

IMMA

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Tracing Memories

An archive of voices from Studio 10

Episode 6

The Big Kick-Up:

Studio 10 remembers *ROSC '67*

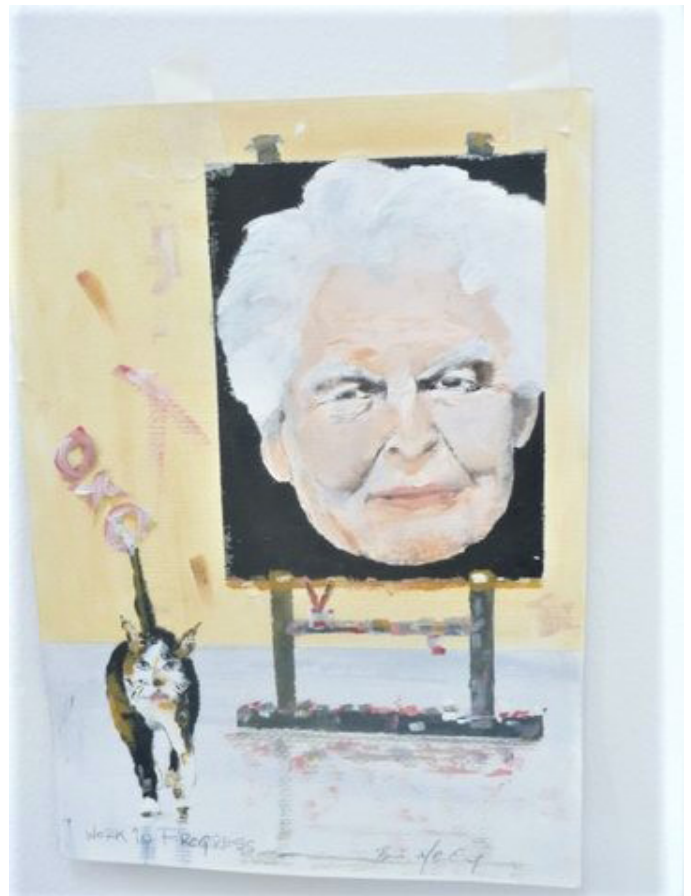
Episode 6

The Big Kick-Up: Studio 10 remembers *ROSC '67*



Patrick Scott. *Rosc Diptych*. 1967. Acrylic on canvas. 122 x 243 cm.
IMMA Collection: Donation, the artist, 2013

Narrator (N): In this episode, [Studio 10](#) casts a backward glance at *ROSC '67*, the first in a seminal series of exhibitions which brought an international and eclectic mix of modern art to Dublin for the first time. *ROSC*, an old Irish word meaning *the poetry of vision*, was the brainchild of modernist architect [Michael Scott](#), aided by [James Johnson Sweeney](#), former director of the Guggenheim. That first exhibition at the Royal Dublin Society was a nationwide sensation, considered significant enough that special buses were laid on so that schools around the country could visit. Participants of Studio 10 who saw [ROSC '67](#) revealed their experiences to me, Trish Brennan of the visitor engagement team at IMMA and my colleague Sandra Murphy.



Brian McCoy's tribute to Patrick Scott.
Photo © Brian McCoy

'You can't hang around on a building site'

Brian McCoy of Studio 10 was working on the installation of a mosaic in the newly built [American Embassy](#) close by the RDS when *Rosc* was opened on the 13th of November 1967, by then finance minister [Charles Haughey](#). Brian recounted the following anecdote of how he rambled in to *Rosc*.

Patricia Brennan (PB): Do you remember when you first began to be interested in art? And what sparked your interest?

Brian McCoy (BMcC): Yeah, yeah, the *Rosc*.

PB: Tell us. Oh was it *Rosc*?

BMcC: Yeah.

PB: Was that the very first one?

BMcC: That was the very first one.

PB: In 1967.

BMcC: There was a big kick up over it.

PB: That's right.

BMcC: And I remember reading in the paper, you know, at the time there was no – There was television but there was nothing like that on television. It was just ordinary, you know quiz shows and stuff like that – black and white. But in the paper there was a kick up over – don't know what it was over but I remember reading about it – I remember people saying that "Oh, that's a load of rubbish", and all that type of thing so I got interested and I went to *Rosc*.



11 November 1967. Press preview of *Rosc 1967 Exhibition* at the Royal Dublin Society, *Picasso's Grand Profil*, 1963, being viewed by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Graham of Dublin.

Photo [irishphotoarchive.ie /Lensmen Collection](http://irishphotoarchive.ie/Lensmen_Collection)

BMcC: But I only went through default. I was working in Ballsbridge, doing – I remember I was working in the embassy at the time. They were building it and I was doing work in it, and I was held up by –

PB: What work were you doing there, Brian?

BMcC: I was doing, I was doing a bit of marble and mosaic, right.

PB: So was that furniture making or what?

BMcC: No, I only installed, I was only a tradesman. The mosaic came and I was putting this panel in. It was a kind of a motif of – American type of an [eagle](#) and flag in the centre section of the – it's a – round, right, and it was a building that was kind of a kick up as well, they were saying it's a horrible looking [building](#) 'n' all like, because it's round, and it was pre-cast. The stuff was brought in and the contractor was Crampton who was from that area – his offices and his yard was in Shelbourne Road I think.

BMcC: I was working there, and I was held up, and it was dinner hour, and you can't hang around on a building site because there's other builders. You're in their way, you know what I mean? They were trying to get the place opened. I remember this fellow [Tip O'Neill](#) was coming, he was the kind of a – what would you call?

PB: Speaker?

BMcC: Ambassador –

PB: Oh right yeah.

BMcC: For Ireland.

PB: A famous character.

BMcC: He was Speaker in the House and they were trying to get things, you know, sorted.

PB: Oh yes.



11 November 1967, Press preview of *Rosc 1967 Exhibition* at the RDS. Michael Scott with Taoiseach Jack Lynch. *Picasso's Grand Nu*, 1964, is visible in the background.

Photo [irishphotoarchive.ie /Lensmen Collection](http://irishphotoarchive.ie/Lensmen_Collection)

‘I was amazed’

BMcC: So I just said “Oh, this thing over in the RDS” and walked across the bridge, walked in, had me working clothes on, you know, which were dirty, walked in the door – they thought I was working there. (Laughter). Yeah and there was this big hall, looked all white to me. I can’t remember a painting, I can’t to this day except for one, there was a nude – this magnificent – I remember saying to myself “Gee! These are fantastic”, you know what I mean? I didn’t know what they were; they were Modern art.

PB: It wasn’t a Picasso, was it?

BMcC: Somebody said it was a [Picasso](#); I don’t know whether it was a Picasso or not, but, it must’ve been, because Picasso was one of my favourite painters and artists, like, you know, so that was it. I walked back out and I was amazed, I remember at this white – and all these – they were all splashes to me, you know. Came out, forgot about it. But that was my introduction to art. But from then on, I got interested in art.

N: While Brian McCoy came across *Rosc* almost by chance, Esmé Lewis wouldn’t have missed *Rosc* for anything. It was undeniably a ground-breaking and breath-taking event.



Esmé Lewis with children Daragh, Eamon, Eoin and Ciara, 1969

‘Totally new’

PB: Did you visit *Rosc* in ‘67?

Esmé Lewis (EL): I did, yes, the first *Rosc*. I really can remember the paintings being out from the walls. That would be my number one memory. That they weren’t hung on the walls, and maybe clutter-hung, you know, really all fighting with each other for space. They were out, and you could walk around, you could look at the back and enjoy. And that for me was a totally – totally, totally new.

PB: Sure, that was Patrick Scott’s installation.

EL: And I was lucky that I got there because by that stage I was married ten years and I’d had six children, so I would be, in inverted commas, a housewife. So to have the op-

portunity to go and visit *Rosc* –

SM: Very exciting!

EL: It was a treat.

SM: Yes, yeah. Gosh yes, and a different venue as well – not the art gallery.

EL: No.

SM: Not the National Gallery.

EL: No, because it was the RDS and we lived in Donnybrook so we were nearby.



13 November 1967. The official opening of *Rosc 1967 The Poetry of Vision* exhibition at the RDS Dublin with the white muslin installation by Patrick Scott. The Celtic Art section was to have been in the centre of this main exhibition but was moved to the National Museum. Photo [irishphotoarchive.ie /Lensmen Collection](http://irishphotoarchive.ie/Lensmen)

‘A brilliant breakthrough’

N: Patrick Scott was responsible, not only for the graphics around *Rosc*, but also for the installation design which so impressed Esmé, where the walls and ceiling were draped in pristine white muslin, transforming the RDS into a veritable [white cube](#). The American art critic Brendan Gill pronounced Scott’s design “the most exciting thing about the entire *Rosc* show”.¹

EL: I’m very lucky ‘cause I knew [Patrick Scott](#) well. We were neighbours in the fifties when we lived in Hatch Street, they lived in Leeson Street. Patrick McLaren and Patrick Scott, Paddy Bedford, Willie Styles – they were all part of it. And I think it was a brilliant breakthrough. It was a breakthrough.

PB: Sure.

¹ [“Ambitious Art Exhibition 1967”](#), *RTÉ Archives*, rte.ie Accessed May 30, 2021.

EL: And when they added the Irish artists later on into it, fair enough, but at the beginning it was just outstanding to have artists that you'd only see names or in books actually hanging in Donny– well in Ballsbridge, in the RDS. You could say for me, being married to an artist I would have had a lot of appreciation.

PB: Yes.



Esmé Lewis, 2019

‘Lots of chat about it’

Sandra Murphy (SM): And would you have been – Friends and relations, would they have also visited *Rosc* at that time do you think or was it just yourself because –

EL: Yes of course they would.



SM: Because of your background.

EL: Yeah the circle, and there would've been lots of chat about it. I can think of most of the friends now who would've been working in Ove Arup. I know one I can think of instantly, and coming to the house, they would visit. We had lots of couples that came and we'd have meals together. We'd have long, long discussions because we shared the interest. They would've known the artist – the Irish artist now, Pat Scott – 'cause he was working

Patrick Scott, *Small Rosc Symbol* 1967. Oil on panel. 152.4 x 152.4 cm.
IMMA Collection: Heritage Gift, P.J. Carroll & Co. Ltd. Art Collection, 2005.

next door I think to Ove Arup at that time, and you'd watch him painting... The mutual friends, they were all artists. And I had lovely photographs. The other day, a friend of mine called Seán O'Mara, he was showing me photos from 1962, and it's relevant to Joyce because they were taken at the tower in Sandycove. But [Brian Bourke](#), [Michael Kane](#), God rest [James McKenna](#), [John Kelly](#), God rest him, as well – Mairéad (Kelly). He was showing me all these photographs, including himself. And we would have been very much part of those circles.

'I kept the catalogue'

N: The majority of the works seen by Esmé and Brian were paintings. However, it was a Conceptual piece by the brilliantly innovative British artist John Latham which resonated with Barbara Keary. Barbara filled us in on her thoughts about *Rosc* and Latham's work in particular.

PB: And just moving on to *Rosc*, Barbara, you have the book there.

Barbara Keary (BK): I have the book.

SM: You have the catalogue.

PB: You've kept the catalogue all these years.

BK: I kept the catalogue, yeah.

SM: So that's brilliant. God, that's an original copy as well – isn't that fantastic!

PB: Beautiful, that's lovely to have.

SM: With the lovely – was that?

PB: The logo by Pat Scott.

BK: Scott, yeah, so that's –

PB: It's in good condition.

SM: It's lovely.

BK: So...



Barbara Keary with husband Raymond
on their wedding day, 1967

‘A big barn of a place’

PB: Ah yeah, it's great to see that. And so do you remember walking in and what –

BK: It was a big barn of a place, and I thought – shabby. It was painted, sort of, with whitewash or white paint inside and all the walls were white and – it wasn't done up in any way. It was clean and the floors were swept and it was a very big space, but that was all. It was draughty, I remember. There was a huge wind as well, and all the paintings were up. I went to see a Picasso, because I'd read about Picassos in books and I wanted to see what Picasso looked like. And I also noticed this work by Latham, John Latham, and the reason I noticed it was – it was white material hanging up – two pieces of white material, all stained... comes out as black spots.



John Latham standing under his exhibit *Soft Skoob*, 1966, hung at the *Rosc* exhibition at the RDS, Dublin, 11 November 1967.

Photo [irishphotoarchive.ie /Lensmen Collection](http://irishphotoarchive.ie/LensmenCollection)

‘This reminded me of a lab coat’

BK: But this reminded me of my lab coat, which – and that was because I had – if you were doing chemistry or anything, your lab coat would be full of holes. That was the whole idea of wearing a lab coat, to protect your clothing, obviously. But I mean for chemistry they would be very dirty. I mean, they'd be well worn and they would have stains on them. And this reminded me of a lab coat. And it was hanging up suspended like that, and the books were being consumed in front of it. And [Latham distrusted](#)

[books](#). He hated books because he said they were full of false stories and they had too much influence on people, which is a bit crazy.

‘One of the first Conceptual artists’

N: Latham courted outrage and dissension, especially in his book burnings. In 1966, his students at St. Martin's School of Art helped Latham to chew up and spit out Greenberg's classic book, *Art and Culture*. [Latham](#) was fired from his teaching post for failing to return the book to the library in a readable form.²



Barbara Keary as a Science student, age eighteen

BK: What's the word, what's the word for art where it's the idea?

PB: Conceptual art.

BK: Yes. He was one of the first Conceptual artists and that is his importance. Now there were three – he has three – this is another one here. And these are all books sort of thrown at a screen and it's weird – they're all sticking out because they're quite weighty books, you know, so that's the third one. This just caught my eye because it reminded me of my lab coat and it stuck with me, right.

PB: That's a great story Barbara, thanks for sharing it, 'cause it's personal.

² Moorhouse, Paul, "And the word was made art: John Latham", *Tate ETC*, tate.org.uk September 1, 2005. Accessed May 30, 2001.

A personal response

SM: I remember actually in one of our Studio 10 mornings – I think it was our last one we had, and we were discussing *Rosc* and Barbara, remember you put up your piece on John Latham?

BK: Yes.

SM: And it was great because we weren't really familiar and we weren't sure about his work at the time, you know, and how we'd fit it in to the Studio 10. But you did explain that and I was very – it was very interesting.

BK: Well I'd never heard of him then – and I've never heard of him since.

SM: So that was a very personal response that you had to his work.

BK: Yes.

SM: Because it was something that was in your life that you could recognise.



The Corleck Head. Early Iron Age, 1st - 2nd century AD. Sandstone, H 32cm
Found, Drumeague, Co. Cavan, c. 1855. © National Museum of Ireland

'All the stone work'

N: In contrast to contemporary works such as Latham's, the ancient art exhibited as part of *Rosc* '67 sparked the [monuments controversy](#). This was the furore over the removal from their sites of ancient artefacts such as the [Tau Cross](#) of Kilnaboy, Co. Clare, in order to be exhibited in the capital. Noel Moore was emphatic in his praise for those extraordinary treasures when he replied to my question about whether he had visited *Rosc* '67. Noel Moore (NM): I did, yeah, in the sixties – early – mid sixties. Sixty-seven I think it was, yeah. Well I enjoyed that. I enjoyed all the old Irish, like the gold stuff, the [torcs](#) and

all that type of thing.

PB: I know – I have some examples here.

NM: And all the detail on the [chalices](#) and...

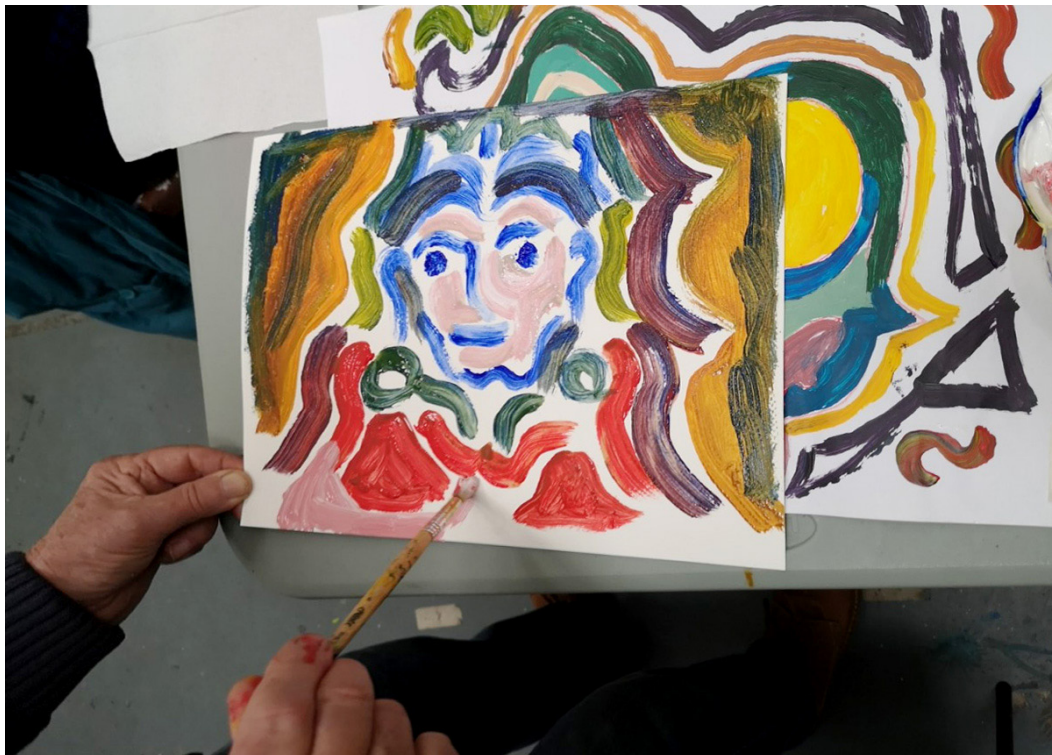
PB: You would've seen this perhaps, the [Glenisheen Gold Collar](#)?

NM: That's the torc, yeah. I thought that was fantastic stuff, you know.

PB: It is, isn't it. And then things like the [Corleck Head](#) and the [Tandragee Figure](#).

NM: I remember that. Stone - that's a head. I remember all those, yeah. This is all the stone work.

PB: Because you – I know you're very interested in Irish art of this period. It comes into your work a lot.



Noel Moore at work in Studio 10

'Monastic ruins'

NM: Ah yeah, I like to go round these old monastic sites around the country. In '67 I was working in Belfast for a while. When I gave up that job – it was in '76... I went round the country in my car and I sketched all. I was going around all these different sites, from Kerry I went right along the west coast, sketching these old monastic ruins, like [Cashel](#) and that on the way down, you know. I have a lot of those charcoal drawings still at home... I was always interested in that type of thing, you know. I love art. I love art, you see, my whole life really. It is, yeah (chuckles).

'Intricate stuff'

NM: Well, that's the stuff I liked, I must say. I was fascinated by that, because I hadn't really, I went around museums but I wouldn't have looked so closely, like, at chalices and that type of thing, but at that I began to take a keen interest in all the engravings on the

chalices and all the handwork that went into it, intricate stuff that went into it you know.

PB: Oh yes, absolutely.

NM: I was fascinated by that. But it was – generally, it was a very good exhibition, I remember that. It was in the RDS I think it was.

PB: That's right, yeah, and there was –

NM: Some of the pieces, now, were very big, the artworks and that you know when I saw them. But I had a book at home of that, one of the souvenir books I took from it.

PB: Well, do you think – what do you think of having all those international artists in Dublin?

NM: Oh I think it's great.

PB: People like Picasso and [de Kooning](#)?

NM: It's great. I've travelled round now in the last few years since. I've been to Berlin, I've been to Rome and all the – Paris – I was in Paris with Ries. I went into the [Louvre](#). We saw the [Mona Lisa](#) there. Ah sure, I love to see all the different paintings.



The Corleck Head. Early Iron Age, 1st - 2nd century AD. Sandstone, H 32cm.
Found, Drumeague, Co. Cavan, c. 1855. © National Museum of Ireland

'I still have the booklet for *Rosc*'

N: It was no surprise to hear that Noel's good friend of many years and fellow graphic designer Ries Hoek remembered his visit to the very first *Rosc*.

Ries Hoek (RH): Oh yeah, oh very well, yeah. I remember that. I still have the booklet for *Rosc*, I think.

PB: Right, did you go to the first one in '67?

RH: Oh yeah, I went there, I went there. Of course I was interested, I went to all these things, you know. I hadn't got time to paint at that time, because I was doing commercial

art. I was so busy in doing commercial art. I worked for a lot of places, I had a lot of clients. What is his name, the Belgian guy? [Louis le Brocquy](#)!

PB: Oh Louis le Brocquy, yes.

RH: He came, and RTÉ was doing a film on [Louis le Brocquy](#) and I had to do – I was the graphic designer on that. I met him there with his wife, you know and – to do the film. I was just a small part – graphic designer, I was. So I had to help the rostrum camera man with all his pictures. I've still a little thing about it, my name is there as a graphic designer.

'I used things like that for design'

N: The exclusion of [Irish artists](#) like le Brocquy from the *Rosc'67* raised some questions but Ries was struck by the ancient Irish art shown at the first *Rosc* exhibition and acknowledged its definitive influence on his own graphic design work.



The Glenisheen Gold Collar
Bronze Age, 800-700 BC
W 31 cm
Found, 1932, Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare
© National Museum of Ireland

PB: And Ries, we've some photographs here of –

RH: Ah, yeah the torc –

PB: – the *Glenisheen Gold Collar* in the museum.

RH: Oh I know them all –

PB: When did you become conscious of these as Irish art?

RH: Well when I –

PB: Would you have visited the museum when you arrived?

RH: The day I arrived, ok, (chuckles) I became conscious of the art. Maybe I had seen already Celtic art things before. You know I used things like that for design even, the torc – [torc](#) it's called.

PB: Was that for the Bord Fáilte ads?

RH: I used it on a Bryan S. Ryan box design. And I used this for a film. You could trace these – big stones. And if you put a cloth in front of it, and you took a nice black pencil, you could trace this and have a nice thing on a cloth. I did that for the film. The film was – oh yeah I was filming for the *Emerald Star Line* on the Shannon and if you look at that film you see me doing – well, you see a person doing it, tracing these old stones – fantastic!

RH: Everything was happening – everything was happening in slow, slow movements, you know. *Rosc* was a movement. And it was all slowly getting aware of what was happening in the artworld in Ireland.



Brigid McClean
St. Brigid's Cross
Wool fibres

The Saint Brigid's Cross

RH: And then I was very interested in film making, you know, and that helped me through RTÉ as well, but I had great interest in the film industry.

PB: That's right, you worked in RTÉ for many years.

RH: Oh, I know it from the beginning – '61, I worked on the [design](#), on the [Saint Brigid's cross](#), but I wasn't the only artist who worked on that. I did a little film even, [opening](#) film, for RTÉ that time, '61. But I didn't want to work full time for RTÉ, they did not need real

artists as designers in that period, so later on I joined RTÉ and I worked for more than twenty-five years for RTÉ, as a designer.



Leda Scully, Ciara Magee and Aintzane (Anne) Legarreta Mentxaka, Visitor Engagement Team

International influences

N: Ries was among a group of Dutch designers who were invited to come and work in Ireland to raise the standards here of design and advertising, especially in Aer Lingus, The Irish Tourist Board – later Bord Fáilte – and Telefís Éireann. With the arrival in Ireland of Dutch illustrators and designers came the influence of modernism, the Bauhaus and the concept of graphic design.³ In a parallel vein, *Rosc* connected with several generations of Irish born and Irish based artists from the sixties right into the late eighties. The sixth and last *Rosc* at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in 1988 [led to the opening](#) of the Irish Museum of Modern Art just three years later and, of course, the founding of [Studio 10](#).⁴



Beth O'Halloran, Visitor Engagement Team

³ 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*, ed. L. King and E. Sisson, CUP and IADT, 2011, pp 167-187.

⁴ O'Donnell, Nathan, "The first ROSC exhibition was, by all accounts, a seismic event", *Apollo Magazine*, May 29, 2017, [apollo-magazine.com](https://www.apollo-magazine.com) Accessed May 30, 2021.

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A Studio 10 workshop
in session

FURTHER READING

Róisín Kennedy, *Art & the Nation State: The Reception of Modern Art in Ireland*, (Liverpool University Press, 2021).

Peter Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision: The ROSC Art Exhibitions 1967–1988*. (Irish Academic Press, 2016).

FURTHER LISTENING

Brenda Moore-McCann, [ROSC 50 – 1967/2017: International Artists' Perspectives](https://www.imma.ie/rosc-50-1967-2017), IMMA Soundcloud, May 17, 2017.

IMMA 30



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