

THE DOCK

Ciara Barker

libraries of rest

welcome to the library

Here, we are making space to consider the value of rest. To explore how it looks and feels. To respect this need, and avoid judging it. To prioritise connecting, feeling, recovering, and playing.

This space invites you to imagine that a new catalogue of library services is being developed. One that will ensure that every person, regardless of their productive capacity, has access to resources and experiences that support their resting needs.

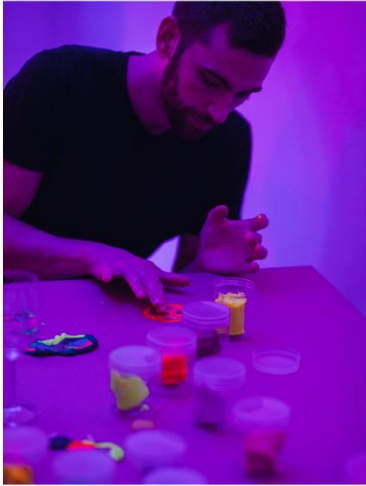
You're invited to reimagine the existing culture that leaves us endlessly busy and exhausted, while believing we're still not doing enough. We need to help each other rest. How might we think outside of systems that value profit over caring for people?

In this space, you will find tools to help you imagine this library. Respond with the materials provided, or by moving around the space, having conversations, playing, daydreaming, lying down, or simply existing.

By sharing your responses and ideas, you are contributing to the library, a growing resource that other people can consult for inspiration. Your responses may be included in future iterations of the library.

previous contributions to the library





Ciara Barker, libraries of rest at transmediale studio in Berlin. Photos by Katie O'Neill.

invitation to reflect

1. What prompts you to slow down? How do you monitor your capacity?
2. If you were paid to rest how would you spend this time?
3. What does a restful space look or feel like? How does it engage your senses?
4. What assumptions do you make about other people resting or not resting?
5. How do you feel when you see a pet or an animal resting?
6. What changes to everyday spaces would allow you to get enough rest? For example in workplaces, schools, supermarkets.
7. Imagine a system where 50% of all paid work involved caring for others.
8. What would towns look like if we prioritised care, leisure, and community over work?

space for reflection

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, outlined in a thick purple line. It occupies the majority of the page below the title, providing a designated area for reflection.

curatorial statement

libraries of rest represents an evolution in Irish artist Ciara Barker's work to date, expanding her previous installation practice to create a fully immersive collective resource. Her artistic approach combines installation, gameplay, sound and light, to inhabit a space between visual art, large-scale environments and critical theory. This interdisciplinary approach is grounded in a material exploration of the body, by creating ephemeral and flexible work that considers people in space. Through accommodations for comfort, this installation work encourages audiences to consider alternative futures centred on collective care, divorced from productivity.

As a concept, the library provides a model for the distribution of collective resources. Libraries, in this context, facilitate an imagined future that opens a dialogue surrounding the role resting can play in people's lives, encouraging audiences to contemplate, with body and mind, what it would be like to access a public service that provides ways to rest. Using materials associated with normative resting, playing and brainstorming practices, Barker invites audiences to collaborate on undoing learned behaviour around resting. Common elements of Barker's visual language feature, with divisions created by mylar highlighted by blue and red lighting. The mylar introduces a permeable and malleable dimension to the idea of boundary, while the depth and line of the lighting play with the demarcation of space.

Barker's practice engages with the constraints of contemporary artistic process, considering the demands placed on artists and arts practitioners to create in specific ways with uniform outcomes. This creation of a collective resource through unstructured participatory methods stands in opposition to the white gallery wall. Barker's exploration of rest as a method of resistance is informed by a number of critical works, including texts by Tricia Hersey, Dr Sandra Dalton-Smith, Sonya Renee Taylor and Dr Devon Price. This scholarship is grounded in an examination of structural inequality and rest as a racial, disability rights and social justice issue that disproportionately affects marginalised communities.

mankyy's soundscape captures restful practices from a variety of perspectives, from dreaming and contemplation to story-telling and creativity. Through a conversation with John Logan, originally from Ballinamore, Leitrim, manky also interrogates restlessness and finality. Facilitating a multisensory engagement with the exhibition's themes, and moving through various states of repose, the soundscape encourages the visitor to engage with an embodied sense of rest.

First created as part of Zeitgeist Irland 24, an initiative of Culture Ireland and the Embassy of Ireland in Germany, *libraries of rest* challenges a traditional focus on productivity, encouraging us to consider speculative futures centred on collective well-being and relaxation.

-Aoife Donnellan, Leitrim, 2025

biographies

Ciara Barker is an Irish artist working with installation, multi-sensory media, and participation. Her work explores how we experience the world through our bodies, considering social and physical structures that shape how we connect, or disconnect, from ourselves and each other. By inviting people into her immersive artworks, Ciara intends to create space for sensory experiences, critical reflections, and the dreaming up of structures that accommodate us.

In 2024, Ciara exhibited *libraries of rest*, a solo show at transmediale studio, Berlin, part of Zeitgeist Irland 24, an initiative of Culture Ireland and the Embassy of Ireland, Germany. As an Artist-in-Residence at Ormston House, Limerick (2019–23), Ciara developed *People Who (...) Have No Dreams*, a large-scale immersive installation, which was exhibited in 2021 as part of The Feminist Supermarket at Ormston House, and at Supermarket Independent Art Fair, Stockholm. Ciara has exhibited in over 20 shows across the West and South-West of Ireland, including the Galway International Arts Festival (2019). She is a co-founder and former director of Spacecraft Studios, Limerick (2017–20). She holds a BA in Fine Art from Limerick School of Art & Design (2017) and a HDip. in Interaction Design from Dublin City University (2022).

Aoife Donnellan is a curator, researcher, and art writer from Limerick, based in Berlin. Her research and curatorial interests are in accessibility practices in exhibition making and sustainable work practices.

In 2024, Aoife curated Ciara Barker's solo exhibition *libraries of rest*, as part of Zeitgeist Irland 24, an initiative of Culture Ireland and the Embassy of Ireland, Germany. In 2022, Aoife was a co-curator at the UCL Ethnography Collection where she contributed an archival study of artefacts that had been lost by the collection. Since 2020, Aoife has been publishing art writing in Berlin, interviewing a wide range of practitioners and reviewing a variety of exhibitions. She holds an MA in Material and Visual Cultures from University College London, where she is currently undertaking an Anthropology PhD in accessibility practices in contemporary exhibition making.

mankyy is a musician and artist from Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare. Based in Limerick since 2018, with a background in sample-based loop music, his work has moved into art booklets, exhibition soundscapes and live improvised performance.

acknowledgements

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