

The Inspiration

Reflecting on my choice to
move to Galway

-Emily Noë



When looking for jobs that I want in the art world after graduation in the fall, I discovered that perusing a post graduate degree would be beneficial to getting employment. Luckily I was in a position to explore options for schools internationally and had narrowed down my selection to 5 schools between the UK and Ireland before finally deciding on NUI Galway. One of the main factors in this decision was Galway receiving the status of European Capital of Culture 2020 and the opportunities that provides for people to really see the city and experience the art and culture through an entire program of events. After looking around the galway2020.ie website, it was good to see just how many people are involved in planning something of this scale and all the different roles you can have within the organization and it really opened my mind up to the opportunities available for those in the art industry that I had not considered previously.

"THE LANDSCAPE IS A DEEP WELL OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INSPIRATION. ECONOMIC FORCES HAVE LED TO A DESERTION OF LARGE TRACTS OF LAND AND THE DEPOPULATION OF SMALLER TOWNS AND VILLAGES. AND SO, THE ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE HAS BECOME UNCERTAIN — PART MUSEUM ARTEFACT, PART TOURIST TRAIL.

OUR INHABITED ISLANDS ARE HOME TO 10,000 PEOPLE OR 86% OF ISLAND DWELLERS IN IRELAND. THEY ARE UNIQUE COMMUNITIES WITH ANCIENT CULTURES."
- MAKING WAVES PAGE 4 SECTION 1.1.5

The proposal places a significant emphasis on the landscape and weather as opportunity engage with the what makes Ireland so unique and to see art selections from Irish artists, which was very exciting for me as someone who had never been to Ireland before. My dad was in the navy for 21 years and I was raised with a love for the sea so having the opportunity to study in a place where the proximity to the water is a major part of the culture is amazing.



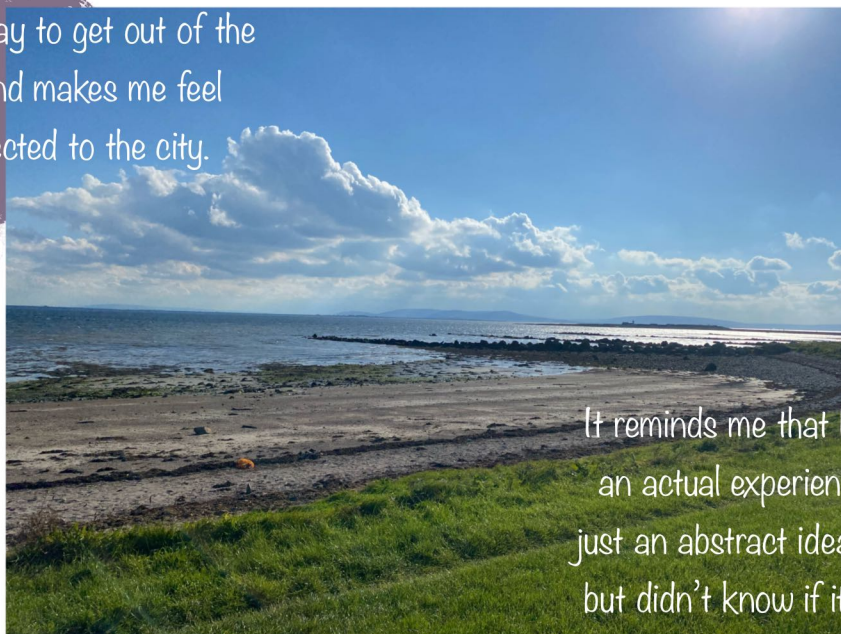
This is not the Ireland I was expecting to live in.

This is not the experience I thought I would be receiving when I applied in April of this year and it's not the educational experience that I anticipated when I received my acceptance three days before the global shutdown in March. It could be easy to get distressed and wonder if now was really the right time to come to another country but I have been choosing to focus on the unique opportunities living in Galway gives me even in the midst of a pandemic.



In a world without a pandemic, I would be able to easily travel throughout Ireland and Europe and really be able to take advantage of being in this country but even though that's not possible right now, there is plenty to be seen in Galway.

Taking the time every day to get out of the house and walk around makes me feel grounded and connected to the city.



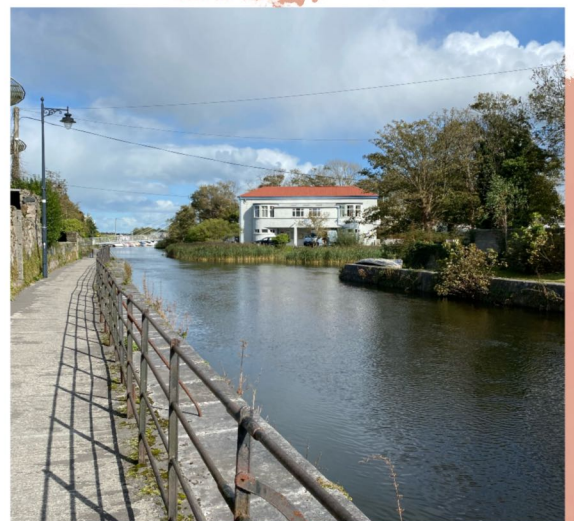
It reminds me that I do live here and this is an actual experience that I'm having, not just an abstract idea that I had talked about but didn't know if it would actually happen.

Art of the City

I am an artist, my educational background is in art, I take frequent trips to major cities all of the east coast of the United States specifically to see art and visit museums, and coming to Galway is the perfect way to see art and culture from a place where I have familial ties and develop my own connection to Ireland.



The city is full of interesting architecture and beautiful views that make for an abundance of creative inspiration.



Mirror Pavillion

Mirror Pavillion by artist John Gerrard was one of the installations that I was most excited about seeing when I moved to Galway. I had spent a few years during my undergraduate studies interning for my sculpture professor and we made large pieces that were installed on the historical Rail Trail that run through Pennsylvania, the focus which was related directly to the culture of farming and cycling that is very present in the community. Having had that experience, I was really interested in Gerrards intentions to create a large piece that interacted with it surrounding through the reflections on the mirror sides as well as the LED screen side that plays a video. I am fortunate enough to live in an apartment on The Long Walk and one of the first things I saw on my first walk into the city when I arrived was the Mirror Pavillion and it was striking. The sun was shining and the mirrors caught the lights reflected the sky and water of the river in a way that had me immediately walking over to the Claddagh to take a closer look.



John Gerrard's Mirror Pavillion, Corn Work
Photo: Colm Hogan, giafie ↘

↗ My photo taken the day I came out of isolation.



As part of the Waking Waves proposal they define the success of Galway's time as a Capital of Culture by saying "The ultimate arbiters of our success will be the citizens of Galway and Europe whose holistic perceptions of success will be defined by the positive and enduring influence of the programme on their lives and the lives of others.". In that sense, the installation was a huge success because it is intriguing and promotes interaction while calling for the viewer to consider the way in view the landscape around them. The installation really does stay with you as well, I have told everyone back home about this piece in particular because it was such a beautiful thing to see after coming out of my two week travel isolation.

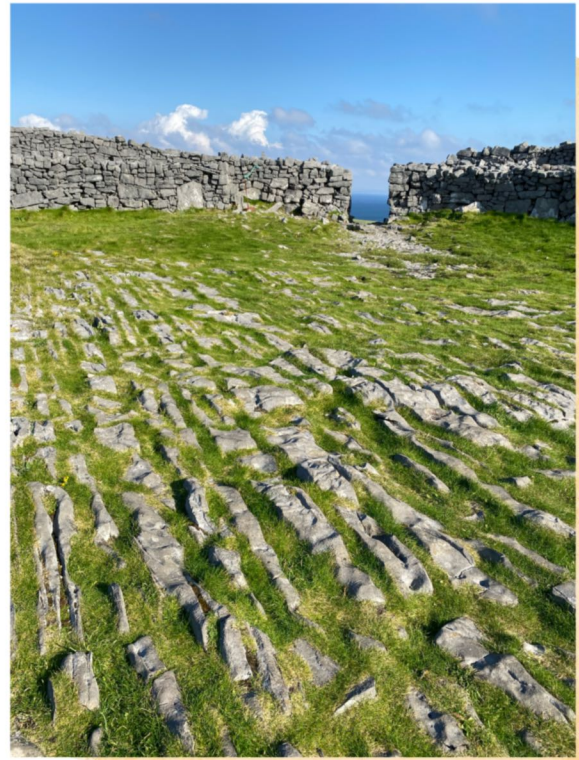
Inis Mór, Aran Islands

One of the places on my “must visit” list while I am here are the Aran Islands and luckily my roommates and I were able to make a day trip over to Inis Mór the other day and it was beautiful.

The islands are mentioned throughout the bid proposal as prime example of Irish culture that has been well preserved due to their isolation. The first spoken language on the islands is Irish and the landscape is almost completely undeveloped which makes you feel like you are stepping into an Ireland from old books and postcards. It's a really unique experience for someone from the east coast of the States where the land had been developed to the point of losing most of what made it so interesting in the first place.

A small blessing of the limited travel with the pandemic is that we went though most of the day on the island without being surrounded by seeing more than just a handful of other tourists. It gave us a rare opportunity to take pictures of the cliffs and embrace the natural beauty without having other people standing in the way. The history and age of the structures on the island, like Dún Aonghasa and the Poll na bPéist(worm hole), were fascinating to take in and I feel so lucky to have been able to make the trip.





THIS TIME SPENT IN IRELAND IS UNEXPECTED AND UNPRECEDENTED BUT IT IS ALSO A TIME FOR EXPLORATION AND CREATIVITY. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME IN MY LIFE WHERE I COULD DEDICATED SO MUCH TIME TO JUST LEARNING AND EXPLORING THE WORLD AROUND ME SO I'M TRYING TO EMBRACE EVERY MINUTE OF IT AND NOT GET TOO CAUGHT UP IN THE NEGATIVITY OF THE PANDEMIC. I COULD HAVE STAYED HOME, POSTPONED MY ENROLLMENT, OR JUST DONE REMOTE STUDIES FROM CONNECTICUT BUT THERE ARE SO MANY AMAZING THINGS TO SEE IN IRELAND EVEN WITH THE RESTRICTIONS THAT I AM VERY THANKFUL THAT I CHOSE TO MAKE THE MOVE.

