

IMMA

Presents

# Tracing Memories

An archive of voices from Studio 10

Episode 2

**My faces never turn out right**

Participants tell us what Studio 10 means to them

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# My faces never turn out right

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Helen O'Donoghue and Brigid McClean with Studio 10 Participants, Bealtaine 2007

Narrator (N): In this episode participants describe what happens in [Studio 10](#), IMMA's gallery and studio programme for over-eighteens. Most importantly, they tell us what they get out of it. To give you some background information first, Studio 10 grew out of a long-term outreach programme with the St Michael's Parish Active Retirement group, in Inchicore, Dublin 8, that was initiated in 1991 by Helen O'Donoghue, Senior Curator: Head



Barry Kehoe with Cathy McArdle and Studio 10 in an Abbey Theatre/IMMA collaboration, 1997

of Engagement and Learning at IMMA and was developed into an open studio model for adults more generally in the mid-2000s. IMMA celebrates its thirtieth birthday this year, as does this evolving programme. I'm Patricia Brennan, and I'm a member of the visitor engagement team at IMMA. I would also like to introduce my colleague, Sandra Murphy. You will hear both our voices in the following conversations with Studio 10 participants.

## **‘I like it for the interaction’**

N: Our first contributor in this episode is Ben Dhonau. We met Ben in Episode 1. He is a retired geologist for whom drawing has always been an indispensable skill. Ben’s analytical mind is engaged by good company and lively, informed debate on art and art related topics.

Ben Dhonau (BD): I like Studio 10, both because of the chance to hear about artists and try things out but also, I like it for the interaction and the rest of it. It stops me being too much of a hermit (chuckles).

Patricia Brennan (PB): Could you say, though, that what you’ve seen here at IMMA – you’re very interested in visiting exhibitions and the changing exhibitions. Has it influenced your own thinking, Ben, or how you might approach creative projects yourself?

BD: I’m sure it has, in the sense that I mean there are things I have done in Studio 10 that I’ve been pleased enough with that I’ve framed them and put them on my wall.

PB: Oh, great!

BD: You know, So, yes, I think it has.



Ben with his own framed artworks and works by other participants on the wall

## **‘A chance to learn things’**

BD: Well, I mean there’s been a chance to learn things and try techniques. It got me interested enough so I did an actual formal class in painting –

PB: PB: I did not know that.

BD: – in watercolour painting.

PB: Great.

BD: So I know how to do it, because painting we didn’t know. And again it’s – drawing was a skill that we were expected to have as geologists. In the old days, the 19th century, you were expected to be a watercolourist.

PB: For someone who’s never experienced Studio 10, Ben, could you describe it; could you sum it up in three words, your experience of Studio10?

BD: In three words! Phew! (Laughter)

PB: Well, you can use more if you wish.



BD: Yeah, there'll have to be a few more than that.

PB: That's fine.

BD: An opportunity for ordinary people to participate in current art themes.

PB: That's terrific.



Barbara Keary

## 'I joined the Studio 10 and that was great'

Narrator: I would like to now introduce Ben's colleague, Barbara Keary, also a scientist. Barbara was impressed by a [work](#) exhibited at IMMA, titled *Anabasis, A Work in Twenty-Four Parts*. *Anabasis* was made in 2003 by Hughie O'Donoghue. The artist used oil paint, inkjet print and resin on books, and so created an enduring and moving artwork from his father's photographs. Many of these images record his father's service with the British army in Italy during World War II. Barbara discussed with Sandra and me a piece she made in response to Hughie O'Donoghue's work.



Hughie O'Donoghue. *Anabasis, a work in twenty-four parts*. 2003. Oil on prepared books with inkjet on gampi tissue. Dimensions variable, individual books approx. 30 x 46 x .65 cm. IMMA Collection: Heritage Gift, 2004.



## 'It took ages'

PB: And you've brought along some pieces that you made there.

BK: Yeah. This one took a long time to do. Now I know, they're not mine, in the sense it's not my idea, ok, but I wanted to see how you did it. That is actually some sort of a take on Hughie O'Donoghue – you could recognise it.

PB: I realised immediately, yes.

BK: And it was really hard to do in the space of three hours and to get the thing dry and we used varnish. But it took ages, I had to really work hard to get that in three hours.

SM: Yes, yeah.



Members of the Visitor Engagement team with Participants of Studio 10.

Top row, L - R: Joan Walker, Domnick Sorace, Chris Jones, Paola Catizone, Sandra Murphy,

Second row, L - R: Ciara Murray, Olive Barrett, Aidan O'Sullivan (photo Brian McCoy), Patricia Brennan, Brigid McClean (photo Brian McCoy)

## 'I was very intrigued by his method'

PB: What materials did you use for that?

BK: Ah, I think it was acrylics, I'm not sure now. And do you see the shine on it?

SM: Yes, yeah.

BK: We got some sort of varnish you know but –

SM: A nice finish, yeah, mm.

BK: But I don't know if I had approached it properly. If I were to do it again. You see he used, mm, he used resin, and he used – I had used resin for my PhD because I used to embed the tissues in araldite, which is resin, and he used resin as well. But he used to sand it down and put layer upon layer and I was very intrigued by his method.

SM: Technique and methods, yes, yeah.

BK: You know, and also, the stuff that he did, the floating bodies that they were all –

PB: His bog bodies.

BK: And his interest in memory, you know, the things he did with old photographs.



Hughie O'Donoghue. *Crossing The Rapido VI*. 2003. Oil on aluminium panel in three parts with inkjet on gampi tissue. 245 x 198 cm each. IMMA Collection: Heritage Gift, 2004

## 'You learn not to be precious'

N: Barbara's sensitivity to materials and methods clearly informs her art making as well as her readings of contemporary art. There is a sense of freedom, imagination and experimentation that goes with Studio 10, the freedom to be oneself, as Barbara describes it for us.

BK: It's a marvellous place, I think. It's – you learn not to be precious about your work, or shy about it. 'Cause you might think it's very bad, but you get over that and everybody puts it up – I think that's a great thing. And, the staff are great, they're very helpful, and if you have a thing going, they leave you to it. But they are understanding and helpful as well as being professional and they don't make any value judgements, which is what they shouldn't do but they don't and a lot of people do make value judgements, you know. So, I think it's a marvellous institution – long may it last, really.



Barbara Keary at work in Studio 10



## **‘Studio 10, wonderful!’**

N: We also met Esmé Lewis in Episode 1. Esmé finds expression in exuberant painting and in her enthusiasm for the lively and collegiate spirit of Studio 10. Perhaps friendship, as much as art, brings the magic to our Friday sessions, as Esmé recounts.

Esmé Lewis (EL): Certainly Studio 10, wonderful! And I think for me the aspect of, when my life wasn’t going through all sunshine and roses, to be able to come up and do nothing. To just come in there and be cosseted by the people who were there at the time and have a cup of coffee or cup of tea and go around and look at what other people were doing, and come out, and not feel quite as bad as I did when I – (chuckles). I was doing things like that with ceramics and stained glass; I’ve done lots of bits and pieces, other than Studio 10 now, in NCAD...



Esmé Lewis, Bloomsday, 2017

## **‘I’m very optimistic’**

PB: It’s worth coming to, then?

EL: Oh, oh, definitely. I’ve encouraged a lot of people to come there. And I’m very pleased with that because they’re people who’ve stayed, as well. Well, I’m very lucky, I think, just the way life has gone for me. I’ve been very, very lucky, really lucky.

Sandra Murphy: You’ve put such a lot into life as well.

EL: Well, I’m a positive person.

SM: You are, you see, you’re very positive.

EL: And I’m very optimistic. I’ve come through a lot of battles in my life and I’m still coming through battles, but they don’t affect me, I’m very positive about things. And that’s a rock.





Studio 10 Participants  
at work

## Colleagues and friends

N: Esme's words bear witness to the significance of social connectedness as a source of human happiness. In Episode 1, we also heard how Ries Hoek arrived in Ireland from Rotterdam at the age of eighteen. Ries had answered an advert which drew many European designers to Ireland from the fifties onwards. Some settled here for good.<sup>1</sup> Throughout his long association with Studio 10, friendship as much as art seals Ries's memories of IMMA.

Ries Hoek (RH): You have great friends, and if you're in art, interested in art, you have colleagues – colleague. Friends, friends, really in the, with the same thinking, they want to do, they want to do something, you know. They want to look at things, they want, but they want to do themselves, something. And if you are not like that, you shouldn't come to Studio 10.



Studio 10 April 2010

## Life-long friendship

N: Ries, in turn, introduced his old friend Noel Moore to Studio 10. Ries explained how he and Noel became friends having worked together and travelled to Greece to film the [Royal wedding](#) in 1964.

PB: So, you met Noel before Studio 10 –

RH: Before we went away, and I got a job in Greece, and I had to film also the wedding and so on. This is a long, long story what I had to do out there.

PB: That was the wedding of the Greek king.

RH: Yeah. But Noel came with me, he was also a bit bored. He – you know, just doing studio work, so he came. A fantastic, nice guy, he chats a lot, and he's interested in art, so. There's nothing wrong with him, eh, he's getting like myself – old.



Ries in the studio

SM: Yes, but isn't it interesting, Ries, that twenty years, or thirty years down the road, you both come together again as friends in Studio 10. Isn't that –

RH: Well, I introduced him to Studio 10.

SM: Ah right, okay.

PB: You did tell us that, yeah.

RH: I said "Come!". But I knew his family; we always were sort of in contact with each other, because later on we worked in other agencies together.



Noel Moore at work



## Making connections

N: Ries and Noel share a lifelong interest in art, design and travel. Noel, whom we met in Episode 1, recalls this connection.

NM: That's right. You see, when I go round these exhibitions, I see something I like I can make a connection with, and I do an interpretation of that type of thing you know. And that's what I do and people over there in the studio, they think it's great, you know. They were all impressed by it, you know, so, which is good.

SM: It is of course.

NM: It gives me encouragement too, to carry on because sometimes you need a good kick in the arse, if you'll excuse the expression, to keep going (laughter). And that's it for me, like. If you hear a bit of – self praise is no praise, you have to hear it from others.



Noel Moore  
*Untitled*

## 'Mind-boggling always'

N: In Studio 10, there is room for discussion and disputes about artworks. Nobody is expected to like everything. It's equally valid to say you don't like it at all. Noel summed up Studio 10 in four words.

NM: 'Impressionable'. Well, it leaves a good impression on you, you know. You'll, you get new ideas from it, all this type of thing. 'Memorable'. Well, you'll always, it is memorable. 'Mind-boggling'. Well then, you come out some days and you don't know what the hell it was all about like (laughter) But still 'n' all you are fascinated by it, it is fascinating to see how other people work and all this type of thing, you know. And then: 'Always'. Well, you'll always remember it, and I'll always remember the days here with IMMA, with the Studio 10 and that, you know, and the nice friends I met there.

SM: Yes, the friendship and –

NM: So that's it, you know. That's my impression. Now that's IMMA, Irish Museum of Modern Art: 'Impressionable-Memorable-Mind-boggling-Always'. You see, that's it.





Looking at *Francis Alÿs: Le temps du sommeil* exhibition, 2010.

## ‘Everybody made me very welcome’

N: We now meet Barbara Geraghty, whose approach to looking at art is one of gentle and thoughtful involvement, an odyssey of discovery rather than textbook interpretation of artworks. Barbara explained to me and Sandra how she first heard about Studio 10.

Barbara Geraghty: Yeah, well when I retired two years ago, I did an online course in Trinity and it was [Strategies for Old Age](#).



And in that there was a video of Studio 10 and Esmé and Mary were in it, and it showed the whole Studio 10 thing, and I just thought this was fantastic, and that was the first I had heard of it.

SM: Right, oh.

BG: So, I pursued that then, after that. So yeah, I was very interested, and everybody made me very welcome and, you don't know what you're at for a while, you don't know what you're supposed to be doing or, you know, so you just get in and do it and enjoy it and you know.

Flower-making workshop led by Joan Walker and Bryan Hogan in response to the IMMA exhibition *Doris Salcedo, Acts of Mourning* 26 April – 21 July 2019

## **'It's a painting and it's personal'**

SM: Do you like the group aspect of it?

BG: I like the group aspect of it, yeah, 'cause it's great to be able to see what other people do and you know they're all – it's all so varied isn't it?

SM: Yes, yes.

BG: You know, they're all so different. It's the one thing, but they're all so different, and that's wonderful. I mean I don't paint, but if I was I would be thinking I should be coming up with this beautiful painting, as I would see it ... But now I can – you can look at things and you can do – do what you want to do and it's still, it's a painting and it's personal and it doesn't have to be this – in boxes, do you know what I mean? Before I came here, say, coming to a modern art exhibition, I could just walk in and walk out and say: "What was that all about?" (Laughter)

SM: Yeah.

BG: You know? But now you can look at it in a different way, you can try to understand what the artist is about.

SM: Yes.



Barbara Geraghty

## **'A huge thing for me'**

BG: I mean it's not something that you're going to say 'Well I can do this, I can understand this', I mean you have to, I think you have to come again and again to get into it. To do a painting or to do a drawing or whatever and try to – what you're after seeing in the exhibition to try to influence – for that to influence what you're doing, you know, and for me it's a huge thing.

SM: You're own interpretation, yes.

BG: Because I never really, I mean I haven't done art since I was at secondary school so it's a huge thing for me.

N: That excitement, that sense of discovery when confronted with the new, is a big part of Studio 10. Continuing that theme in the next extract, you will hear Olive Galbraith's thoughts on the role of sensory experience in sparking imaginative engagement with the visual world.





Olive Galbraith  
*Untitled*

## ‘There’s no ties on you’

Olive Galbraith (OG): There’s no ties on you to do it right or to do it this way or that way. You’re given certain tools, especially when you see an exhibition, you’re armed with a certain amount of information, and it’s up to you how you interpret that, and if you can, put it on paper, you know, so that at least you’ll have a memory of it if you keep it but – and you might get joy from looking at it or you might say “Oh my God, what the hell was I thinking of!” I can’t explain it. I think art is one of the most joyful things that we have, and you can notice art in nature as well. It’s all around us, you know. You begin to see gardens and trees in a different light as well, and you’re always looking for light on mountains or shade in a tree or you know, always something different. And then you see a painting, and you say: “Hmm, why did he do that?” (Laughter). “What time of day was that done?” So, it opens up questions, and the more questions you have, the longer you’re going to live, (laughing) because you’ve to find all them answers.



Flower-making workshop led by Joan Walker and Bryan Hogan in response to the IMMA exhibition *Doris Salcedo, Acts of Mourning* 26 April – 21 July 2019



## **‘A new thing altogether for me’**

N: I’m honoured now to introduce Jean Brady, a veteran of Studio 10. Jean and I spoke by telephone during lockdown, so please excuse the poor sound quality.

PB: So, Jean, who or what would you say was the biggest influence on your artistic life?

JB: Well, it was Helen and Anne that kind of started us off, and then when we went down like it was a complete – oh God a new thing altogether for me, you know, to be able to do art as I said. Now, I’m still kind of not the best at drawing. I think that really is a, God bless us, a gift. You’d have to be blessed in Holy Water to be able to do some of the drawings I do see some of the people doing (laughing). But my faces never turn out right.



Helen O'Donoghue, Senior Curator:  
Head of Engagement & Learning



Jean Brady and John Kenny

## **‘It’s terrific that we can learn’**

N: Twenty-nine years on, Jean is a vivacious presence and an enthusiastic participant of Studio 10. Jean speaks of the benefits to her of lifelong learning. Jean likes having time to develop her ideas in response to each exhibition over a series of sessions, utilising a variety of media.

JB: I think it’s terrific that we can learn, we learn so much now really and truly. Because, janey mac, we never, we wouldn’t have had the chance, you know. I know we never got the chance at school. And I love the way each – every three weeks that we can do something different, you know, that – and you’re getting to know different kind of skills.

PB: Sure.



Jean Brady with *Murphy's Jalopy*, Stills from footage by Domnick Sorace, 2020

## 'You can chat and laugh'

JB: It's all, even if it's painting and it could be something in the middle of the table and you're trying to draw it or it could be anything. But – or even doing things with our hands like working rather than drawing, doing something else even with potatoes, (chuckles) you know what I mean. I'm learning new skills kind of all the time, I find, and at eighty-three, janey mac, I want to keep the brain going too. So, it does, it helps all the time, you know, learning and getting involved. And then the people that are there, the group we have now, my God! They're all lovely and it's terrific that you can chat and laugh and still do your work, you know – and everybody gets on so well and like there's new people joining all the time, which is good, you know.



Jean Brady with *Murphy's Jalopy*, Photo Domnick Sorace



## ‘You couldn’t be part of a better group’

JB: It’s enjoyment. It challenges me to, you know, all different things all the time. And I suppose it helps to keep the brain going – the brain active. You couldn’t be part of a better group than our group down there in the Museum of Modern Art because it’s absolutely terrific and I think anybody that is looking for somewhere to go and do art, they couldn’t go to a better place.

N: Jean is our last speaker in this episode. I certainly agree with Jean, that art offers an exciting and rewarding way to protect and promote brain health, as well as fostering a strong sense of personal achievement. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Studio 10 is the friendship and solidarity of the group. I hope we have managed to convey to you a flavour of this irrepressible spirit, embodied in the voices of Studio 10 participants.

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<sup>1</sup> King, Linda, “(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze: Dutch Influences and Aer Lingus Tourism Posters, 1950-1960”, in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, (Cork University Press/School of Creative Arts, IADT, 2011), p.167.

**IMMA 30** 



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