

Eilbhe Donovan

The artistic work of Eilbhe Donovan is inspired by the ever-changing rugged Atlantic coast. The work speaks of isolation and the simple beauty she encounters on her trips by water and land.

A Minimalist Nature Artist, her work attempts to capture the essence of her subject through simplicity – particularly the painted ink works, which, predominantly featuring solitary birds in flight with little or no background, serve to amplify their beauty and fragility.



Working minimally, in intaglio and ink, with a lot of white space gives the work a unique lightness. All her work is taken from own observations, photographs and sketches whilst on walks, sea kayaking and coastering rambles.

The conservation and protection of native wildlife and biodiversity is key to this work. The aim of the artist is to exemplify the beauty and fragility of our natural world, in particular threatened fauna, and to promote an understanding of how our own survival is inextricably linked to the delicate web of interspecies connections. Interestingly, Eilbhe's work veers away from traditionally depicted wildlife styles lending itself instead to a contemporary minimalism.

Her work has been shown both at home in Ireland and internationally and is held in private collections in Ireland, Australia, USA, UK, Germany and Switzerland.

Image: Eilbhe Donovan: *Hodiernus Pterodactylus* / Ink & pencil on cotton paper / 165 x 105 cm, 2022

Seven Heads Studio - Eilbhe Donovan

School Cross, Lislevane, 72 DD37 Bandon, Co. Cork, Ireland

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Eilbhe Donovan

Eilbhe Donovan works from her garden studio in the picturesque South West of Ireland. Having studied Illustration in West Wales School of the Arts, Eilbhe worked as a decorative painter for many years before returning to Fine Art.

Her subject is wildlife, but in a contemporary minimalist style. She achieves this by visiting reserves and marine environments to sketch, photograph, record and observe.

Paintings are using natural hair Chinese ink brushes, painting with water before applying ink using a pipette. This leaves the pigment to spread arbitrarily within the water film culminating in unpredictable results, none of which become truly apparent until fully dry.

The paper is very specific as it holds a strong yet fine line without splintering or bleeding into the fibres of the paper. Sustainably sourced from St Cuthberts Mill in Somerset on a 10m roll x 152.4cm, this large format means the work can be sized exactly. None of her pieces are the same size - the image and the subject dictates the format and size of the work.



Working initially within a far larger size, the finished image is scaled down by tearing, a precise procedure using a hand ruler that can ruin a piece if not executed correctly. In print, works are done with intaglio etching ink in the monoprint technique before running through the press, followed by further manipulation using pencil, acrylic ink and metal leaf.

This monoprint effect is something orphic, almost reticent. Marks made through the process are capricious because of the many variables – the final picture becoming a dreamlike transgression from the source image. Imaginings and stories develop through this process.

Eilbhe intends to create such stories, telling tales of the lives of her studies – the difficulties faced in this increasingly anti-wildlife age. Her message is to communicate the dilemma facing us as one of many species in a shared world. She hopes her work will inform the viewer as such, create a quiet pensive space for admiration of our diverse world and the richness within it - to become aware, one must be still. Her work delivers a peace, a simple beauty.

“I endeavor to capture the essence and soul of the animal I am portraying, shaking off superfluous detail to expose a faint imprint of that creature - a shadow that encapsulates their core being in as few lines, shades, and tones as possible. I like to leave some of the image for the eye and brain to configure, sometimes creating an unintended abstraction. To make minimal, one has to begin with excess.” Eilbhe Donovan

Image: Eilbhe Donovan: Limosa / Ink & pencil on paper, 105 x 155 cm, 2022

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Bio

Exhibitions & Commissions

- 2023 Winter Art Residency, Mauser Foundation, Parrita, Costa Rica
- 2022 Works on Paper Art, Exhibition Centre, Lugano, Switzerland <https://wopart.eu>
Art International Zurich, Kongresshaus, Zurich, Switzerland
"Straight out of Ireland", Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA, USA
- 2021 "Caibhleadh" Grey Heron, Cloughmacsimon, Bandon, Co. Cork, Ireland
Art International Zürich, PULS 5, Zurich, Switzerland
Galerie Am Lindenhof, Pfalzgasse 3, Zurich, Switzerland
Art Nordic, Lokomotivværkstedet, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2020 Art International Zürich, PULS 5, Zurich, Switzerland
Art 3F, Roche Expo, Haute-Savoie, France
- 2019 Glasgow Contemporary Art Fair, Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Scotland
"Flights of Fancy", Cronins of Crosshaven, Co. Cork
Two-person show, "Fragile Expanses", The Ivy House, Drumcondra, Dublin
MAG Swiss, Montreaux, Switzerland
ArtSource, RDS, Ballsbridge, D4, Ireland
- 2018 Winter Exhibition, Group Show, Origin Gallery, Fitzwilliam St., Dublin 2
Private Commission, West Cork, Ireland
ArtSource, RDS, Ballsbridge, D4, Ireland
- 2017 Solo Show, ArtSource, RDS, Ballsbridge, D4, Ireland
Group Show, West Cork Creates, Skibereen, Co. Cork, Ireland
- 2016 Group Show, West Cork Creates, Skibereen, Co. Cork, Ireland
- 2013 Private commission, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2011 "Faultlines" Solo show, Courthouse Arts Centre, Tinahely, Co. Wicklow, Ireland
"Faultlines" Solo show, Greystones Library, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland
- 2007 Design for bowsprit of pedalboat Moksha for return of round-the-world expedition
Private commission, mural for listed Georgian building, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow
- 2006 Townhall Arts Centre, Charlestown, Co. Mayo, Ireland

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- Private commission, Church of Ireland church, Dundrum, Co. Dublin, Ireland
- 2005 Group Show, Wicklow County buildings, Wicklow, Ireland
- 2004 "Island Women", Group Show, Letterkenny Arts Centre, Letterkenny, Ireland
Group Show, Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland
Public Art mural, Donore Avenue Community centre, D8, Ireland
- 2003 Group Show, Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland
- 2002 "Small Things", Solo Show, Signal Arts Centre, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland
- 2001 Illustrations for book, Pedaling to Hawaii by Stevie Smith
- 1995 Commissioned series of drawings for Eco-Lodge Casa Mojanda, Otavalo, Ecuador

State Bursaries, Awards & Affiliations

- 2020 Member of Cork Backwater Artists Group
- 2019 Artists in Schools Programme, funded by Cork County Arts
- 2018 Artists in Schools Programme, funded by Cork County Arts
- 2017 Artists in Schools Programme, funded by Cork County Arts

Education

- 2009-2010 Post Graduate Diploma in Education for Art, Craft & Design
Crawford College of Art & Design, Cork
- 2003-2004 BA(Hons) Art & Design
West Wales School of the Arts, Carmarthen, Wales, UK
- 2001-2003 HND Multimedia
BIFE, Bray, Co. Wicklow
- 1993-1994 NCVA Art, Craft & Design
Grennan Mill Craft School, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny

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Eilbhe Donovan: Traces of Ebb / Monoprint, 50 x 55 cm

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