

## **BENCHMARK – A Writing, Visual Arts and Heritage Project at the Linenhall Arts Centre, Castlebar, Autumn Winter 2019/2020**

BENCHMARK is a multifaceted arts and heritage project in which award winning writer Mike McCormack will work with ten Mayo based writers and ten visual artists from Engage Art Studios to explore aspects of bench marks and surveying in the context of local heritage.

A bench mark is a simple and elegant crows-foot-shaped mark which is carved into stone walls in built environment all around the country. They were created during the 1800s to mark the height above sea level at particular locations and were used by ordnance surveyors to map the terrain.



This is a theme of ongoing interest to Mike McCormack and is also one which resonates with the Linenhall Arts Centre insofar as the 18th century façade of the Linenhall building is home to a beautiful surveying bench mark. Many more of these bench marks survive in Castlebar and in towns all around Mayo, carved into stones on buildings, bridges and other structures of note, while others have disappeared as towns have developed.

The writers and visual artists involved in the project will take part in an information session with Mayo County Council's Architectural Conservation Officer Siobhán Sexton and staff members from Ordnance Survey Ireland. Throughout autumn 2019 they will create new works of art, in the form of writing and visual art, inspired by the theme.

The BENCHMARK project aims to shine a new light on local heritage and the built environment, enrich people's lives through engagement with the arts and local heritage, and increase awareness and understanding of local heritage and the arts.

The project will culminate in early 2020 with a public presentation of the work created in the form of an exhibition and reading event. There will be ample opportunity for public engagement with the project through exhibition, workshop and 'in-conversation' events. Full details: [www.thelinenhall.com](http://www.thelinenhall.com)

The Linenhall Arts Centre is now inviting writers based in Mayo to take part in the project. The project is suitable for practicing writers, who regularly work on their craft and may have taken part in creative writing workshops over the years with a view to developing their work.

Places are limited and allocation of places will be on a first come first served basis. Booking opens on Thursday 5th September 10.30am. NB: Please read the project details over the page and check that you are available for all the dates and times listed before reserving a place

## **Details:**

Date / Time: Fri 20th Sept 2019. Briefing day 2.00pm-6pm

Location: Linenhall Arts Centre Theatre, and Castlebar Town

Presentation about bench marks by Ordnance Survey Ireland staff, followed by a walking tour of the bench marked structures in Castlebar with Heritage Architect Siobhan Sexton.

Dates / Time: Fridays 11th Oct, 18th Oct, 25th Oct, 1st Nov 2019 5.30pm-8.00pm

Location: Linenhall Arts Centre Community Arts Room

Mike McCormack workshops with 10 Mayo based writers to respond to the benchmarks/bench marked buildings/surveying theme through creative writing.

Date: Monday 4 Nov 2019: Deadline for submitting (via email) short written pieces  
All ten writers will have completed and sent a short piece of writing on the theme to Orla Henihan, Arts Access Officer, Linenhall Arts Centre ([access@thelinenhall.com](mailto:access@thelinenhall.com)). Orla will forward all to these written pieces to the artists at Engage Studios.

November / December 2019:

Engage Studios artists create visual art works in response to the theme. They are free to respond to the written pieces, bench marks, bench marked buildings or surveying in general.

Mon 13th (afternoon) – Thur 16th January 2020:

Engage Studios curate and install an exhibition at the Linenhall Arts Centre from the works created. Written works created also available to read in the gallery.

Friday 17th January 2020 (time tbc): Reading and Exhibition opening event

All ten writers and Mike McCormack read the pieces they have written, and Engage Studios introduce their exhibition in the Linenhall Arts Centre.

Fri 17th Jan – Sat 15th Feb 2020: Exhibition in place at Linenhall Arts Centre, Gallery

A range of workshops and engagement opportunities for the general public will complement the exhibition.

Sat 8th Feb 2020 – time tbc at Linenhall Arts Centre Theatre

In-Conversation Event: Mike McCormack, Artist/s from Engage Studios, Participating Writer, and Facilitator discuss the artistic process they've engaged in throughout the project.

## **Participating writer's role will be as follows:**

- Attending briefing session
- Attending 4 x 2.5 hour writing workshops on the theme benchmarks/benchmarked buildings or structures/surveying
- Creating a short piece of writing on this theme that will be available to read both in the gallery space and on the Linenhall Arts Centre website for the duration of the exhibition.
- Reading your piece at the exhibition opening event
- Attending an 'in-conversation' event about the project, and artistic process involved