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**2026 SUMMER SCHOOL:
COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

15 – 20 June 2026
Killary Lodge, Co. Galway

CREATE & LEARNING LAB AGENCY. SUMMER SCHOOL 2026

COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE & SOCIAL CHANGE



ALISON CLARKE



ALISHA DOODY



CATHERINE CALLAN



EMMA MC KEAGNEY



EVELYN BRODERICK



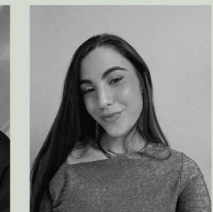
JENNIFER WEBSTER



JOANNA HOPKINS



JOHNATHAN DOSSANTOS



LEEN JAMAL MAAROUF



NOLLAIG MOLLOY



ODHRAN JACK O'BRIEN



PAULA MONGEY



PHILIP RYAN



SOPHIE MEEHAN



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the arts



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LEARNING LAB AGENCY.



The Summer School on Collaborative Practice and Social Change is generously funded by The Arts Council of Ireland with additional support from the National Sculpture Factory, The MAC Belfast, NEIC and Arts Council Creative Place's Programme.

ABOUT THE SUMMER SCHOOL

Welcome to the 2026 Summer School on Collaborative Practice and Social Change and to Killary Lodge, Tullyconor, Leenaun, Co. Galway.

Over the next week, we will engage with a range of topics shaping collaborative and socially engaged practice - including the politics of public art, the increasing role of counter publics and the significance of place in an era of rapid geopolitical rupture and transformation.

The School's 6-day programme draws upon themes outlined in the public callout in addition to the challenges you have highlighted in your in-person interviews.

Using international case studies and in-situ projects, we will explore the visible and invisible forms of labour and the distinct, yet interconnected skills and spheres involved in socially engaged work.

The Summer School on Collaborative Practice and Social Change is designed as a space for standing still, critically reflecting and listening with peer-to-peer collective exchange and mentoring.

We will learn and unlearn together through a mix of cooperative activities – sharing practices, methods, challenges and ideas and ambitions for new projects beyond the School.

SUMMER SCHOOL TEAM

Summer School Director: Áine O'Brien

– Independent Curator/Researcher, Learning Lab Agency

Summer School Producer: Áine Crowley

– Programme Manager, Arts and Engagement, Create

Summer School Assistant Producer: Carolann Courtney

– Programme Coordinator, Create

VISITING ARTISTS AND FACILITATORS

Dominik Czechowski, Curator, Researcher and Writer

John Conway, Socially Engaged Artist

Dana Olărescu, Socially Engaged Artist



You Look As Though You Might Be a Relation, Dana Olărescu,
Moomin Characters, Counterpoints, Gloucester Guildhall 2025. © Andre Pattenden



Previous Page and Above:

You Look As Though You Might Be a Relation (2024-2025), a raft with a sail bearing the slogan, sailed across Gloucester Docks during Refugee Week (UK). Built with people from refugee backgrounds to mark the 80th anniversary of the first Moomin book, *The Great Flood*, it was co-commissioned and co-produced by Counterpoints and Gloucester Guildhall with support from Moomin Characters. The sail is currently on display as part of the 'Escape to Moominvalley' exhibition at the Architecture and Design Museum in Helsinki, Finland.

Keywords:

COMMISSIONING, DECOLONIAL, COLLABORATIVE, AGENCY, INFRASTRUCTURES, LONGITUDINAL, COUNTER, PUBLIC, SCALE, MAKING, FACILITATION, PLACE, COMMUNITIES, AUTHORSHIP, DIGNITY, NEURO-AFFIRMATIVE, AESTHETICS, SOCIAL CLASS, YOUTH, CARE, ETHICS, LABOUR, NARRATIVE, EXTRACTION, IDENTITY, PARTICIPATION, CIVIC, RECIPROCAL, STORIES, NETWORKS, OPACITY, CONTRADICTIONS, ENTANGLEMENT, UNPAID, ECOSYSTEM, LEGITIMACY, VALUE, EVALUATION.



Outpatients →



Previous page & above:

Mobile Printing Press (2025-ongoing)

Installation aspects of a custom fabricated mobile printing press, produced during the first year of a 2-year residency in Naas General Hospital. Targeted at engagement with patients in End of Life Care, Palliative Care, and with Life Limiting Conditions.

SCHEDULE 15 - 20 JUNE

Please note that the one-to-one Mentoring Schedule will be circulated on Day 2

DAY 1 MONDAY 15 JUNE

4PM	Arrive at Killary Lodge Get settled + tea and scones
6:00 – 8:00 PM	Welcome and overview of programme Áine O'Brien and Áine Crowley Who is in the room and why? Sharing of select images and what people are currently working through in their practice.
8:30 – 10:30 PM	Dinner

DAY 2 TUESDAY 16 JUNE

Keywords: Infrastructure, Ecosystem, Extraction

10:00 – 10:30 AM	Daily Review
10:30 – 12:00 AM	Dana Olărescu
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch
2:00 – 3:30 PM	Sub-Group Conversations
3:30 – 6:30 PM	Free Time/Mentoring Opportunities
6:30 – 8:00 PM	Dinner

DAY 3 WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE

Keywords: Commissioning, Longitudinal, Authorship

10:00 – 10:30 AM	Daily Review
10:30 – 12:00 AM	Dominik Czechowski
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch
2:00 – 3:30 PM	Sub-Group Conversations
3:30 – 6:30 PM	Free Time/Mentoring Opportunities
6:30 – 8:00 PM	Dinner

DAY 4 THURSDAY 18 JUNE

Keywords: Making, Facilitation, Place

10:00 – 10:30 AM	Daily Review
10:30 – 12:00 AM	John Conway
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch
2:00 – 3:30 PM	Sub-Group Conversations
3:30 – 6:30 PM	Free Time/Mentoring Opportunities
6:30 – 8:00 PM	Dinner

DAY 5 FRIDAY 19 JUNE

10:00 – 10:30 AM	Daily Review
10:30 – 12:00 AM	New Prototypes – Group Creative Challenge
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch
2:00 – 3:30 PM	New Prototypes – Group Creative Challenge
3:30 – 5:30 PM	Collective Feedback/Conversation
5:30 – 8:00 PM	Free Time/Mentoring Opportunities
8:00 – 9:30 PM	Dinner

DAY 6 SATURDAY 20 JUNE

11 – 12:30 PM	Summer School Wrap-Up and Goodbyes
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Right: Taste of Transformation - An Alternative School of Food Politics (2025-2026) in Nelson, Lancashire (UK), commissioned by Super Slow Way and in-situ, offers monthly public cooking sessions, site visits (co-operatives, land trusts, farms etc.), communal meals and discussions, and the construction of an outdoor mobile table inspired by a Pakistani bus.



Taste of Transformation, Dana Olărescu, Super Slow Way and In Situ, 2025 © Diane Muldowney

SUMMER SCHOOL AREAS OF INQUIRY:

- The various forms of 'value' associated with collaborative and socially engaged practice.
- Managing expectations with commissioners, funders, and community partners.
- Re-examining the commissioning process, providing time for preliminary research before co-production.
- Building trust with 'critical friends' and 'champions' in long-term projects.
- Navigating the relationship between craft, care, and the essential role of aesthetics in collaborative and socially engaged projects.
- Addressing the challenges of co-creating material and cultural infrastructures within contested public spaces.
- Balancing artistic authorship with the collaborative dynamics of working with communities and collectives.
- Documenting and 'finding the story' of a project in partnership with diverse allies and communities.
- Identifying and establishing both temporary and permanent venues for exhibiting collaborative and socially engaged work, including galleries, public museums and private and public collections, archives and other civic and community spaces.
- Exploring innovative approaches to critical evaluation with potential commissioners, collaborators, and participants.

NARRATIVE-BASED EVALUATION:

How to position storytelling as a methodology and core element of socially engaged practice?

***But we must tell our stories
and not be ensnared by them.***

— Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Water Dancer*, 2019

Who sets the criteria and the language for narrative-led evaluation?

How might creative storytelling provide valuable insights into the collective actions, co-production challenges, and the diverse milestones encountered in collaborative work?

How can we more effectively and broadly communicate the importance and core values of socially engaged practice in driving social change?

SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS INCLUDE:

- How can *storytelling*, when placed at the centre of collaborative and socially engaged practice, help us understand the ‘how and why’ of social change?
- In projects where experiences and perspectives differ, what formats can we use to listen to personal testimonies and collective reflection—creatively translating a full range of voices?
- How to decipher and interpret the emotional labour involved in a project, ensuring participants’ efforts and experiences are equitably amplified and valued throughout the collaborative process?
- How to document and narrate the gradual building of trust and relationships between artists and communities over time, especially in projects with multiple partners, funders, and evolving agendas?
- How to make sense of and openly communicate any erosion of trust between artists, communities, or partners, particularly during periods of conflict or disagreement? How might these stories be equally valid and communicated?
- How can local vernaculars and lived experiences be archived and sustained in different forms of storytelling? Through fiction or non-fiction or a mix of both and across other performative, cross-media platforms?
- How might community stories be (re)claimed in contested places?
- What ethical dilemmas arise when representing sensitive or conflicting stories—how to navigate issues of consent, confidentiality, and agency in collaborative storytelling?



Right: *The Colossus* (2024-2025), John Conway.
 Extract from *The Colossus*, and process image of young people developing the augmented reality aspects and visuals for the work. The Colossus is a socially engaged art project led by John, with Digital Artist Elaine Hoey and Theatre and Film Artist Shaun Dunne in collaboration with young people from North Clondalkin in Dublin and with mothers who have lost children to suicide.



The Colossus (2024-2025), John Conway



Abundant Futures, Kupala Festival curated by Olha Pryymak.
Art House Jersey 2025 © Mark Fox

Abundant Futures (2023—), Dana Olărescu.
An ArtHouse Jersey commission in Jersey, Channel Islands. It explores food justice and migration politics through collaborations with artists and academics; images were captured at Kupala, an Eastern European midsummer festival curated by Olha Pryymak, illuminating connections to nature during wartime.



Right: *Our Place, Our Space* (2023-2026), John Conway. Process images for engagement through bespoke printing workshops with staff and young people for the development of a series of permanent artworks titled *Visual Sanctuaries*, across 14 rooms in The Alders Child Sexual Assault Unit in Connolly Hospital, Dublin.



Our Place, Our Space, John Conway



Our Place, Our Space (2023-2026), John Conway.
Installation view of Visual Sanctuary vii, part of the Our Place, Our Space commission for The Alders Child Sexual Assault Unit in Connolly Hospital, Dublin. Mixed media on felt covered acoustic panels, framed in cherry: including screen printing, collage, found objects, and oil.



Slow Feast, Super Slow Way 2024 © Diane Muldowney

Super Slow Feast (2023-2024), Dana Olărescu.
The final event of a residency on food politics in Nelson, Lancashire, commissioned by Super Slow Way and in-situ. The public feast took place following the anti-immigration riots and enabled political conversations in public space.

SCHOOL VALUES

RESPECT

CONFIDENTIALITY

GENEROSITY

SOLIDARITY

CREATIVITY

COMMUNICATION

LEARNING

HONESTY

LISTENING

PATIENCE

SUMMER SCHOOL WORK AGREEMENT

**HOW CAN WE WORK, LEARN
AND COLLABORATE TOGETHER?**

CODES OF CONDUCT

+ Be respectful + Listen actively + Be aware of language diversity + Be honest and act in good faith + Be collaborative + Be generous + Respect privacy + Ask permission to share info, record or videotape beforehand + Handle disagreement constructively + Everyone has a chance to contribute + Don't interrupt other people, be patient and wait your turn + In break-out sessions, volunteer or nominate someone to moderate conversations.