

Lost Lace – Press Release – 23 September 2022

On behalf of the visual artist Miriam McConnon and the poet Jessica Traynor, it is my privilege to announce that Lost Lace, a public art installation and poetry recital to commemorate the lives lost to covid 19 in Ireland will be launched on Saturday 15 October 2022 at Iveagh Gardens, Dublin, Ireland. The event will be opened at 3pm on that day by TD Catherine Martin, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

About Lost Lace:

Lost Lace is a public art installation and poetry recital to commemorate the lives lost to covid 19 in Ireland. It will be launched at 3pm on 15 October 2022 at Iveagh Gardens, Dublin.

Concept of the project:

The project 'Lost lace' is a collaborative project between the visual artist Miriam McConnon and the poet Jessica Traynor with the engaged participation of the families who have lost loved ones to covid 19 in Ireland. Members of the public were indeed invited to share their stories of loss on a website created for that purpose: <http://www.lostlace.com/>

Miriam McConnon's outdoor installation 'Lost Lace' is made up of approximately ten thousand white roses made by the artist from individual white handkerchiefs. The artist will place the roses around one of the fountains at Dublin's Iveagh Gardens. The handkerchief roses will form a delicate pattern of traditional Irish Lace. Each Handkerchief rose symbolizes a life lost in Ireland and Northern Ireland due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Each single handkerchief rose in this installation references the small cloths or 'cloodies' that were hung traditionally on trees near the site of holy wells in Pagan Ireland. The handkerchief was believed to drive illness away by absorbing it. The artist has chosen to place them in a floral lace pattern hinting at the concept of the man-made object imitating nature in an attempt to find resolve.

The single rose is a symbol of devotion. Here this devotion becomes collective, signifying the national and personal loss. This installation urges the public to not lose sight of the individual life, the single rose. In this installation McConnon emphasises the solitary path of individual grief in unison with the national and collective loss, urging the people of Ireland to unite in grief and in the commemoration of the lives lost to Covid 19.

Watch a short video of the artist announcing the project filmed in the Iveagh Gardens Dublin:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AC3do5ZT748>

About Miriam McConnon:

Miriam McConnon's outdoor installation Lost Lace is consistent with her other artwork in its use of the personal narrative to communicate social issues to a wider public audience. In this case an individual life lost to covid is represented as a single white handkerchief rose. It is presented along with over 10,000 other roses in a lace pattern in Dublin's Iveagh gardens. As she often does, she calls on the personal narrative behind domestic objects to mark events of change in history. In this case, through the objects of the handkerchief and lace, she relates the objects to the ancient Irish

tradition of hanging clooties (handkerchiefs) at the sacred sites of wells in pagan Ireland in the hope of curing an illness.

The use of bedding material to make the roses references the sensitive and intimate narrative of a person's last days in bed due to the onset of Covid 19. This installation Lost lace is a homage to the human story behind each of these ten thousand roses and urges the public not to lose sight of the individual life amidst the collective and national grief.

Miriam McConnon is represented by the Olivier Cornet Gallery in Ireland:

<https://www.oliviercornetgallery.com/miriam-mcconnon>

Collaboration with the Poet Jessica Traynor:

The poet Jessica Traynor has been commissioned to write a series of four poems, taking as a guiding principle the ambition to honour those things we have lost in the past two years – people, skills, art, connection. She has explored and responded to themes such as the lost art of Irish lacemaking, the ancient practice of tying 'clooties' at holy wells, and the words and messages submitted on the project's website (<http://www.lostlace.com>) by those who have lost friends and relatives to covid 19 in Ireland. She has weaved these themes together through poetry that will also be accessible to the public through the use of QR codes allowing visitors to the Iveagh Gardens access to a transcript of the poems, and a recording of the poet reading them.

Jessica Traynor is a poet, essayist and librettist. Her debut poetry collection, *Liffey Swim* (Dedalus Press, 2014), was shortlisted for the Strong/Shine Award and in 2016 was named one of the best poetry debuts of the past five years on Bustle.com. *The Quick* was a 2019 Irish Times poetry choice. Awards include the Ireland Chair of Poetry Bursary and Hennessy New Writer of the Year. *Paper Boat*, a new opera commission from Irish National Opera, will premiere in 2022. Essays and articles have recently appeared in *Winter Papers*, *The Dublin Review*, *Banshee*, *Tolka* and *We Are Dublin*. *Slapped Actor*, a book of essays, has been listed for the Fitzcarraldo Editions Essay Prize and the Deborah Rogers Foundation Award in 2021. Residencies in 2021-22 include the Yeats Society Sligo, The Seamus Heaney Home Place and the DLR LexIcon. She is a Creative Fellow of UCD. Her third collection, *Pit Lullabies*, was published by Bloodaxe Books in March 2022, and is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation.

"It's been a rare privilege to engage with the messages left for loved ones on the Lost Lace website. Wading through all this grief was deeply affecting, but the common strand I found was love, the love that outlasts life. The experiences common to many - the inability to hold a loved one's hand at the end, the inability to bury them in a suit or outfit chosen for the occasion - struck me deeply, and I tried to reflect these experiences in my poems. I hope these poems and the Lost Lace installation will give grieving people another focal point and a chance to connect with the communities who share their loss." Jessica Traynor, September 2022

'a knot for the hay and the harvest

 a knot for your husbands and wives

a knot for your sons and daughters

 a knot for their flickering lives.'

- from 'Knotwork' (one of the four commissioned poems)

Presentation of artwork and poetry:

The launch of the project will take place at 3pm on the 15th October 2022. The installation will remain in place for two weeks (until 23rd of October). At the launch of the project, the Families of the victims of Covid 19 will be invited to gather together to hear the recital of the four poems by Jessica Traynor and to see the outdoor installation Lost Lace by Miriam McConnon. The Location of the Iveagh Gardens in Dublin provides a perfect enclosed and private setting for the people of Ireland alongside the families of those who have died from Covid 19 to come together and collectively support each other and mourn the individual and the collection loss.

This project appears to be one of the first of its kind in Europe where an individual artist created an entirely self-made installation (making over 10000 handkerchief roses by hand) to commemorate the victims of covid 19 for an entire nation while engaging with a poet and members of the public.

Lost Lace is supported by Dublin City Arts Office and the OPW.

The artist will be presenting a series of drawings based on the installation at the Olivier Cornet Gallery from October 19 to October 30.

For more information, please visit <https://www.oliviercornetgallery.com/lost-lace-art-installation-drawing-exhibition-miriam-mcconnon-olivier-cornet-gallery>

Regards

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