

## ***Cartographies en mouvement: Re-imagining the Irish Landscape through the Tim Robinson Archive***

*Dr Nessa Cronin, Centre for Irish Studies, NUI Galway, Ireland*

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### **Introduction**

In September 2014 the Tim Robinson Archive was formally launched with a preview exhibition, international symposium, and public interview with Tim Robinson, at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Robinson is acknowledged as being the most significant writer and cartographer of the Irish landscape over the last forty years, and his work has been published to much critical acclaim and translated to a wider global audience in recent years. As a mathematician trained in Cambridge, Robinson is a self-taught visual artist that lived and worked throughout Europe (primarily in London) in the 1960s and early 1970s where his visual and environmental artworks were exhibited in galleries and non-traditional settings. His international reputation now lies with his extraordinarily work detailing the landscape of the west of Ireland, primarily through maps and books he has written focusing on the complex histories and geographies associated with the places and people of this part of western Europe. This paper explores the archive of Tim Robinson through an artist-in-the-archive research project, *Iarsma: Fragments from an Archive*, based on the maps and writings of Tim Robinson.



**Figure 1**

Artwork from *Rianiú Talún: Interpreting Landscape Exhibition*.  
Designed by Proviz Design, Ireland. 2014. Reproduced with kind permission.

In many ways then, the idea of *cartographies en mouvement* is a perfect description for Robinson's life and work. Indeed, it could be argued that it is more apt to retain the French rendering of the expression rather than offering a discussion embedded within the translation of "cartographies in/of movement" (or, "mobile cartographies"), as the English approximation does not capture the capaciousness of the French phraseology. The French *cartographies* offers a more immediate engagement with the foundational idea of map-making and cartography historically. In the western European tradition, maps were often drawn on *cartes* which could denote anything from animal hide, to manuscript materials, to paper, deriving etymologically from the Latin *charta* and the ancient Greek *khártes*, meaning "papyrus, paper" (Harley and Woodward xvi). This is a point worth remembering as it reminds us of the particular cultures and material histories associated with mapmaking in Europe. The second element to the word, *graphies*, is associated with the *graphos* of writing, and so the map is a form of writing or textual inscription on the map or chart. The *graphies* also infers an active engagement with the *cartes* and so the interplay between the two offers us a way to think of cartography as a way of making, doing, writing about space and place, through the process of the making of the map. In addition, a discussion of maps as being *en mouvement* offers more ways of thinking about cartography as a processual, open-ended and ongoing project, and allows us to think of movement and dynamism as being both internal to the very act of drawing and creating a map. It also invites us to remember that maps as mobile objects travel across space and through time, and so we can consider how maps themselves are also "on the move" as well as their makers and users.

Inspired, then, by such considerations of *cartographies en mouvement*, these ideas speak very much to the life and work of Tim Robinson. We can think of how the art and practice of mapmaking is an act of external movement (Robinson moves from London to the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland in 1972), and of mapmaking as a form of internal dialogue between the acts of creating the texts and images that eventually are drafted, edited and finally printed as the finished product of the map. This process, of both an external and internal dialogue with regard to the very act of mapmaking, is central to an understanding of Robinson's work on Ireland. In particular, Robinson foregrounds that the very act of mapmaking is always already an infinite process of gathering material and capturing the texture of a place, it is as much about the relationship between hand and foot, as it is about the relationship between pen and paper, and indeed for Robinson the two are inextricably intertwined.

Finally, the role of language cultures (of speaking, writing, and communicating) has a very particular resonance when examined through the lens of any project associated with the west of Ireland. This is a region that has been long associated with vernacular Irish culture and, in particular, with the Irish language. Today, the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas of Conamara (Connemara) and Oileáin Árann (the Aran Islands) in the west of Ireland are places that retain Irish as the first language, but are also becoming more bilingual in nature with the increasing use of English by their inhabitants and seasonal visitors.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the position of the Irish language as the primary language culture in these areas is a matter of constant national debate as many see the increasing influence of English as a matter of linguistic concern with regard to the future viability and vibrancy of the Irish language in this region in particular and across Ireland more generally. As an Englishman living in and writing about this part of Ireland, Robinson is acutely aware of the sensitivity associated with his own positionality and has described his various projects as a sort of "act of colonial reparation," as noted in conversation with Brian Dillon. Robinson's forensic attention to detail and his inclusion of other voices, narratives, traces and memories (from Irish and English language sources) associated with the region has been seen as an ongoing dialogue in terms of a

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<sup>1</sup> I use the Irish language placenames here in relation to these areas as Irish is the primary language of these particular areas in the west of Ireland.

historically weighted relationship between Britain and Ireland. It also speaks to the more interpersonal and intimate relationship between himself and local individuals and communities as he became gradually accepted as a “newcomer” and deeply respected for the knowledge he added to living landscape that has been now captured in his writings and archive for other generations of residents, scholars and artists to explore and expand upon in the future.

### **Tim Robinson (1935-)**

Tim Robinson was born in Yorkshire in 1935 and studied mathematics at Cambridge University. He currently spends his time between Roundstone, County Galway and London with his life-long partner and wife Máiréad. After a career as a visual artist in Istanbul, Vienna and London, he settled in Oileáin Árann with Máiréad in November 1972, and would soon commence his detailed study of the landscape the West of Ireland through the lens of cartography and writing from his home on the islands. His books include *Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage* and *Labyrinth*, the *Connemara* trilogy (*Connemara: A Little Gaelic Kingdom*, *Connemara: Listening to the Wind*, *Connemara: The Last Pool of Darkness*), and a suite of essays, *My Time in Space*, and *Stepping Foot on the Shores of Connemara*. More recently, a photo-book centred on the photographic work of French photographer Nicolas Fève, *Connemara and Elsewhere*, was published in 2014. With an introduction by American nature writer John Elder and edited by Jane Conroy (an Irish scholar of French literary history), this book was inspired by Fève’s own longstanding relationship with the west of Ireland and how his readings of Robinson’s work has shaped and informed his own photographic practice. The book concludes with three short essays by Robinson in a sequence entitled “Elsewhere” (Robinson, in Conroy 127-42). Together with Liam Mac An Iomaire, Robinson translated into English what is regarded as the greatest twentieth-century Irish language novel, Máirtín Ó Cadhain’s *Cré na Cille*. Their translation, *Graveyard Clay/Cré na Cille: A Narrative in Ten Interludes*, won the prestigious Lois Roth Award for “Translation of a

Literary Work,” as acknowledged by the international Modern Languages Association in 2016.<sup>2</sup>

In 1984 the Robinsons set up Folding Landscapes as a specialist publishing house and resource centre in the studio of their home on the quayside in Roundstone. Its main purpose was to publish Robinson’s maps and some of his books concerned with the three areas of interest around Galway Bay that would serve as the fulcrum of his work: Oileáin Árann, the Burren and Conamara. In 1987 Folding Landscapes won the Ford Ireland Conservation Award and went on as Ireland’s official entry to win the European award in Madrid, where the Mayor of Madrid’s citation especially commended the project’s “unique combination of culture, heritage and conservation”.<sup>3</sup>

Robinson was elected to Aosdána (Irish National Association of Artists) in 1996, and to the Royal Irish Academy in 2011. In 2011 he was the Parnell Visiting Fellow at Magdalen College, Cambridge, and in 2012 was the Visiting Artist-in-Residence at the Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris, which serves as Ireland’s flagship cultural centre in Europe. His visual art works and constructions have been exhibited as part of joint and solo exhibitions at Camden Art Gallery, Serpentine Gallery, Irish Museum of Modern Art and the Hugh Lane Gallery amongst others. Other explorations of Robinson’s oeuvre include the documentary film, *Tim Robinson: Connemara*, directed by Pat Collins (Harvest Films, 2011), and an interdisciplinary essay collection, *Unfolding Irish Landscapes: Tim Robinson, Culture and Environment*, edited by Christine Cusick and Derek Gladwin. Robinson’s writings and archive has been written about from a wide range of international scholars crossing the fields of Cultural Geography, Irish Studies, “New” British Nature Writing, Historical Cartography, Visual Arts, and Environmental Sciences, to name but a few fields where his work has had an increasing impact in recent years. A new generation of ecocritics and feminist scholars such as Christine Cusick and Maureen O’Connor are critically engaging with his writings in particular to explore new ways of thinking about the relationship between human and non-human worlds in relation to concerns over climate change and the politics of the Anthropocene.

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<sup>2</sup> See the awards listed for 2016 at: <https://www.mla.org/Resources/Career/MLA-Grants-and-Awards/Winners-of-MLA-Prizes/Biennial-Prize-and-Award-Winners/Lois-Roth-Award-for-a-Translation-of-a-Literary-Work-Winners>. Date accessed 7 December 2018.

<sup>3</sup> As noted on the Folding Landscapes website, <http://www.foldinglandscapes.com/> Date accessed 12 January 2019.

Since the inception of the artist-in-the-archive project (which will be discussed in more detail below) many artists have also come to encounter Robinson's work and archive supported by the Centre for Irish Studies through the Visiting Fellowship scheme at the Moore Institute, NUI Galway, a fellowship programme that allows for a very broad understanding of what "scholarship" is and can be across the arts and humanities.<sup>4</sup> One recent example of this is the work of artist-scholar Cathy Fitzgerald and how her ecocritical practice has been influenced by her experience of researching the Tim Robinson archive can be read on her 2017 blogpost, "Understanding a place 'without shortcuts': exploring the Tim Robinson Archive".

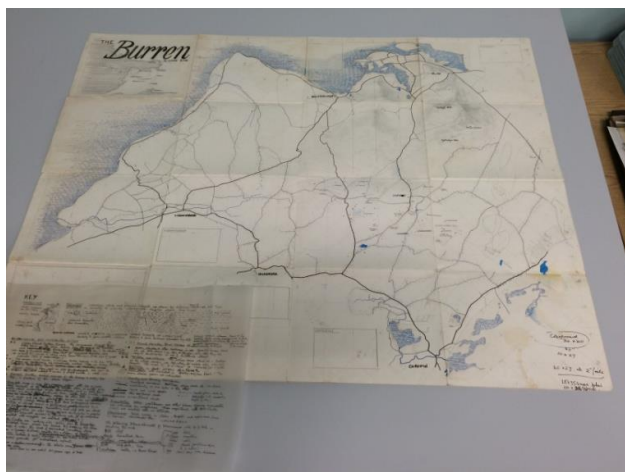
### **Tim Robinson Archive**

In 2014 the Tim Robinson Archive was officially donated to NUI Galway as a generous gift to the people of the region by Tim and Máiréad Robinson. The Robinsons did not seek, nor wish, to receive any compensation for the archive, an extraordinary gift considering the vast scale of unique material contained therein and the growing international reputation associated with Robinson's work. The archive contains mostly maps, manuscripts, placename index cards, books from Robinson's personal library, letters, notes, and ephemera from his travels and life in Ireland, England, Turkey, Italy and France. The archive to date contains:

- 489 pages of maps
- 9,650 pages of correspondence dating from 1960-2010
- 24,365 pages of manuscripts, and first editions of his maps and books
- 300 Irish and English language reference books
- material relating to his life and work in Vienna, Istanbul, London and Cambridge
- 11,700 items of placename index cards contained in 13 drawers
- field notebooks, index cards, rubbings
- drawings, photographs and other fieldwork related material and observations relating to work in the Burren, Connemara and the Aran Islands since 1972
- other items and miscellanea

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<sup>4</sup> Since 2014 there have been 15 Visiting Scholars at the Moore Institute working on the Tim Robinson Archive, 6 of whom are interdisciplinary artist-scholars. This scheme has proved to be a vitally, important form of support especially for artist-scholars, at a time of decreased funding for the Arts and Humanities in Irish and British institutions after the global financial crisis of 2008. See, <https://mooreinstitute.ie/visiting-fellows-scheme/> Date accessed 1 February 2019.



**Figure 2**

Items from Burren Map and Notebooks, Tim Robinson Archive, James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway. Reproduced with kind permission.

The process of depositing and cataloguing the archive commenced in July 2013 with a team of librarians and academics, with the majority of the items being deposited in Autumn 2014. A series of events in September 2014 was co-ordinated by Professor Jane Conroy to mark the preview of the Tim Robinson Archive at NUI Galway. This included an exhibition curated by Jane Conroy and Nessa Cronin entitled, *Rianiú Talún: Interpreting Landscape*, highlighting the intersection between Nicolas Fève's images and Robinson's writings; the public book launch of *Connemara and Elsewhere*; an international symposium *Interpreting Landscapes*; a public interview with Tim Robinson; and a meeting of the Royal Irish Academy that also took place in Galway as part of this series of events dedicated to marking Robinson's life and work.<sup>5</sup> This was all followed in December 2014 and January 2015 with a two-part radio documentary on Tim Robinson by writer Vincent Woods for the national broadcaster RTÉ Radio 1.<sup>6</sup> In June 2015 *Connemara and Elsewhere* had its subsequent French launch in the Irish Embassy in Paris, where a roundtable discussion on the book was chaired by *Irish Times*' journalist,

<sup>5</sup> "NUI Galway and RIA honour pioneering cartographer who mapped Connemara," <http://www.nuigalway.ie/about-us/news-and-events/news-archive/2014/september2014/nuigalway-and-ria-honour-pioneering-cartographer-who-mapped-connemara.html> As accessed 3 January 2019.

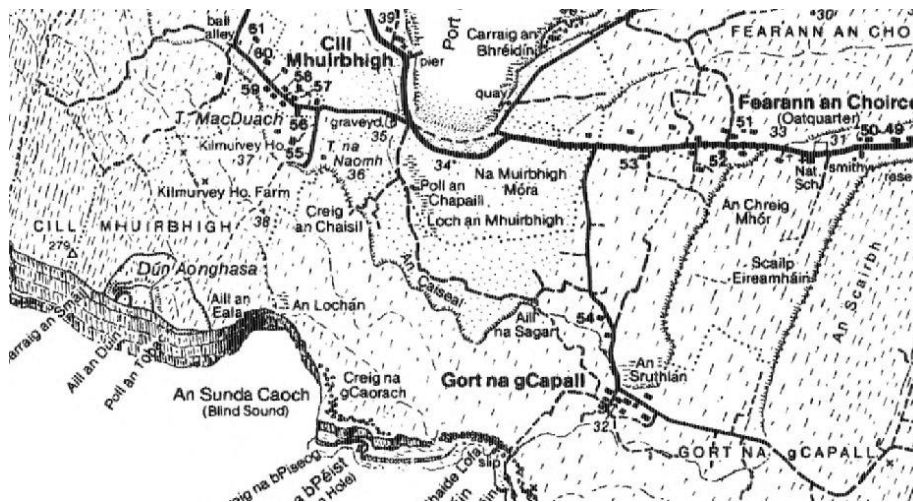
<sup>6</sup> "Tim Robinson: An Interview," RTÉ Radio 1. December 2014 and January 2015. <https://www.rte.ie/radio1/arts-tonight/programmes/2014/1215/667089-arts-tonight-monday-15-december-2014/> As accessed 3 January 2019.

Lara Marlow, and also included Tim Robinson, photographer Nicholas Fève and Jane Conroy as editor of the volume.

### Conceptualising the Archive

With regard to his own ideas as to what his archive is, and what it could mean for the future, Robinson wrote that:

I try to ensure that copies of as many as possible of these lists [of placenames] from Connemara and Aran and the Burren come into my hands, and are added to my archive, which will eventually go to NUI Galway. Now, it may be that some minor historical puzzles can be resolved through consulting such lists, or a scholar may use them to buttress a thesis about land-use or emigration or plant distribution. That is, the placenames become grist to the academic mill. Artists and writers may pick and choose among them for their own creative purposes. (2003, 50)



**Figure 3**  
Detail from Oileáin Árann Map. NUI Galway. Reproduced with kind permission

With such ideas in mind, *Iarsma: Fragments from an Archive* was conceptualised as a project to explore the different ways in which we could engage with archives in general, and the Tim Robinson Archive in particular, opening them out to different publics and uses in creative and scholarly ways. Several different aspects of archives and historical memory were at play, in particular with regard to the idea of how to ethically engage with difficult, colonial pasts in our present, how to deal with contested zones of language and cultural identities, and finally how to engage in an open-ended way to make the archive relevant and “live” for a contemporary audience.



The concept of “deep mapping” was key to shaping and informing my own understanding of Robinson’s work as an act of deep mapping the west of Ireland. I also hoped to explore certain aspects of deep mapping practices through the perspectives of language, literature, music, dance, image and text, in what would finally become the transdisciplinary *Iarsma* project. In particular, the work of cultural geographer Karen E. Till and artist-scholar Iain Biggs in relation to their writings on deep mapping practices and in “mapping spectral traces” informed the project work from the beginning (Biggs 2014). In her catalogue essay for a US visual arts’ exhibition entitled *Mapping Spectral Traces*, Till poses a series of questions opening up discussion as to how different and difficult pasts can be captured, framed and represented sensitively and with respect to different heritages and traditions. She asks, “How might we listen to and recognize stories, remnants, and submerged ways of knowing as unresolved remainders of memory?” and, “What might mappings that are sensitive to past injustices look, sound, and feel like?” She enquires further as to whether there might be “approaches to environment that treat ground as home and resting place, as thresholds through which the living can make contact with those who have gone before?” (2010, n.p.). What Till highlights here is the need to maintain a constant vigilance as to the different valencies of history, to honour different ways of remembering, and to carefully consider how best to ethically engage with “remnants and submerged ways of knowing”. This is of particular importance in relation to former colonial spaces where history, identity and ways of being are still very much contested as part of a narrative of the present. As Robinson writes in an Irish context, “History has rhythms, tunes and even harmonies; but the sound of the past is an agonistic multiplicity” (2008, 2). The challenge then is how to navigate such histories and geographies of belonging that respects past traditions and contemporary communities.

The work of Till and Biggs has in turn been shaped by the writings and work of Clifford McLucas who wrote a manifesto of sorts, “There are ten things that I can say about these deep maps”.<sup>7</sup> McLucas outlines that deep maps are big, slow, sumptuous, multimedia, engage insider and outsider, the amateur and professional, might only be possible now, are subjective and partisan, and are unstable, fragile and temporary. He

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<sup>7</sup> Clifford McLucas, “There are ten things that I can say about these deep maps”. <http://cliffordmclucas.info/deep-mapping.html> Date accessed 3 January 2019.

finally states that, “They will be a conversation and not a statement”.<sup>8</sup> The idea of the “deep map” of a landscape as being an open-ended, processual conversation between a place and the people that shaped it, had a deep resonance in terms of the work of Robinson. As he writes:

For me, making a map was to be a one-to-one encounter between a person and a terrain, a commitment unlimitable in terms of time and effort, an existential project of knowing a place. The map itself could hardly then be more than an interim report on the progress of its own making. (1995, 76)

With such considerations to the fore, thoughts then turned to other collaborative projects that engaged with archives differently, and that encouraged people to rethink the very idea of an archive in a radically different way. Through work in the field of Cultural Geography I became aware of the 2002 interdisciplinary project *Visualising Geography* by geographers Felix Driver and Catherine Nash and artist Kathy Prendergast, located at Royal Holloway, University of London, England. *Visualising Geography* was an interesting “experiment,” as the authors frame it, in how such collaborations could lead to more “more productive and challenging exchanges” in terms of extending ideas as to how artists visualise geography, or how geographers use the visual record as part of their research. As Driver, Nash and Prendergast write, “For many participants these collaborations have led to unexpected new directions in their work, to thoughtful conversations and rewarding exchanges, and to relationships that will continue beyond this project’s formal ending. Each collaboration has its own dynamic, depth and character.”<sup>9</sup> They also note that an exhibition associated with the project, entitled *Landing*, “sits between the conventions of research report and exhibition catalogue, between academic writing and artistic work, posing explicit questions and offering suggestive reflections.”<sup>10</sup>

A secondary concern was how to deal with the embodied and *living* aspect of the archive, and how to deal with the idea of archival memory. I was aware of the work on post-9/11 policies and their effects since 2004 in America through the collaborative artistic work of Mariam Ghani and Chitra Ganesh. Their joint artist-activist project, *Index of the Disappeared*, sought to explore the idea of people who have “disappeared” from

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<sup>8</sup> McLucas, “There are ten things”. <http://cliffordmclucas.info/deep-mapping.html>

<sup>9</sup> ‘Visualising Geography’. <http://www.gg.rhul.ac.uk/landing/texts/intro.html> Date accessed 3 January 2019.

<sup>10</sup> As noted in, <http://www.gg.rhul.ac.uk/landing/texts/intro.html> Date accessed 3 January 2019.

archives and national records for different reasons in recent history and foregrounds the difficult histories of migrant, “Other,” and dissenting communities in the US today.<sup>11</sup> Much of their work was presented in a series of public programmes, texts, website, installations throughout 2013-14, in relation to their residency at the Asian/Pacific/American Institute, New York University. In relation to *Index of the Disappeared*, Ghani and Ganesh argue that, “By framing archiving as a radical practice, we wish to consider: archives of radical politics and practices; archives that are radical or experimental in form or function; moments or contexts where archiving in itself becomes a radical act; and how archives can be active in the present, as well as documents of the past or scripts for the future.”<sup>12</sup> From Ghani’s and Chitra’s work we learn how archives are not just a repository of history, but are a method, medium, and interface, echoing to a large extent the impulse behind McLucas’ deep mapping principles. The idea of an archive of absence being made into a *presence* had a particular resonance with the Tim Robinson archive, where Robinson’s work seeks to make present and visually emplace on the map Irish language placenames and sites of memory that had been either mistranslated, misplaced or omitted entirely from the original maps of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland dating from the 1830s. Indeed, as Robinson would discover, many of those errors and omissions were retained in modern maps of the region up until the 1990s.

Finally, the online journal *Radical Archives* is an excellent source to think through and consider alternative kinds of archival practices, based on different approaches to traditional ways of archiving and warehousing material. Robinson’s writings seem to echo concerns discussed in many issues of that journal, such as how to adequately capture experience, how to write ethically about absence, and how to forge new connections between different pasts and presents. As Robinson writes in the “Preface” to *Connemara: Last Pool of Darkness*:

How can writing, writing about a place, hope to recuperate its centuries of lost speech? A writing may aspire to be rich enough in reverberatory internal connections to house the sound of the past as well as echoes of immediate experience, but it is also intensely interested in its own structure, which it must preserve from the overwhelming multiplicity of reality. (2008 3)

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<sup>11</sup> For more on this aspect of their work, see their ‘Radical Archives’, <http://creativetimereports.org/2014/05/27/radical-archives-mariam-ghani-chitra-ganesh-nyu/> Date accessed 3 January 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Mariam Ghani, ‘Index of the Disappeared’. <https://www.mariamghani.com/work/626> Date accessed 3 January 2019.

The idea of “reverberatory internal connections” was an idea that had resonance and took hold, and helped shape the internal logic of the project as it unfolded over the course of the year, and the idea of the archive as housing the “sound of the past” would go on to conceptually frame the architecture of *larsma*.

***larsma: Fragments From An Archive***



**Figure 4**

Film still from *larsma: Fragments from an Archive*, 2014  
Reproduced with kind permission

*larsma: Fragments from an Archive*, is the artist-in-the-archive research project that involved a number of artists across a range of practices who were commissioned to collaboratively work to devise a new way of engaging with the idea of an archive. Choreographer Ríonach Ní Néill, composer and musician Tim Collins, and visual artist Deirdre O’Mahony worked with me over a six month period to form the *Performing Landscapes Collective* which sought to explore and investigate new ways in which archives of the Irish landscape could be encountered, envisaged and re-imagined through various disciplinary approaches and arts practices. The film produced as part of this project was directed and produced by Deirdre O’Mahony on location in the archival rooms at NUI Galway, and on location in the Burren and Connemara. The music score was composed and arranged by Tim Collins, including the newly commissioned pieces, “Anthem: Ómós Tim Robinson,” “The View from Above,” “Sir Donat’s Road,” “Sheas sí

an Fód,” and “Labyrinth”. Ríonach Ní Néill directed the choreography and her recorded and live movement segments, “Bird in the Archive,” “Léarscáil an Cheathrú Rua,” and “my foot is my pen” utilised contemporary dance environmental research and embodied mapping practices.

In June 2016 *larsma* was launched and performed at the UNISCAPE International Conference on “Landscape Values” at NUI Galway, Ireland.<sup>13</sup> The launch entailed an introductory presentation from NUI Galway archivists, Aisling Keane and Kieran Hoare, outlining their work in handling and cataloguing the material from the archive. This was followed by a performance of *larsma* from the *Performing Landscapes Collective*, the transdisciplinary artist-scholar collective established as part of the project to produce a work of public engagement as part of the remit of opening out the archive to different audiences in very different ways.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 5**  
Film still from *larsma: Fragments from an Archive*, 2014  
Reproduced with kind permission

*larsma* was initially envisaged as a project that would foreground the work of artists working in, through, and out of, an archival context as an alternative way of experiencing

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<sup>13</sup> UNISCAPE is the European Network of institutions dedicated to the implementation of the 2004 European Landscape Convention, and has participatory status with the Council of Europe. <https://www.uniscape.eu/>

<sup>14</sup> See <https://deirdre-omahony.ie/works-and-projects/2000s/42-artworks/2000-s/90-landscape-collective-tim-robinson.html>

this landscape archive of great public interest. However, as soon as the collective came together, it became very clear that the project would take on a life of its own in many ways. Throughout the project, from the early stages of conceptualisation to the mid-phase of development, to the final phase of directing, editing and performance, two core principles were agreed upon by all involved. Firstly, the archive and work of Tim Robinson would serve as a compass for direction, both in terms of being material starting points and conceptual landing places. Secondly, the work was to be collaborative, co-created, and conceptualised through a bilingual process whenever possible. In this way the project would respect the two primary languages associated with Robinson's work and the places that he mapped and wrote about, i.e. Irish and English language cultures. Finally, there was an acknowledgement that the emphasis at any given point of the project might head in one particular direction (visual, sound, movement, text) depending on the thematic being explored at that particular juncture. And so, accordingly, the direction of the work in that particular segment would naturally shift towards, and be led by, the member of the collective whose expertise lay in that area of practice.

### **Creative Cartographies: Some Reflections**

A key part of the success of the project as a collaborative endeavour and artist-scholar "experiment" lay in its innovative approach to researching our past, as it examines what is contained in (and what gets left out of) institutional and national archives. As a result, the archive is seen as a site of provocation, a place to think in and through questions about Irish national identity, history, and belonging in a contemporary, globalised world. The project also approached critical scholarship in new ways, and explored the means by which fields of enquiry (distinct disciplinary formations) shift to modes of enquiry (different kinds of interdisciplinary practices). Finally, it highlighted the integration of critical and creative practices and methods and demonstrated how they can yield new ways of thinking about the narration of history and the creation of maps, in a spatio-temporal framework.

The concept of "iarsma," which translates from the Irish as "fragment," "trace," "relic," was a defining concept in terms of how the archive should be envisaged as a place that

collects fragments, traces and relics from past times for future posterity. In Robinson's writings the fragment is mapped through the movement of the pen writing the text, and the foot marking out the lines of the map. Ríonach Ní Néill's choreography in particular embodied this aspect of the Robinson archive in terms of her embodiment of place in her dance sequences, as refracted through the maps and texts of Tim Robinson. In relation to Robinson himself, we asked if the participants the in *larsma* project were mapping out the life of the artist, the cartographer, the writer? Where was Robinson situated in the archive itself? Was he the absent presence participants were seeking to capture in the work?

The critical perspectives and creative pathways that were explored in *larsma* can be read in terms of recent developments in the area of GeoHumanities, Creative Geographies and Environmental Humanities more widely. For many scholars working in the wider area of Cultural Geography, it has become increasingly apparent that collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to research questions can yield exciting new ways to think about old questions. Such approaches in turn can be transformative because the change in methods and practices also leads to innovation in everything from epistemological structures and formations to ontological understandings of the world. In addition, the act of engaging different publics and audiences also allows for different kinds of discussions in the future. One could argue that, now more than ever, with the challenges of anthropogenic climate change, the migrant crisis and increasing geopolitical insecurity with the very idea and institutions of democracy under threat in this mis/information age, the creation and maintenance of public scholarship and socially responsive research is even more important now than ever. *larsma* was an interdisciplinary project that captured the imagination of different publics; as such it is one example of the way in which institutional archives can restate and reclaim their role as a space for open and progressive discussions as to how nations deal with their pasts (however difficult). It also reminds us how such considerations can help shape futures that make space for new modes of belonging using methods that remember and respect the past and enable such traditions to be honoured in the future.

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