

UPDATE REPORT
SCULPTURE DUBLIN: CITY HALL - O'CONNELL PLINTH COMMISSION
July 2021

For the attention of the City Hall Protocols Committee

ABOUT SCULPTURE DUBLIN

Sculpture Dublin aims to raise awareness of the Dublin's sculptural heritage and to create a series of ambitious new sculptures in parks and public spaces city-wide. It is a Dublin City Council initiative developed by Parks and Landscape Services and the Arts Office and supported by the Hugh Lane Gallery. Permanent sculptures are being commissioned in Ballyfermot, Finglas, Raheny, Terenure and Smithfield Square Lower and a temporary artwork is being commissioned for the O'Connell Plinth at City Hall.

ABOUT THE O'CONNELL PLINTH COMMISSION

The O'Connell Plinth was originally constructed to support the monumental statue of Daniel O'Connell by John Hogan, that is now located in the Rotunda in City Hall. The plinth is located at street level in a paved area leading to the main entrance of City Hall. This commission invited artists to respond to a historical plinth that has stood empty in the centre of Dublin city for over 150 years. Commissioning a new artwork for the O'Connell Plinth is an opportunity to restore to it its original function: the public display of sculpture.

Artist, Alan Phelan has been commissioned 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. Phelan is creating a large scale scone (or candle holder), a symbol of hope that is richly layered in reference; including the image of the Acanthus flower, a popular motif in Georgian stucco architecture, and the RGB colour code of the Joly Screen Photography printing process (invented in Dublin). The work also references queer and social histories, including the Dublin Castle Scandal of 1884.

The proposed artwork represents a different monumental sculpture to 'The Liberator' that stood there 150 years ago. The flamboyant scone 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.

PRODUCTION UPDATE

The artwork will be 5metres high and made of paper-covered, 3D printed thermoplastic polyester forms and steel. The artist is working with two main contractors: 3D Printing Ireland and Prism Engineering. 3D Printing Ireland has produced and delivered the 3D printed sections that will make up the main sculptural form. Prism Engineering has produced and delivered the steel support structure for the sculpture.

The artist gained access to Fire Station Artists' Studios in May, following the easing of restrictions and is working on the assembly, modification, papering and finishing of the final piece. The work is scheduled for completion in September with a launch date in September to be confirmed. Prism Engineering will prepare the method statements for installation. The artist will be responsible for the dismantling/removal of the artwork from the plinth after 1-year.

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/>

In relation to public engagement activity around the O'Connell Plinth commission, an **online café** with the commissioned artist, historians and public art curators was hosted by Visual Artists Ireland earlier in the year. The Sculpture Dublin **City Hall Lectures** by Professor Paula Murphy have been screened online monthly since January. The series was filmed in City Hall and explores historic public sculpture in Dublin from a range of perspectives. The screenings, including a Q&A with Paula Murphy, were very popular with approximately 100 people tuning in to each one. The recordings are available at <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/city-hall-oconnell-plinth-2/>

In partnership with the Hugh Lane Gallery, Sculpture Dublin has been running a monthly VTS **Sculpture Club** exploring the Hugh Lane's sculpture collection. VTS (Visual Think Strategies) is an innovative, fun way to look at art and make meaning out of artworks collectively. <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/city-hall-oconnell-plinth-2/>

Following the launch of the commissioned artwork in September, Visual artist, Renata Pekowska will facilitate a series of sculpture workshops with students in **Presentation Secondary School** and curator and art historian, David Archbold is developing a programme of **public talks** around the new commission.

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 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/>