Irish Modernisms Round Table podcast transcription (part two)

with CCA Director Catherine Hemelryk (**CH**), co-curator Matt Retallick (**MR**), and artists James Ashe (**JA**), Rachael Campbell-Palmer (**RCP**), Phillip McCrilly (**PM**), Grace McMurray (**GM**) and Ben Weir (**BW**)

00:00
CH: Hello, and welcome to our bonus material *Irish Modernism*s Round Table podcast from the Centre for Contemporary Art Derry~Londonderry. In this podcast you'll hear the second part of the conversation between artists James Ashe, Rachael Campbell-Palmer, Phillip McCrilly, Grace McMurray, Ben Weir, my co-curator Matt Retallick, and me, Catherine Hemelryk. You can listen to part one by searching for CCA Derry~Londonderry on Anchor, Spotify, iTunes, Google, and any other podcast providers. Enjoy.

00:34
CH: Seeing how our visitors have been responding to your work, that those imperfections and the fact that it is handmade, are visible when you're looking at it, but when it is through the screen, it does seem that almost artificially, pristine, pristine, inhuman, perfect. And it's something that particularly on your work that is the screen where it's exposing the back, it's skewed, because of the tensions of the ribbons that are being pulled. And that's very intentional to show that it's not that it's a mistake, it's that we can see that physicality of the labour there. I wanted to ask, how did you come to make that decision to show that piece in that plane rather than neatly against the wall,

01:21
GM: I think through chatting–we had a meeting on Zoom before the show and Ben brought up the idea of architecture within the home. And I felt like my piece was like a fabric wall. This was me trying to control the environment that was within the gallery. I prefer to show objects that you're not supposed to see. And so that's why I tried to show it in a way so that somebody could have a corner space to sit and just take in the work and not be distracted by other objects within the space.

01:58
JA: Grace, I thought it was interesting when you brought up the Bauhaus movement and when you're talking about your upbringing, and sort of real working class, and then you're talking about Bauhaus, it's kind of interesting the parallels, that although Bauhaus was a very progressive movement in and around or before Nazi Germany came in. I think the Bauhaus had only one woman master and that was still a very progressive movement. So in what way has Bauhaus influenced you?

02:28
GM: Yeah, it's in terms of making objects, patterns that appear to be three dimensional, but they're two dimensional and having those around you and what kind of influence that has on you.

02:40
BW: We spoke about many others as well, very briefly, but I think if I'm not mistaken Annie Albers found herself in textile and weaving, because architecture wasn't accepting women. So that's a really interesting thing that actually, Annie Albers is not incredibly influential, but almost found herself making such sophisticated and beautiful work in spite of the fact of the slightly backwards political nature of the school at the time.

03:07
CH: I've always enjoyed Grace, as well, the way you talked about just the process of weaving. Could you tell us a little bit about how you go about that? And then Rachel, I'd like to ask you about the casting process and the ways of making, so again I think there's so many interesting connections and overlaps between your works.

03:25
GM: The weaving was something that I came upon because I wanted to create like a material that was like an abstract whole in a way. So I find that weaving different strands in different directions, I can make these completely geometric patterns, but in a very tactile way. And a lot of the patterns that they use in the work, it's woven in three different directions. And the main pattern that I use is a patchwork pattern called tumbling blocks. And it's from Patrick from the 1800s. But it's also was used in ancient Greece, it appeared as a mosaic floor design. So some of the works then I feel like that's the connections with some of Rachael's work, but the kind of woven patterns, I guess, it brings into the Gallery things that you are surrounded by on everyday basis in terms of the domestic.

04:16
RCP: I actually worked a lot in soft sculpture and textiles right the way through art college. And it wasn't until after I left and I did like an introductory course to casting that I sort of had this moment of realisation and I was like, yes, this is the language that I've been looking for that I just wasn't quite reaching with the soft sculptural work that I had been making. So it was like once the casting process was exposed to me I was just like–that was me hooked basically. And so I work with like a traditional casting process. I really enjoy–it's very satisfying working with those hard materials and then when you take any form out of a cast, and it works, it's just such a satisfying moment. And I really enjoy the problem solving involved in it. And you're kind of having to work quite methodically through the positive three dimensional shape that you want to end up with and backwards to figure out okay, well what negative space is going to create that positive in terms of then design and building your walls. Because I like to work quite large scale I work with wooden moulds just because they're more portable. And just that whole figuring out every time you build the same walls, you have to test, you have to make sure that you've got your release agents right for that material. And even when you think you got everything right, sometimes stuff just doesn't work, and then you're trying to figure out what's going wrong here? You've got to very methodically examine each step of the process and experiment and try different things. And when Grace was talking earlier, just about labour and perfection and control, I was just like, yes, this is the same struggles that I have and maybe tensions in my practice in that I work quite often in modular forms, and in multiples. So I'm casting the same object a number of times, and it's manufacturing the shapes and forms, and each time I'm searching for perfect in it. And I want it to come out with lovely smooth surfaces with no air bubbles, but because I'm using a handmade process to make these forms, they never are going to be perfect. In each one even though they are all different, you know, they're going to be unique. And I really enjoy that about that tension in a self-produced process. But I love that through the casting process you can kind of see the journey of the material and the casting. So for example, in the surface you will see this history of how that process has happened. And the layers that have been created to make the form in some of the casts in the *Massives* there are ten irregular cuboid hollow cast forms and the way that they're caste is built up in a series of layers, and the first layer that you put in your mould is the surface that's going to come out, so that's going to be what's going to be seen. So that's the one you always want to make sure that you get right.

And in the surface of some of the casts in *Massives*, if you look very closely you can see the imprint of pencil marks of the numbers and the labels of the different parts of the moulds that are then embedded into the surface of the cast. It tells the story of how that piece was made and the processes. And that's something that really interests me in how the surface of the cast is a sort of membrane that shows the process and the journey of its making. And that is something that I quite often align with, with buildings when thinking about the service buildings, and how things change around buildings. But some of that history, that experience in that environment is somehow embedded in the surface of buildings and routine there. So yeah, and also the physicality which is helped by that is, is really important. And I often work in a way that–I suppose in size and scale, it's in relation to my size. So I'm kind of limited by how big I can work, by how heavy a thing I can lift or how high I can build it. So that's often why I do work in one or two forms so I can create larger works, because I can build it up gradually. But quite often forms might be referencing my height or like a torso where they would have quite a lot of body analogies or connections. And I think you can really see that in the *Massives* piece, they have these sort of almost like profiles, like heads and shoulders. But that physical interaction and engagement with the process and making it work is really important to me, it is labour but I feel like I need that to get there. It just something that feeds my practice; that connectedness to the materials and the working.

08:55
MR: I think that thing of physicality, I'm quite interested in in terms of Ben's work, you know. Ben, you're in the Netherlands, we're in the middle of a pandemic, you have to work in a very different way. And I was wondering if you could maybe talk about that experience and how you came to present the artwork that you that you did?

09:17
BW: Yeah. Maybe this comes into question, maybe it'll come up later, about our kind of individual practices and relationships that I have, specifically between art and architecture, because in some ways I differentiate them. I think I really work within the discipline of architecture as opposed to the profession of it. That's the quote that I often talk about with my teaching partner in Queens – Michael McGarry – that I think maybe if we were talking about what I make is art production as architectural research. But then I think actually, if I switch around in terms of my mind, that also makes sense. But maybe there's something about a kind of a mode of practice where I'm practising in ways that an architect might order to produce art, so it's quite typical that an architect would sit at the computer and draw almost like the kind of the ideal version of something. Architects make drawings, they don't make buildings – directly anyway – they make drawings, and the drawing is the ideal version of work, it can never really exist. You know, it's almost like platonic. And then it's the job of the builder to build something that is as close to the drawing as possible. In this instance, Catherine Hemelryk, was said building for which I'm forever grateful.

10:29
CH: Your instructions were so fantastic. I think it's one of the easiest to follow. It was like Lego instructions. I loved it. But yeah, 130 blocks. It was good fun.

10:43
BW: That's good to hear. Because I mean, jus in this previous conversation about labour and specifically gendered labour, I thought it was, you know, I'm sending you over information, and you make it formal. But yeah, I guess it's just we were kind of victims of circumstance. So I yeah, I worked in the way that an architect does, which I drew something many times. And then I came up with a final drawing, which worked as a set of instructions. And even in the middle of the construction process, this is still how an architect works; an architect might go onto site and give out direct actions to builders like 'no, that shouldn't be like that. That lintel should be two bricks higher' or 'you've ordered the wrong window colour, you need to contact the

manufacturer', blah, blah, blah. But then, if a change is made on site, you do actually have to go back and you redraw it, and then you issue that as what's known as an AI – like an architect instruction. So the drawing process for me is always the kind of key process. And that's really where my research happens as well, is that I always start with the survey drawing. Like before, I know what I'm going to make, I always have to be highly aware of what's there. So I draw and I think drawing your physical surroundings is the best way to kind of come to terms with what fits best. And so yeah, I kind of requested a survey drawing of the gallery. And then I could start inserting specific modules, which I knew the size of which is these lightweight, concrete blocks that I arranged in such a manner as to make something out of them. I mean, yeah, my work is almost not work in its own right. Like it is a scenography that is there to host something. But I knew that Phillip was going to be showing a series of objects and research. And I think I proposed to him the idea of a collaboration, or maybe it just came up in conversation, that I proposed to him that I would provide a built context in which he would display his work; almost in a way to kind of strip away that sanitary idea of like a white cube with precious historical artefacts laid out in vitrines, and instead turn it into something which is more akin to a kind of domestic environment. And then that collaboration was really smooth. And that happened in the most 2021 way ever and it was predominantly on Instagram DM, which was great.

12:47
CH: It was so nice to be able to make something happen, despite the fact that you are overseas. And it was nice showing you the photos as well. And I remember your reaction of the blocks that were ordered expecting them to be identical. But actually, as Rachael was talking about earlier – the changes in colour, and texture throughout all of the blocks, they're so different. And the patterns and textures really become apparent when they're constructed in such a way as they are in the show rather than sort of, you know, covered in a layer of skin or what have you. Phillip's work is positioned on the concrete on the blocks, and you've got aspects of nature that are coming through – we've got gorse wine that fermenting at the moment during the show It's still doing its little bubbles every now and again. And a series of syrups and these flowers, very spiky. So can you tell us more about that?

13:47
PM: Sure. I suppose one of the strands of research that I brought into the exhibition was work I was doing around the queer body in the landscape, and the sort of relationship between cruising and foraging as these deviant practices and the queer reclamation of property. So I suppose one of my things within the exhibition was to kind of further on the research that I've been doing within that context, and I suppose learn more about it. So that strand of research kind of looked at particular parts of South Belfast, and it really honed in on one area which is Shaw's Bridge, And in my research then I find that it was actually this really centre kind of fracture point of modernist planning and where things came to a head at one stage and I wanted to represent that within the exhibition. So I want to say it was in the mid 60s up until 1965. If you owned a piece of land and you put in for planning permission, you were eligible for compensation for its proposed use if it didn't go through. So it meant that a lot of things unfortunately, were put through even though they weren't in any way wanted or needed. Local councils couldn't pay for the competition. And it all came to a head with one person called John Oliver, and he convinced one of the ministers at the time to pay the compensation for this big plan and there was infrastructures that would have totally got rid of all the woodland and forest and everything and turned it in just a massive residential development. But through his conversations with other people, he knew that things were going to change. And then it meant the government took over planning. And they were able to then rightfully refuse planning for stuff without having to pay compensation. So Shaw's Bridge was saved. One of the things in Shaw's Bridge is an abundance of gorse, and I suppose a kind of a timely kind of coming together for the exhibition, like gorse, was kind of out and had flowered. So I collected it and made gorse wine and over the course the exhibition that is going to ferment. And I suppose a lot of the work anyway, in the show

is for me unfolding, and not fully resolved. So using the exhibition as some sort of platform or a structure for things to develop. And the objects that are on Ben's sculpture–I suppose I saw that collaboration as a kind of way for both of us to fill in the gaps within each of our work. And I had struggled with finding the device or a means to kind of display the research because I find that's quite an interesting part of my practice is these little things, these little particular histories that have kind of went overlooked and unheard. So I saw that as a really successful way to hint at or gesture these histories and stuff. The work in itself, I titled those objects and stuff, *Death of the Banshee* that itself comes from a documentary that was in 1996, I think it was that RTÉ did on the 50th anniversary of the electrification of rural Ireland. And the documentary itself kind of presents these two voices of like the greatness and how good it is for Ireland to have electricity, but then also kind of reflect some potential for the loss of storytelling, and this modernisation and the potential for an old way of life to go completely overnight. So it's these little hints to these histories.

16:54
GM: I like the way there's kind of a strand through a lot of people's work, of that idea that you're talking about feeling not being fully resolved. I think yours is like a continuing practice of research and how that informs everything. And then Ben's can be changed or made into something else, and the same with Rachael's always feels like it could be something else, you know, in a short space of time. So I like that it's not fixed.

17:24
PM: I don't know if it speaks maybe–it's incongruous to what modernism can be, it was these permanent things.

17:31
GM: I'm kind of more interested in late modernism in a way. What kinds of challenges to modernism on those ideas of utopia. I think it kind of feels like that's not that achievable, and sometimes creates a distance. So I think, yeah, if you come at it with like a modern slant even in terms of location, where we are, I think that's, to me, that's way more interesting.

17:55
BW: That's actually a really key point I was even thinking earlier, whenever you were talking about your influences; that literary modernism was a little bit ahead of other form in that it was really thinking about the first person narration. And for the first time really, the 'I' was really considered as an individual stream of consciousness came in alongside internal monologues. I don't think that really came into play in things like architecture until late modernism. And late modernism is, I think, where things get particularly interesting because they start to include all sorts of things like regionalism and specificities. I think, already, by the time that modernism gets to Ireland from the mainland and from mainland Europe, from places like Germany, Switzerland, and France already, it's kind of tainted and sullied. It's kind of contaminated with regional ideas, it always gets an accent, if you like. And that's the reason I've always seen modernism in Ireland is almost a kind of trying to catch up to mainland Europe, but doing it in our own kind of way, as we do. And therefore a certain kind of richness and specificity kind of comes to the fore.

19:03
MR: I think that's a really interesting point, and it sort of tallies with my research on *Irish Modernisms*. I sort of alluded to this earlier, that it is a lot more complex on the island of Ireland. And it references the past a lot more readily. And I think this is seen in a lot of the work on display in the exhibition, it's that point where history and modernism blend and where you have that sort of tentative adoption of modernism is for me, where the most interesting stuff happens. But I'm quite interested in–we are talking about modernism as this thing of the

past. But if stuff is being unearthed that's only talked about today, I mean, is it a thing of the past? Or is it still this incredibly relevant living thing?

19:43
CH: And where does that past start? Because there's so much of the modernism here that references like the megalithic and its very old stone carvings that reappear and those motifs that come through time and time again as well.

19:56
JA: I'm actually–going back to my research when I was drawing the buildings–the Editions for the gallery so actually trying to find like aspects of modernism specifically tied to Northern Ireland; it partially ties into kind of our politics because I've already touched on Craigavon, but I tend to find that partially the reason why you have a lot of cities like Lisburn and Newry and Craigavon often default into like commuter towns is because during the Troubles, the Belfast city centre and the main streets–people were afraid to go out or people just didn't feel safe, so that's kind of why we've got a lot of urbanised centres or shopping centres outside Belfast. Also things like I recently discovered the Richmond Centre and Derry~Londonderry, it was one of the ones we were initially discussing, but it's kind of like a hodgepodge of modernism and brutalism and just a load of glass. I found it was designed as a multi-storey centre because of all the car bombs and trouble going on in the streets during that time in the Troubles.

21:08
GM: I feel like post modernism feels like it was a response, or kind of came from the Second World War. And I feel like definitely modernism is informed by the fact that we live in a post-conflict society, but it almost feels like we're not post-conflict, it's almost like we're still in conflict, but it's just a different conflict. It's kind of this prolonged extended austerity, and a lack of resources and different, like, mental health services and things. And so I feel like it's definitely–it's very contemporary, and even though you don't necessarily want to make work that's about the environment you live in, it kind of is already informed by that. It can't not be. And so, yeah, I feel like it is so contemporary in that aspect. And also, I'm kind of interested in that idea of psycho-geography and, you know, exploring the environment around you. And I think that's seen in everyone's work. So I feel like that's totally ever changing.

22:11
BW: Yeah, this psycho-geography thing is interesting, as it would be the goal of the modernists to design a city in which you can never be lost. Because the modernist project was–I was gonna say–never completed but you know, only really just begun in Belfast and then stopped for various reasons. But we end up with fragments and somewhat kind of nonsensical infrastructure. A *terrain vague*–I'm not sure to pronounce it in French–around these kinds of neglected incomplete pieces of infrastructure that become interesting for the urban wanderer, but almost seem like relics of a future that could have been at the same time. Like the Westlink was never completed, for example. And now in 2021, we're kind of talking about the piece, which is going to perhaps solve a lot of the Westlink's issues, which is your street interchange in the north of the city. But rather than seeing that as a project for everybody to aid the legibility of the city, you know, our love affair with the car, I think, is drawing to a close as it should, because I think the car has single handedly destroyed many great European cities. And now something like the York Street Interchange, although it's going to complete a 1960s project – I don't think that's necessarily a good thing, especially because it's going to decimate some adjacent communities like Sailortown, Shore Road and Tigers Bay. So I think it's time for a kind of revisionist modernist history. As I kind of said earlier to kind of cherry pick what was good about it and to kind of reassess if it's worth completing something or whether it's worth retroactively trying to fix things. It's interesting that we end

up in this kind of bricolage environment of almost like a kind of collage of urban identities and how that influences us. I know some people that have moved to Belfast and for the first couple of years they could never get around. Like there's no kind of coherent urban form to the thing.

23:56
MR: It's interesting what you were just saying about these unrealised, or half finished infrastructure projects that are dotted around. And I've been thinking about that idea of hauntology quite a lot; these sorts of ghosts of past futures. And there is this sort of dualism of that in the exhibition in that everything sort of refers back to something of the past, but also speaks of the contemporary, of the now. And maybe there is something in that. Maybe we do need to look back more and look at what we saw for the future in the past.

24:27
BW: I think it's interesting in Derry that an older type of infrastructure remains complete, or almost complete in the city wall. And somehow that's been accepted, you know, it's an infrastructure that is not one of facilitation and doesn't facilitate access in the same way that the Westlink intends to do. But it's a piece of defensive infrastructure.

24:47
RCP: Absolutely, I think what you're saying Ben is really interesting, and also those sort of things that come up and those ideas of connection with older fortresses and ring forts, standing stones. So that's something that I've been exploring with the work that I've made for the exhibition – this continued area of research, but very much that idea of something that speaks to the past and the future, like you were saying that I think is really relevant, and sort of these ideas of creating relics that are artefacts of the past or a future that that may or may not have existed you can't see the stuff that sort of sits between. Yeah, that's definitely something I'm exploring with my work and I think is a thing that comes up because you said in a few of the works.

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CH: James.

23:35:
JA: I remember when we were talking earlier about the Rossville flats in the Bogside. You still have examples of like modernist residential flats in the Bogside area of the city. I think the other example I noticed, was maybe the BT call centre ip in Derry because it's like a big mass-purpose building and not really something that I would choose to illustrate because like, people tend to associate call centres with minimum wage, dead-end jobs, depression, so on so forth. In Derry it was a bit more challenging to find modernist examples compared to like other cities like London, Dublin, or even different towns.

26:26
CH: There are so many pieces that are just part of the infrastructure. So like the vernacular housing–a lot of the social housing–these amazing shapes that you get with these sharp triangles that repeat and loop through. All across the city, there are these pockets of these builds. And also the ecclesiastical architecture, some of the most incredibly shaped different churches–and it's not one denomination–you've got a Presbyterian Church up by the big Tesco. For anyone in Derry they'll know exactly where I mean. Or one of the Catholic churches as well you have these sharp spires around Shantallow way as well. You have these incredible shapes and really ambitious, all encompassing modernist buildings, but it's not that sort of landmark in the way that other modernist buildings might play out in other cities. It's just in the everyday here.

27:10
JA: Just outside Derry you've got Sion Mills St. Theresa's church which is a shining example of modernism.

27:28
BW: Also Altnagelvin, in the late 60s or early 70s, when it was built was an explicitly Corbusian building. And I think it was cited as such. I think it's significantly altered by this point, maybe to the point of unrecognition, but that's a modernist slab lawn as in a Unité d'Habitation kind of style. And then actually, a really fantastic piece of modernist art was then commissioned for that building. So William Scott, a painter, was commissioned to make a mural for Altnaglevin when it was finished, which actually worked on in the south of England where he lived and it's absolutely beautiful. Matt mentioned Ben Nicholson earlier, it's almost this kind of abstracted forms of still life, or it could be something more relating to nature, or weather, or something more euphoric. It's the scale–it's almost like the Irish version of Robert Motherwell's *Elegies.* It's this really, really fantastic, huge mural that you can't help but be consumed by. So there's the two pieces that kind of go hand in hand, specifically related to Derry. I haven't seen it for quite some time, but I think Altnagelvin is–

28:36
CH: Yeah, it's definitely been added to over the years, is a discreet way of saying that. So we are going to spend the last bit talking about beyond the exhibition. So Phillip, you are involved with the Fruit Shop Collective in Belfast. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

28:56
PM: So we're a collective of Belfast based artists that are operating out of a residential cafe. And we merge food production with local growing initiatives and local food histories and trying to find, I suppose creative solutions to those kind of problems. We're interested in ideas of creative labour and creative entrepreneurship, and the artists working in labour and the things that kind of go to support our practices that have become our practices.

29:25
CH: It definitely feeds through because I know you've done a lot of work that involves food previously, and actually this is one of the first–is it right to say the first time you've used objects in an exhibition?

29:56
PM: Well it's the first time in a long time. Like in art college it was always sculpture and it was very object orientated. But that was coming out of having a studio and stuff. And I suppose my practice has been influenced by not having a studio and taking a more curatorial path over the last number of years, which I kind of see now as a kind of stepping back from personal attachment to work and stuff in almost a protective step away from it. Where now, I feel a lot more confident working with the things that I'm interested in and presenting that. You see it in the exhibition, as this experiment, and finding like a language or vocabulary or mechanism to represent this research in objects and stuff. So yeah, I'm interested see how that develops.

30:17
CH: Yeah, I'm with you there. And Grace, you're part of Array Collective. So how does Array tend to operate? And also, we can't not say again, huge congratulations on the Turner Prize nomination.

30:31
GM: Thank you. Yeah, Array's a collective of 11 people and we joined together to create collaborative actions in response to socio-political issues, and a lot of the work is around protests. It's how do you create work collaboratively within a gallery space and kind of bring together these aspects of, you know, protest and what that is particularly in the north of Ireland in relation to England, Scotland and Wales. The Turner Prize nomination has been amazing. Been a bit of a whirlwind. I think I'll only really come to terms with it in a couple of years. Yeah, we're just trying to make work at the minute. But, you know, there's so many of us, we all have multiple jobs, have kids, are pregnant, and moving house so yeah, it's a lot of work. But I enjoy working collaboratively more than I enjoy working by myself and it's been really great to come out of–to feel like I'm coming out of a pandemic and then having more of a sense of community within that I'm making work that's responsive to what's happening.

31:40
JA: In the collective, Grace, I seen when the Turner Prize list went live and you'd grabbed attention from like a few blogs and articles like from the conservative women in I think the Telegraph. Some of these very right wing spaces.

31:55
GM: I think those kind of responses I actually found it really interesting. Yeah, I think we respond to kind of issues that we find within our mainly right wing society. I think we like to play with the critiques. And yeah, it's it's a reaction–I think we were work best whenever we're reacting to things.

32:22
CH: I think that segues neatly to James. You also work as an activist and you created perhaps some particularly iconic images from some different campaigns that have been happening recently. So do you see it as integral to your practice or do you kind of divide up; this is where I'm an activists, this is where I'm an artist.

32:41
JA: I kind of think art and activism goes together, especially recently I've just finished the window text poster for Lena Chen, who's an American author, and how erotic labour is essential labour. My inspiration for that project came from a lot of research and posters from the 1960s era of when all the civil rights movements are going across the world, like in Derry for example. I think some of them are actually 1960s posters you can actually go see them in the Museum of Free Derry in the Bogside. Regarding my own practice, things like LGBT rights, marriage equality, abortion rights, in Northern Ireland has been something that I very much have been observing for a good number of years now. It's probably one of the things for our generation. There was a period–I think was it was 2015 marriage equality got legalised in the Republic of Ireland and the UK already had it. And in 2018 Ireland got the 8th amendment appealed, and for this period of time we're in a small isolated corner in the northwest of Europe and we're so behind with with LGBT rights and abortion rights. Then fast forward to 2019 I think it was Stella Creasy the Labour MP–she got the bill put through for same sex marriage and abortion rights to be approved and to be rolled out in Northern Ireland. So I made a couple of images, one saying 'Ulster says now!' and the other saying' save sodomy from Ulster.' It's a parody from two DUP Unionist campaigns, the infamous 'Ulster says no' and the 'save Ulster from sodomy' campaigns by Ian Paisley–the type and the colours are all based on the 'Ulster says no' posters from that time period. I've got that printed out on t-shirts, badges, posters. And the 'save sodomy' badge is actually on display in the Ulster Museum. I think art and activism goes together in practice because generally, so speak, a lot of artists voice opinions in their artwork. One of my favourite illustrators Keith Haring, he brought. Lot of awareness to HIV and gay rights in his artwork, especially because he was from that community and unfortunately died quite young because of his

AIDS. If you look at different contemporary artists, they always use the network as a platform to voice their opinions and messages. And regarding the Ulster Museum, I drew the two Tayto men from the north and south, like in the statue up in Derry where they're reaching out to shake hands. I designed it as a commentary on Brexit and peace in Northern Ireland, and the Irish border because it's unstable at the best of times sometimes with politics up here. I just did it as a light-hearted thing. It really took off as iconic and a lot of people really resonated with it. I mean there's always something going on here politics wise that people are able to take the piss out of or parody. Like with Array Collective, as we've been speaking–was it you, Grace, during Pride month one year that someone dressed up as Stormont and an RHI boiler? I think that was Array Collective.

36:21
GM: Yeah, that was Sighle and Sinéad Bhreathnach-Cashell.

36:26
JA: Yeah, there's so much going on politics wise here to laugh at. Well, or cry I should say.

36:32
RCP: If you don't laugh you will cry.

36:35
CH: And Rachel, in your other incarnation; you run the Black Box. So, have you found programming that–are there overlaps?

36:55
RCP: Well, I think just the conversation there about art and activism is something that's really relevant, you know, to the Black Box while I'm there are director. We are ready to provide space for protest, for communities, for people to meet, and share ideas that give voice to people that maybe are underrepresented in society and need a space to meet and to formalise themselves and have a public platform as well. So in that capacity, it's a really important space for the city in terms of allowing room to incubate ideas, to experiment, to learn, to try things. To have an opportunity to be in a place that is accessible and inclusive and to be able to do that. We are a welcoming space and we work very hard on achieving that ethos and we relate it to everything we do. In terms of your actual appearance being in the space being put together, our staff team training, right through to the board level. Yeah, in terms of overlap, I don't really know where the Black Box ends and the rest of my life begins. It creeps into everything. I mean like a lot of artists and people work in the arts and culture sector. I mean often you're wearing many hats and you're juggling a lot of things. I mean, I don't know if any one here knows any artists that make a living from being an artist particularly–you're always doing that plus other stuff like a full time job, or a couple jobs plus volunteering as a combination of things. That is a really difficult balance that a lot of people struggle with and I think there are ways that there can be more resources and support in terms of supporting artists and that way of working and being able to support yourself and what you do and a real change in the value that's placed on artists and the arts here at a government level. Sorry, I'm like, what else is my point? I suppose it is a lot of creativity that can bring into the job as well. There's the management side of things, there the admin side of things, there's funding applications, there's all that. But I do try and bring in a lot of creativity in terms of design and delivering a lot of the programmes that we do and the events that we host, and really try to use the as a space to utilise my creativity in a different way outside of my sculpture practice, and so working in a gallery context is really thinking about audiences and how they experience events. I suppose a lot of what we like to put on is stuff that is quite immersive and experimental in terms of how people interact with the space and interact with arts and very cross platform and collaborative types of practices is something we really like to give a space to as well. An example of that is the

that is the *Neo Neo* project that I developed with Kwame Daniels who is from Bounce Culture, and that was very much about trying to create a specific space for visual artists and musicians to collaborate across their practices and their different ways of creating work and creative content, and then present it to an audience, or as a work in progress to an audience, that would then be experience in a very live and immersive way. And that's something I've been extremely happy to be able to have this space to develop and I wouldn't have that opportunity if I wasn't in the position that I'm in at the Black Box, and having access to that space and those connections that added to my practice and what I do. I suppose with my work, there is a continued thread there. I create installations and think of how people interact with work and objects in a space or a live space and bringing the together.

40:32
CH: And finally briefly to you, Ben, you talked a little bit about working between and across and it's all as one between architecture and as an artist. So I'm curious to know–I know that you teach as well at the university, but do you build buildings? I can't find a way to style it out.

41:00
BW: Maybe I can also go back to my previous point with my installations kind of artistic practice. I do actually physically construct them–part of my artistic process is actually to be more involved in the physical construction of work. Whatever I make I kind of a built installation I do always want to and more often than not, I do build it myself, which is more at odds with the way an architect would usually work. But I think it's important to kind of get your hands dirty sometimes. Yeah, no, it's it's a complex question. I guess it depends – as we're kind of talking about it, I mean, sometimes I have worked for years in architecture practices and I've had incredible collaborations there. They're always working towards a shared goal, and in my artistic practice I tend not to collaborate so much, not because I don't want to but because the opportunities just haven't really arisen so much. In architecture offices, collaboration is kind of the base level. Like everything happens in shared discussion and we always presented our sketches from the day at the end and we'd kind of have a chat about it. You never are in a bubble. You know, I would always be shouting across the room to someone like 'can you send me this gutter detail that you took a photograph of in Italy?' or 'what's the name of that guy that does not really stairs detail' or whatever. And we are always really critical of each other, in a really kind of positive sense, that we're always working towards a shared goal, which is, you know, a building that everybody sees is appropriate and generous, and within those kind of really difficult frameworks in Northern Ireland. It's very, very difficult to get a piece of architecture made in Northern Ireland. And I guess in the context of this show, I was presenting work as an artist–like I do kind of differentiate day jobs and my artistic practice. Also I would never want to speak on anyone's behalf, but I wouldn't present a work that comes out of my own artistic portfolio as a work for my architecture practice with clients and turnovers, with those things I do I'd draw the line there. So yes, I have in the past worked on buildings, but I guess the teaching practice is much more close to my artistic practice, in that how I teach architecture is one that's really self reflective and almost in the form of artistic research. Like I really get our students to look inside themselves, see what they're interested in, and try to get them to spit a project out of that. We tend to be very loose as to what we dictate towards them, but more often than not, it's just a site. So we put them down somewhere and see–so last year in first semester it was in the Lagan meadow, and they just had to walk around and find a space for intervention and do something that they deemed appropriate, and somehow spin a thesis out of that. I think as soon as you start identifying points for intervention, you can do that without putting some of yourself into it. You know, as a student you're working outside of these kinds of regulatory frameworks, you're not worried about getting planning permission, you're not worried about budget, you're just doing something which is important to you. And I think that's just exactly how an artistic process works. And it's how I also make projects. Something I'm working on right now is a built

project in a public space south of the Netherlands and I did it exactly how I teach my students, which is find an area for which you think something needs to happen, and try to do it.

42:55
CH: Hearing you all talk about the collaborative nature of your practices is, I think, a really nice note to end on. Thank you all so much for your time and sharing your thoughts, interests and practices with us today. *Irish Modernisms* is open until the 18th of September 2021 at CCA Derry~Londonderry, and for those of you unable to visit you can see images at our website CCADLD.org and across our socials @CCADLD. This Round Table is made possible thanks to the support of Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Derry City and Strabane District Council, the Art Fund, British Art Network, the Paul Mellon Centre, Yale, Arts Council England and Tate. And thanks to Jessica Jukes, Martin Myrone, Danielle Goulé, Mel Bradley, Laura McCafferty, and Fiona Allan. Thank you for listening.