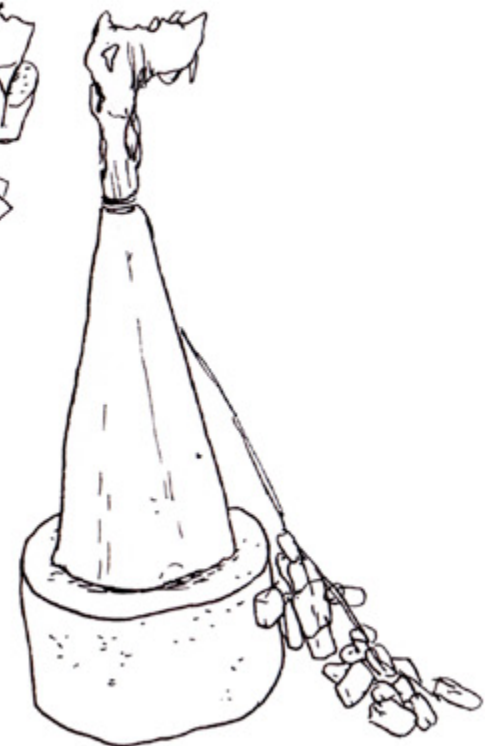
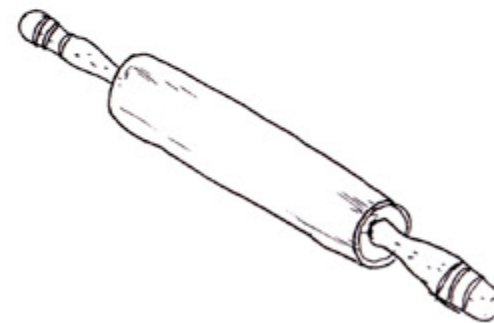
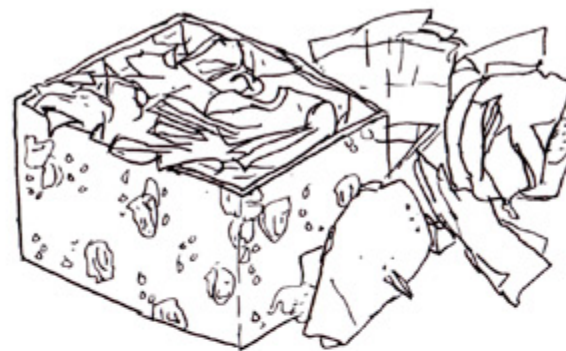
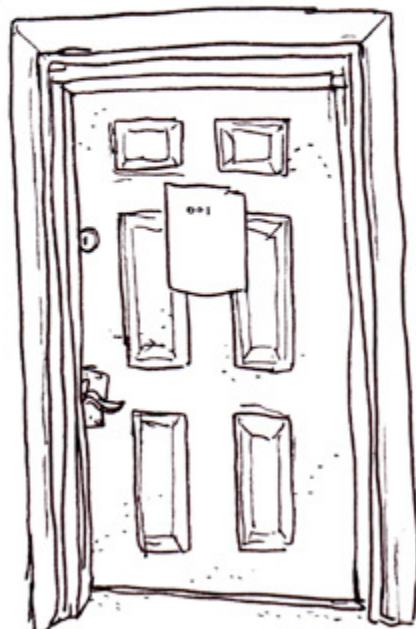
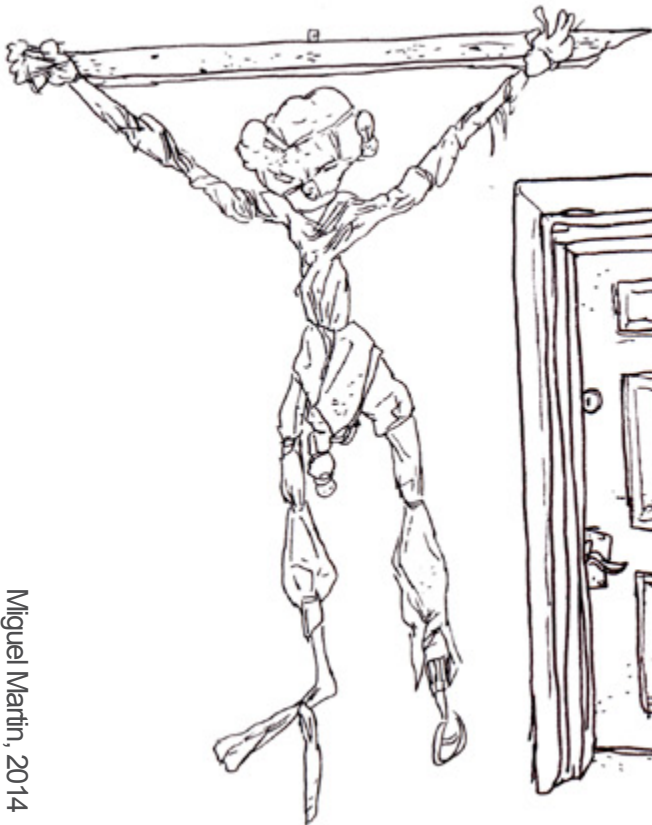
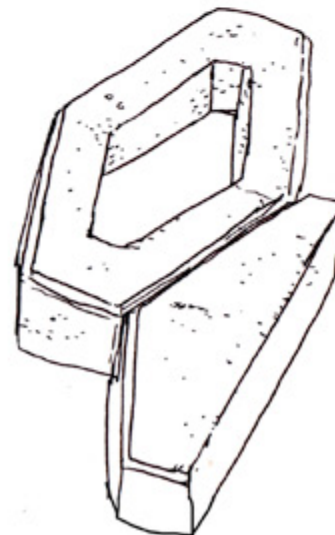
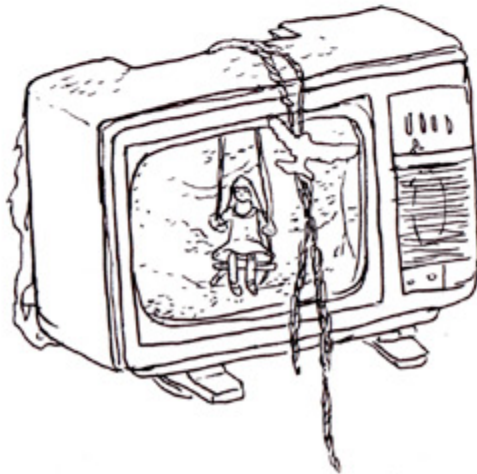


plat5orm



Miguel Martín, 2014

Platform Arts

The First Five Years

2009 - 2014

Platform Arts!! Two and a half years I gave to you ingrates. Be it grant applications or cleaning toilets, we all worked fearlessly and tirelessly. Coming in belligerently one onerous Sunday morn to paint the upper gallery, we were less than pleased to have to eject three pigeons that had popped in for a bit of breathing space. Breadcrumbs, strategics and signposting solved the issue, eventually. And then there was the food fight! I popped downstairs for ten mins and returned to absolute bedlam. Decaying, smelly bedlam!! Three weeks it took to clean that up!!! We spent six million pounds on detergent and another fifteen grand on sponges.

My spell as co-director at Platform was damned hard work at times but, personally speaking, it was one of the most enjoyable and worthwhile experiences of my life. I am exceptionally proud to be part of the foundations of Platform Arts, and I know it will continue to shine in days to come. Congrats to us all.

Catherine Devlin
Co-Director 2011 - 2013



The Blue Sofa: This has been a fixture in the studios in Platform since its beginning. It's a security blanket that provides artists with a place of comfort or sleep whenever inspiration has evaded them. We have all been guilty of taking a nap on it at some time. The old cliché 90% perspiration and 10% inspiration, I feel has to be replaced in Platform by 10% inspiration and 90% Blue Sofa.

Chris McCambridge
Founding Co-Director and Studio member



Platform means a lot of hard work and many late nights usually sustained by pita bread, houmous and beer. But I couldn't be more proud to be part of such an exciting and inspiring organisation.

Happy Birthday Platform, thank you for great times, good friends and a new found ability to write policies and procedures!

Rachael Campbell-Palmer
Studio Member and Co-Director 2013 - 2015

My first experience of Platform was actually my first experience of Belfast! I came up to Belfast from Dublin in January 2013 and was specifically interested to see artist-led spaces that were similar in ethos to The Market Studios (an artist's studio space in Dublin that I had been co director of for the previous 6 years). Platform was the first place on my tour and the energy and friendly atmosphere I encountered clearly made an impression, as a few months later we ran a Dublin-Belfast studio exchange between Market Studios and Platform.

When I saw the advertisement for new directors I heard the call of the North and knew it was for me! I've been enjoying my involvement as a Co-Director so far and look forward to what the next year in Belfast will bring. So thank you Platform!

Deirdre Morrissey
Co-Director 2013 - 2015



Platform is like my second home. Since it opened I feel very proud to have witnessed the growth of an integral part of Belfast art history and I continue to be in awe of how strong its status has become. #FromTheHeart

Miguel Martin
Studio member and former Co-Director



It has been a pleasure to see how much Platform has grown and progressed over the years. I am fortunate enough to still be a studio member and feel a part of that on-going change. To me Platform is as much my home as the house I rent and I'd be at a total loss without it. So Happy Birthday Platform and I look forward to celebrating many more to come!

Mairead Dunne
Studio Member and Co-Director 2011 - 2013



When I applied to be a Co-Director at Platform I had been to its events only a handful of times. What had shone through to me was its spirit of DIY and risk-taking, and how it seemed to both highlight and go some way to address a new niche in Belfast's art scene.

Having been on the board for the last 20 months I am so happy that my first impressions were true. Through the on-going work and positivity of the board, the willingness of studio members to contribute, and the continued support of gallery-goers I'm honoured to have been involved in some of Platform's most ambitious programming to date, such as the The Learning Experiment summer school and the unholy mess of food fights in FLX 13.

As the year progresses and my term as a director draws to a close, I'm so excited to see its upcoming projects realised and eternally grateful for the experience and friends I've gained along the way.

Dorothy Hunter
Co-Director 2012 - 2014



I remember that special smell from the microwave, the Castle Street doorstep crew, drunken clear-outs after late night art, Mairead's slipper boots, painting walls white, painting walls grey, painting walls white, dreaming up the future, working bloody hard, laughing bloody hard, colleagues becoming friends, friends becoming family, and so so much support from the local artists inside and outside of the building.

Sighle Bhreathnach-Cashell
Co-Director 2011 - 2013



In the two years I've spent helping out at the organisation, I have been seriously proud of the quality of work that Platform consistently puts out, supporting upcoming local artists with much-needed studio space and showcasing all kinds of boundary-pushing artwork in the gallery.

I've really enjoyed being involved in the Finance and Outreach groups for Platform, and having countless interminable (but mostly fun!) arguments over minute details with my fellow Co-Directors. As time goes on, I would like to see Platform reach out even more widely, encouraging more people of all ages and backgrounds to experience contemporary art. I hope it continues to develop and retains its place long into the future as a vital part of Belfast's cultural fabric. If the energy, grit, passion and tea-making skills demonstrated by Platform people over the first five years are anything to go by, that will no doubt be the case.

Conor McCafferty
Co-Director 2012 - 2014



Platform has somehow through sweat and pig ignorance, managed to manoeuvre itself, right bang and centre into the cultural fabric of Belfast in only 5 years! My time as a director, though short, was an inspiring and hugely enjoyable time. I wish Platform continual success in its many manifestations, and look forward to the next 5 years.

Feargal O'Malley
Former Co-Director and Curator, University of Ulster



I was really happy when I was awarded the Platform Graduate Residency, it was great to have a space where I could continue with my practice after University. I would highly recommend the programme, the other studio members were very friendly and always willing to offer help and support if needed.

James Fennell
Graduate Residency Award 2013 - 2014



Being part of Platform Arts for the 5 months duration of the Graduate Residency was an invaluable experience. Doing the residency after coming out of university encouraged me to create ambitious new work. I was able to push my practice, acquire new skills and put together my first solo exhibition in a professional context.

Karine Talec
Graduate Residency Award 2013 - 2014



One of my favourite memories of platform is the day that we hung the doors in the studios. It had been a long journey getting the place ready but finally we were able to let artists into the space. We were ridiculously excited about hanging doors, but that was the way it was in those first few months. Every little step was a milestone.

Now we are at another milestone - 5 years, and I couldn't be prouder of how Platform has evolved (and continues to do so). To most people in Belfast it is now seen as an important, well established art space and an asset to the artistic community. But to me it is still a second home and I am privileged to have been part of it all and grateful to all I have met along the way.

Fiona Goggin
Founding Co-Director and Studio Member

I was delighted to have a studio which I could continue making work in and to be in such a supportive environment!

Caroline McCusker
Graduate Residency Award 2012 - 2013



During my time as Director at Platform, I was constantly in awe of what was emerging around me. I recall us giggling with excitement whilst signing the official paperwork. It was because of that initial excitement and dedication and the want to make it happen that we now have the very handsome organisation that it is.

Platform does not rely on public funding. It has no staff. It is a democratic and organic organisation that is self-sustaining thanks to the dedication and energy of all those involved. I am very proud to have been part of something really special and I look forward to all that is to come. Happy birthday dear Platform!

Amberlea Neely
Founding Co-Director



Platform has created self-sufficient studio and gallery spaces in Belfast and I am humbled to have contributed to it's running and development in the last two years. I have had the opportunity to work with some amazing people and I will remember my time at Platform for the rest of my life.

Jason Higgins
Co-Director 2012 - 2014



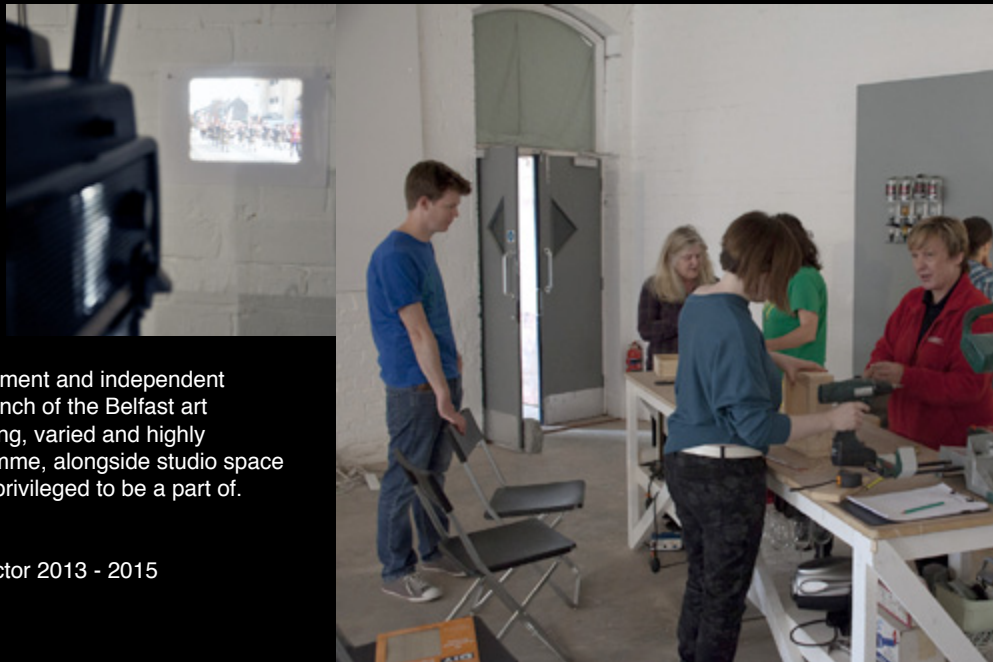
In 2009 I moved into Platform. Twenty-six steps to the second floor I turned left walking through the common area which later became Unit (our project space). Another twenty-two steps to the third floor is our main gallery where I had a solo show in 2012. I walked into studio no 2, looked out the window on to Castle street where oversized seagulls were eating puke outside Ladbroke's. I scanned the space 13' x 10' x 9', I ripped the resistant carpet out, tore the shelving down, changed the lights and painted the space white. There were no doors on the studios (but we got some).

Platform is a 'can-do' place with indomitable spirit. The camaraderie between studio members contributes to Platform's dynamic ethos. In the words of Mr. Spock, "Live long and prosper."

Fiona Ni Mhaolair
Studio Member and Co-Director 2012 - 2014

That sandstone marriage between the quaintness of Queen Street and the craziness of Castle Street. Platform has a great future. Im proud to be a part of it.

Barry Mullholland
Co-Director 2013 - 2015



Platform's strength of commitment and independent endeavor is an important branch of the Belfast art community. Producing a strong, varied and highly accessible exhibition programme, alongside studio space facilities, is something I feel privileged to be a part of.

Liam Crichton
Studio Member and Co-Director 2013 - 2015

Platform the Early Days



South Belfast News, 9th May 2009

The big question for artists when studying is always 'what to do next?' Do you further your education or do you go out into the wider world and continue your artistic practice outside of the security and comfort of a university setting?

CMcC: This was the dilemma that was quickly presenting itself at the end of our Masters course. David Turner and I met on the BA Honours degree and we had both continued on through to the Masters of Fine Art course. In total, a full 6 years of education had created an institutionalised comfort that was quickly evaporating. We had enquired with the usual studio groups about renting a studio, more in hope than anything else and unfortunately there was no space available, at that time. After a conversation, we thought why don't we try to start up a studio space!

DT: We set about looking for a space. While walking around Belfast, we found that there were a lot of vacant spaces above offices and shops. Eventually we found a space in Lombard St, taking two small rooms above a shop in what was later to become the first incarnation of Platform Arts. I can't emphasise enough how important it was for the two of us to find a space and continue our practice. We had no funding and little regular income but we made it work. The following year 2007 we were joined by Fiona Goggin and Rachael Campbell-Palmer. It was at that point we

realised the lack of studio space that we had encountered was very much the experience of most graduates from The Belfast School of Art. After a few weeks the four of us put down the original draft of what was to become 'Belfast Platform For The Arts'.

In 2009, Platforms' present space at Queen Street had been sitting empty for some time. I was invited to view it by an agent who new we were looking for a bigger space. I remember walking around the space with Fiona Goggin and just seeing the grin on her face when she saw it. The space was much as you see it today with rooms on the first floor and an open space on the second but it needed a lot of work. It was a momentous task but we decided to take on the building.



Platform Arts Main Gallery, 2009

CMcC: No. 1 Queen Street was a space that was worth the risk. We signed the lease and the story of Platform began. We managed to secure some investment from local solicitors and this gave us the funds required to make minor renovations to the gallery. Our first exhibition, the MFA 1st Year Show was secured, which is still a highlight of the Platform calendar.

It was challenging for all of us at the start, we didn't really know what was involved. Many of us were unfamiliar with public liability or directors insurance and some of the day-to-day running in the beginning wasn't as glamorous as

we'd thought. None-the-less, we'd created something we could be proud of. I feel that Platform is one of the most unique art spaces in Belfast and I am very proud to have been involved in its inception.

DT: Platform has grown from strength to strength and is a well-established and respected champion for contemporary arts in Belfast. This would not have been impossible without the hard work and diligences of the original board and members of Platform.

CMcC: Each new set of directors and studio members offers something different and unique, however the original philosophy is always present, to widen the access to contemporary art in Northern Ireland.

Though no longer a studio member or director, I am always proud to see the diverse and unique exhibitions, talks and opportunities within Platform and to participate and support ventures in any way that I can. Happy 5th Birthday Platform and I look forward to seeing it in whatever guise it may be in, in another 5 years.



Platform Arts Studios, 2009

David Turner and Christopher McCambridge
Founding Board and Studio Members

From our Friends

Platform Arts is an exciting studio group and contemporary art space that has emerged over the last five years to become a significant part of Belfast's contemporary art scene. Their two gallery spaces constantly challenge their audiences with innovative creative programming from both emerging local talent and established national and international artists.

This artist-led, self-funded organisation is run by volunteers and has established itself at the heart of a close-knit community of visual artists in the city. I look forward to the next five years of food fights, multimedia installations, performances and participation and never knowing what to expect next.

Rob Hilken
Northern Ireland Manager, Visual Artists Ireland

Platform Arts is a significant visual arts space for both established and emerging artists and is central to the Belfast art scene. Over the last five years it has come to represent the real strength of artist run organisations in the city and provides a highly acclaimed and experimental programme with an impressive professional profile.

The MFA Belfast highly values its long standing relationship with Platform Arts, especially in recent years, with its first year cohorts presenting their work there. The opportunity to exhibit at Platform is a fantastic experience which enables the students to hone and develop professional experience and exposure within the context of the fuller Platform Arts programme.

The faith that the students will do justice to the opportunity stems from the strong ongoing relationship with the MFA and through the connection of MFA alumni involvement in running Platform over the years. Through this supportive relationship both the MFA and Platform are able to continue to foster emerging artist networks and contributes strongly to the wider arts scene in Belfast and beyond.

Mary McIntyre and Dan Shippides
MFA, University of Ulster Belfast

platform
2009 - 2014

68 exhibitions

22 board members

34 Studio members

6,879 visitors

6 graduate residents

4,742 glasses of wine

1 food fight (never again)

368 sheets of MDF

245 litres of paint

Infinite gallons of sweat

Too many late nights

Loads of good times!

With thanks to. . .

The current Directors of Platform Arts would like to thank:

- All of the Board Members past and present, who have put in many long days, sleepless nights and hungover mornings to make Platform the success it is today.

- Our Studio Members whose drive and passion to create innovative boundary pushing work ensures that Platform continues to be at the centre of the contemporary arts in Belfast.

- Our enthusiastic Volunteers who always answer our call for help and aren't afraid to get their hands dirty.

- All of the artists locally, nationally and internationally who have exhibited in our galleries or responded to our open calls.

- The MFA at University of Ulster for being our first exhibition, sticking with us until year number five, and hopefully many more to come.

- The building owner whose continuing support for artistic endeavour allows us access to the space needed for studios and the main gallery.

- The organisations and funders who have provided financial support that has allowed Platform to realise some of its most ambitious projects to date.

- Catalyst Arts, Digital Arts Studios and Visual Artists Ireland for their continued support (and lending us the odd bit of equipment).

- The artistic community in Belfast for fostering a unique spirit of risk-taking, collaboration and mutual support.

- All those of you who come out rain or shine for our exhibition openings and events!

And last but by no means least we would like to thank the Founding Board Members of Belfast Platform for the Arts: Francesca Bondi, Fiona Goggin, Gareth Martin, Christopher McCambridge, Amberlea Neeley and David Turner for their vision, determination and sheer hard work in establishing Platform.