

**BAFUSHIA  
(A PHYSICALLY  
BOUND PROCESS  
OF FORWARD  
MOVEMENT)**



David McDonagh  
Not Acting Portrait of Stephen Casey Bracken, 2024  
Puffinshill Gallery, Dublin City Council  
2024

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## Director's Foreword

### Barbara Dawson

Hugh Lane Gallery is delighted to present Bafushia, an exhibition of works by contemporary Irish artists who share Traveller heritage. Featuring photography, sound works, paintings and drawings, this exhibition draws us into the heritage and culture of our Traveller communities.

Bafushia was organised by HLG's Education and Community Outreach programme in collaboration with artist Séamus Nolan and Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. Séamus Nolan was the successful recipient of a previous HLG commission in partnership with Create which resulted in our first Traveller exhibition, Traveller Collection at the Hugh Lane Gallery in 2018. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to showcase Traveller art again in the Hugh Lane Gallery as part of our 2025 programme. Both Traveller Collection at the Hugh Lane Gallery and Bafushia give visibility and validation to Traveller contributions to the arts in Ireland and emphasise HLG's commitment to an inclusive cultural environment welcoming all to engage with and enjoy the visual arts.

The word 'Bafushia' was discovered written in a sketchbook belonging to Jack B. Yeats alongside Telling the Cards (1898; Collection: NGI), an intimate watercolour depicting

two women sitting on a wall. The dress of the woman on the right suggests a Traveller woman who may be a fortune-teller. While no record of the word Bafushia being used by Traveller groups or anyone else has been found, through workshops with Traveller participants led by artist Séamus Nolan and the Sligo Traveller Support Group in partnership with Cairde Sligo Arts Festival in 2024, an open and transparent process of inquiry led to the possibility that Bafushia might have been a localised term, reflecting how language evolves and gains meaning when spoken. The group's collective speculative understanding of the word was one of being physically rooted while imagining the future – much like how the word Bafushia itself was a product of the group's speculation.

In creating this exhibition, we opened our collection to a series of workshops facilitated by arts educator and cultural worker Adam Stoneman with Michael Collins, Paddy Collins, Ann Maguire and Mags O'Sullivan where the community, through a process of visual inquiry, selected two artworks to include alongside the contemporary artists on display. These are a rotating sculpture, Impact by Michael Ayrton, and a lithograph, The Pillar by Louis le Brocqy.



Irish Travellers, a minority ethnic group, have a long-shared history of traditions, language, culture and customs that stretches back centuries. Traveller culture is based on a nomadic tradition and sets Travellers apart from ‘settled people’. While Travellers still experience racism, discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion, this exhibition demonstrates the resilience in the community, its strong creative tradition and an ability to look forward in strength and hope.

HLG is proud to present Bafushia, our first group Traveller exhibition in collaboration with its partners. Congratulations to all of the artists involved, Chloe McDonagh, David McDonagh, Frank McCarthy, Leanne McDonagh, Paddy Collins and William Cauley.

Our thanks to Séamus Nolan, Pavee Point and Jessica O’Donnell, Head of Education and Community Outreach, for staging this exhibition and to Rosaleen McDonagh for her illuminating essay. As Leanne McDonagh remarked at the launch, Bafushia is the first time that her work is exhibited in a group show where all of the artists shared a Traveller heritage. We look forward to ensuring this will continue.

Barbara Dawson

Director

Opposite page:  
*The scrollwork and artwork on the archway entrance leading into this exhibition in gallery 6 were painted on site at the Hugh Lane Gallery in January 2025 by Paddy Collins.*

Pages 4-5:

**William Cauley** *Untitled* (c. 2000)

**William Cauley** *Portrait* c. 2000. Photocopy on paper. Courtesy of Bridget Cauley.

**The Candlelight Painter**

*The Life and Work of William Cauley, Traveller, Painter and Poet*

Transcribed and edited by Micheál O’hAodha, 2005







**William Cauley**

Untitled

c. 2000

Acrylic on canvas, 30cm x 40cm

**The Candlelight Painter**

The Life and Work of William Cauley,  
Traveller, Painter and Poet

Transcribed and edited by Michéle O hAodha  
2005

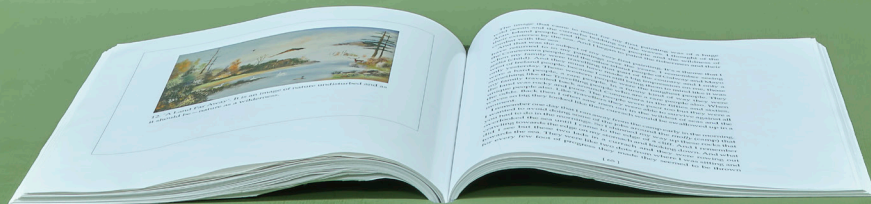
Book, 25 x 25 cm

**William Cauley Portrait**

c. 2000

Photocopy on paper.

Courtesy Bridget Cauley





# Bafushia at the Hugh Lane Gallery

## Martin Collins, Co Director, Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre

Irish Travellers have a unique position in the history of arts and culture of Ireland and continue to make significant contributions to arts and culture in Ireland – especially in the areas of music, singing and storytelling.

Traveller organisations, including Pavee Point, have a long history in promoting pride and engagement, with and by Travellers, with Traveller culture and the arts overall. Since our establishment in 1985, Pavee Point has used a community development approach that empowers and develops self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence to enable greater participation and self-determination.

This work includes publishing Traveller music, oral histories and stories and running events such as the National Traveller Arts Festival in the early '90s. Many Traveller organisations around the country now engage in arts and culture work – often working in collaboration with artists, Traveller and non-Traveller, in photography, sculpture, music and song, literature and visual arts. Galway Traveller Movement runs the successful Misleór Festival of Nomadic Cultures.

The arts and creative expression is a powerful medium to highlight issues such

as discrimination and inequality and plays an important role in fostering meaningful conversations about the collective experiences of Travellers in terms of racism, social exclusion and inequality.

Art structures and institutions need to support the work of Traveller organisations and to ensure Traveller inclusion in mainstream institutions. Travellers need to be involved in arts at all levels – as audiences, artists, industry workers, curators, arts administrators and decision makers.

Bafushia at the Hugh Lane grew out of a previous collaboration in 2017 - 2018 between the Hugh Lane Gallery, Pavee Point and Séamus Nolan through a joint commission supported by Create and Hugh Lane Gallery and entitled 'Traveller Collection'. This current exhibition shows the importance of building relationships and developing a Traveller arts infrastructure.

Since 2018, Pavee Point has established a partnership with the Arts Council and employed its first Arts and Culture Coordinator and developed a programme of activities. This is an infrastructure that needs to be extended to include local groups.

Traveller creativity has always been recognised and valued within the Traveller community – in some forms perhaps more than others. Now, professional Traveller artists are emerging and many are keen to ensure that more Travellers have opportunities in the arts.

Traveller creatives and artists face many barriers in the arts and culture sector – marginalisation, discrimination, digital and other literacy issues, lack of awareness of pathways to progression and lack of social capital and networks. In this they share experiences with other minority ethnic groups.

While acknowledging some progress has been made in relation to women's participation in the arts there are still challenges and barriers in particular for minority ethnic women, including Travellers.

Specific or targeted measures are needed to support Travellers in overcoming barriers, and arts structures themselves need to change to ensure inclusion. Travellers need spaces and opportunities to experiment and explore creativity without pressures to produce, succeed or fit into particular stereotypes or dominant views.

Through consultations with Travellers and Traveller organisations, a consensus is emerging of what needs to change and how. There have been some positive developments over recent years on the part of arts institutions in Ireland to begin to recognise the valuable contributions of Travellers and other minorities. For example, author and playwright Dr Rosaleen McDonagh is currently a member of Aosdána and was recently appointed to the Board of the Arts Council.

It's exciting to see the interest, enthusiasm and talent among Travellers for arts and culture – as exemplified in this exhibition and in the work of other Traveller artists and creatives around the country. It is an exciting time and important that we capitalise on this momentum to fully realise the potential of Travellers in the arts and help to build a more inclusive and diverse society.





Installation view of Bafushia at Hugh Lane Gallery.



# A Traveller Provocation

Dr Rosaleen McDonagh

*“Traveller Art, in all its forms, is an integral component of our struggle for political and cultural survival.”*

## Context

While reflecting on Lady Gregory’s 1903 essay, “Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography,” her call rings sharp: “We must make our own propaganda.” Engaging critically with Gregory’s ideas, we uncover both parallels and tensions between her cultural revival and the Traveller Renaissance we see today. Gregory’s essay wrestles with colonialism and its lingering debris, articulating the urgency of dismantling derogatory Irish stereotypes – like the “pig in the parlour.” Her concern for the Irish psyche, its self-esteem and sense of self-worth, offers a stirring vision.

Her thesis was unflinching: art could confront colonialism and racism head-on. Her words speak to me now, as an Irish Traveller bearing witness to a Traveller Renaissance. Gregory envisioned a cultural awakening where Irish voices, through theatre, could reclaim their identity and demand space in the world of art. Her celebration of rural Irish life invited the nation to reclaim its stories, to write itself back into its cultural fabric. For Travellers, her essay resonates deeply. For our community, art isn’t just celebration – it’s resistance. It’s survival. It’s defiance against the tide of assimilation.



This response to Gregory’s vision reimagines it in the light of contemporary Traveller experiences. It questions the paradox of recognition without systemic support, the transformative power of community arts, and the pressing need for Traveller artists to control the narratives we create. Where Gregory sought to reclaim Irish culture from colonial erasure, Traveller art seeks to dismantle internal hierarchies and elevate diverse voices within Ireland’s broader cultural canon.

Our moment as Traveller creatives has arrived – a vibrant energy driving what I dare to call a Traveller art Renaissance. This Renaissance builds on a legacy of music, storytelling, embroidery, tin smithing, and other crafts rooted in everyday life. Our art has always been purposeful. Yet, when Traveller art is

mentioned in historical contexts, it often centres on settled people’s representations of us – their misappropriations of our artefacts, histories and identities. Institutional racism reinforced stereotypes through museums and cultural institutions, locking our stories out of reach. We had no access to theatres or galleries to see ourselves reflected. The ether carried those tropes, but access was a privilege Travellers rarely held.

Now, our art – in its vast forms, from music to performance to visual art – stakes its claim in the mainstream. Here lies the provocation: we are not here to amuse or educate or entertain. We are here to demand rights, recognition and resources to live and to make great art. Economic reward, while important, is not the singular purpose. The disparities in recognition and opportunity remain stark. Celebration of



Traveller art cannot come at the expense of confronting the deeper systemic issues our community faces. A grant or bursary alone cannot erase centuries of exclusion.

Traveller organisations must be resourced to employ community art workers – to nurture the collective voice. For over 40 years, our community has fought for fundamental human rights: housing, education, protection from racist evictions. Building cultural and artistic platforms isn't a departure from this work but its natural progression – a way to preserve and share Traveller identity while challenging prejudice. Community art amplifies collective stories, not just individual visions. A Traveller-led initiative in this space fosters pride and resilience. Our shift from survival to celebration is a testament to the journey of our movement – a reclamation of identity.

### **The Paradox of Recognition**

Today, Traveller artists are celebrated in exhibitions but often lack institutional backing or sustained support for professional development. This pattern reflects a troubling trend: arts funding for “diverse” cultures does little for the communities these cultures emerge from. Traveller art risks being consumed as an object—a static relic—rather than seen as a living, evolving act of cultural resistance. Local authorities may fund art projects while simultaneously denying our community culturally appropriate accommodations. The paradox is glaring.

Recognition, when hollow, risks devolving into tokenism. Including Traveller art in mainstream

spaces, without addressing systemic inequality, reinforces power imbalances. Traveller artists are often relegated to “folk” or “ethnic” creators, their work celebrated for its quaintness but dismissed as peripheral to Irish art. For too long, settled artists caricatured our stories for settled audiences, stripping our dignity in the name of entertainment. We understand the nuances of the racist tropes embedded in those portrayals.

Similar as Black artists have fought systemic racism to have their voices heard. When the arts sector reflects only a narrow segment of society, it excludes both the artist and their audience. Traveller artists deserve inclusion across all art forms – theatre, dance, visual arts, and beyond. Representation will bring Traveller audiences, too, not confined to our own stories but embracing the spectrum of artistic engagement.

What's missing in this framework is genuine recognition – not just of Traveller art's value but of the lived experiences shaping it. Traveller art must sit at the heart of Irish culture, not as a footnote. To achieve this, our community must lead – funding, curating, interpreting, and owning our narratives. True recognition transforms institutions, forcing them to reflect our realities.

### **Art as Resistance**

Traveller art, in all its forms, is resistance. It is survival in the face of systemic racism. Labelling it “craft” or “heritage” diminishes its power to challenge stereotypes. Instead, Traveller art inhabits Homi Bhabha's “third space,” where identity resists simplistic

categorisation. To truly transform the Irish art world, we must dismantle the entrenched structures that limit our potential. This requires reimagining what it means to be Irish – and an Irish Traveller – in an equitable society.

### **Curatorial Control**

Aruna D'Souza critiques the power structures of curatorial control, reminding us that inclusivity must go beyond token gestures. Traveller artists need ownership of our cultural artefacts, not just to be included but to curate and administer our work. Decolonising the art world means dismantling the colonial frameworks that position our stories as marginal. Traveller artists must frame our experiences, using our authority to challenge the status quo. Without equitable funding and systemic reform, recognition will remain an empty gesture.

As Edward Said's analysis of Orientalism shows, perpetuating colonial power dynamics through “high art” while marginalising “folk art” is a dangerous trap. The question isn't whether Traveller art can be included – it's whether the structures sustaining the art world can reform to embrace the diversity of Irish society.

### **The Art of Defiance**

For Traveller artists, inclusion is not enough. We demand ownership of the spaces that claim to welcome us. Claudia Rankine's call for an art world that confronts its biases cannot remain an ideal; it is a necessity. Traveller art must reshape Irish culture, challenging dominant narratives while nurturing our community from within.

This provocation is not one-sided. Artists – Traveller or otherwise – must be free to create without the weight of representation. My own politics inform my work as a playwright, rooted in Traveller identity. Yet the provocation remains: will the institutions that invite us ever truly integrate our voices, or will they keep us at the margins? Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality reminds us that the compounded discrimination facing Traveller women must be addressed in both artistic and political realms. Traveller art is no monolith – it's a multitude of voices demanding to be seen and heard.

This is our moment. We must be bold enough to showcase our work, to accept critique from peers and mainstream critics alike. Non-Travellers must engage with our art critically, without fear of perpetuating stereotypes. Through this engagement, art becomes transformative – personally, communally, politically. The test isn't in being featured, it's in redefining the spaces that feature us. Equity demands that our voices shape these spaces from within. As James Baldwin said, recognition is not just a gesture – it's an act of defiance, compelling the world to see us as we are.





**Frank McCarthy**, *Grala 2 Maula Sublias Corribin Got'cha*  
(meaning "Shoulder to Hand Boys Hitting Colours" in Gammon/Cant), 2024



**Frank McCarthy**, *Untitled*, 2024, MP3 audio file





Paddy Collins, Violence Against Women Worker, Pavée Point Traveller and Roma Centre and artist Séamus Nolan.

## ‘telling forward’ Séamus Nolan

*Bafushia* stems from an exhibition which was devised as part of the *Hereditas* project, a collaborative artwork led by myself in collaboration with Sligo Traveller Support Group (STSG) in partnership with Cairde Sligo Arts Festival and funded by The Arts Council of Ireland’s Art: 2023 Centenary programme. The aims of the *Hereditas* project can be summarised in three points: to support the work of Traveller artists and the processes of community expression, to ensure that the participants’ voices are central to all elements of the work, and to ensure that long-term relationships are built between arts and Traveller organisations. Those aims have been continued through this exhibition in the Hugh Lane Gallery and the accompanying programme of talks and events hosted by Pavée Point and the Gallery. As an exhibition situated in Dublin City’s municipal gallery, it is the second collaborative project between the Hugh Lane and Pavée Point Traveller and Roma Centre since 2018, and signals a mutual and developmental relationship between the organisations to support artists from Traveller communities. The initial collaboration was part of CAPP, the EU Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme, involving the Hugh Lane, CREATE and Pavée Point Traveller and Roma Centre and culminated in the *Traveller Collection* project and ongoing website [TravellerCollection.ie](http://TravellerCollection.ie)

As recorded on the website<sup>1</sup> or through the Pavée Point Traveller and Roma Centre’s Traveller Arts and Culture Projects digital archive,<sup>2</sup> there are also many examples of Traveller Arts and Artist exhibitions over the course of the past 30 years. The original *Bafushia* exhibition was developed as part of the *Wandering Gaze / An Misló Swuner* exhibition curated by Julie Brazil and presented by Cairde Sligo Arts Festival in collaboration with The Model as part of the festival programme in July 2024. The project set out to explore an equivocation of the subjects of contemporary Traveller artists in relation to the framing of Traveller subjects in the early modernist Irish visual artworks of Jack B. Yeats, with a focus on works from Yeats’s prolific career that either directly identified Traveller / ‘Tinker’ subjects or that presented examples of contiguous cultural subjects relevant to both Traveller and non-Traveller populations. The project involved a series of workshops with participants through STSG which sought to foreground the interpretation of Yeats’s artworks by the community they depicted.<sup>3</sup> The workshops took place with Oein DeBhairduin, the Traveller Culture Collections officer at the National Museum of Ireland, Julie Brazil, the exhibition curator, Tara McGowan, director of Cairde and a participant group from STSG. It was

during one of the workshops that the word Bafushia was discovered in one of Yeats's notebooks. The image *Telling the Cards* (1898; Collection: NGI) shows two women sitting on a wall reading what appears to be a set of cards. Above the image the word *Bafushia* is written. Examining the image together, the group began to speculate as to the meaning of the word and the possibility that it was a descriptive term given to Yeats by the women. The process of collective or speculative interpretation of the word reflected both the workshop group and the women from the image involved in a divination of the future, a telling forward, or imagining of what lies ahead. This speculative process of interpretation might be read as a conjuring of possible futures, a folding or unfolding of visual representation through the artist's work and the group's interpretation.

Acknowledging collaboration as a key element in the development of the project, the Hugh Lane Gallery opened up its collection of artworks to a series of workshops with Traveller participants. The workshops were a continuation of a project that had happened through the education department in the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) in 2023<sup>4</sup>, where participants from Pavee Point and the Cork Traveller Women's Network (CTWN) examined the IMMA collection to curate a virtual exhibition of artworks and provide a short descriptive interpretation of those works and how they were chosen. Facilitated by Adam Stoneman, Mags O Sullivan and Ann McGuire from the CTWN, along with Michael Collins and Paddy Collins from Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre,

examined and selected artworks from the Hugh Lane collection that are displayed with a short collaborative statement as part of the exhibition. Those statements are included in this catalogue along with Dr Rosaleen McDonagh's provocative text but what follows is an outline of the artworks that are part of the exhibition. It is not meant to be directive in how to look at the artworks but is a record of the context that the exhibition exists within, and of some of the research and discussion that has happened in its development.

*Bafushia* is an exhibition that features the work of six visual artists who share heritage and ethnicity within Traveller communities. It is a multidisciplinary exhibition of contemporary artists featuring works of photography, painting, audio, print and a commissioned text. It is also an exhibition where the ethnic identity of the artists is purposefully foregrounded. The artworks, while addressing issues of social or political consequence that are culturally situated, are done so within the broader frame of contemporary rather than ethnographic arts. The distinction, while muddy, is important, in that the artworks on display are concerned with and emanating from issues of Traveller heritage, visibility, community cohesion, diversity and cultural expression. They are, however, contemporary meditations on those subjects rather than examples of easily recognisable community crafts, traditions and participatory practices.

Dave McDonagh's intimate portrait of Stephen Casey Bracken relates very particularly to a psycho-allegorical staging of Traveller identity. Dave is known as both a street photographer

and a filmmaker and carries a camera everywhere, consistently documenting the places and people that he meets. The subject of the portrait, Stephen Casey Bracken, is a Traveller and a trained actor, a young man who had fallen on difficult times. Using his camera both as a tool for his creative output and as a device to engage in collaborative image-making with his subjects, Dave's invitation to Stephen to have his portrait taken was met with his insistence to prepare himself, wash, have a shave and purchase a new shirt – to prepare himself to be seen, to be instrumental in defining how he wishes to be seen.

In its original context, sitting alongside the paintings of Jack B. Yeats, McDonagh's portrait offered a counterpoint to the constructed images of Traveller figures who populate Yeats's artworks. Despite offering a document of the lives and material culture of Traveller communities in Ireland, Yeats's work raises the issue of the uses to which Traveller images and tropes have been employed in the literature and visual culture of the early 20th century. At its most critical departure, in her study of the treatment of Travellers in Yeats's 1905 watercolour *A Tinker*, Julie Brazil proposes that the image of the lone male 'Tinker' is directed towards the emergence of an internal threat to nationalist constructs of domestic stability; the family unit with the woman at its reproductive core. Within this dynamic, the wandering 'Tinker' is a figure of suspicion towards property, its connotations with female bodies (analogous to male property) and the landscape, quite literally outlining the boundaries of national identity in terms of who belongs, their ties to place

and who is outside of or peripheral to those connotations of land and identity.

In contrast, nomadic cultures existed upon the fringes of common or public land usage, and complicate the homogenous relationships to land and belonging that are so deeply engrained or foundational to 'Irishness'. The removal and criminalisation of nomadic practices, the policies of appropriation and eradication of Traveller culture and identity, instituted and sustained by successive Irish governments since the founding of the Irish Free State have been widely documented. As have the legacies of these social policies to assimilate Travellers into sedentary modes which are reflected, for example, in the statistics on mental health, incarceration, substance abuse, and suicide that disproportionately affect young Traveller men.

As an analogical device, the visual representation of Irish Traveller identity raises complex issues of appropriation and control over narrative framing and interpretative analysis that require a concerted investment in intention. What is clear is Dave's intention to tell his own story reflected in his engagement with the people and places he encounters. Stephen Bracken's portrait, the subject, composition and its monumental focus foreground the exchange between photographer and sitter, oscillating between what might be described as the legacies of problematic representations and the generative empowerment of self-representation. Stephen's portrait holds our gaze.

The two images *Rest* (2011) and *Confined*



*Conditions* (2017) are examples of a gestural photorealism that Leanne McDonagh has developed, turning her camera on the spaces and people of her family and community in what at first glance seem familiar or at least not uncommon. Scenes that could be lifted straight from family albums or the growing genre of Traveller photography.<sup>5</sup> Both works on display point towards domestic interiors in terms of the setting but also the perspective. The photographer is at ease, intimate and comfortable with their subject. It is from the artist's perspective that the images are constructed but also distorted as the shutter is left open, the camera records the scene but also the photographer's movements. The artist's body is implied as an actant in how the image is created but also how it is to be read, or unread. The perception of Traveller identity is coded and decoded through the sensorial disruption of the techniques of display or visual information and environment. What is presented is purposefully unclear, and claims a discerning control over the perception of Traveller identity and material culture. It is a veto towards the availability of Traveller representation. The image is obscured by the artist's design, but it is this technique of obfuscation that provides a key to how McDonagh wishes her work to be understood. As she indicated in describing her technique and how it developed:

I like to experiment with the processes I use and to push boundaries, transgressing the standard or expected visual of the same. By doing so I am able to attain a visual I really like, a visual that is both elusive, and ethereal in a way. I like

this because with the blurry hazy image, it invites the viewer in, it allows for people to ask questions about the work and the people or places portrayed within it. I want the viewers to be more inquisitive about what's actually happening here, about what's going on in the piece and to question the concept of it all. I do this in tandem with the notion that we should meet people in same way. I like when people come to me or to other members of the community, who are genuinely inquisitive about who we are and where we come from etc... And I welcome that.

The photographic images purposefully obscure and blur what is seen, or available, and trouble the definitive boundaries of identity — purposefully inviting the viewer to look closely, to examine and decipher for one's self the spaces, people and scenes she portrays. Her images present a barrier to the viewer that is negotiated in careful observation or through dialogue with the artist or the community.

William Cauley's often unpeopled landscapes are drawn from the experience of his early life on the road. At nine years of age, Cauley left his family and set out to wander the roads and country lanes of Limerick, Clare and North Kerry by himself. The imprint of those places and the people he encountered returned to Cauley in his adult life when he was introduced to painting by a family friend.

The untitled landscape that was generously loaned for the exhibition by William's widow

Bridget shows a lakeside scene with a man fishing from a small pier. In the foreground, two riders on horseback wearing red hunting coats amble away from us back into the painting where the tree-lined lake overlooks a small homestead itself overlooked by a hilltop ruin. All the elements of the painting are synonymous with an idyllic or picturesque, even kitsch, landscape tradition. The elements of the scene are hastily treated and the canvas itself has come loose from its stretcher in some areas. It is not, however, the quality of the technique or the accuracy of the scene that is important, what makes this work interesting is exactly its loose treatment and the freedom Cauley demonstrates through his approach to image-making. The photocopied image of William that arrived with the painting is a portrait of William in the act of painting. As a document of the artist intimately involved in the act of painting, the photograph both reflects and reflects upon the staging central to Cauley's work.

William earned the name of 'the candlelight painter' for his habit of painting by candlelight at night in the trailer parked at the front of his Limerick home. Inside the trailer, William conjured images of landscapes that he was no longer free to roam. His work and the context of how and where it was produced entered the mythology of his family and community and he has been cited as an inspiration to younger artists for his dedication to recording the images that preoccupied him but also for his resolve to pursue his own creative path. His trailer, William's one-time mode of shelter and transport, and his makeshift studio still sits in the front driveway fifteen years after

his death. A scenography emerges in the staging of his artwork and life history, a world that implicates both a living and imaginary landscape.

Chloe McDonagh's work emerges from the familial and community history of the removal of nomadic traditions and territories. Chloe describes the triptych of images she created as a series of stamps showing the progression/regression from nomadism to sedentarisation.

Created to celebrate the life of my late Father, Kieran McDonagh, telling the story of his and many other Irish Travellers' upbringing. A golden road travelled by many, in deep silhouettes showing the progression from a nomadic lifestyle to being forced into social housing. An older man with his horse and wagon acknowledging the older generation and traditions. A young woman hanging out her washing beside her caravan as the living situation changes and finally, young children outside a house, stripped of the lifestyle and traditions but remaining in the silhouette giving in to the statement that all Travellers are painted with the same brush. However, no matter how we live and celebrate life the road is always golden wherever we go.

Irish Travellers are an indigenous, historically nomadic minority ethnic group whose ethnicity was recognised by the Irish Government in 2017. The campaign for ethnic recognition was a hard-fought and rigorously contested process which Travellers, Traveller groups and supporters achieved



through the appraisal of both scientific and subjective means. Ethnicity status does not necessarily mean protection and resourcing and was recognised as being largely symbolic but an important and necessary first step in achieving equality.<sup>6</sup> The report of the Commission on Itinerancy from 1963 is often cited as foundational in the forced ‘settlement’ of Irish Travellers. The report along with an analysis of it can be found on the Irish Traveller Movements (ITM) website.<sup>7</sup> Traveller academic and researcher Dr Sindy Joyce provides a further study into the policies and provisions of the Irish Government since the foundations of the state which have been detrimental to the culture and rights of nomadic communities in Ireland.<sup>8</sup> Chloe’s images maintain the form and silhouette of the wagon that provides a strong link to the material and immaterial practices of nomadism. In what is an ironic twist, the series of stamps she has created were purchased by the National Museum of Ireland and are due to be printed by An Post to be circulated through the national postal network. Although the stamp(s) have not as yet been printed or made public, these objects, indexical to an economy of circulation, have more chance of travelling than McDonagh’s father, to whom the image is dedicated.

Paddy Collins’s scenes of both past and current Traveller culture relate a visual tradition distinct to the customs and context of nomadic practice, where previously symbols of Traveller heritage, subjects, colour palettes, ornamentations, etc. had been inalienable to nomadic cultural and material

practices. The stencils for the scrollwork Paddy has created upon the entrance to gallery 6 were borrowed from tinsmith James Collins and are normally used to decorate and finish barrel-top wagons. Similar to the protective signs and symbols used by masons to ward off negative elements, the scrolls define a boundary or threshold that is crossed when entering or leaving the confines of the wagon. Paddy’s artworks can be found in many private collections, and the painting *On the Road Again*, exhibited in the Gallery, has been borrowed from its permanent display in the Traveller education service, Exchange House. A mural of Paddy’s is proudly displayed in the Pavee Point building and his paintings uploaded to TikTok (@paddycollins845) are widely circulated through familial, community and digital networks. These examples of Paddy’s work are displayed in the spaces of Travellers’ cultural heritage, in both the built environment and the evolving digital and circumambulatory platforms. Mary Carruthers is a scholar in memory and mnemonic technique who presents in her writing a genealogy of memory storage as indexical to the built or material heritage of the environment. Carruthers describes how ‘memory as a written surface is so ancient and pervasive in all Western cultures that it must, I think, be seen as a governing model’<sup>9</sup>. In this manner the images of wagons, campfires, sulkies, horses, etc. that Paddy creates operate as forms of memory retrieval specific to Traveller identity. The infrastructure of nomadic life is predicated upon the ability to move, to pick up all of one’s belongings and transfer them easily from place to place. These objects and symbols

remain a strong community identifier despite, or possibly because of, the redundancy of those items in reflecting the cultural practices of contemporary Traveller communities. Conversely, the objects, patterns, colour and forms are devices of memory in the maintenance of culturally situated forms but also in the maintenance of collective identity and the politically salient refusal to be assimilated. Whether in the architecture of settlement or the infrastructure of nomadism, as Carruthers describes the retrieval and construction of memory in the material cultures of Western civilisations presents a form, that is both reflective and generative.

Displaying the traditions and symbols of Traveller culture serves to resist the removal of Traveller identity and cultural expression.

Frank McCarthy is a recent graduate from Limerick School of Art whose Socially Engaged Arts (SEA) practice involves working with young people through music and the unlikely medium of boxing gloves. The triptych of cyanotypes titled *Grala 2 Maula Sublias Corribin Got’cha* (meaning ‘Shoulder to Hand Boys Hitting Colours’ in Gammon/Cant) is made from images of participants in Frank’s *Paint Punch* project, a process that involves working with Traveller boys and teenagers to combine their passion for boxing with paint, performance, and dialogue. The participants don a pair of protective overalls and gloves to dip in paint buckets and create images by punching primed boards. Throughout the process, discussion happens around the lives and well-being of the participants, and images are created to honour family and

community members, traditions and beliefs. A further audio piece that plays in the gallery every five minutes was made with young people through the Southside Traveller Action Group (STAG). The lyrics for this energetic EDM track were written and recorded with Frank during a two-hour workshop and are made up of words from Gammon/Cant that the participants list while stating:

This is our language, it’s not an accent, it’s not our fault that you can’t understand it, some call it Cant and some call it Gammon, these are the words that we whid when we’re chatting.

The third piece of Frank’s in the exhibition is a screenprint titled *Gathera*, meaning ‘father’ in Gammon/Cant. It is an image of Frank as a child with his father surrounded by the wagons and objects his father would have made. The colours of the print radiate from the picture surface creating a warmth that draws us in. The picture plane has been altered, lowered and fixed at an angle to more clearly relate the textual and didactic nature of the image and its subject. Apart from Frank’s desire to have his father included in the exhibition, the image taken from the family album, rendered in bright tones of yellow and red, serves as a document of the intergenerational transference of culturally situated knowledge. As a creative producer, artist and craftsperson, Frank’s father maintained the material and cultural traditions he had learned from his father and community. Reproducing this image of familial and material heritage through the image-making techniques that Frank has



learned introduces a further set of knowledge and formal techniques while maintaining a focus on the source and traditions of the artist's heritage. This focus is maintained throughout the three works that have been created through the social practice Frank is developing with the young participants from Traveller communities in his *Paint Punch* project and through the new mediums and sites of dissemination that the work engages.

Dr Rosaleen McDonagh's text that accompanies the exhibition sets out a provocation towards the integration of Traveller art and artists in the Irish arts sector. The text describes a proposition of redress towards the narrative of Traveller arts in this current moment, for Traveller communities and individuals to have their stories told, to have their history consolidated, and reflected not simply in the cultural spaces of galleries, theatres and museums but also, and more importantly, reflected back to the Traveller communities themselves. To the people, sites and spaces where Traveller culture and identity have been maintained despite the forcible efforts of the Irish state.

This provocation raises the issue of non-Travellers' involvement in how Traveller arts are interpreted, framed and mediated that is exactly the situation of this introduction and exhibition. Being an artist not of Traveller ethnicity reflects the complexities and intricacies of working across cultures as a member of a dominant group. This is an issue that is elemental to contemporary and socially engaged arts practice yet rarely examined. Upon this fulcrum, McDonagh

signals the need for Travellers to maintain ownership over the framing and interpretation of Traveller arts; ownership over the narrative, as well as the places in which Traveller arts are supported, developed and displayed.

As an exhibition of the work of artists whose ethnic identity is foregrounded, many of the artworks make explicit the challenges that exist for Traveller artists and their communities, such as, for example, the historic absence of Traveller narratives and voices in the arts, the need to interrupt and contest negative perceptions, and the safeguarding of creative practices central to family and community arrangements. In meeting these challenges the artworks, along with McDonagh's provocation, share a vision that is both speculative and culturally situated. It is a vision towards Traveller cultural enfranchisement, one that requires actionable and community-oriented solutions within the arts. *A Bafushia*, a collaborative and physically bound process of forward movement.



Artist Leanne McDonagh with Séamus Nolan in front of McDonagh's artwork *Confined Conditions* (2017). (Collection: Hugh Lane Gallery)

1. See <<https://travellercollection.ie/category/5ec4fa961c68859f1fe72d86>> [accessed 14 February 2025]

2. See <<https://www.paveepoint.ie/artsmapping/>> [accessed 14 February 2025]

3. See <<https://travellercollection.ie/items/66d838780d4450d982c136f9>> [accessed 14 February 2025]

4. See <<https://imma.ie/whats-on/spice-partnership-research/>> [accessed 14 February 2025]

5. See <<https://travellercollection.ie/subcategory/5ed122b72a06e97b5159919e>> [accessed 14 February 2025]

6. Haynes, A., S. Joyce and J. Schweppe, *The Significance of the Declaration of Ethnic Minority Status for Irish Travellers*. Nationalities Papers, Volume 49, Issue 2: Special Issue on Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Identity, Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality by Law, pp. 270 – 288 (2021)

7. See *The Irish Traveller Movement Review of the Commission on Itinerancy Report* <[chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://itmtrav.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ITM-Review-of-the-1963-Commission-on-Itinerancy.pdf](https://chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://itmtrav.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ITM-Review-of-the-1963-Commission-on-Itinerancy.pdf)> [accessed 14 February 2025]

8. See <<https://www.iccl.ie/news/whrdtakeover/>> [accessed 14 February 2025]

9. Carruthers, Mary, *The Book of Memory – A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge University Press p16 (1990)





Mags O'Sullivan, Cork Travellers Women's Network with *Impact* by Michael Ayrton and *The Pillar* by Louis le Brocquy.



Mary Collins (foreground) and Helen Collins (background) at the Traveller Community Arts Day at the Hugh Lane Gallery speaking about 'Unpacking Traveller Mental Health' featuring Traveller grub boxes made by Traveller Primary Health Care projects in the Eastern Region.



Vanessa Paszkowska of Pavee Point Roma Programme and Dr Rosaleen McDonagh at her talk 'A Traveller Provocation' delivered at the Hugh Lane Gallery. Photo by Julie Flavin.



Children from St Canice's GNS, Finglas with artist Tamao Oka discussing and sketching Paddy Collins' painting as part of our city-wide project with primary schools.





Installation view of Bafushia at Hugh Lane Gallery.



# Traveller perspectives on works selected from the Hugh Lane Gallery’s collection

## About the Project

As part of Bafushia at Hugh Lane Gallery, these artworks from the Hugh Lane Gallery’s collection were selected by Mags O’Sullivan, Ann Maguire of Cork Traveller Women’s Network, and Michael Collins and Paddy Collins of Pavée Point Traveller and Roma Centre. The group met online and visited the Hugh Lane Gallery in December 2024. The discussions were facilitated by Adam Stoneman. Building on a series of workshops at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 2022 as part of a citizen curation project, this initiative aims to share Traveller perspectives through selecting and responding to artworks in public collections. The texts emerged from group conversations inspired by works from the Hugh Lane Gallery collection.

*The selected artworks Impact by Michael Ayrton and The Pillar by Louis le Brocquy were included alongside the work of the contemporary artists on display.*

Michael Ayrton  
*Impact*  
1974

Bronze and perspex, 33.4 x 24.4 x 22.4 cm  
Reg. 1434



How do you see the other, with barriers in the way? There are so many negative and harmful stereotypes against Travellers in the media. As Travellers growing up, we try to be positive, but when people openly insult us, you learn to stand up for yourself. We have no choice but to be resilient. You are always chiselling your way out of something.

Negative portrayals can lead to internalised shame and struggles with mental health. This is made worse by the barriers Travellers face accessing basic mental health services – a human right denied to us.

In the mirror, a man sees a raging bull. Is he holding something back, keeping his demons at bay? Composure and resilience, inner strength – it can be hard to keep yourself together and not lose the head.

Louis le Brocquy  
*The Pillar*  
1986

Lithograph on Japanese paper, 32 x 45 cm  
Reg. 1711.13



Do you see a man holding a cane or a woman with a harp? A column or a fist held high in the air, calling for change?

How do we celebrate those who make change? Who are the change makers fighting to hold on to Traveller culture? Will we see statues of Nan Joyce in our town squares one day? Brian Maguire’s portrait of Kathleen Clarke in the gallery upstairs shows how we can celebrate the lives of those who do not normally have their stories told.



Other Works

Edgar Degas  
*A Peasant Woman*  
1871

Oil on canvas, 40 x 32 cm  
Purchased through subscriptions collected  
by Clara McCarthy, 1905.  
Reg. 547



A portrait is a mark of respect for the sitter. Having your portrait painted was a privilege. Degas brings an awareness of ordinary people to a more privileged audience. We see this in Brian Maguire’s work too. The making of portraits is a mark of resistance to representation that does not view people as equal.

Deborah Brown  
*Waiting*  
1982

Paper and wire  
Reg. 1563



A protest piece, the figures are chained down, mouths broken. It reminds us of mental institutions long ago. People were thrown into these places if they did not fit in. You could be drugged and given electric shock treatment. You would leave stone mad.

Some young girls who fell pregnant were sent away to cold places like this. Bessborough was a Mother and Baby Home in Cork. Women were made to work; their lives were taken from them.

Travellers have been put in in places like this for long periods with no diagnosis. These things are still going on.

Extra: Notes on Brian Maguire

Brian Maguire’s exhibition at the Hugh Lane Gallery reminds us of that our lives as Travellers in Ireland are relatively privileged. Compared with other parts of the world we live in safety. But you do not have to go to the other side of the world to find human rights being broken. Travellers are denied basic human rights here in this country, when we cannot access housing, education and basic mental health services.

Brian Maguire  
*Bentiu Camp South Sudan 1*  
2018

Acrylic on linen, 200 x 400 cm



Maguire’s painting of a refugee camp in South Sudan could be Spring Lane in Cork or Labre Park in Ballyfermot.

Brian Maguire  
*Strange Fruit (Europe)*  
2016

Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 140 cm, Private Collection



Maguire places a picture of EU flags above the painting of the refugee camp. The EU is linked to the deaths of migrants crossing the Channel. We imagined an Irish flag flying over Spring Lane or Labre Park.

Brian Maguire  
*Child Living From the Waste Food on the City Dump (São Paulo 2003)*  
2022

Acrylic on linen, 290 x 460 cm, Tia Collection, Santa Fe



This work reminds us of the toxic dumps many Travellers are forced to live alongside. The boy represents intergenerational trauma, internalised shame of changing, hiding our identity.



# Artists' Biographies

**Chloe McDonagh** is a Graphic Designer and Multi Media Artist who is currently completing a BA(Hons) in Digital and Graphic Design at TUS Athlone. Winner of the Aontas STAR Award in 2023 Chloe has had her work exhibited in the National Museum of Ireland, and in the Axis centre in Ballymun as part of the Pisreóg project. Chloe was also a featured artist RTE Lyric FM's Aedín in the afternoon, and in summer 2024 exhibited in 'Bafushia' in The Model Sligo. 'My journey into the world of design is not just a professional pursuit but a personal pursuit of creativity. From the early days of childhood, to the intricate designs in this portfolio, my life through art has been a story of personal connection, persistent action, and infusing emotion into every piece.'

**David McDonagh** is a self-taught photographer and filmmaker with a passion for storytelling. In 2021, he received the Misleór Short Documentary Grant, which enabled him to create the short film Dreamer. In 2023, he was nominated for the Bingham Ray Rising Star Award and won Best Short Documentary at the Galway Film Fleadh for Being Put Back Together, a film that explores the power of photography in addressing mental health issues. That same year, David held his first solo exhibition, Exposure, at the Hyde Gallery in Sligo as part of the Cairde Sligo Arts Festival. His work has also been featured in

group exhibitions, including Bafushia at The Model, Sligo (2024), and Pisreóg at the Axis Ballymun (2023).

**Frank McCarthy** is a printmaker, artist, and recent graduate of Limerick Institute of Technology. He currently works as a Musician Educator for Music Generation in Limerick, Cork City, Carlow, and Kilkenny, as well as for The Kabin Studio. Frank has also served as a music and workshop facilitator and coordinator for The GAFF in Limerick City, a resource supporting community and voluntary arts that fosters direct connections between artists, communities, and the public. One of Frank's recent projects, Paint Punch, combines boxing and art for young Traveller boys. The project has been highly successful in County Limerick, helping to boost the participants' confidence, self-esteem, and school attendance. Frank also co-produced the short documentary Knuck & Knuckle with Monica Spencer at The GAFF. The film tells the story of boxer Lee Reeves, a young man from Limerick who uses his passion for boxing to cope with the grief of losing his mother to suicide.

**Leanne McDonagh** is an award-winning Irish artist. She is also a teacher and a member of the Travelling community. She grew up on a halting site, with first-hand experience

of the prejudices and misconceptions that society has about Travellers. As an artist she feels she has a unique opportunity to represent and record her community from within. Numerous pieces of her work were acquired by the Irish Museum of Modern art in 2020, and they now form a part of the National Collection of Ireland. Her work also features in both private and public collections, and since her debut in 2015 she has exhibited both nationally and internationally. She recently illustrated a short story book, titled "Why the Moon Travels," written by a fellow Traveller, Oein De Bhairduin, which is the first of its kind in Ireland and which is the recipient of many awards. She is currently working on a new body of work for exhibit in 2026. Additionally, she is the Traveller education coordinator at Munster Technological University, where she established the Traveller Graduate Network in 2019 and is also developing a work experience programme aimed specifically at members of the Travelling community.

**Paddy Collins** is a self-taught painter who was born in the UK and moved back to Dublin when he was seven. His talent was spotted at school where he was encouraged to improve his arts skills. In the early 2000s, while working for Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, Paddy had the opportunity to work with the painter Eamon Colman, who mentored him for

a year, helping to refine and develop his craft. Paddy paints representations of traditional Traveller life, often depicting scenes of camps, fires, wagons, horses, dogs, and the natural world. He is deeply committed to promoting Traveller culture and traditions through his art and finds drawing and painting offer him a "peaceful place" of expression. His work is on display in a number of Traveller organisations and also in a number of private collections.

**William Cauley** (1954–2009) was a poet, author, and artist based in Limerick City. He earned the name of "The Candlelight Painter" for his distinctive practice of painting by candlelight in a caravan parked in the front garden of his home. William started travelling alone at the age of nine, and many of his paintings, created from memory, are based on memories of the scenes that he encountered on his travels.

Curator **Séamus Nolan** is an artist and doctoral student with the School of Art History and Cultural Policy UCD, the School of Visual Culture NCAD and the Collection Department in IMMA. Conducting a practice-based study which examines the role of the contemporary museum in representing marginal cultures with a specific focus on Irish Travellers.





Frank McCarthy, *Gathera*, (meaning father in Gammon/Cant), 2024



Chloe McDonagh, *An Lucht Siúil*, 2023



# List of Works

**Frank McCarthy**

*Grala 2 Maula Sublias Corribin Got’cha*  
(meaning “Shoulder to Hand Boys Hitting Colours” in Gammon/Cant)  
2024

Triptych of tinted Cyanotypes on BLK paper,  
50 x 70 cm each

**Frank McCarthy**

*Untitled*  
2024

MP3 audio file

Audio project created with young people through the Southside Traveller Action Group (STAG), Sandyford, Co Dublin with Frank McCarthy 2024

Duration: 2 min audio, repeating every 5 minutes

**Frank McCarthy**

*Gathera*  
(meaning father in Gammon/Cant)  
2024

Screen print on Fabriano paper, 50 x 57 cm

**Paddy Collins**

*On the Road Again*  
2014

Acrylic on canvas, 150 x 151 cm

**Paddy Collins**

The scrollwork and artwork on the archway entrance leading into this exhibition were painted on site in January 2025 by Paddy Collins.

**Chloe McDonagh**

*An Lucht Siúil*  
2023

Digital prints on paper, 40 x 75 cm

**David McDonagh**

*Not Acting – Portrait of Stephen Casey Bracken*  
2024

Photographic print on photo rag, 120 x 80 cm

**Leanne McDonagh**

*Confined Conditions*  
2017

Pigment on Copper House Photo Rag, 55.8 x 76.2 cm  
HLG Collection  
Reg. 2231

**Leanne McDonagh**

*Rest*  
2011

Pigment on Hahnemuhle paper rag, 21 x 29.7 cm

**William Cauley**

*Untitled* (c. 2000)

Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

**William Cauley Portrait**

c. 2000.

Photocopy on paper.  
Courtesy of Bridget Cauley.

*The Candlelight Painter*  
The Life and Work of William Cauley, Traveller, Painter and Poet  
Transcribed and edited by Micheál O’hAodha  
2005

Book, 25 x 25 cm

**Louis le Brocquy**

*The Pillar*  
1986

Lithograph on Japanese paper, 32 x 45 cm  
HLG Collection  
Reg. 1711.13

**Michael Ayrton**

*Impact*  
1974

Bronze and perspex, 33.4 x 24.4 x 22.4 cm  
HLG Collection  
Reg. 1434





Turner prize nominated artist Delaine Le Bas (fourth from right) visiting a preview of Bafushia at Hugh Lane Gallery with Barbara Dawson and Dr Rosaleen McDonagh (third and fourth from left).



Artist Brian Maguire leading a discussion of his exhibition La Grande Illusion at Hugh Lane Gallery as part of the Traveller Community Arts Day.

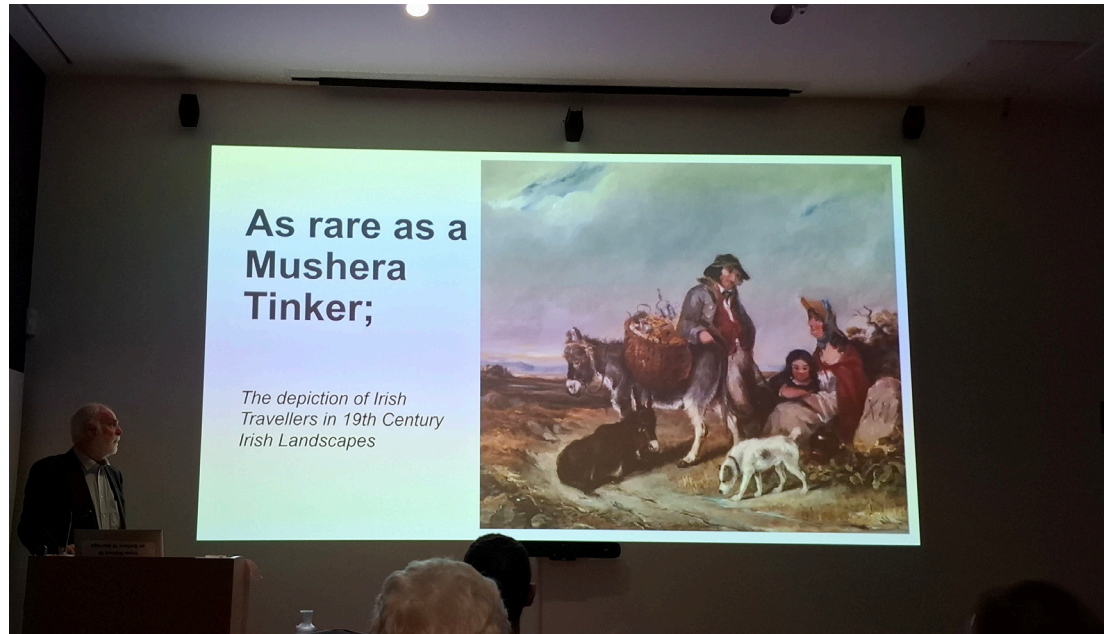


Lord Mayor of Dublin Emma Blain at the launch of Bafushia with from l-r Jessica O'Donnell, Caoimhe McCabe, Paddy Collins and Séamus Nolan.



Traveller rap and spoken word poet Wilzee (right) delivering a workshop on Traveller rap, song and poetry in the Hugh Lane Gallery's Education Space.





David Joyce delivering his talk at the Hugh Lane Gallery on *The representation of Irish Travellers in 19th century Irish Landscapes*.



One of the beady pockets displayed by Brú Bhríde, Tuam Galway at the Traveller Community Arts Day, Hugh Lane Gallery on 1 May 2025. The decorations of beads and buttons on these garments worn by women were traditionally exchanged as a way of keeping in touch and storing memories.

Published by Hugh Lane Gallery on the occasion of the exhibition

# BAFUSHIA (A PHYSICALLY BOUND PROCESS OF FORWARD MOVEMENT)

29 January – 8 June 2025

Artists Chloe McDonagh, David McDonagh, Frank McCarthy, Leanne McDonagh, Paddy Collins and William Cauley.

Curated by Séamus Nolan.

*Bafushia* at Hugh Lane Gallery is curated and organised as part of Hugh Lane Gallery's Art Education programme in collaboration with artist Séamus Nolan and Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre.

Hugh Lane Gallery Curatorial Project-Exhibition Lead for Bafushia: Jessica O'Donnell, Head of Education and Community Outreach.

Pavee Point Project Lead: Caoimhe McCabe, Arts and Culture Coordinator.



Our sincere thanks to the artists Chloe McDonagh, David McDonagh, Frank McCarthy, Leanne McDonagh, Paddy Collins, the family of William Cauley; Dr Rosaleen McDonagh; Martin Collins, Co-Director, Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre; Séamus Nolan, Jessica O'Donnell, Caoimhe McCabe; Mags O'Sullivan, Ann Maguire, Michael Collins, Paddy Collins, Adam Stoneman; Lucia Fabbro, Head of Conservation and Louise Walsworth-Bell, Paper Conservator, Logan Sisley, acting Head of Collections and Philip Roe, registrar; Hugh Lane Gallery art technician team David Lunney, Ciaran Crowe, Fergus Kelly, Nicolas Dolan and Valerie Stone; and all of our colleagues in education, collections, exhibitions, marketing, administration, operations and security.

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TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

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