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## Update on Sculpture Dublin: City Hall - O'Connell Plinth Commission

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Chair and Committee Members,

Please find below a short report updating the City Hall Protocols Committee on progress relating to the O'Connell Plinth commission.

At the end of this report, I have included, as an Appendix, the report submitted to the Committee in December 2020. It provides information on Sculpture Dublin, the O'Connell Plinth commissioning process and Selection Panel, along with the awarded artist, Alan Phelan and the proposed work.

### SCULPTURE COMMISSION

#### CONTRACT

Alan Phelan has been contracted by Dublin City Council to create and install a temporary sculpture on the O'Connell Plinth, and to de-install and remove the artwork after a period of one year.

#### PRODUCTION

The artist is working with two main contractors to fabricate the work: 3D Printing Ireland, based in Ashbourne, and Prism Engineering Ltd. in Walkinstown.

3D Printing Ireland is responsible for the production of the 3D printed sections that will make up the main sculptural form. Prism Engineering is responsible for the central support structure running through the middle of the sculpture, the cantilevered structure supporting the sculpture on the plinth, and the installation / de-installation of the commissioned work. Both contractors are in contact with each other about the project, as well as speaking to and through the artist.

The engineer is in the process of developing final design solutions for the support structure around the plinth. His initial plans, included in the artist's Stage Two Proposal, were approved in principal by DCC Conservation Officer, Mary McDonald in February. When he completes more fully resolved plans, the artist will be put in direct contact with DCC Conservation Architects to finalise the plans and details of materials to ensure that they are of an acceptable standard and quality to meet with conservation guidelines around the plinth.

#### TIMELINE

The commissioned sculpture was scheduled for completion in June 2021. However the production timeline is being affected by COVID 19 and Level 5 restrictions.

Challenges affecting the production timeline include:

1. Brexit and resulting additional costs of importing specialist conservation-standard glue from the artist's UK supplier. The artist is in the process of sourcing a more cost-effective alternative product from an Irish company in the required quantity. The finished 3D-printed components of the work will be covered by coloured papier-mâché, meaning that a highly durable, weather-proof and colour-fast glue is required.

2. Level 5 lockdown has caused a delay in accessing workspace at Fire Station Artists' Studios that is essential to the paper-covering phase of production and final assembly of the sculpture prior to its installation.

Access to Fire Station Studios, or an alternative studio/workshop space in May would allow the work to be completed by August 2021.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

All of the new commissions will benefit from local engagement programmes designed to raise awareness, provoke conversations about sculpture and involve people in discussing how public art can enhance their neighbourhood. Local engagement will take the form of online surveys, public meetings, artists' cafes and culture clubs, as well as opportunities to participate in the creation of some of the new commissions and get involved in local art projects through schools and community organisations. <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/sculpture-in-your-area/>

An online Visual Artists' Café facilitated by Sculpture Dublin's programme partner, Visual Artists' Ireland (VAI), took place at 3pm on 23 February. Speakers included: Alan Phelan, commissioned artist; Brian Crowley, a historian working in the Heritage Services, National Monuments, OPW, and as an archivist in Kilmainham Gaol; Helen Pheby, Head of Curatorial Programme at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and Paula Murphy, Professor Emeritus at UCD School of Art History and Cultural Policy. The VAI are organising a café for each of the commissions to bring together artists, arts organisations and audiences and connect them with local projects.

Sculpture Dublin Public Engagement Curator is in contact with DCC Community Officers, Declan Hayden and Ronan O'Donnell to develop local community contacts. Sculpture Dublin will run a series of creative workshops in Presentation Secondary School Warrenmount in September 2021.

Sculpture Dublin is working with the city's cultural institutions to draw attention to sculpture in their collections and temporary exhibition programmes. Through a city-wide programme of talks and workshops, online presentations and publications, and a number of exciting new initiatives, including International Sculpture Day (24 April) and the Experiment! Sculpture Award (developed in partnership with The LAB Gallery and Fire Station Artists' Studios), Sculpture Dublin will encourage people to rediscover their city through sculpture – imagining new possibilities for art in the public realm and engaging in shared processes of learning and making. <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/sculpture-in-the-city/>

For information on upcoming events: <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/news-events/>

**Grainne Kelly**  
**Administrative Officer**

**25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

## APPENDIX 1

UPDATE REPORT submitted to the City Hall Protocols Committee  
in December 2020

### SCULPTURE DUBLIN: CITY HALL - O'CONNELL PLINTH COMMISSION

#### ABOUT SCULPTURE DUBLIN

Sculpture Dublin aims to raise awareness of Dublin's sculptural heritage and to commission new works in parks and public spaces city-wide. It is a Dublin City Council initiative, developed by Parks and Landscape Services and the City Arts Office, and supported by the Hugh Lane Gallery and Visual Artists Ireland.

Sculpture Dublin will commission a public sculpture in each of the Dublin City Council administrative areas: North West, North Central, Central, South Central and South East. Additional to the five permanent commissions, a special temporary artwork will be developed for the O'Connell Plinth at City Hall.

#### ABOUT THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS FOR THE O'CONNELL PLINTH

This commission invited artists to respond to the historical plinth that has stood empty in the centre of Dublin city for over 150 years. The O'Connell Plinth at City Hall was originally constructed to support the monumental statue of Daniel O'Connell – 'The Liberator' – that is now located inside the building.

Through a two-stage, open competition Sculpture Dublin asked artists to propose a new temporary public artwork for the O'Connell Plinth.

Full details of the commissioning process are included in the Commission Brief. In line with the published process, all submissions were checked to ensure completeness before progressing for review by the Selection Panel.

The Selection Panel for the O'Connell Plinth included:

- Councillor Donna Cooney (City Councillor)
- Councillor Mannix Flynn (City Councillor)
- Charles Duggan (DCC Heritage Officer)
- Gráinne Kelly (representative of DCC Culture Recreation and Economic Services)
- Sheena Barrett (representative of the City Arts Office)
- Paula Murphy (representative of Sculpture Dublin Steering Group)
- Barbara Dawson (representative of the Hugh Lane Gallery)
- Grace Weir (external art expert)

The Selection Panel agreed a short-list of 5 proposals from Stage 1 submissions on 1 October 2020.

The panel was reconvened on 25 November to identify from Stage 2 submissions by Mark Clare, Nathan Coley, Doireann Ní Grioghair, Alan Phelan and Paul Regan. Alan Phelan's proposal, 'RGB Sconce' was agreed by the panel as the most suitable proposal for the O'Connell Plinth commission.

Selection Panel Guidelines for Stage 1 and Stage 2 can be found here and attached.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST AND PROPOSED ARTWORK

Alan Phelan (b.1968, Dublin) based in Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, works in sculpture, film, museum interventions and public art. Recent public art projects include The Walker Plinth Commission, Void Gallery, Derry (2020); 'Living Words' sculpture commission for Kevin Street Library (2018) and a sculpture commission for St Michael's House Special National School Raheny, Dublin (2015). He studied at Dublin City University and Rochester Institute of Technology, New York, and has exhibited extensively across Ireland and abroad.

### 'RGB Sconce'

The proposal for the O'Connell Plinth commission, entitled 'RGB Sconce' is to create a large scale, brightly coloured sconce or candle holder, referencing stucco plasterwork and Georgian architecture, and symbolising hope in the form of a torch or eternal flame. The proposed artwork represents a different monumental sculpture to 'The Liberator' that stood there 150 years ago. The flamboyant sconce in bright colours draws its context from the building and nearby histories. These stretch over that same time period, celebrating different kinds of emancipation, moving through Irish independence, EU Presidencies, tribunals of inquiry, and important civic events related to marriage equality and reproductive choice.

### Fabrication and installation

The design and fabrication of the sculpture will involve working with two main contractors, one to produce 3D printed thermoplastic sections and the other to provide structural engineering, fabrication, installation and de-installation services.

### Materials

Paper covered 3D printed thermoplastic polyester forms (PLA), stainless steel, varnish, EVACON-R glue for paper lamination, Tec7 sealant for PLA joins, rubber matting (between metal and stone), electrical wiring, LED lights

### Scale

The size of the sculpture above the plinth is 538cm high x 250cm wide x 100cm deep.

### Weight

The thermoplastic and paper sections are relatively lightweight. The combined weight of the 12 sections that make up the structure is approximately 100kg.

### Positioning and fixing

Using a cantilevered, polished steel support, surrounding the stone plinth, the artwork will be essentially self-supporting. The design gives the impression that the plinth is used as bracing for the structure but all the weight is re-directed to the steel support and the ground (see visual attached). The installation design ensures that no fixings have to be attached to the plinth, building or site.

### Timeline and budget

The commissioned sculpture is scheduled for completion in June 2021. The artist will be responsible for the dismantling/removal of the artwork from the plinth after 1-year. The total commissioning value of the sculpture is €50,000 (incl. VAT).