

THE DOCK

The Map and The Mantle

Alice Maher and Rachel Fallon

The Map

Alice Maher and Rachel Fallon have created a monumental textile sculpture. *The Map* is a mobile, hanging piece, viewed from front and back. The richly worked surface presents an epic Mappa Mundi, in which the elements of the cartographer's practice are used as a device to imagine and re-imagine the life, legacy and mythology of the Magdalene and its impact on women's lives.

An alternative topographic and psychic landscape is uncovered in this witty and complex un-picking of the established narrative around Mary Magdalene, with its own continents, winds, currents and constellations. This giant cloth map comprises embroidered, knitted, sewn, painted, appliqued, printed and found components around which the viewer can move.

The artists utilise the iconography of Renaissance maps and medieval tapestries, as well as the language of Victorian 'cartes de tendre' and moral schemas such as 'the Pilgrim's Progress', in order to subvert and challenge the very belief systems and

power structures these maps were established to uphold.

"Maps are neither mirrors of nature nor neutral transmitters of universal truths. They contain silences as well as articulations, secrets as well as knowledge, lies as well as truth." — *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical approaches to cartography throughout history* by Jacob, Conley and Dahl

In this spirit, the obverse side of the piece reveals the alternative patterns and abstract systems which occur in the making and applying of this, or any, schematic representation or world-view. The artists' collective experiences, formed through making banners and performative garments used during the Artists' Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment, have lent this work a certain continuum in terms of activist cultural practice.

The intense amount of work devoted to the piece becomes, for them, a small tribute to the invisible labour of the unnamed women of this country, who carried the label and endured the unjustified shame of 'Magdalene'.

We Are The Map

Next door to *The Map* by Alice Maher and Rachel Fallon, a whisper emanates from a darkened space: *We Are The Map* is a text and soundscape by Sinéad Gleeson and Stephen Shannon.

We Are The Map is an integral audio piece creating an immersive soundscape that accompanies *The Map*. The incantatory sound quest is narrated by an 'everywoman' who moves around a new terrain. The everywoman's freedom of movement is in contrast to the many women who were unable to escape the laundries, mother and baby homes or homes where they worked non-stop.

We Are The Map is divided into 24 sections echoing the 24 books of the Odyssey. It is a journey, a pilgrim's progress, a quest through new lands and terrains.

Gleeson and Shannon collaborated on the sound and texture of the piece, adding music from Mary Barneclutt, Sadhbh Sullivan and Matthew Nolan. It builds to a final chorus of 36 individual voices united

The Mantle - *stairwell*

The Mantle is a new work by Alice Maher and Rachel Fallon addressing the subject of dress, pattern and language as vehicles for social control, particularly in the colonialist context. After premiering at The Irish Arts Center in New York, the work will be exhibited for the first time in Ireland, opening on Brigid's Day.

In 1462, a tax was imposed in Ireland on the wearing of the 'Irish' mantle, a huge cloak worn by both sexes at the time, in an effort to introduce the 'new order' and suppress the old.

Four years later, the wearing of traditional saffron tunics was also outlawed. Clothing patterns held social significance, with 'the stripe' being used as a tool of classification in many different Western cultures. The Sachsenspiegel Law of 1220 reserved striped attire for bastards, serfs, criminals, clowns, prostitutes, traitors and heretics. And while that reading of pattern has changed over the centuries, the stripe is still a mark of difference or outsider status whether negative or positive.

Indigenous languages are often suppressed or subsumed, as was the Irish language, and yet they too surface in myriad expressive ways. The interlacing Celtic knotwork of early scribes is inspiring breakthrough scientific research by scientists today. This textile sculpture employs colour, pattern, symbol and text to uncover and discover the many ways in which suppression is not always followed by annihilation, but can lead to a hyper-branching of culture and to ever more creative and inclusive forms.

The exhibition is accompanied by *We Are The Map*, a text and soundscape by Sinéad Gleeson and Stephen Shannon in response to the work.

We Are The Map

Sinéad Gleeson and Stephen Shannon

in a mantra, their herstories filling areas of Maher and Fallon's mappa mundi.

Voices such as Lynn Ruane, Catherine Corless, Vicky Phelan, Ailbhe Smith, Felicia Speaks, Rosaleen McDonagh, Olwen Fouéré, Marian Keyes, women from Tallaght and the artists commissioned through The Magdalene series. They all carry their own stories that now inhabit *The Map*.

Acknowledgements

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We Are The Map was commissioned by Alice Maher, Rachel Fallon and Rua Red South Dublin Arts Centre to accompany *The Map*.

The Mantle was created for and first shown at the Irish Arts Center in New York.

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Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council