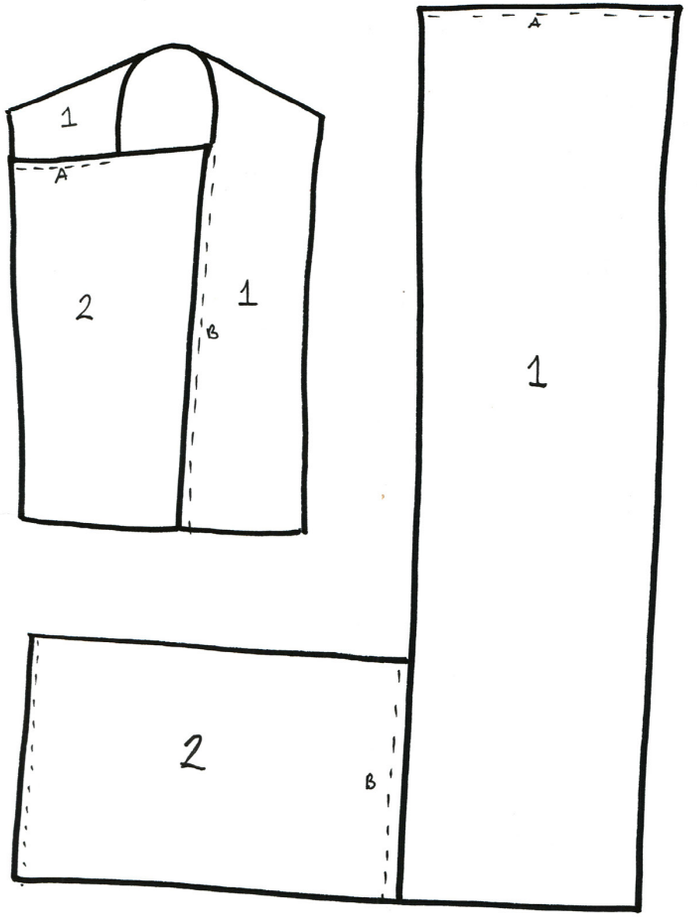
The project starts with a single plant and a growing system based on an instant solution to growing food. The straw bales system offers an immediate start, the bales are fermented – inculcated with a living culture, forming a rich growing environment. For a longer term project in the second year they become the compost for the next crop. The idea here is to create a glut – an excess of a single produce, an idea drawn from the observation that people become much more creative and work together when this naturally happens. How to process this bounty, how not to get bored/maintain a varied diet and a rich gut culture? The courgette is perhaps a rather boring and bland food but it has many advantages, there are many elements of the plant you can use, the stems are fibrous and can be used to make a fabric, they are also edible in a young form. The flowers have long been used as food offering a casing for stuffing and as a delicacy themselves. The fruit of course has a multitude of uses, is very international occurring in most cuisines and can be easily preserved, again in very many ways.

From the produce comes the product, in the immediate incarnation, for food but also extending into other products based on the courgette and it's image. In the language of flowers its spectacular flower means critical, quite an unusual meaning for a flower. The curcubit (gourd) family has long been the source of vessel-making both directly and as a model, so much so that it is a bit of a horrible cliché however that is unimportant, the idea that all our aesthetics are drawn from our functional use of materials is a current archeological thought: That we cannot think outside of function and that all function becomes play sooner or later. Here we try to return to un-prejudiced functionality as the elemental aesthetic – 'Function First'. The products drawn from the field and servicing the field are intended to be 'Useful, Desirable and Achievable' which means saleable and able to be produced by an unskilled person in 15 minutes.[1] This additional benefit of the product, that it is saleable, thereby creates an economy, albeit a small one, a hobby economy. An important element of that economy is that it is exportable – if you can sell things outside of the context in which they are produced you can increase the profit margin and cultural exchange.

Most importantly the system provides a basis for an education – that an immediate elemental system holds within it a vast array of material that can feed into educational experiences, will initiate self education, drawn from a direct need to learn in order to achieve a specific useful and valued ambition. The ambition to make the product something that anyone can make is to introduce or reintroduce the point of making – in the same way that sport is a means to learning how to work together, compete etc – an activity for children not a profession. So making is an activity with an elemental lesson – if you can make something that you can use, you can make your world, the tiny world around you, your spoon, your shoes, the things that make living better, easier, buy you capacity to pursue other courses of action – like territorial expansion but potentially more worthwhile, beneficial ambitions. Making teaches you that you can change the world – you don't need to do it well you just need to know you can and reset your mindset.

Now is a time when art is genuinely needed and can be a very important contributor to how we view the future, what we value and how we go about bringing these ways of living to life. Now is a great time to be creative, to take up this reposition of the idea of being an artist, there is more opportunity than can be imagined.

1 The project has slightly laconically adopted the Arts and Crafts fashion for the 3 word slogan, once you start doing this you cant stop – your whole life turns into the 3 word slogan – rise, work, grow. The best remembered ones of olden times are Hand eye heart and truth beauty power – these 2 in fact were in opposition to each other not that you would know now that we look on from a distance.



A TWO SHEET ROBE

SELF BUILD

The landscapes of Ireland and Britain are marked by thousands of houses of soil, cob, wattle and daub to which formal architectural practice holds little relevance; all bearing traces not only of the landscapes and ecologies that have informed their materials, but of the cultures that have evolved during their making. The same is true of every country in the world. Barns, byres, mills, cabins and longhouses, all fabricated through an incomprehensibly wide range of methods and technologies; 'pudding' the clay to achieve the right consistency being one of them.

These structures contribute to a perpetually evolving field of contemporary architectural research, in which they are often grouped loosely under the term 'Vernacular Architecture'. Although these account for over 90% of buildings worldwide and provide crucial information on the evolution of skill, craftsmanship and tradition since the beginning of civilisation, research on the topic can be traced to only the late 17th Century, and the field remained largely disparate and inconsistently pursued until the mid 1960's. During this time it received fresh (and haphazard) attention from the communal living experiments and radical movements of the era, owing partly to a resurfacing of the enduring, mythic allure of the isolated login cabin and freedom from alleged urban constraints, but also to the recognition of its potential to be co-opted and developed as a tool to explore more useful ways of living.

Perhaps most succinctly defined by historian Paul Oliver as being built 'by and of the people' [1] (in a soft paraphrase of William Morris), vernacular architecture can be identified by the fact that it is never 'for' the people. That is to say, it emerges from within a culture as expression of its values and needs, rather than being prescribed from above, or outside. Drawings and plans often appear during or after the building's completion, as dwellings of this nature are refined and adapted through use; shifting in response to the individuals or communities that have created them. This is a design by doing.

1 See *Built to Meet Needs* by Paul Oliver (Elsevier Press, 2006)

It is perhaps little wonder then, that the vernacular aesthetic was co-opted as a bright 'new' alternative to the experiments in housing via compounds, villages and towns that were constructed under the rubric of Modernism; furnishing utopic visions and delineating the ideal (yet nevertheless prescribed) living conditions in which individuals are expected to thrive. These experiments most frequently focused on encouraging optimally productive citizens for the benefit of a society, though they addressed every aspect of life, in which leisure too was carefully integrated. One of the more extreme examples, in which leisure was so rigorously accounted for that it reads almost as parody, was the Colonia Novarese, in Italy during the 1930s. A series of holiday hostels for the children of industrial workers and members of the Facist Party, the Novarese featured two semi-spiral ramps on either side which acted like turbines as they "flushed" children from the dormitory floors and "siphoned" them up again at the day's end.[2] While of course many successful and influential experiments in living were designed and enacted in the early twentieth century (those not associated with Facism, for example, but with the peaceful and visionary concepts of planners and architects such as Ebenezer Howard, Raymond Unwin and many more), by the mid 1960's there was a mounting pre-occupation with education on traditional, self sufficient modes of building and the dismantling of architectural practices that designed on behalf of the populations they intended to assist.

A genre of graphic, conceptual architecture soon flourished in resistance, mostly undertaken by young architects, which embodied provocative and elabourate conceits considered alternative in the absolutist sense, as they might not ever or could never be built. As Andrew Blauvelt argues in the recent catalogue publication Hippie Modernism, these designs 'offered a powerful critique of both the affirming and servile nature of much professional practice, while challenging the lowered expectations of architecture from society at large'. However, prospective and illustrative alternatives offer limited long-term impact, inspiration or even consolation for the lived experience, and active, practical solutions were sought in parallel through embracing the untraceably long history of 'amateur' approaches to building and making that dominate the landscape, albeit quietly. Lead by individuals whose work, as with vernacular architecture proper, entailed not only the design but the fabrication of experimental structures, the 'neo-vernacular' co-opted by many Western radical movements has been criticized for it's naivety and narrowly focused ideologies, claiming self building as a new phenomena. As Adolfo Natalini, of architectural group Superstudio argued, 'if architecture is merely the codifying of a bourgeois model of ownership and society, then we must reject architecture; if architecture and town planning is merely the formalization of present unjust social divisions, then we must reject town planning and its cities...until all design activities are aimed towards meeting primary needs. Until then, design must disappear. We can live without architecture.'[3]

Because it was popularly (and inaccurately) assumed that the commune movement was in passive revolt against technology, alternative architecture was not looked to for advanced building techniques. What was expected was found, vernacular revival, simplified self-build, low gain energy systems. As Greg Castillo writes, 'within the commune movement of 1964 – 1974, the focus was 'not on any rigorous or specific architectural form, but rather on a kind of empirically informed and socially inspired bricolage.'[4] This bricolage, however, was not without its problems and inherent contradictions. The temporary boon in blowup architectural structures furnishes one example - designed and produced by the newly ecologically conscious counterculture, yet based on existing pneumatic technologies and constructed of cheap plastic, a word that had become accusative of the culture itself. Moreover, it is

2 As described by Mark Sanderson, *Derelict Utopias: The Facists go on Holiday*, (Cabinet Magazine Issue 20 Ruins, Winter 2005/06)

3 Adolfo Natalini, Superstudio, at the Architectural Association, London (1971)

4 Greg Castillo, 'Hippie Modernism', *Places Journal* (October 2015)

largely acknowledged that the intended liberation from the constraints of normative roles was by no means as widespread or effective as the rhetoric espoused. Uncomfortable visions here emerge of geodesic domes melting and warping in the sun during so-called experimental 'love-ins'. Radical communist and architect Anatole Kopp, assumed the commune movement to have been escapist and faulted its allegiance to vernacular, adhoc architecture for it: 'Some people… take refuge in a new utopia: they think that if they change their own way of living they will gradually change society, they form communes… and some, in America at least, even imagine an architecture adapted to their needs… I don't believe in the possibility of making small islands of independent life, and even less in the possibility of structuring them and giving them real architectural expression.' Thus 'there cannot be a really new architecture, a revolutionary architecture, except in the context of total social upheaval".

However, the approach, levels William Chaitkin in his essay Alternatives (which tellingly, was later omitted from the book in which it was published) was 'anti-purist, rather than being ideologically consistent'.[5] Addressing the political implications of self building and vernacular architecture is perhaps best achieved not through a comprehensive overhaul of power, but through the transference of skills that can transform the everyday experience and empower individuals within broader systems. The call for architecture to transform from a theatricalised culture of expertise to a form of collective, inclusive movement continues to offer ways of addressing sustainable living conditions and social inequality, not least to challenge the rapidly ascending housing crisis. There is no doubt that self-building and making retains its transformative capacities, however it must be acknowledged that it has done so for centuries, regardless of its co-option by social movements throughout time.

5 William Chaitkin, *Alternatives*, in Charles Jencks *Architecture Today* (Harry N Abrams, 1982)

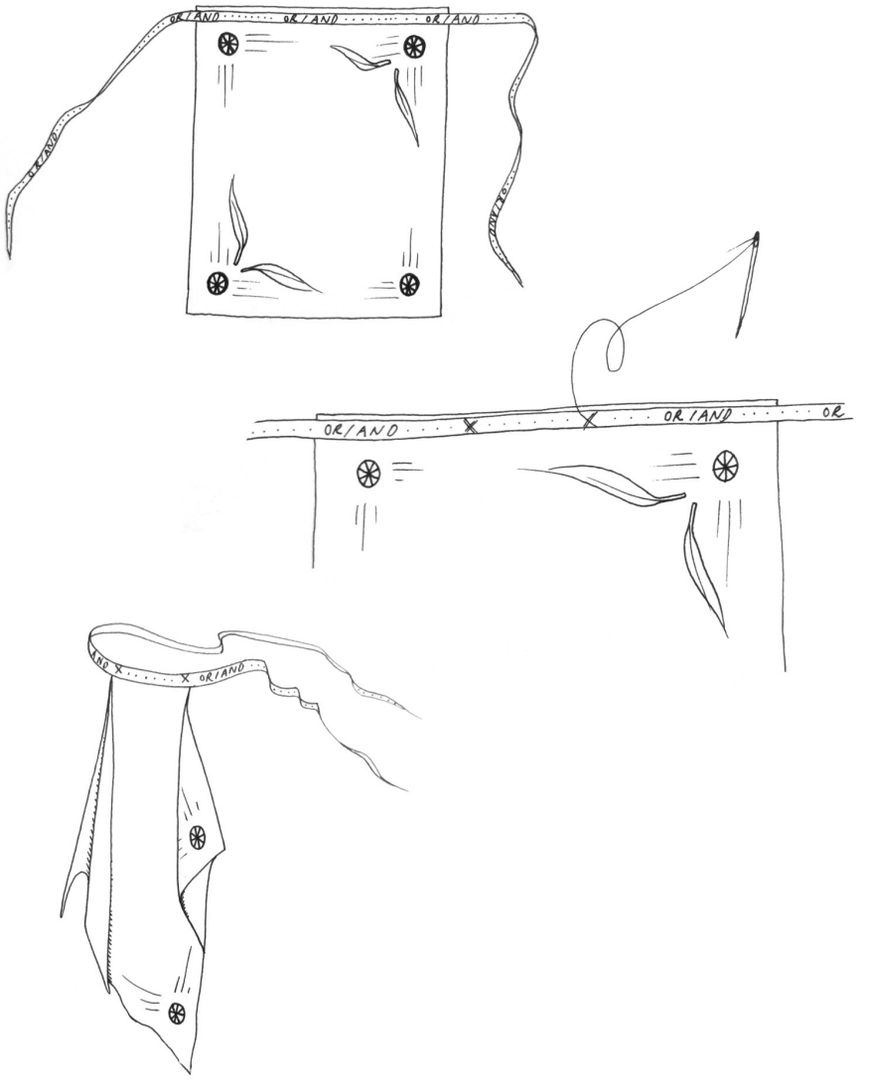
As Paul Oliver argues, 'what will kill the vernacular is the loss of the transmission of skills, rather than the loss of the buildings themselves.' It must therefore be approached with pragmatism and a disavowal the dominance of its aesthetics, so prone to being abstractly romanticised (see for example, the popular blog and now glossy coffee table publication, Cabin Porn, in which images providing 'inspiration for your quiet little place somewhere' are presented as mute stimulus for over-worked office dwellers). More successful, long term examples can be found in events that provide space for skills exchange, education and debate, such as Habitat Conference, which formed in 1976 as the first in a series of UN endorsed international conferences, and is now due to be repeated in October this year (2016). Recently founded but within a similar tradition is Clayfest, in Cumbria, an event fostering earth building in the UK and Ireland in which the development and exchange of skills is foregrounded alongside education and debate. Self-building and vernacular architecture requires dedicated conservation, but crucially should also be studied and practiced on these terms as a contemporary, rather than an archaeological field of study. As Lindsay Asquith neatly summarises, 'from a purely academic point of view, an understanding of the way in which vernacular traditions respond and react to ecological, technological and cultural changes will offer better insights in the nature of traditions and processes of change... From a more practical and professional perspective, such insights may help us to identify how vernacular architecture may best play a part in current and future attempts to create an appropriate and sustainable built environment for all.'[6]

6 Lindsay Asquith and Marcel Vellinga, *Vernacular Architecture in the Twenty –First Century: Theory, Education and Practice* (Taylor and Francis, 2006)


POTATO
PRINT

APRON


OR/AND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LIVE/WORK

Here follows a partial pictorial history of live/work
in Ireland; beginning around
500BCE & including some of the places
that the Irish have lived & worked
between that time and the present day.

This story of Irish living & working begins with Celts & Vikings,
moves through invasions & migrations,
Anglo Saxons, Normans, English & Scottish, Papal rule,
English rule & Irish rule.

A story of rural origins, suppressions & uprisings,
industrialization & the attendant
drift of rural populations to Dublin.

Georgian Dublin with grand live work housing built for the upper classes & emergant middle, workhouse
or peripatetic living for everybody else.

Subsequent ravages of famine saw the flows of
work & life disrupted by circumstance;
bringing us to the industrial city, the 19th century and mass
migration to England & the United States.

As Irish Independence ends English rule, the rule of capital
progresses in its place. A tiger economy
rising & crashing to rise again with
the Live/Work unit becoming a marketing concept for speculative property development.

Echoing the role artists played in creating & articulating
a new vision for Ireland pre-1916,
this story in pictures ends where it began with a
proposition for a more ecologically
sustainable relationship with nature.
To enable our futures on this planet & to do that
with richer kinship & community.

Grizedale Arts have created
A Fair Land within the courtyard at IMMA, artists,
architects, cooks and gardeners are living in
the residency houses &
working collectively with food as material,
bringing people together
in a courgette economy.

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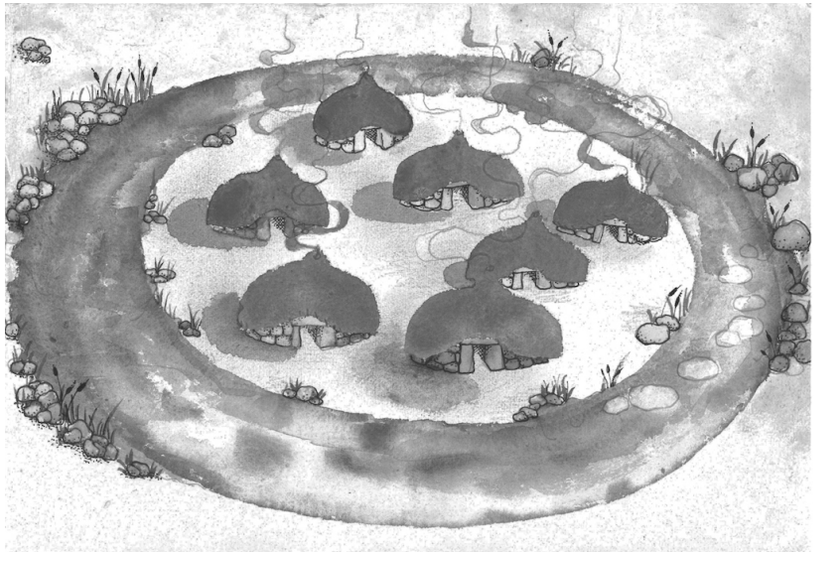
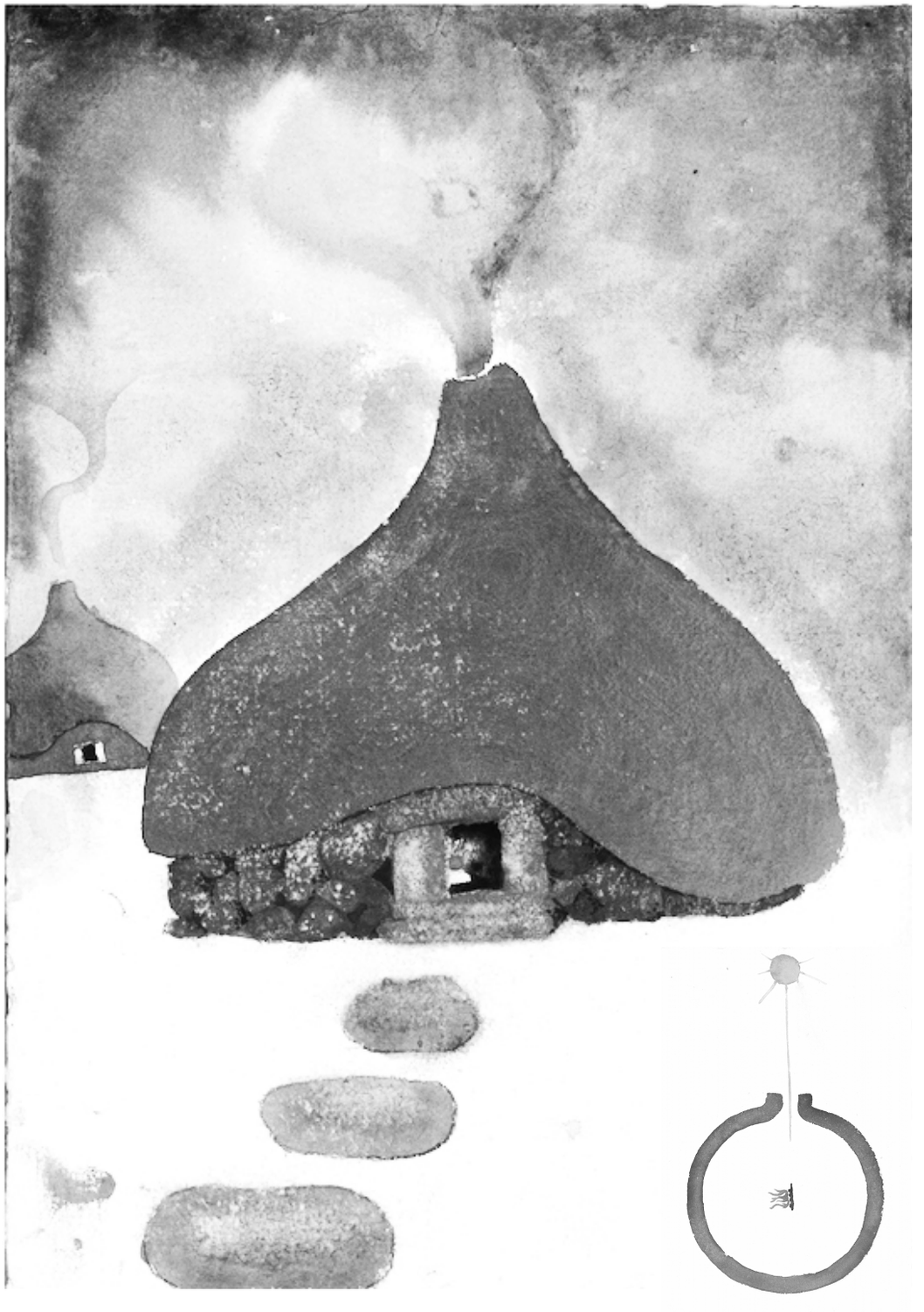
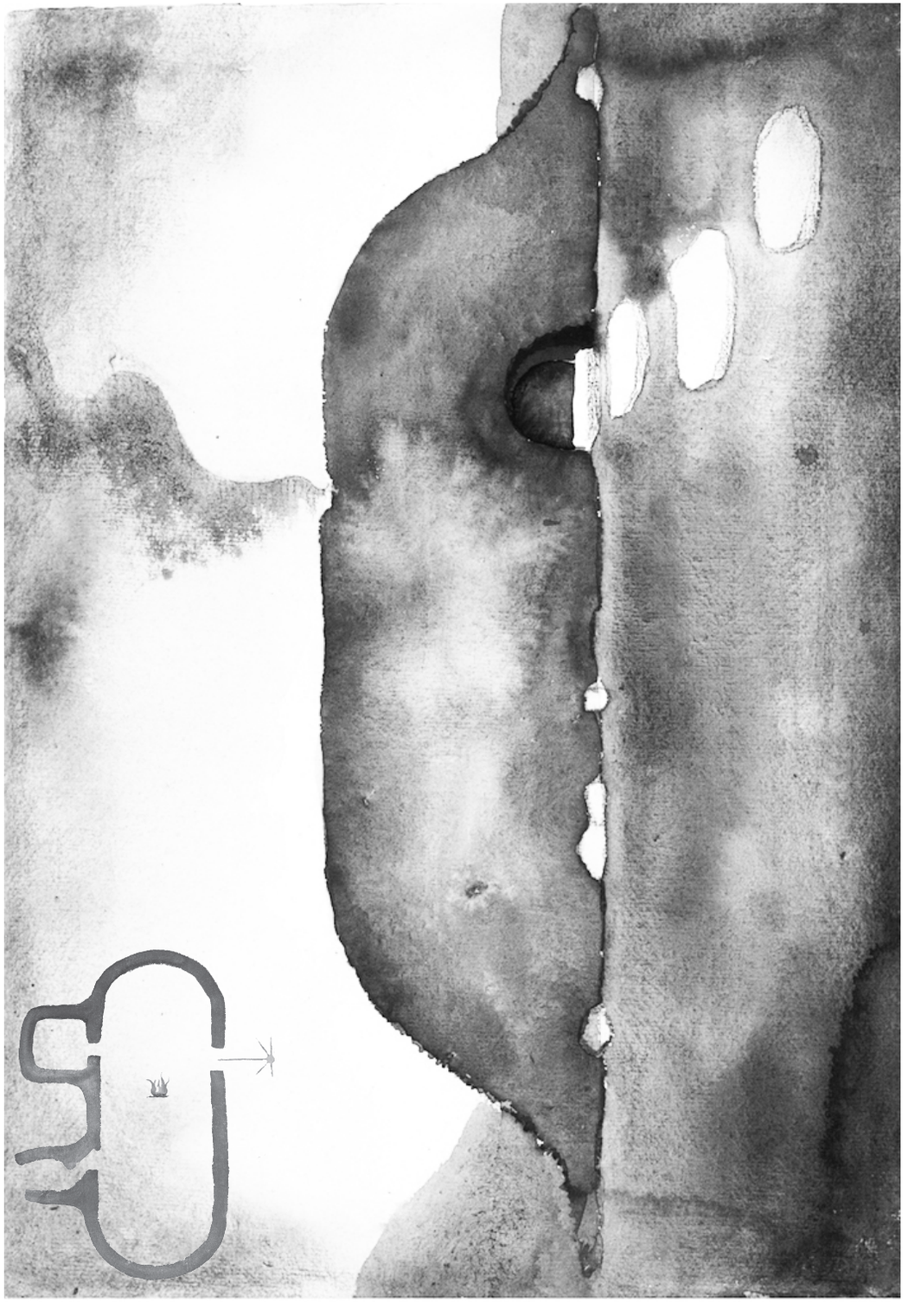
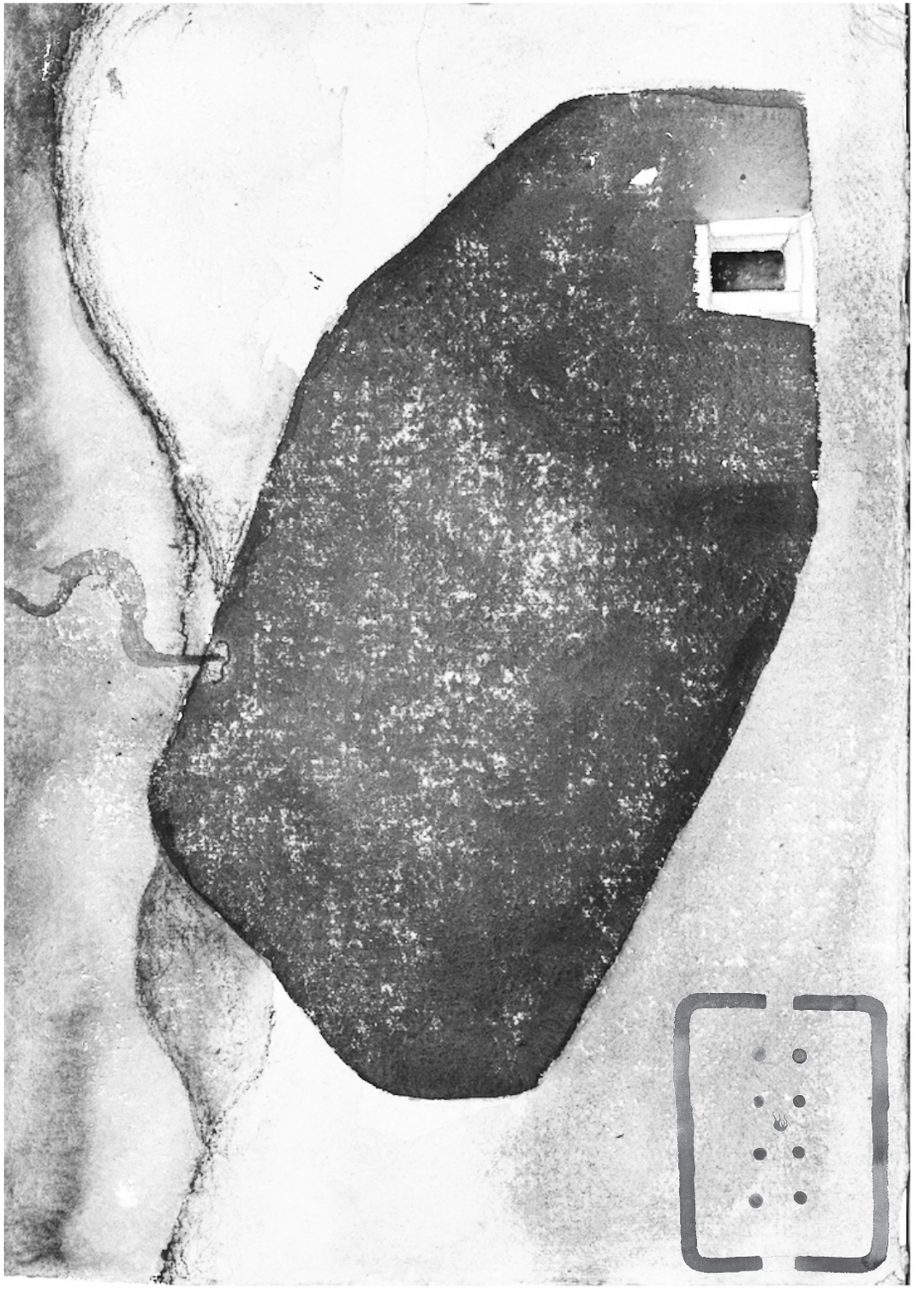


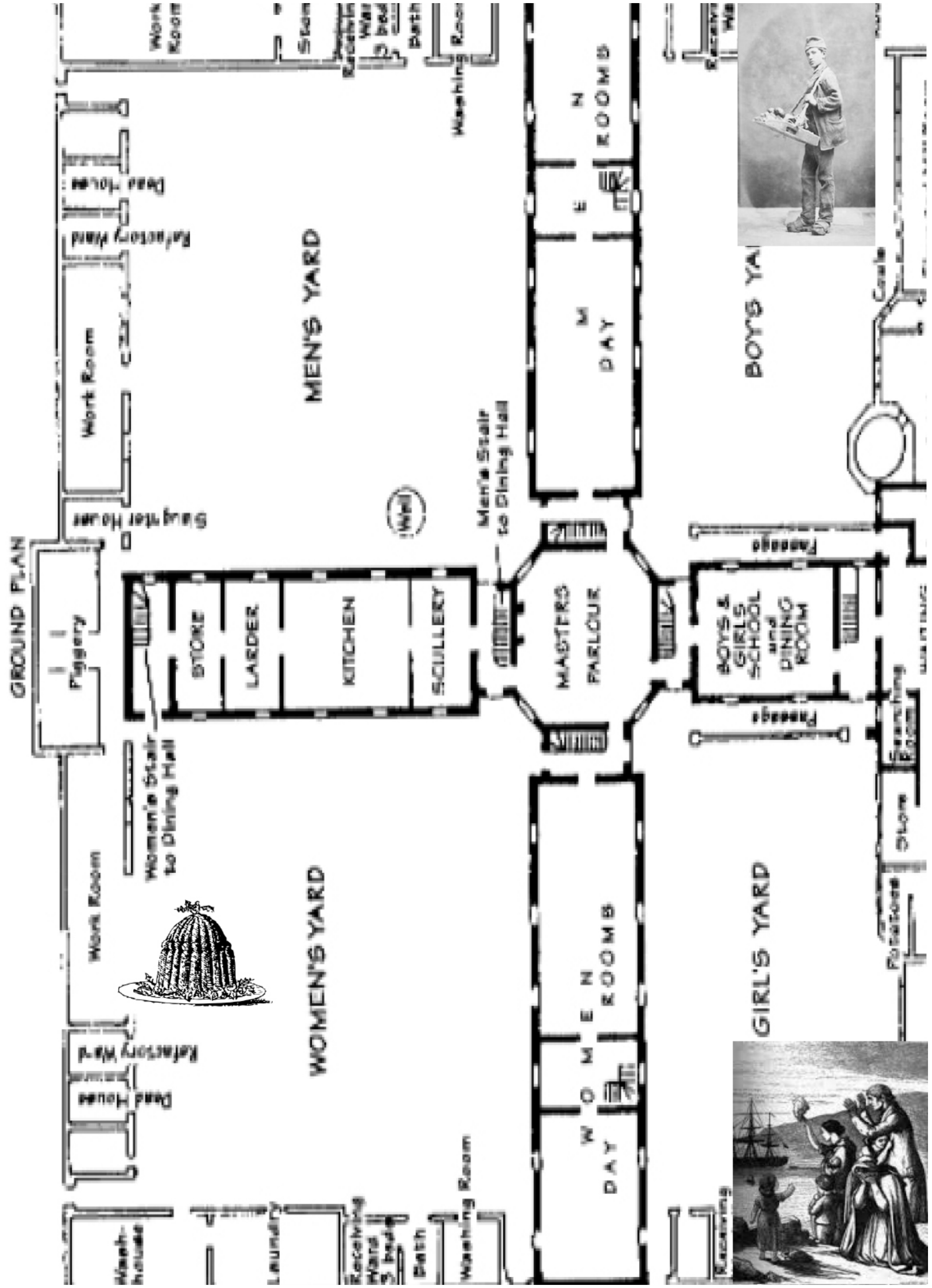







THE
Ouer-throw of an
Irish rebell, in a late battaile:
Or
The death of Sir Carey Adoghertie, who murdred
Sir George Paulet in Ireland; and for his rebellion hath his head now standing ouer
Newgate in Dublin.

Imprinted at London for I. Wright, and are to be solde at his shop neere Christ Church gate. 1608.



LIVE/WORKUNITS:A RELATIVELY NEW concept in the Irish property market, live-work units in four Dublin schemes are being pitched at entrepreneurs and start-up businesses. The most up-to-date figures from the CSO indicate that there has been a 50 per cent increase in the number of people working from home. While most of these people are working from a traditional residential setting, purpose-built live-work suites are a new concept designed to service some of this market.

IRISH TIMES, 2008

ART PHILOSOPHIES THROUGH CRAFT ECONOMIES

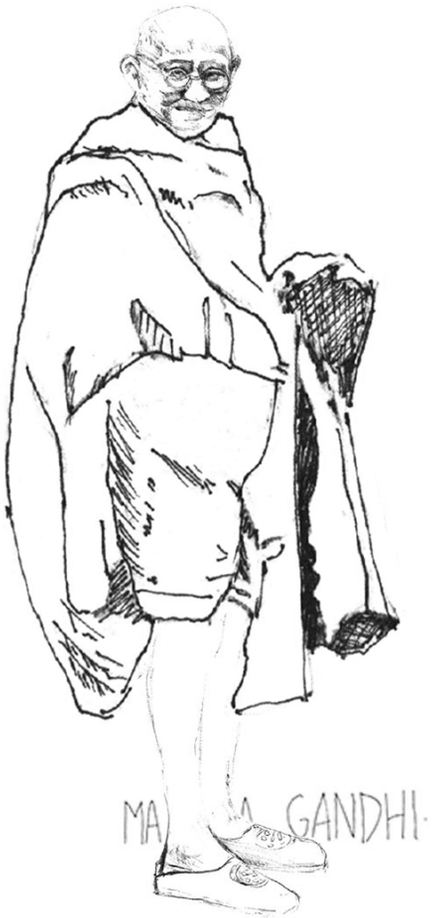
As a forerunner to the *A Fair Land* project, The masters students in Art and Research Collaboration (ARC) from Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design + Technology (IADT) transformed the IMMA project space into *statecraft*, an experimental public research-hub. The students looked at residency in the context of the physical space and place it occupies and found that a lot of visitors were completely un-aware that there is a residency programme at IMMA or even in general what an artist residency entails. Visitors and local residents actively engaged with the notion of IMMA being their museum. As a state institution "a public *state* space" it is of course their space, but this idea was something new to most visitors. This encouragement instantly put visitors at their ease and as a result, they were more ready and willing to engage in philosophical conversations and the physical act of making.

The project ran for three weeks and interwove the histories of two entities—IMMA's Residency Programme and the Free International University model advocated by Joseph Beuys & Dorothy Walker. It opened out ideas about free learning and situated art alongside politics and civics. Visitors willingly explored on Beuys-style blackboards with plenty of ideas and ideals of what the name residency in its broadest term (ie, housing, alternative ways of living, habitat, a sense of place) meant to them and through this activity it was found that many of these suggestions did overlap with ideas around art-based residency (i.e. traditional artists drawing/painting/sculpture studio, a technology based/laptop studio, a white cube studio) and philosophic forms of hospitality. This further opened out furtive interaction with various texts, film pieces, interviews with artists, designers and IMMA staff, talks and archive images. Making workshops were run by students, centred around concepts of up-cycling, identity and alternative forms of communication. The action of cooking/eating together is part of *A Fair Land's* core focus. Both of these projects see art as a verb that arises in collective action, and this is central to understanding the wider scope of what each aims to achieve.

Making and doing certainly have a role in pondering, perhaps a way to see the world with fresh eyes or to challenge viewpoints. In 1931, during India's quest to gain independence from British rule, Gandhi travelled to Lancashire where the textile industry was blaming India for the demise of their trade. Previously the Lancashire mills had purchased raw cotton from India; India in turn bought woven cloth from Lancashire, a symbiotic relationship of sorts, albeit one in which Britain quite clearly had more to gain. In 1931 Gandhi's peaceful ways preceded him and he was invited to come and talk with the local workers about the ban India had made on cotton export. A note posted on the door of a Lancashire mill read "*We welcome Mr. Gandhi in the spirit of friendliness on this visit,*" reflecting a willingness for resolve on both sides. During Gandhi's visit he proceeded to clearly explain why for India's own industry it was important for them to hold onto their raw cotton trade, but equally they were still happy to purchase cloth from Lancashire when additional material was needed.

What transpired to Gandhi during this visit was that the British trade's problems weren't due to Indian supply/purchasing decline alone. While Lancashire's mills valued good relations and were known for their warm humour, their main focus was making money. Despite this, they were romantically attached to the idea of retaining their old "by hand" traditional model and this was preventing them from moving forward. Gandhi was interested in helping them embrace new technology so that the British mills could up their production and compete globally, thus reaching their economic goals.

Inspired by his observations in Britain, Gandhi went on to help bring about the revival of hand woven cloth in India, and in doing so befriended Indian mill owners who he encouraged to set up small social projects which involved local villages. These



WEAVING FOR INDEPENDENCE

projects promoted the act of spinning as a way of life that was self-motivated and life enriching, both economically and socially. Gandhi rose at 4am each morning to engage in spinning; It was the act of spinning cotton/yarn and it was a practice of repetition, dexterity, attention, endurance and transcendence. It was an act that exercised the mind by engaging in one's environment, bringing a rhythm, a stillness at the start of one's day. It was through these efforts that Gandhi encouraged ordinary Indian people to do the same, and in doing so perform daily resistance through their soul force.

Indeed Gandhi was *an architect of a form of non-violent civil disobedience that would influence the world.* This parallels the vision of many involved in the 1916 up rising in Ireland. While it certainly wasn't non-violent, it was driven by ordinary people whose lives were involved in self sufficiency, making, poetry, visual art, music and politics, that was enacted from ground level rather than a hierarchical approach.

Mahatma Gandhi's (1869 - 1948) famous saying is *Satyagraha*, broken down it means *Satya* - Truth and *Agraha* - Polite Insistence. You could paraphrase this as gentle persistence, he used this approach in creating and implementing peaceful protest. He believed very much in communicative civics, in enabling the society you want to be part of.

The feelings of inclusion and the idea of politics/ philosophy/ art taking place at ground level made me think of society and how each member can participate on an equal footing. It nurtures an open environment where things seem do-able. It is a kind of *non-violent civil disobedience* breaking "*the rules*" and opening a wider remit; Collaboration certainly comes with challenges and there is plenty of letting go happening all the time. It will be interesting to see what change and insights this will bring to both organisations, along with all the participants and contributors. Can engaging in this practice alter your viewpoint/ enrich your life? Come, partake and question.

ECO HOUSE, STREET FARM

Designed and inhabited by Graham Caine, Eco-House was a hand built laboratory-come-living-space in Eltham, South London, during 1972-75. Operating as a base for the activities of the anarchist group Street Farm, the house was a closed loop of energy and food production that centered on a methane energy generator supplied by the toilet. Under Caine's meticulously attuned care the house comprised a productive hydroponic greenhouse with a radial pneumatic roof, various solar collectors, and a vertical axis windmill - all of which served a modest dwelling unit containing a fish pond, and insulated by a sod roof.

In Street Farm's lively manifestoes, an ad-hoc, post-industrial revolutionary dialect is informed by horticultural similies – the decaying city as a compost heap for sprouting liberal tactics, the 'weeding' of certain existing technologies - and a range of graphic illustrations and diagrams, in which a herd of anarchist cows invade the metropolis, eating the office buildings. Wedged between the livestock and other assorted 'diagrams of interdependencies', is the firmly held (if slightly vague) assertion that 'the reversal of the inorganic revolution of hierarchical systems will be signaled not with a dispersal of the city into the country, but by a change in the quality of both'. Or put more precisely; a change in the consumer-capitalist mythologies this binary continues to generate.

Caine was in fact a failed student of the Architectural Association, although his passionate final presentation and the nationwide media coverage on his project later saw him offered a position in their faculty. The ultimate fate of the house however, evinces a droll warning on the perils of an absolutist, closed circuit system, both practically and theoretically. When Caine was called away on a family emergency for a few weeks he appointed his favourite AA student to maintain the delicately balanced ecology in his absence – during which time the student contracted the flu, and was duly prescribed antibiotics. Naturally his antibiotics 'passed through' the house as waste - and as the waste was then fed into the recycling for energy, the system was immediately destroyed. An extension to the temporary planning permission on the land was denied soon after, and the house was demolished in 1975 after three years of activity. It is perhaps unsurprising, that a system so reliant on any one individual would be prone to such swift vulnerabilities.

** A comprehensive (and richly illustrated) history of the project can be read in Lydia Kallipoliti's From Shit to Food; Graham Caine's Eco-House in South London.*

IMMA

GRIZEDALE ARTS

Editors: Kirsty Roberts and Miranda Vane
Designers: Midori Fullerton and Drew Wallis

Artists and Collaborators include:
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