



MUSEUM  
PLINTH  
PROJECT  
2026

# Museum Plinth Project Six Month Residency Open Call for Early Career Visual Artists

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## **Guidelines for Applicants**

### **Museum Plinth Project**

The Museum Plinth Project is an artist residency programme conceived and led by artist Dominique Crowley, in collaboration with artist and curator Sharon Murphy. The project offers early-career visual artists, and artists at a formative stage of practice, the opportunity to undertake a sustained period of research and development within major heritage institutions, including museums and libraries, in Dublin. Delivered in partnership with the National Museum of Ireland, Marsh's Library, and Dublin City Arts Office and Lab Gallery, the Museum Plinth Project is designed as a pilot residency model that places artistic research, critical inquiry, and institutional engagement at its core. The inaugural 2026 iteration of the Museum Plinth Project coincides with Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, providing a focused civic and temporal context in which artists are invited to reflect on cultural memory, knowledge systems, and the role of institutions in contemporary life.

### **About the Museum Plinth Project**

This Project is designed to support artists whose practice engages critically with context, material, history, and systems of knowledge. The project places particular value on artistic practices that are analytical, reflective, and questioning, and that approach collections as sites of inquiry. These may be cultural, social, scientific, political, literary, or aesthetic in nature, where research meaningfully resonates with the artist's own concerns and has the capacity to evolve, extend, and deepen their practice. Through mentoring and curatorial support artists are encouraged to work with complexity, ambiguity, and process, and to develop work or thinking that emerges through sustained engagement with institutional structures, archives, collections, and professional expertise.

## **Governance and Oversight**

The Museum Plinth Project is overseen by a Steering Committee comprising representatives of the project partners, including the Plinth leads, the host institutions and Dublin City Arts Office and Lab Gallery. The Steering Committee provides strategic oversight, supports good governance, and advises on the development, delivery, and evaluation of the project. Members of the Steering Committee may also serve on the selection subcommittee for the residencies.

## **About the host institutions**

Two residencies will be offered in 2026, hosted by the National Museum of Ireland and Marsh's Library. Each residency is based in one host institution only. Applicants may apply to one institution and must indicate their preference clearly in the application form.

## **About the National Museum of Ireland (Natural History and Art and Industry)**

The National Museum of Ireland is the guardian of the nation's natural, cultural, and material heritage. Through its collections, research, and public programmes, the Museum explores the relationships between people, place, science, design, and material culture, and how these continue to shape understandings of the world. The Museum Plinth Project residency is hosted across the Museum's Natural History and Art and Industry collections. Together, these holdings provide access to extensive material in zoology, geology, scientific classification, decorative arts, industrial design, craft, and technological innovation, spanning Irish and international contexts. The National Museum of Ireland offers a rich research environment for artistic practice that engages with materiality, science, design, environment, and systems of knowledge, and with the institutional frameworks through which such knowledge is produced, preserved, and communicated. Institutional Leads: Paolo Viscardi, Keeper of Natural History. Dónal Maguire, Keeper of Art and Industry.

## **About Marsh's Library**

Founded in 1707, Marsh's Library is Ireland's oldest public library and one of the finest surviving early modern libraries in Europe. Its mission is to preserve, study, and make accessible its internationally significant collections, while supporting critical engagement with the intellectual histories they contain. The Library holds over 25,000 rare books and manuscripts dating from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, with strengths in theology, philosophy, history, science, medicine, law, travel, and early modern literature. Its architecture and historic reading rooms form a rare, intact environment in which books, space, and systems of knowledge remain closely connected. Marsh's Library offers a distinctive research context for artistic practice that engages with early knowledge systems, textual culture, belief,

scholarship, and the material and spatial conditions of reading, thinking, and learning. Institutional Leads: Jason McElligott, Director. Amy Boylan, Librarian.

### **About Dublin City Arts Office and The Lab Gallery**

Through Dublin City Arts Office, Dublin City Council supports artists, organisations and local communities by delivering experiences that contribute to the city's cultural life. By leading and working with these partners, the Arts Office aim is to create a vibrant city known for its rich heritage. The Arts Office encourages the people of Dublin to explore, experience and contribute to the arts. The development of new audiences for art is a priority and this is achieved through work with schools, communities and businesses. In collaboration with other areas of Dublin City Council, such as planning, events and parks, Dublin City Arts Office aims to improve public access to art and maximise opportunities for local artists to showcase their skills. They support this work through a variety of grants and funding programmes. They also provide artist studios, incubation spaces, residential spaces, rehearsal studios and training opportunities to the city's creatives. The Arts Office is also tasked with implementing the Dublin City Public Art Programme, which allows it to commission new artwork across all artforms. Other initiatives include MusicTown, Opera in the Open, Culture Night Dublin and Bealtaine Dublin. They also support dozens of other events and festivals taking place around the city. Since 2005, The LAB on Foley Street has been the municipal arts hub and delivers a year-round programme of free events. The Lab Gallery, established in 2005, runs an exhibition programme with eight exhibitions every year and supports emerging art practices and established artists. The gallery supports the Plinth Project through funding and support for new residency opportunities for artists. Dr Margarita Cappock, Curator at the LAB Gallery is a member of the Steering Group

### **The Residency Opportunity**

Duration: Six months, from 1 July to 31 December 2026.

Residency Structure: The residencies are designed around structured access to institutional collections, with research arrangements shaped collaboratively to support the evolving needs of each artist's project. The residencies are non-studio-based and do not include accommodation; instead, working arrangements are agreed in advance between the artist and the host institution. Curatorial and mentoring support are integral to the residency, offering sustained dialogue and guidance attuned to individual working rhythms and research trajectories. Each residency unfolds across three interrelated phases: a research phase, a development phase, and a phase of public engagement and sharing. Towards the end of the residency, there will be an opportunity to share research outcomes within the host institution. This final Plinth component is flexible and responsive and will be determined by the nature of the artistic enquiry in consultation with the host institution. Both selected artists will also be

invited to present their residency experience and research as part of the Museum Plinth Project Lecture.

### **Funding and Support**

Each selected artist will receive a fee of €5,000, intended to cover artist time, materials, and public engagement activity. Desk space, access to collections, and curatorial and mentoring support are provided as part of the residency.

### **Eligibility / Who Can Apply**

This residency is intended for early-career professional visual artists whose practice is research-driven and critically engaged. The programme is particularly suited to artists who work through enquiry, reflection, and analysis, and who are interested in how artistic research can be developed within institutional, archival, historical, or knowledge-based contexts.

The Museum Plinth Project welcomes a wide range of artistic approaches and research interests, including cultural memory, material histories, scientific and literary enquiry, museology, the Anthropocene, systems of classification, and the ethics of knowledge production.

### **Assessment process and criteria**

Applicants must be practicing professional visual artists with a demonstrated track record, such as exhibitions, publications, commissions, performances, or awards. A solo exhibition is not required. Applicants must be Irish citizens or normally resident on the island of Ireland. Applicants currently enrolled as full-time students on BA or MA programmes are not eligible.

Selection will be based on the following criteria:

- the quality, coherence, and rigour of artistic practice,
- evidence of a critically engaged and research-led approach,
- the potential benefit of an institutional residency at this stage of the artist's practice, commitment to practice development,
- and the quality and relevance of supporting material.

### **Key Dates**

1 March 2026 – Open call announced.  
16 April 2026 5pm – Application deadline.  
Week of 27 April 2026 – Shortlisting.  
Week of 11 May 2026 – In-person Interviews.  
18 May 2026 – Announcement of selected artists.  
1 July 2026 – Residency begins.  
31 Dec – Residency ends

### **Access and Inclusion**

The Museum Plinth Project is committed to inclusive practice and to supporting access requirements wherever possible. Applicants are invited to outline any access needs as part of the application process.

### **How to Apply**

The deadline for receipt of applications is 16th April 2026 at 5pm. Applications should be submitted by email, with all materials contained in one PDF document, no larger than twenty megabytes. The file name should follow this format: Museum Plinth Project, Institution (MARSH OR MUSEUM), Surname Firstname. Links to online platforms such as Dropbox, Vimeo, YouTube, or personal websites may be included within the PDF. Time-limited services such as WeTransfer should not be used.

No proposal text should appear in the body of the email, as the selection panel will review attachments only. Applications should be sent to [admin@museumplinthproject.com](mailto:admin@museumplinthproject.com) with the email subject line Museum Plinth Project Application, Your Name. Applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt. All applicants will be notified of the outcome. Due to the pilot nature of the programme and limited resources, feedback cannot be provided.

Send Applications to [admin@museumplinthproject.com](mailto:admin@museumplinthproject.com)

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