

SAMHAIN

SHANNON PATTERSON

29-31 OCTOBER 2021



CCA DERRY~
LONDONDERRY

LIST OF WORKS

Shannon Patterson
SAMHAIN, 2021
Animation, 4 mins

Samhain Guide, 2021
Text, drawings

Animation running order:

1. The Lord of the Underworld, Donn, calls spirits of the dead and the Aos sí from Bull Rock with his horn.
2. It's Samhain, the Crack in time when the veil between worlds is at its thinnest.
3. Carving the Turnips, welcoming our dead ancestors and warding away the sídhe
4. Cailleach, the Divine Hag, Goddess of winter, rebirth, storms and harvest.
5. Bonfire, representing 1 the 4 quarter fire festivals of the Celtic Wheel of time.
6. Cattle between two bonfires. A fire festival ritual to ensure safe livestock for the upcoming year, and remove fleas.
7. The fairy ring. Daoine Sídhe emerges for Samhain.
8. Divination with Hazelnuts upon the fire hearth. How will your relationship fare this year?

9. The mythology of Lugh slaying Balor of the Evil eye. The origin story of Irish Selkies.

10. Divination with the looking glass. Will the reflection reveal a lover?

11. The Selkies Coat. A time of transfiguration, shapeshifting, and disguises.

12. The Salmon of Knowledge imparts the last year's wisdom. Samhain sets up the new year with new beginnings.

13. Change. The ever changing shape shifting Selkies remind us of a sídhe's ability to move among the humans undetected. Particularly during Samhain.

14. Migration. A time for movement, and big changes.

15. Famine, remembering our ancestors respectfully. Welcoming them home at this festivity. Recognising the regurgitation of American influence over modern day "Halloween".

16. Divination, the apple peel of truth. Reveal the initials of a truth, or future lovers name. Apple games and apple trickery. The fruit of liminality and harvest.

17. Our Mummers and Rhymers. A tradition that has stood fast through colonisation, migration, and language erasure. Respecting the Rhymers.

18. Don't eat Blackberries after Samhain, lest you eat the mischievous Púca's urine. He's a tricky one.
19. Cait Sídh. The shapeshifting Sídh cat that is known to steal the souls from a corpse. Be sure to protect your coffins, particularly during this crack of time.
20. Folklore of our king of cats.
21. Christian assimilation. The monk's narrative.
22. The Celtic Tree of Life. The symbol of the Celtic death philosophy and rebirth.
23. The Bean Sídh (Banshee). Be sure not to take her comb.
24. The Celtic death rituals, and our Keeners. The importance of celebrating life, and mourning death with performance. The Irish tradition of wakes predates Christian colonisation.
25. The Changeling. When a human is secretly replaced with a Sídh. Oftentimes a young boy. "Come away with me O human child..."
26. The more recent Christian interpretations of Samhain.
27. Samhain is over, the new year has begun. The crack in time closes, and the veil is no longer so thin.
28. Donn hails the spirits and Sídh back to Bull Rock, the entrance to his realm.
29. It begins again, rebirth. To the next year ahead.

SAMHAIN

For this year's Awakening the Walls 2021 CCA Derry~Londonderry has invited artist Shannon Patterson to produce a new animation in response to the festival themes of Samhain, spirit worlds and folklore. This new commission is projected from the City Walls onto the front of the CCA building on Artillery Street each evening for the duration of the Halloween weekend. In these pages you can find out more about some of the symbols and characters featuring in Shannon's work written by the artist herself.

The animation is a response to the ideas of Samhain by Shannon based on her fascination with the festival, her knowledge of Celtic Mythology and her research on the history of Halloween. Shannon is becoming known for her unique illustrations and animations inspired by folklore, magic and mythology.

Shannon says of her work, "I was raised at the knee with folklore stories by my mother, who grew up on Dernish Island, Lough Erne in County Fermanagh - having told her of how her family regularly encountered the ghosts of soldiers, and Trooping Fairies, upon the many Islands of their mysterious Lough.

Though some of this folklore actually predates 'Celts' and the term Celts is one widely theorized and disputed - for the sake of simplicity I will address the information as one of Celtic heritage. As 'Celts' mostly just refers to the people of old Gaelic languages across these Islands, and our own cultural stories and traditions have been remarkably preserved - all thanks to our Irish language speakers of the past, and present.

Go raibh maith agaitbh"

If you see the animations over the duration of the festival tag us @CCADLD and #DerryHalloween

MYTHOLOGY OF THE DEAD

Donn

Celtic Lord of the Dead/Underworld sometimes in Irish folklore and Myth to be conflated with Fear Dorcha (the dark one).



Donn means brown in Irish, associated thus with the shadowy dark realms of our Otherworld that belong to the dead. He was considered to be one of the first humans to invade Ireland while the old gods still roamed here. He met his death at stormy sea, and as a respected commander he was elevated of status in his demise to the position of lord of the dead. It was at the hands of the good God Dagda's grandsons, the three high kings, that he fell to the storm. The same brothers who are said to have killed our god Lugh the ildánach (master of all arts). So despite his human blood, to die at the hands of Gods was so significant, that Donn was raised to a Demi god like status in death. Now every Samhain he rises from Bull Rock on the coast of Cork to sound his horn, calling Sídhé out from the Otherworld along with those spirits of the dead.

JACK O'LANTERNS AND GLAMOURS

Tornapa taibhse

(Turnip lantern/ghost turnip)



It was always a Celtic tradition to light candles for the dead, predating christian influence. The Celts believed it would lead the way for the departed to return, and ward off the tricky Sídhé. There's no evidence how far back carving the Turnips go, but it is thought that similar to twisted gargoyles upon a church - they were a way of frightening Sídhé from your doorstep. However, once christianity took a hold on Ireland, more and more stories would assimilate to fit a christian narrative. For instance in the 18th century it was said a man named Jack the Blacksmith had colluded with the Devil, he was said to be denied entry to heaven. Once condemned to wander Ireland, he begged the Devil for some light. The Devil saw mercy, and gave him a burning coal ember which Jack placed inside the head of a turnip.

Thus the name “Jack O’lantern.”

Many Irish and Scottish folklore tales revolve around this character Jack.

Thus you have stories like Jack and the beanstalk with its roots in Gaelic storytelling. Then the Irish emigrated to America, and Americans had loads of Pumpkins instead of Turnips. Now we waste money buying pumpkins that aren’t native to our land and have zero cultural value. They do look cute however.

Sídhe would see fit to shapeshift themselves amongst humans to get past things like spooky turnip faces, fire or religious iconography, humans too would disguise themselves as the Sídhe. The reason for our affiliation with costumes during Samhain today comes from this tradition so that the Sídhe could not recognise us. They play tricks on us, and we play tricks on them.

HARVEST AND THE BEGINNING OF WINTER.

Cailleach

The Divine Hag Goddess of Storms and renewal



Samhain is about reining in November, and celebrating the beginning of winter. The Celts had a beautiful death philosophy that celebrates the cycle of life. If you imagine life like a seed, we begin in the darkness of soil like that seed. November (Samhain) - is that darkness. Once the seed rises up out of the soil as a plant, and makes its way to the light - summer (Bealtaine) - eventually it must return to the soil upon death. Our lives too begin in the darkness of a womb, and end in darkness of the soil, renewing the land for replanting. This death philosophy is the foundation of everything we know culturally, from the Celtic Tree of Life, the five Celtic cycles of mythology to the Celtic wheel of time etc. Samhain brings in the Celtic new year, beginning with winter. We celebrate the last of our harvest, and celebrate the return of our departed ancestors. We welcome the renewal of winter’s crisp, deadly grip on the landscape, as the seed is planted firmly in the soil once more. This is why all our festivals begin on the evening before and end the evening after. Samhain begins on Samhain’s

eve, 31st October by the Christian calendar, and it's actually called Oíche Shamhna - ending on the eve of November 1st, which is technically Samhain itself. The Celts tended to change dates according to the lunar calendar, but it would always signify November and winter.

THE TIME FOR DIVINATION

Apple peels

Cabbage

Hazelnuts

Looking glass/Mirrors

Báirín Breac

Games



During the Celtic Wheel of time of the four major fire festivals every quarter year, Samhain and Bealtaine are the two main times for Divination. This is because the veil between the Otherworld and our own is at its thinnest. The powerful flow of liminality melds the rigidity of our realms rules away during these moments...our mortal realm can then tap into the energy of the Otherworld,

where the Sídhe reside. The veil to the Otherworld also thins during Imbolc and Lughnasadh, but those corresponding quarter festivals tap the power of divination slightly differently, as the rules apply differently according to the purpose of that energy. Samhain and Bealtaine are about protecting our luck from the Sídhe, whereas Imbolc and Lughnasadh are about bringing more luck to our lives. The Samhain traditional rituals for divination take the form of role playing games and tricks. Hazelnuts on a fire hearth or apple peels scattered to the floor will share light on the future of a relationship. Apple bobbing will answer a burning question. Báirín Breac will tell a young woman her fate with finances, marriage, religious prospects or future family. A looking glass can reveal a secret lover. Cabbages can reveal money prospects or relationship length. Typically anyone with a womb would take part in divination, as the womb was seen as a liminal space between life and death. Oftentimes it was imagined they could tap into fortune telling much easier for that reason. However, anyone could take part in Divination.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shannon Patterson is an Irish artist, illustrator and activist, also known as @Rose_May_Scribble, living and working in Northern Ireland. Her work focuses on Irish folklore and mythology, aiming to break down patriarchal narratives introduced by the Church. Using a combination of classic book illustration and children's book illustration style, combined with influences from the Irish landscape and art from medieval times, Shannon wants to breathe new perspective into old stories. For Shannon these Irish myths are stories of migration, powerful women, queer exploration and fallible, normal human behaviour. With her work she aims to express this, decolonise the narratives and insert a fresh perspective hopefully to ignite renewed public interest in this aspect of Irish culture.

Shannon graduated with a BA in Video Games Design from UCLAN in 2017. Furthering her studies with an introductory course in Irish Mythology and Folklore at University College Cork in 2019. She is pro choice and LGBT+ activist and her work has been used in many campaigns for Alliance for Choice Derry.



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