

THE
DOCK

Marie Farrington

Diagonal Acts

Introduction

by Kate Strain

Diagonal Acts is a multi-platform project by Irish artist Marie Farrington. The exhibition here at The Dock brings together sculptural and site-responsive artwork by the artist, alongside specially commissioned works by invited collaborators. Underpinning the project is Marie's longstanding interest in gaps, fragments and edges, in processes of archaeology and geology, in ideas around memory and place, and in the connection between the human body and the land.

Once upon a time, when Marie was a child growing up in rural Kildare, a piece of land on her family farm was subject to a compulsory purchase order, making way for a new motorway. The site underwent an archaeological dig by order of the local authority. Marie has vivid memories of seeing patches of squared off grass being turned inside out. Walking over the fields to visit the archaeologists at work, young Marie was astonished as objects and artefacts buried in the earth were brought to the surface with care and precision. The excavation mostly yielded flakes of flint and other inconsequential things, but to Marie it seemed as if the secrets of the past were being revealed in front of her eyes. She began to understand history not as something in the distant temporal past, but as something that still exists in the present, that is located directly beneath us.

Throughout Marie's research as an artist, she has looked closely into the fields of geology and archaeology. During her residency at Trinity Centre for the Environment (2021–22), her research repurposed and inverted geological sampling methods as modes of making in the studio.

Fascinated by layering, and the unstoppable force of time as a process of constant accumulation, her works became portals into other practices, through material intervention. In researching archaeological methods, Marie learned that there are no such things as dedicated archaeological tools.

Archaeologists simply borrow tools from other disciplines. Shovels from DIY stores, trowels from garden centres, forks from cutlery trays, brushes from artists' studios. In a similar way, Marie gleans knowledge from other disciplines, bringing processing techniques to bear on her own sculptural practice.

Marie has come to think of the artworks she produces as sitting on a coordinate plane, a basic graph that consists of a horizontal X axis and a vertical Y axis where data (or ideas) can be represented (or imagined). For Marie, the X axis signifies a horizontal movement across; a relational way of being. Relative to the X axis, the Y axis maps a vertical movement. Verticality could be thought of as an historical way of thinking – an opportunity to move downward, into or through – an archaeological excavation of the past, perhaps. Positioning a point Z on the grid allows us to represent time as well as space, by giving an action or an artefact a relative temporal location, reachable via a diagonal line. The title of this project refers to diagonal lines as ways to connect, divide, and move across various planes/disciplines/ places/ideas, through materials as well as through thoughts.

For this exhibition, Marie has invited contributions from other fields. Archaeological illustrator Róisín O Meadhra produced drawings of some of Marie's artworks.

Writer Megan Macedo wrote a text responding to the work *Figures for Lifting*. Graphic designer Alex Synge created a website for the project – www.diagonalacts.com – the site acts as a digital repository of text and image-based material, hosting preparatory drawings and background information.

Marie also commissioned artists to make sculptures inspired by excavation tools. For the collection, Marie created a steel sieve for sifting soil (*ACTS (catch/sift)*, 2025) and a spade made from soil (*ACTS (scrape/dig)*, 2025). Liliane Puthod made a sculptural wheelbarrow for transporting soil samples (*Barrow*, 2025), and Laura Ní Fhlaibhín created a blanket using earthworm poo for nourishing the soil (*blanket for earthworms*, 2025).

These objects will be activated as part of a day of close engagement with the exhibition. Visitors are welcome to join us on **Saturday 18 October** as we sit with the work, read together, activate gestures implied by the sculptural forms and talk about the ideas grounding it all.

//////////

List of Works

Gallery 2

Clockwise from entrance

Marie Farrington, *Toolkit re-collected*, 2025

Various waxes, cotton wick, gouache on linen, painted steel

Marie Farrington, *[x] Floor plan (door frame)*, 2025

Engraved and folded steel, wax

Marie Farrington, *[y] Strike/dip (window panes)*, 2025

Acid-etched tempered glass

Marie Farrington, *[x] Floor plan (radiator)*, 2025

Engraved and folded steel

Marie Farrington, *[x] Registers (floor boards)*, 2025

Acid-etched glass

Marie Farrington, *ACTS (catch/sift)*, 2025

Mild steel

Marie Farrington, *ACTS (scrape/dig)*, 2025

Glass wax, modelling wax, Aughrim soil samples, steel, copper

Laura Ní Fhlaibhín, *blanket for earthworms*, 2025

Digitally embroidered cotton hospital sheet, stainless steel surgical seekers, worm tea, elastic bands (to be activated as part of the exhibition on Saturday 18 October)

Liliane Puthod, *Barrow*, 2025
Steel, spray paint, rubber, aluminium, keyring

Róisín O Meadhra, *technical drawings i-v*, 2025
(to be activated as part of the exhibition on Saturday 18 October)

Gallery 3

Marie Farrington, *[x] Figures for lifting*, 2025
Carved soapstone

Please note: Visitors are welcome to touch, hold, and move the soapstone objects in this room.

////////////////

Acknowledgements

The artist would like to thank Ross Clancy, Sophie Gough, Tricia Farrington, Shane Malone–Murphy, Declan Maguire, Mary Conlon and the team at The Dock.

Further iterations of *Diagonal Acts* by Marie Farrington are taking place at Kunstverein Aughrim in Wicklow and Commonage Projects in London, as well as online at www.diagonalacts.com.

The project is supported by the Arts Council's Visual Arts Project Award and Culture Ireland. Kunstverein Aughrim's collaboration with Marie Farrington is supported by The Arts Council and Wicklow County Arts Office through the annual Strategic Project Award Scheme.

Lifting and Leaning

A text written in response to Figures for Lifting
By Megan Macedo

There is a series of black and white photographs of my granny leaning on an outcrop of rock on a Donegal beach in the early sixties. She's putting her stockings back on after paddling at the water's edge. Her youngest child is not long dead.

I can't look at those photos without thinking of that eighteen-month-old's name carved on the black gabbro gravestone with Granny's name underneath, twenty-five years apart. As a teenager, I used to watch my mother lay fresh flowers and wash the headstone with her bare hands, cleaning off dried grass cuttings and dead leaves. A tender act. The stone washed as if a body. As if a baby.

Laying eyes on Marie Farrington's hand carved pieces of soapstone – pastel greens and greys, ridges and hollows carefully sanded and polished – something about them makes me want to cry. The work is titled *Figures for Lifting* and we are invited to handle these stones, so I crouch down beside one on the gallery floor and stroke it gently. The soapstone is predominately made up of talc, the softest mineral on the earth, and my fingertips almost read it as flesh. It has the silky-smooth feel of a newborn cheek or elderly palm, skin close to the margins of life.

Reaching for the stone with both hands, I notice the grooves on its sides, perfect for fingers, and two shallow dimples on top, a snug hold for thumbs. As I slip my fingers into place, raise the stone off the ground and feel its satisfying heft, I have the immediate realisation that

this is how the person before me would have held it too. Fingers in the same grooves, our bodies manipulated at distance by the sculptor's hand. All of a sudden, time collapses and I am engaged in a collective experience with every body that has ever touched this stone.

Soapstone is often found where the land has collided, fractured, and folded so much that it has risen into mountains. A vicious, imperceptibly slow upheaval that alters the rock forever. Talc is formed by the process of metamorphism. Rocks that crystallised deep in the belly of the earth find themselves subjected to so much heat and pressure that they become permanently altered. Their internal structure forever aligned to the orientation of the trauma they endured. Their softness born of cataclysm.

I've been holding this piece of soapstone for long enough now that it has begun to warm under my hands. The heat of my body permeating its surface. A jolt of emotion pulses through me and I get a flash of my granny sitting on the rock on the Donegal beach. I visited that outcrop of rock recently, circling it before placing my bag on the obvious ledge. As I sat down, I realised I had adopted Granny's exact position in the photographs. The shape of the rock lets us know how it can hold us, shows us where to place our weight, invites us to surrender to it. As I touch it, my body becomes her body. And as I handle this soapstone in the gallery, my flesh becomes that of all those who came before. Bodies coalescing across time, through rhyming movement and echoing pose.

The carving of the finger grooves, the meticulous sanding and polishing, Farrington has thought of us – the shape of our bodies, the need on us – long before

we ever arrived at this stone. The sculpting is an act of generosity. An invitation. Maybe that's what moves me. Farrington is leaning towards us, extending herself so that we might find an easier way in. Reminding us that this is what the land does always.

//////////

Biographies

Marie Farrington is an artist whose practice reflects on the act of making through geological and archaeological lenses. Using casting, carving and other sculptural processes, she engages with memory through situated encounters with landscape and architecture. Her work makes formal reference to field sampling, built heritage and histories of display. She holds a Three-Year Membership Studio at Temple Bar Gallery & Studios and is a part-time lecturer at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. Her work is held in the permanent collections of The Arts Council of Ireland, Trinity Centre for the Environment, and the Office of Public Works. Supported by The Arts Council of Ireland.

Megan Macedo is a writer and facilitator from Derry. Her work explores the interconnection between identity, family systems, landscape, and memory, and is informed by her academic background in geology and the domestic experience of growing up during the Troubles. She's particularly interested in how place holds memory, and how personal and cultural histories shape artistic identity. Alongside her writing, Megan runs seasonal writing challenges and hosts an annual retreat in Donegal, bringing participants into the landscape to investigate their own stories of place, identity, and inheritance.

Laura Ní Fhlaibhín is an artist from Wexford who works with materials related to healing and nourishment, both ecological and autobiographical. She undertook a research residency at The Henry Moore Research Institute Leeds in 2024 and is the Derek Hill Scholarship Residency recipient at The British School of Rome, 2025. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include Britta Rettberg Gallery, Munich (2024); The Complex, Dublin (2024); Commonage, London (2024); Belmacz, London (2023); Palfrey, London (2020). Group exhibitions include Ormston House/EVA International (upcoming); the Irish Museum of Modern Art (2025); Hollybush Gardens, London (2025); and 'Footfalls', curated by Yara Sonseca, Britta Rettberg Gallery, Munich (2024).

Róisín O Meadhra is a professional artist and archaeological illustrator. She graduated with honours from Waterford Institute of Technology with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art. She has exhibited extensively, and her work is held in private collections in America, Australia, England, and Ireland. Róisín is a member of Visual Artists Ireland (VAI), a member of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI), and an affiliate member of CIFAs Graphics Archaeology Group (GAG).

Liliane Puthod is an artist whose sculptural and installation-based practice incorporates both handmade and industrial materials. Recent exhibitions, projects and commissions include Temple Bar Gallery & Studios at The Pumphouse, Dublin Port (2024); Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin (2023); Solstice Arts Centre, Navan (2023); Skerries Art Trail, Fingal (2023); IMMA, Dublin (2022); VISUAL, Carlow (2021); Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast (2020); Pallas Projects Studios, Dublin (2019).

Kate Strain is the artistic director of Kunstverein Aughrim, a curatorial production office that accompanies artistic practice through creative production. From 2016 to 2021, Strain was artistic director of Grazer Kunstverein, Austria. Prior to that she was acting curator at Project Arts Centre, Dublin; a participant of curatorial programmes at de Appel Amsterdam and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; and a graduate of MA Visual Arts Practice, Institute of Art, Design & Technology (IADT), Dún Laoghaire, and BA History of Art and Architecture, Trinity College Dublin. Strain co-founded and collaborates on the curatorial research and commissioning projects RGKSKSRG and Department of Ultimology.

Alex Synge is an Irish graphic designer working under the studio name The First 47. The studio specialises in design for print, web, and visual identity for a wide range of clients in the cultural, commercial, and academic fields. The First 47 has worked with Kerlin Gallery, Temple Bar Gallery & Studios, Ireland at Venice, EVA International, Fruit Shop, States of Entanglement, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Kunstverein Aughrim, and more. Established in Dublin, Ireland, the studio is currently based in Belfast, Northern Ireland.



Leitrim
County Council
Comhairle Chontae Liatroma

