



Imagine



**Refugee
Week**

Virtual Exhibition for Refugee Week

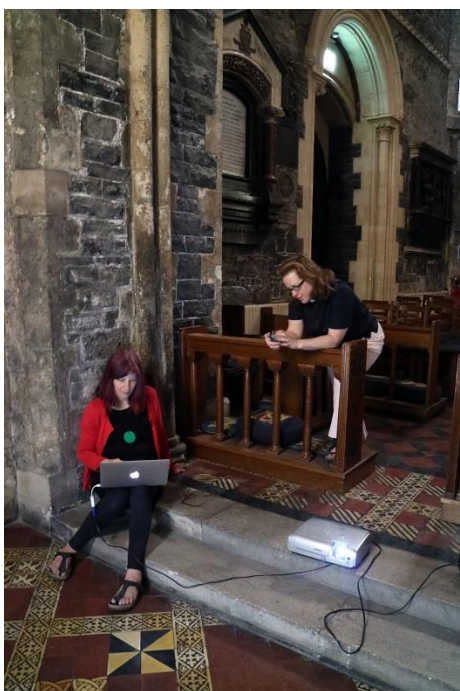
a collaboration between Art Nomads +
Welcome Café + Christ Church Cathedral



Welcome!

The Revd Abigail Sines, Dean's Vicar, Christ Church Cathedral

In these strange and challenging times in which we live, where ever you are sharing in this 'virtual exhibition' I want to wish you a warm welcome! When I began talking with Laragh Pittman, the exhibition curator, a few months ago about the possibility of holding an art exhibition in the cathedral for Refugee Week it was an entirely different proposal from what has now emerged! Nevertheless, we have taken the constraints of the coronavirus pandemic and the restriction on gatherings of people in our stride to bring together this virtual exhibition, a video compilation of artworks projected in the cathedral space, with audio contributions from the various artists as well as spoken word poetry by four women who have come through the asylum process in Ireland.



For the past three years we in the cathedral have been trying to educate ourselves about the issue of direct provision in Ireland, and to participate in the public conversation around this issue. Through this process we have tried to listen to and learn from those who have themselves been through this system. We have formed a friendship with Ellie Kisyombe of Our Table, which we have valued greatly, and we have tried to give asylum seekers the chance to speak for themselves through our 'What's the Story?' series. We have tried to mark Refugee Week in an intentional way over the last two years and we envisioned this year's art exhibition would be a natural extension of that. Though the circumstances have meant that our 'Imagine' exhibition itself had to be re-imagined, we are delighted to be able to present this work. In recent weeks, we have come to recognize an even more urgent need in our society for courage, creativity, openness and honesty as we pay heed to voices speaking out against systemic racism so entrenched in many places around the world.



I want to express huge thanks to Laragh Pittman, herself a visual artist and major force behind the Art Nomads group, who has curated this exhibition and done a tremendous amount of work to organise and draw all the threads together. I would also like to thank Rajinder Singh for volunteering his expertise to edit and produce the final videos. Thanks also to Antonio D'Souza and Muhammad Achour for their major contributions in shaping the virtual exhibition experience.

A word from the curator

Laragh Pittman

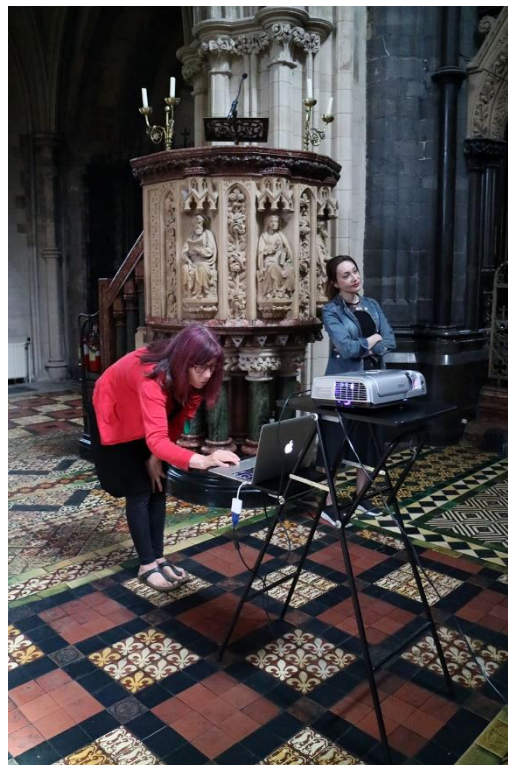
'Imagine' curator and co-founder of Art Nomads

When I was first approached by the Revd Abigail Sines about the possibility of curating an exhibition in Christ Church Cathedral I did feel a little reluctant. The staging of an exhibition in a complex and ornate space such as a church can render the artworks invisible, and I also have a particular dislike for hessian display screens. However on my first visit to the space with its vast nave and beautifully tiled floors, I realised that we could take a much more audacious approach. I also came to discover that Abigail herself has a natural creative sensibility and was very open to new ideas.

Once the devastation of Covid-19 started to be part of our everyday reality and the restrictions of lockdown started to hit, it took us all a lot of energy to think and see a way forward. The process has been very interesting; how to communicate, how to overcome the restrictions of distance, how to transport artwork, how to share the voice of the artist?

One key breakthrough was the idea of using light projections in the dark architectural space of the Cathedral and then to film a journey of exploration. Myself, Abigail and a few artists from Art Nomads live within the 5km area so once we were able to travel this distance we arranged to start work. The large interior space also enabled us to keep safe physical distance from each other. Once we were able to start experimenting we discovered that the most interesting thing was to embrace the difficult and diverse nature of the material of the church and to not even try to create flat white surfaces. It was through this play with light falling around carved pillars, across fabric, fitting into wall niches and against the rough stone walls of the crypt that we found a new way to display the art.

The other key element in this work and in the videos we have developed is the use of audio. Instead of reading the artist's printed statements you get to hear the tone, accent and emotion of their individual voices. They are joined by four powerful spoken word pieces by activists who were invited to say something in their own words about Imagine the theme of World Refugee Week. It is particularly important for us if we are to be anti-racist in Ireland to bring to a public audience the real experience of refugees and migrants here and to give them the ownership of their creativity.



Visual Artists

Muhammad Achour/[Heaven](#)

Muhammad is a Syrian architect who believes that Art and Design are twin aims to make life better and more beautiful. He studied architecture in Aleppo, Syria graduating in 2007, and now works at DCU as a teaching assistant since he moved to Ireland in 2015. During his masters research at UCD in 2016 he fell in love with the idea of community engagement and the search for making better cities. He started then to advocate for this passion in engaging people in Art and Architecture within the local communities and refugee camps. He organised his first event during Dublin City University's refugee week by curating "the Syrian Architects Art and Design Exhibition" showcasing the work of graduate Syrian architects from Aleppo who completed their studies throughout the war. He has founded a startup Irish Association: Places of ARcture which aims to form a network of artists, architects and educators, to curate exhibitions, events and seminars. He facilitated a children's workshop "Play in Architecture", teaching kids design principles through play. He also participated in the Intercultural day at Griffith Barrack's National School through delivering a session about architecture for 6th grade class. (The architectural drawings that make up this video were co-created by Muhammad Achour together with M. Ali Albowshi.)

muhammad@placesofarcture.com

<http://www.placesofarcture.com>

Joe Odiboh/[Amazon](#)

An art teacher, actor, artist, comedian, and writer, Joe has been living under the Direct Provision system for more than 8 years as an asylum seeker since arriving in Ireland. He has recently been given the right to remain after fighting a deportation order. In 2012 he was presented with the "African Leadership and Excellence Award in Arts and Culture", sponsored by the African Voice Newspapers in Ireland. The love of art and creativity is what motivates and drives me into creative affairs as a creative and active mind. What kills my morale is lack of painting art workspace for full time art productions and lack of exhibition opportunities. I find it hard to know what I intend to paint at times. Once I touch a canvas with paint and brushes, creativity manifests itself from out of the blue. Until I finish a painting, I really do not know how it is going to end. There are powerful forces that drive my art pieces. Forces from the kingdom of God for the gifted. These are forces of nature in art and creativity. I hope one day, someday to have my own art gallery and to take art to another new level.

jodiboh@gmail.com

Antonio D'Souza/[Head On](#)

Antonio born in Nairobi, Kenya, grew up in North London and now lives in Skerries, North County Dublin. His grandparents originally travelled to East Africa in the early 1900s from the once Portuguese colony, Goa in India. He trained as a 3D designer (BA Hons degree in Furniture and Product Design, Ravensbourne, London 1995). Since settling in Ireland in 2015 Antonio has exhibited his work locally and in Dublin. He is now focused on creating visual art that continues to fulfil his need to manipulate materials and value components that are often overlooked, hidden from sight or deemed useless.

"Head On" Light projections

I create using gaskets. Gaskets are components sealing the junction between two surfaces, preventing the passage of liquids and gases. They are usually found inside the mechanics of various

vehicles and are essential to how they function. They are made from cork, rubber, foam, graphite, paper, card, copper and stainless steel. I am fascinated with the aesthetic qualities of these components, particularly the muted colours and surface textures that are inherent in them. My artwork is an exploration and an expression of my multiple identities, where the gaskets represent the fragmented parts of me, pieced together to depict portraits - "Gasket Heads". For this exhibition, the original art works have been inverted and digitalised and presented as light projections.

<https://www.antoniodsouza.com/>

Roxana Manouchehri/Butterfly

Roxana is a professional visual artist based in Dublin, Ireland. She has received an MFA in fine art from the Tehran University of Art; she has been teaching art and giving talks and workshops, since 1995 in different universities in Tehran, Seoul and Dublin, including Trinity College and the Chester Beatty collection. She has had more than 50 group exhibitions internationally and 15 solo exhibitions in Tehran, Seoul, Dubai, Madrid, Munich, London, Brussels and Dublin, including the RHA and the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery. Etemad Gallery presents her works in Tehran. Her works are in some important private and public collections, internationally such as OPW, AIB bank, AXA insurance in Dublin and Asia Art Network in Seoul. Her main interest is drawing on paper. She is skillful in geometrical patterns, reverse painting on glass and mirror and Islamic patterns. Also researching on European medieval and Persian manuscripts are her main resources in her practice. In her practice she is looking for the conflict between our contemporary life style and the lost truth. Also confronting with her fears, dreams and fantasies.

<http://www.roxanamanouchehri.net>

Hina Khan/Roots

My work has multilayers and is the constant search for the best way to interpret the ideas and express my own ideologies through symbolism. My recent solo show "Visible n Invisible" is all about the human hustle and bustle on the planet. My work is a constant search for peace that doesn't exist anymore. I fabricate things that constantly evoke the deep emptiness / sorrow about the surroundings. Having done my BFA (Bachelor in Fine Arts) from F. G Degree College, I have completed my MFA (Masters in Fine Arts) from FJWU (Fatima Jinnah Women University), Pakistan in 2003, with Miniature Painting as my Majors. I built up my visual vocabulary through the traditional miniature painting. In 2018 I completed an artist's residency in Firestation Studios Dublin and had a solo show in Ballina Arts Centre County Mayo. In 2019 I created an art installation for Culture Night in TUD Grangegorman and went on to be artist in residence in West Cork Arts Centre in Skibbereen. In 2020 I have a solo show in Arthouse Stradbally County Laois and am working towards a solo show at LHQ in Cork for September. Human perception can present things very sensitively and for me Art is not just an activity, it is a passion. It is a medium that I used as an activist. I use it to describe my feelings, my pain. I have used art as a medium to articulate myself since I have faith that art has the power to prevail over the differences between religion, culture, language and race. It has the power to bring harmony to culture and to craft peace in our only inhabitable planet.

[Hinakhan1980 # instagram](#)

Rajinder Singh/Fold

Born in Ipoh, Malaysia he now lives in Dublin, Ireland. Rajinder's paintings and installations as well as photography, video and performance work explore ideas around the vulnerable body and its pain, interrogating the economies of power that deny it space and shape. Raj writes: I am a migrant artist exploring ways the human body folds and unfolds around borders, topographic, symbolic or otherwise. My video in this exhibition touches on some of the concepts I am working with just now. For this video I juxtaposed a kaleidoscopic reading of four floor plans of an ancient mosque, a kuil and a gurudwara as well as the Christ Church Cathedral with a video of Alina dancing to a song that calls out "In my home, O foreigner! You are welcome". The kaleidoscope reminds me of the ancient ornate floor of the cathedral. I was interested in how Alina's body folded into the hushed tones and sculpted spaces of the cathedral. She moved along its seams, into its folds, delicately stepping into its rarefied air in an almost-whisper. I felt her body adjust as she quietly moved through its cavernous halls and its small enclosures. We filmed almost everywhere in the cathedral, take after take, while I watched a dancer settle into the cathedral's quiet, into its myriad tones and its ornate vestibules, into its sacred charms and its delicate beauty. I have recently become interested in this idea of the fold as a bodily or a somatic practice. What is the somatic function of folding? What if your body is continually folding and unfolding and unfolding; folding around and into space, adjusting externally and internally in fractal like origami moves? In this video I combine the architectural and the bodily thrust of pattern making through the creative reciprocities of folding.

<http://www.unprimed.com> [Insta: @woundbloom](https://www.instagram.com/woundbloom)

Amna Walayat/Slave Ship

"History is written by the Victors" and "History is made up of fragments and absences. What is left out is as significant as included" (Walter Benjamin).

I became interested in studying colonisation and imperialism working on my post-graduate thesis at University College Cork in 2015. I was also looking at the recent migration into Europe fuelled by the war zones of more than one million people who fled their countries and undertook deadly journeys in overloaded rubber boats with the risks of fatalities and capsizing. My artwork reflects fragments from this history via symbolism in order to create a visual vocabulary. The exhibition gives me the opportunity to extend my art practice from two-dimensional to three-dimensional installation. I find myself leaping from one art form to another breaking my own boundaries and my conventions. Amna has an M.A. in Modern and Contemporary Art, History, Theory and Criticism from UCC in 2015. She also has a Masters in Fine Arts, from University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan in 2002. She worked as a curator and Programme Organiser with Pakistan National Council of the Arts and Alhamra Arts Council in Pakistan. Currently, she is a freelance artist, regularly participating in art exhibitions in Ireland and Pakistan. Her major interests in research and art practice are British India, colonialism, orientalism, imperialism, modern and contemporary art.

[@Instagram amna.walayath](https://www.instagram.com/amna.walayath) amna.walayath@gmail.com
<https://www.artconnect.com/profile/amna-walayath>

Tomasz Madajczak/[The Touch of the Sea](#)

'The Touch of The Sea' is a new work, created in 2020 in the times of distress and pandemic. The work has very organically originated from the recognition of a place, presence and the experience which have naturally evolved from the isolation and social restrictions. The actions involve search for a deep connection with the surrounding environment while reacting to the here and now with awakening awareness. "What does it mean to surrender to this new moment, to be present in it? Longing to be part of it; Fearing it and yet becoming it. The touch of the water; The floating; A deep sense of groundlessness. Letting go of the known." Our imagination gives us a possibility to be in any place which we choose in any way we are capable to imagine. It gives us possibility to change the reality which we experience and to influence it to an extent defined by our creativity and inner potential. "Being flesh and bones, being water, being the floating existence between memories and now." Sea isn't our natural habitat. Yet it is said that all the life on earth has originally started in the water. "The body, born out of water, knows." "What comes back to land has been changed by the sea." By entering and connecting with the sea environment, we contrast the fragility of human existence with the beauty of the open space of the water element. The sea as all the other elements gives life and takes life. Therefore to find a moment of unity, to imagine a possibility to co exist with and within the existing elements is possible by creating mutual harmonious relationship. "Awareness is wider then it see's and deeper then it sounds." 'The Touch of The Sea' was created in collaboration with Silke Michels.

<http://www.tomaszmadajczak.com>

Insaf Yalçinkaya/[Shamaran](#)

Insaf is a Kurdish poet born in Dersim in the Turkish part of Kurdistan. After a Bachelor degree she taught in Primary and Secondary schools. She was a political activist, and also a Political Consultancy Advisor. She has also shown ceramics in several art exhibitions. Her articles have been published in national and local magazines and newspapers in Turkey. She has started to collect her poems and after she moved to Ireland she started to translate her poems into English. She came to Ireland seeking asylum and is still awaiting a decision about her status. Her poems are published in Correspondences an anthology by Stinging Fly, in the MASI Journal and in Flare 14 by Dublin's Sunflowers Session. She is a member of Dublin Writer's Forum. Her artwork Shamaran is made from wood, pine cones and plasterwork. Shahmaran from the Persian words 'Shah' king, and 'mar-an' meaning snakes. This is a legend of the Kurds. It comes from Mesopotamia. The story of Shahmaran is told the most in Mardin city in the south-east Anatolian region of Turkey. A lot of souvenirs and portraits are made in Mardin and are related to this mother Goddess of the Kurds. In prehistory Shahmaran lived in a heaven in the sky then she was obliged to move underground due to the people's betrayal, she founded a new heaven there. She knows all the secrets of the universe about the past and the future.

<http://www.insafyalcinkaya.com/>

Poetry/Spoken Word

Just Imagine

by Christiana Obaro

The quest for power
We work in lure to the hour
So quickly the life we aspire to end in joy, passes through thin air and it's sour
And then the question emerges, where did the time go? I was just in the shower
Who should I call who should I tell, things has to go slower.
And then I imagined, just imagine, an earth unimaginable
Where the system doesn't see you less a citizen
Where the rich uplifts the poor
Where a group feels no unequal to another
Where children play out without parents worry
Where the government fears more of being afraid
Where no one feels lonely in a sea of 8 billion
Where the colour of our skin is unimportantly looked on like the colour of our hair
Where poverty and war is relegated only to history books
Where countries feels like counties
Where smiles are no longer thoughts in schools
Where grey hair is a crown that it used to be
Where words like migrants are searched only in dictionaries
Where when you see me let not a hello be far away
Just imagine,
Just imagine we look out for one another and start the change we yearn at every passing hour,
A world where we walk together and carry each other along
Just imagine.

Christiana Obaro, mother of four children, arrived Ireland 7 years ago, originally from Nigeria, lived in direct provision centre for several years, and has now moved to living with independence in Dublin. Christiana is a student at University College Dublin, 3rd year now studying General Nursing, also enrolled for an online degree program with the University of the People, studying health science. Christiana is free spirited and hopeful that the future holds a great future for her here in Ireland and the world at large.

Imagine

by Selema Letsie

Imagine we wake up
and there is no
light only darkness
that brings sad memories
Memories of anger and pain
that we can not control

Imagine if freedom was
to be rewritten
so we would not
struggle to fit in

Imagine if colour did
not matter and
we were all human beings

Imagine we were free
yet our minds and thoughts
were being influenced
and labelled by the society

Imagine there is no
air to breath
only suffocation to
our lonely lives

Imagine there is no
trees blowing beautiful
breeze to our wounded souls

Imagine we were free
like an ocean flowing
thoughts provoked by the waves
where nothing matters
Imagine! Imagine!

Selema Letsie is a human rights activist and an experienced advocate for those who are marginalised. Before coming to Ireland Selema ran a project supporting refugees and asylum seekers from many countries around Africa. Selema is qualified in Child and Youth Development. She speaks 11 languages and is fascinated to learn more about Irish culture and hopes to study Irish. Selema is a poet and recently participated with a diverse group of writers in a Pluringual workshop with the Irish Writers' Centre. She is being mentored by a published Irish poet.

Imagine

by Diane Ihirwe

Imagine a world where people seeking refuge were accepted and supported according to their needs, instead of being seen as spongers, scroungers and unskilled.

Imagine a world where this support and acceptance that people received was genuine, complete and holistic instead of being subjected to racism, bias, prejudice and performative allyship.

Imagine a world where your character, capabilities and qualities preceded how you look like, what you sound like, where you came from, what you wear and what God you worship.

Imagine a world where our differences were used as pillars to uplift us instead of dividing us and tearing us apart.

Imagine a world where we, as the human race, could see and work together as one.

Imagine.

Diane Ihirwe is an African-Irish mother and an anti-racism activist. She is waiting to graduate as a Master in Social Work from Trinity College and holds an undergraduate degree in Social Care from TU Dublin. She travelled to the UN in Geneva in December 2019 to advocate on behalf of Asylum Seekers and, in 2014, she co-founded the Young Mother's Network (YMN), a support group for mothers living in Direct Provision Centres. She has just co-launched Rooted In Africa and Ireland (RIAI), an anti-racism network that aims to build understanding and pride of African Heritage, especially for young African-Irish people.

Imagine

by Rosemary Kunene

Imagine the pain of leaving all your family members, friends, your culture behind in search of freedom?

Imagine getting to a place and finally get that feeling of freedom?

Imagine the gratitude and the joy of feeling safe and welcomed?

Imagine the self-esteem and confidence when you hear people calling you by your name and not your identity replaced by the word refugee?

Imagine the dignity to be allowed to work and to have the sense of autonomy?

Imagine if we all welcome people and treat them as individuals and acknowledge the different skills and talents that come with them?

Imagine seeing people beyond the refugee label?

IMAGINE?

Rosemary Kunene is a community activist and a social entrepreneur. Her passion is working with people, promoting personal development and community empowerment for the marginalised groups of people in particular people living in Direct Provision centres and people with refugee status. She believes in meaningful integration, presently, she is joint chairperson of Laois Integration Network and Board member for Places of Sanctuary Ireland. She founded Voice of Migrants Ireland to encourage community participation for people living in Direct Provision Centres in County Laois. Founder and Coordinator of Dignity Partnership, a social enterprise that provides self-employment and internship support services to people who have or are living in Direct Provision Centre. She is also a graduate of Social Entrepreneur Ireland 2019 academy. She possesses great interpersonal skills, organisation skills and facilitation skills. She has spent over 4 and half years in Direct Provision system before granted refugee status.

Partner Organisations

Art Nomads

[Art Nomads](#) has grown out of a desire for an inclusive space for artists, from migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to connect, including those within the Direct Provision system.

Tian Yu Lloyd, an activist with the City of Sanctuary Movement, first suggested forming this network of support at one of the regular [Welcome Café](#) events. Since then Tian, Antonio D'Souza, Joe Odiboh, Muhammad Achour, and Laragh Pittman have been committed to working towards this goal.

Other key catalysts have been the Summer School on Cultural Diversity run by [CREATE](#) and the 'See Through Café' in Rua Red Tallaght, run by [Mother Tongues Festival](#).

The group held a successful exhibition 'Transhumance: The Nomadic Artist Part of This Land' in February 2020, in The Space gallery Phizzfest. The show generated a lot of interest in both the local and wider community. It was opened by artist Jesse Jones and activist Zar Sibbs and gained coverage in the media including [an article in the Dublin Inquirer](#) and [coverage on Pakistani TV](#). A catalogue was published and included a forward by Gerry Kearns, Professor of Geography, at NUI Maynooth: 'The Potent Wayfarer'.

Art Nomads is evolving as a community. As a collective it is a valuable source of connectivity for its artists and creatives - for sharing information, collaborations, staging exhibitions, running workshops, conducting research and many other creative possibilities.

Welcome Café

The [Welcome Café](#) has invited several activists who have experienced both the process of seeking asylum in Ireland and living in the Direct Provision system to produce short spoken word pieces on the theme of imagine. Their inclusion in the virtual tour of Christ Church Cathedral with the Art Nomads visual artists gives a strong voice from Ireland for World Refugee Week. The Welcome Café is a volunteer run social initiative which has been running since 2015. It includes once a month gatherings usually held in the Third Space Café in Smithfield Square Dublin 7. It aims to give voice and visibility to the diverse people who now call Ireland home. Many events have taken place over the years ranging from panel discussions on LGBTQ + asylum rights to Indian classical dance, Chilean protest movements and Irish traditional music. During the lockdown the group has been busy establishing a sewing project to produce washable face covers together with an information sheet on how to use and care for them which has been translated into French, Spanish, Romanian and Arabic.

Christ Church Cathedral

Through engagement in public theology, daily worship in the Anglican tradition, and retreats [Christ Church Cathedral](#) seeks to be a place of welcome, dialogue, and prayer in the heart of Dublin city centre.



**Christ
Church
Cathedral**
Dublin