



In *Seen, not Heard*, the universally evocative subject of childhood is celebrated and interrogated in an extensive exhibition of Irish artists' depictions of children and childhood spanning three centuries.

Why do artists make children their subjects? Is it, as in Vera Klute's tender 2016 video animation *Lara*, seemingly fuelled by a drive to capture the ephemeral nature of their offspring's childhoods, or is it to explore the artist's own memories of formative years, or to provide a commentary on children's position in society?

This question is one amongst the many that spring to mind when exploring how Irish artists have treated the social construct that is childhood. Childhood, biologically speaking, is of course the process of maturing from baby to adult. But in all human societies, childhood is beset with evolving sets of norms, conventions, taboos and traditions.

This year's ongoing student climate strikes provide an excellent backdrop to a consideration of how Irish society's approach to childhood has evolved.

From the old "seen and not heard" adage echoed in the stiffly posed child subjects of 18th and 19th century portraits on display in the exhibition, it's been quite a journey up to these 21st century children clamouring for change and arguing that, not only should they be both seen and heard, but as potential victims of adult political decisions, should be included in policy-making and planning for the future.

As an aside, it's worth noting that it was a Cork native, Mary Harris Jones, AKA Mother Jones, who may have birthed the concept of a children's strike in the first place.



Walter Frederick Osborne (1859-1903) *A Boy Playing Snakes* oil on canvas, 31 x 22cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Ireland, Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

In 1903, the so-called "march of the mill children," saw Jones arm US child workers with placards reading "We want to go to school and not to the mines," and march them to President Roosevelt's summer residence. It was her activism that in part gave rise to radical new child labour laws in the States, with a knock-on impact that saw most of the developed world reject child labour in favour of education.

The division of *Seen, not Heard* into three themes of *Perception*, *Play* and *Power* allows for the adult visitor to break the endlessly thought-provoking subject-matter at hand into digestible, contemplable bites, while who knows what approach will work best for the visitors who are themselves children? Best ask.

While *Perception* is naturally considered when faced with such an extensive selection of portraits of children, the theme of *Power* raises questions around artistic subjects and agency, not least in Robert Ballagh's 1974 portrait *Rachel as Marilyn*, probably the most controversial painting in the exhibition for its depiction of Ballagh's daughter mimicking the famous sex symbol. ➤



Sheila Pomeroy *Girl (detail)* Oil on panel, 63.5 x 84.4 cm. Image courtesy of Sheila Pomeroy and The Molesworth Gallery.

Yet is the little Rachel, for all the vulnerable naïveté of her play-acting, displaying more agency in choosing how she is represented than the unnamed child of Stephen Slaughter's 1745 portrait, *Lady and Child*, which seems to depict a stifled, restrained, adult-oriented view of childhood?

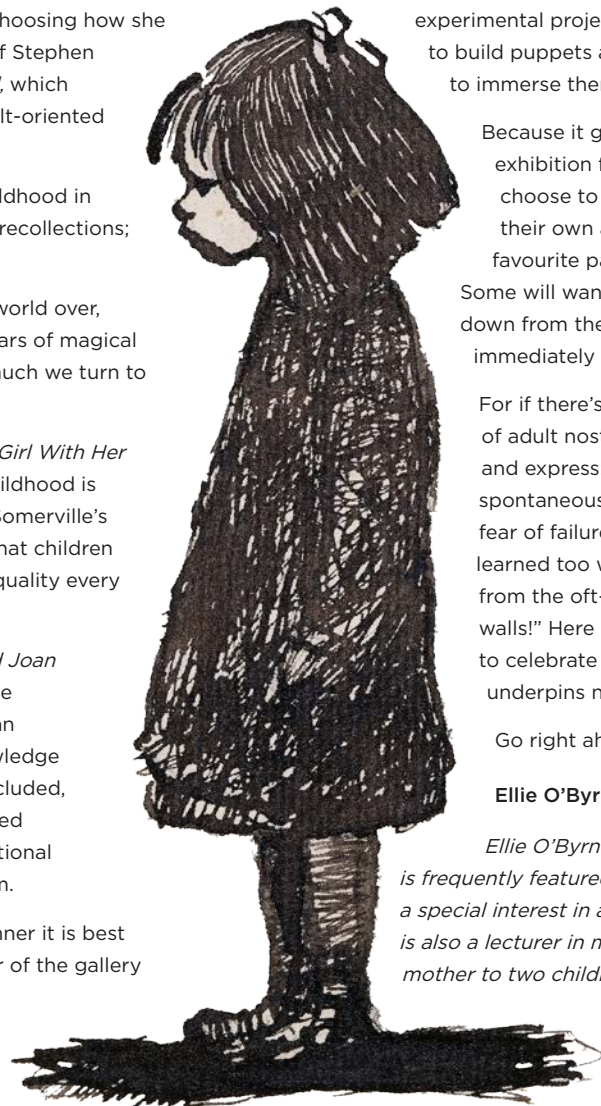
A warning to adults tempted to soak childhood in the sugary syrup of their own imperfect recollections; nostalgia is a dangerous path.

Childhood in Ireland, like childhood the world over, doesn't offer anyone a free pass to 18 years of magical trouble-free memories, no matter how much we turn to revisionism as adults.

The isolation of Michael Healy's *A Small Girl With Her Hands In Her Pockets* reminds us that childhood is often lonely and confusing. Edith Anna Somerville's much-loved *The Goose Girl* reminds us that children are the casualties of social class and inequality every bit as much as adults.

Cork sculptor Seamus Murphy's *Bob and Joan* sculptures once graced the pillars outside Shandon's Green Coat Hospital School, an abstract reminder of the need to acknowledge that the Irish experience of childhood included, for so many blameless little people in need of care, inhuman treatment in the institutional settings that should have protected them.

The theme of *Play* is explored in the manner it is best explored: through doing. The upper floor of the gallery extends an open invitation to play to visitors of all ages for the duration



of *Seen, not Heard*. Through a programme of activities and experimental projects, children and adults alike are invited to build puppets and cardboard box castles, to draw and to immerse themselves in creativity.

Because it goes without saying that this is an exhibition for children too. And how children will choose to engage with it is entirely a matter of their own agency. Some will want to find their favourite painting and sit down in front of it. Some will want to view the entire exhibition upside-down from their pushchair. And some will, of course, immediately and urgently need the loo.

For if there's one area of childhood still worthy of adult nostalgia, it's the freedom to explore and express: to crawl and sprawl, to interact spontaneously with your environment without fear of failure. Maybe, in your adult life, you have learned too well to control your creative impulses from the oft-repeated refrain of "don't draw on the walls!" Here is the chance to unlearn. The chance to celebrate the subversively creative genius that underpins not only childhood, but also art.

Go right ahead: draw on the walls.

Ellie O'Byrne,

*Ellie O'Byrne is a freelance journalist whose work is frequently featured in The Irish Examiner arts pages, with a special interest in arts, environment and social issues. She is also a lecturer in media studies in Griffith College and a mother to two children.*

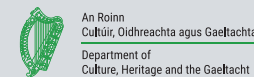
## Crawford Art Gallery



ROBERT BALLAGH, DAVID BARRETT, CATHERINE BARRON, ANTHONY BARRY, WILLIAM GERARD BARRY, HUGUES DE BEAUMONT, BOETHUS, MURIEL BRANDT, JAMES BRENNAN, LOUIS LE BROCCQUY, FREDERICK BUCK (ATTRIBUTED TO), CRISTINA BUNELLO, JULIA CATHERINE CALLANAN, MARGARET CAMERON, JULES-CYRILLE CAVÉ, JOHN MINTON CONNELL, OTTO DIX, BERNADETTE DOOLAN, RITA DUFFY, MICHAEL FLYNN, NORMAN GARSTIN, DEBBIE GODSELL, JENNIE ASHTON HACKETT, MICHAEL HEALY, NATHANIEL HILL, EVIE HONE, ROBERT HUNTER, HARRY AARON KERNOFF, VERA KLUTE, CHARLES LAMB, JAMES LATHAM, GUSTAVE-LEONHARD DE JONGHE, LES LEVINE, ALICE MAHER, MAHONY, COLIN MIDDLETON, VIK MUNIZ, JOHN MURPHY, SEAMUS MURPHY, NORAH BRIGID NI CHUILL, JOHN O'KEEFFE (ATTRIBUTED TO), WALTER FREDERICK OSBORNE, SHEILA POMEROY, BASIL RÁKÓCZI, PATRICK REDMOND, PAULA REGO, STEPHEN SLAUGHTER, EDITH AE SOMERVILLE, ELINOR WILTSHIRE

curated by Anne Boddaert and Victoria Evans with the support of Emma Klemencic and Alice O'Donoghue

Special thanks to the artists, private lenders and lending institutions, IMMA-Irish Museum of Modern Art and National Gallery of Ireland, The Molesworth Gallery, James Adam's Auctioneers and the Lavit Gallery who kindly contributed and to the gallery team.



Share Your Experience with Us  
#CrawfordArtGallery

www.crawfordartgallery.ie

Crawford Art Gallery, Emmet Place, Cork T12 TNE6  
T +353 (0)21 480 5042 E info@crawfordartgallery.ie





"I understand what you're saying, and your comments are valuable, but I'm gonna ignore your advice."

~*Fantastic Mr. Fox*, Roald Dahl

Children play with what they themselves have seen and heard. They use their bodies and minds to interact with their environment, with materials and other people. Play can be quiet or loud, messy or ordered, silly and serious. Play opens up multitude of possibilities.

In response to the exhibition *Seen, not Heard* we embrace play and participation. The meaning and experience of childhood is not fixed and play often mirrors what is important in children's lives. Children's determination to play, even in the most difficult environments, demonstrates the power of play in constructing meaning, safety and freedom. Play creates a world where children transform and experiment according to their own rules. Play is powerful.

Play, here in the civic space may offer an opportunity to reflect on some of our own ideas around childhood and play, education, cultural production and control.

The child in the public space is subject to many preconceptions. How do we respond to children in public space? Do they need a packaged experience? Should we adopt a binary approach with specific child-friendly zones?

This **PLAYSPACE** offers a range of encounters with materials, people and things for all ages. Stay for an hour or two or come play with family and friends every day!

Go right ahead: **draw on the walls.**

## JUNE / JULY

### A VISIT TO THE MOON with Downtcha Puppets

28 June – 5 August

Downtcha are passionate about puppet making, play and skill sharing. To collaborate with Downtcha Puppets we will literally fly to the moon, creating costumes, creatures, alien landscapes, props and a parade!

### Make Celestial Sculpture

Wednesday 3 and Saturday 20 July

Make a planet, comet using a variety of papercraft techniques, or put your name on a star

### Build your own Extra-terrestrial

Saturday 6 and Wednesday 10 July

Using simple hand and rod puppets made from paper, tape and mixed materials, we'll imagine what kind of fantastic creatures might live in and on the moon

### Astronauts & Space Stations

Saturday 13 and Wednesday 17 July

We will explore how we can live on the moon with marionette making, using a combination of recycled and new materials.

### Finger Puppets Explore the Moon

Wednesday 24 and Saturday 27 July

This workshop uses stories about the moon as inspiration for puppet making. Set design and character building will develop in a puppet show.

### Parade & Costume Making

Wednesday 31 July and Saturday 3 August

Make a space themed costume out of lightweight materials. Create simple designs of Space-ships, Moon Landers and Rockets.

### Cork Puppetry Festival

from Thursday 1 August (See [www.crawfordartgallery.ie](http://www.crawfordartgallery.ie) and [corkpuppetryfestival.com](http://corkpuppetryfestival.com) for more details)

## AUGUST

### CARDBOARD CORK

7 - 11 August, 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 4.30pm

We need you to create a cardboard box town! There is no right or wrong way to play with a cardboard box and our **PLAYSPACE** will be filled with boxes for drawing, ripping, taping, constructing, crawling, hiding and more!

### FANTASMAGORIA Animation Play Space

12 – 17 August, 10am – 1pm & 2pm – 4.30pm

Come play with stop-motion animation, invent a world, create characters, add sounds. Bring your ideas, your imagination and any special props. Animate on your own phone or use our equipment.

### FORMative with Cork Printmakers

19 - 25 August

An invitation to invent, construct and collaborate. Print your ideas and designs onto geometric cardboard shapes. Experiment with 3D structures on the floor and walls of a gallery. See an artwork evolve daily.

### workshops for 8 to 12 years old

Monday 19 to Friday 23 August, 10am to 12pm

€25 for the 5 sessions, limited number (12), booking essential via eventbrite

### Free, drop-in session, open to all ages

Monday 19 to Friday 23 August, 1pm to 2 pm

### workshops for 14 to 18 years old

Monday 19 to Friday 23 August, 2:30pm to 4:30pm

€25 for the 5 sessions; limited number (12), booking essential via eventbrite

### Free, drop-in session, open to all ages

Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 August 11am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm

## SEPTEMBER

### EAMON O'KANE

### Freobel Studio: Institute for Creativity

31 August – 23 September

Eamon O'Kane describes becoming a parent as a catalyst for this play environment.

The *Institute for Creativity* is an artwork that invites play and touch, designed for adults and children, teachers and schools. Based on the series of 'play gifts', play building blocks and movement games created by a German teacher called Friedrich Froebel. An interactive space where art, architecture, design, education & play intersect.



© E O'Kane Freobel Studio Institute for Creativity

### BEAG

Enchanting performances for very young children and their adults. BEAG artists use sound, colour, movement and tactile materials to create playful encounters. In partnership with Grafitti Theatre, Cork.

### What Colour is the Rain (0-1 years)

Thurs 12 Sept, 10 - 11am and 12 midday to 1pm, Sat 14 Sept, 2 - 3pm and

4 - 5pm, Sticky Pic (18 months - 3 years)

### Paper-pond Play (12 months - 3 years)

Thurs 19 Sept, 11am - 12 midday and 3 - 4pm,

limited number (12), booking essential via Eventbrite <https://bit.ly/2WHD5iB>

### CHILDREN FILM SEASON

In partnership with Cork Film Festival, we invite children to SEE and HEAR the best of world cinema. The Irish and international animations and short films have been selected by Cork Film Festival programming team for families to experience and enjoy.

### Family-Friendly Shorts

Sunday 22 September, 2 - 3.10pm

### The Secret of Kells 10th anniversary

#### Screening (PG)

Sunday 29 September, 2 - 3.20pm

### The Overcoat and Mirette (double bill)

Sunday 6 October, 2 - 3.10pm.

Tickets per screening: €25 Family Pass (2 adults & 2 children).

€7.50 Additional adult tickets. €6 Additional child tickets

For full film information and booking, visit [corkfilmfest.org](http://corkfilmfest.org)



Louis le Brocqy (1916-2012), *Battersea Boy*, 1954  
Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 25.5cm  
Image courtesy of James Adam's Auctioneers.  
© Estate of Louis Le Brocqy, IVARO Dublin 2019

## OCTOBER

### WILL SLINEY Superheroes take over

1 - 28 October

In October, award-winning comic book artist Will Sliney will take over the gallery, transforming it into a world of legends and super heroes, bound to inspire comic book fans of all ages, budding illustrators, and anyone who dares to dream big. Featuring some of his work from Celtic Warrior: The Legend of Cú Chulainn and from Marvel comics, witness supernatural feats of strength, ferocious battles, and tragic destinies, as Will transforms our Playspace with a cast of larger than life heroes.

Background: Debbie Godsell *7/16e*, 2017 Photo screen print, 100 x 70 cm Image courtesy of the artist



28 June - 27 October, 2019