



Irish Modernisms Round Table podcast transcription

with CCA Director Catherine Hemelryk (**CH**), co-curator Matt Retallick (**MR**), and artists James Ashe (**JA**), Rachael Campbell-Palmer (**RCP**), Phillip McCrilly (**PM**), Grace McMurray (**GM**) and Ben Weir (**BW**)

00:00

CH: Hello, and welcome to our *Irish Modernisms* Round Table podcast from the Centre for Contemporary Art Derry~Londonderry. I'm Catherine Hemelryk – CCA's Director – and I'm very pleased to introduce artists James Ashe, Rachael Campbell-Palmer, Phillip McCrilly, Grace McMurray, Ben Weir, and my co-curator Matt Retallick. *Irish Modernisms* is an exhibition of new and existing work by NI based artists responding to modernism's influences and legacy in the North. The artists in the show work across different media and disciplines, but share a sensibility and arguably an affection for the often maligned movement. The show references the buildings and infrastructure around us; pattern, domestic design, literature, as well as questions of labour, gender and sexuality, materiality, decay, colour, public and personal histories, 'progress' and quite a lot of concrete. James Ashe is an artist and designer from Craigavon – a new town and home to the iconic modernist Marlborough House the features in one of the series of prints that James created for the exhibition. James is an artist and activist, with work currently on show at the Ulster Museum. Rachael Campbell-Palmer lives and works in Belfast. She has exhibited across Ireland, and is also director of Black Box in Belfast. *Terra Firma* in the show is a work seen years in the making, with cast concrete lozenge shapes arranged from the least weathered to the most showing the effects of nature and time on the material. Grace McMurray is based between Rathfriland and Belfast, and is a member of the 2021 Turner Prize nominated Array Collective. Her works in the show include intricately woven ribbons referencing tiling patterns, interiors and domestic labour. Ben Weir is based in the Netherlands and NI. He's a Research Associate at CCA, and has a practice encompassing visual art and architecture. He devised an abstracted hearth and kitchen counter for the show as a display device for Phillip McCrilly's research materials. Phillip was born in Moy, and his interest in the controversies surrounding the first electrified shop sign in the village back in 1957 was the starting point for his work in the show. Phillip is currently a participant on the Freelands Foundation programme, and member of Fruit Shop Collective. Finally, my co-curator Matt Retallick – I first encountered Matt through his @modernist.ie Instagram account that he set up after being told there was no modernism on the island of Ireland. He shares archive images of examples of the wealth of modernism on his account, and is an honorary lifetime member of the Modernist Society. He is currently studying for an Art History PhD at Manchester School of Art, and is Associate Curator of Pink Manchester. So, that's who you'll be hearing from. Let's crack on. I'd like to start by asking each of you, when were you first aware of modernism? Perhaps we'll start with you, James.

03:02

JA: So my first sort of exposure to modernism or when I first knew what it was was maybe when I was studying my undergraduate degree at Norwich, I went to the art university there. I learnt more about the graphic design aspect of modernism. So I learnt about

layouts from Josef Müller-Brockmann, and also different art movements like constructivism and Rodchenko. There's an image of a woman holding a microphone that's saying 'read!' – that's the earliest that I learnt about modernism, and also like Swiss graphic design. That aspect of graphic design is where I learnt about modernism. Throughout the years I learnt more about Bauhaus and different architecture styles like Brutalism and Art Deco – those I learnt about, but when I look back I've always been kind of surrounded by these modernist building designs like for example; originally me and my family are from Belfast, I was born in Belfast City Hospital. That's an iconic part of the skyline, that big brutalist grey and yellow tower that you either love or hate. For part of my childhood I grew up in Craigavon with Marlborough House and all the oval windows. When I lived in England I lived in Norwich and right on my doorstep I had what was called the Stationery Office or Anglia Square and it's basically a big brutal derelict office. It's very iconic – concrete with lots of glass. And also the University of East Anglia, it's a big concrete jungle; brutalist, modern. I've always been surrounded by modernist buildings at different stages of my life so that's kind of been my exposure to modernism.

05:20

CH: Rachel, I'd like to bring you in here because you have your work *Massives* with the concrete blocks – did you have a similar experience? Were you surrounded by a similar environment to James?

05:34

RCP: Yeah, just as James was talking there I was thinking that my experience was quite similar in terms I guess of how my introduction to modernism was through all of the buildings in Belfast near where I grew up. The *Terra Firma* piece that you mentioned which is the other work that I have in the show with *Massives* is based on Dunluce Health Centre car park very near to the Belfast City Hospital building that James mentioned. It's actually a wall, a concrete wall that has a similar pattern formation to the piece, and for me that just really connects me with where I grew up in Belfast. I suppose quite often I'm drawing links between buildings and location and memory, and just how they all connect. So I guess Dunluce Health Centre car park was my first introduction to modernism. Like James said, I knew buildings that I really liked – the shapes and the forms and the clean lines. Also going back to Ulster Museum which is such an iconic building which has that clash of modernism and classical architecture. Like the buildings and style before we realised what it was or what it was called, and then from there learnt more about the history and the architecture.

06:55

CH: I know that Ulster Museum has been a reference point for Ben – you did one of our CCA takeovers earlier in the year and it was an image that appeared there. What was your experience of modernism first of all?

07:08

BW: Any time I hear about the Ulster Museum my ears kind of prick up a little bit, in reference to the building itself perhaps rather than its content. It's always a constant reference for me. I don't know when I first heard of modernism, but I know that the first time that I explicitly learnt about it was in university. But even then, when I guess I heard the term, it didn't seem like an alien concept to me. So it was kind of floating around in the subconscious somewhere. Maybe it was mentioned to me through literature or more as a kind of artistic movement. Then in university, where I studied my bachelors in architecture first of all at Ulster, I then became aware of the kind of founding fathers let's say of modernism like Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van Der Rohe etc – but what it

actually is to me, or was, is perhaps more appropriate because I think it's as much of a historical movement as something like let's say the Baroque movement or any kind of historical art movement. In a sense it's actually more than a movement because it's comprised of so many sub-movements which James has kind of alluded to. So perhaps it's more like an international project or school of thought. It's something that was entirely future-oriented, about new technology, new materials, new forms of living. And the general tendency to move away from traditional modes of representation and towards abstraction, and therefore universality. In the way that I look at it and work with it in my practice, I tend to look at it retrospectively and analytically and then in a sense what we can kind of salvage from this kind of flawed project.

08:44

CH: Yeah, that's a really nice way to look at it I think, and partly why we've called the show *Irish Modernisms* with that 's' because there is that plurality, there's so many different interpretations and within all of you as well as artists there's not just one 'this is it's legacy' which we wanted to reflect in the show. Picking up on future and progress, Phillip there's a really beautiful clipping in your research which is about the motorway that I really enjoyed looking at. So what about for you – what was it about modernism?

09:21

PM: I suppose my first experience of modernism was me not being able to tangibly say what it was. My experience of being in modernism is similar to what Rachael and James have been talking about. I remember growing up and visiting my granny and just being really taken by how the chapel she went to was so different to the chapel that I went to. It was just a modernist chapel. I was really interested in how it was so different to the one that I would go to in my local area, and how it made me feel and how everything was so exposed and how you could see the choir because they weren't hidden away and no disembodied voice, it was just so open and light. So that was my first experience of modernism. Then I suppose as well where I grew up too in rural County Tyrone at the start of the M1 which was the first motorway in Northern Ireland. It kind of brought everything together.

10:17

CH: Grace, coming to you now.

10:19

GM: I first became aware of modernism in school because we studied *The Great Gatsby* which definitely had elements of modernism and that kind of lead me on to find T. S. Eliot, which led me on to Joyce and that led me on to Mondriaan and then Le Corbusier. I think I started then studying at university but with a post-modern approach, and to me I kind of feel like modernism to me is like streams of consciousness and how that informs work.

10:57

CH: I love the connecting the dots there and one thing leading to the other. I know that's something I chime with, and also I'm from the West Midlands in England so we have so much brutalist—but it's such a mish-mash patchwork. Matt did you have a similar experience?

11:16:

MR: Yeah, well I grew up in Cornwall and Cornwall is not one of those places that you would think has abundant modernism. But of course there are such things as St. Ives modernism and the so-called St. Ives School, and this is what I sort of grew up with. So as

a child I was seeing sculpture out in the wild regularly by artists such as Barbara Hepworth or paintings by Ben Nicholson, but not realising that these were modernist because they were just around us. I think a lot of what's been said today, the experience is that you go into higher education and you learn what modernism is, but the modernism that you're taught is caught in the grand gesture of big buildings, big names, literature, James Joyce for example. I suppose that really my adult life so far has been spent trying to understand what modernism is and understand where the slippages are. You realise that it's a lot messier and more complex than you think.

12:25

CH: I think that's definitely something we can all agree on. So coming to look at more of the works in the show, there are some threads that pull between various works – one of them is the use of colour. So I wonder, Grace–I'd love to know more about how you decided on the colour palettes you used and what leads into them.

12:48

GM: I think I try to make work that's quite–well I use textiles, so I want the work to be tactile and I use a lot of blues within the work because I find that quite soothing. And I try to create environments where I control everything and I think that's in parallel to how I feel generally. I want to, through my work, process a lot of emotions and I guess I associate a lot of emotions with blues, and I think the colour palette of the show with the pinks and the blues and the yellows is all kind of inter-related. I use colour patterns that have different gradients to draw you in in and to mess with your vision. I even like the aspect of say the glitter ribbon, and how that affects how you view something. I want something to be almost gluttonous in how it attracts your attention.

13:50

CH: There's some beautiful pinks that run through as well that are really accented by the way that the other blues palettes are coming through. So it's a very conscious decision that you're making there, so are they reference points or, how does that come about for you?

14:10

GM: I am a bee keeper and so I realise that honeybees see colour in terms of UV so they can see flight paths on petals. So that guides them. I've always tried to create environments that are soothing and I have control over them, and so I guess it's that kind of connection. Even when Plath writes about images of honeybees in the hive and so it's connected to that as well. So it's kind of to do with the colour spectrum.

14:44

CH: I think there's so many nice connecting principles between your work and Rachael's work as well. Rachael, you have in the *Massives* these sort of fleshy pink resin sections, and also thinking about the hive with the concrete forms. Could you tell us a little bit more about these?

15:03

RCP: I was thinking just as Grace was talking there, and it's still a thing she's talking about that I definitely have parallels with is when I think about colour in my work, materials are such a key part of the work I make and the process creating work, and that is often what inspires me a lot of the time. I use quite industrial materials; concrete, plaster, resin, wood. I generally don't pigment the material, I like to work with them because of the colour that they are in their sort of natural state. So the resin that you

were referring to; it's a polyester casting resin and it cures in that pink colour. It's a cheap resin that when I was exploring different types of resin and I came across this one that cured in a really fleshy pink colour. For me, it brought in lots of different references to the work, especially with the concrete. It looks fleshy, it looks like crystallised forms or Turkish delight. I like the different conceptual ideas that it brought to the work, especially in contrast to the concrete, and also playing on that idea of surfaces and what materials are. Like maybe it might look sort of squishy and soft but actually it's very hard. I like playing with the different states of materials as well. I like to see the different dialogue that's created between them. When Grace is talking here about the bees – in the *Terra Firma* piece which is the other work in the show, it looks like this sort of honeycomb pattern, and something else that Grace achieved in her work that I think is relevant to my practice as well is this like optical illusion of three-dimensional effects. In Grace's weaving, she creates real depth and three-dimensional qualities to her surfaces and that's something I really chime with in that *Terra Firma* piece which has all sorts of negative space, and depending on how you view it and how the light views it, parts look solid that are maybe actually gaps and vice versa. So yeah, that really resonates with me as well. Also when I'm thinking about colour, there's a lot of concrete in my work, but concrete itself has many tones and hues to it that I get really excited about so depending on what state it's at through its curing process it changes colour really significantly from dark sort of greeny-grey and a murky algae colour when it's fresh out the cast and it gradually lightens and lightens. Depending on the mix of product that you use, sometimes you get quite pinky hues, sometimes you get blue tones – it really varies, and I love that it continues to change over a period of time. So even the work in the exhibition and during the course of the exhibition will subtly change so when I go back and look at it again I know that it'll be further along in the drying process, and much lighter and chalkier. And with the *Terra Firma* piece, that shows how the environment and the impact of weathering on concrete and how that then changes it again, so how this external factors can change. In that piece there's a huge range of colour that's been born naturally so you've got greens and yellows from moss, and then almost really coppery, rusted stone on the parts that were exposed to the elements. So in a material that people think of as being very grey, actually there's lots of nuance of colours and I really love that. That really excites me about the material.

18:29

MR: I have a question off the back of that – I mean obviously you could say that there's been this renewed interest in concrete and you only have to look at social media platforms such as Instagram to see there are many accounts that just look at concrete buildings, or look at concrete as a material. There is a very obvious strand of concrete through the exhibition, and although you're partially answered this already Rachael, I'm really interested in what the appeal is for you as artists that are working with concrete. So for example, Ben, how did you come to your piece?

19:02

BW: It's interesting, the discussion around the resurgence and the use of concrete, when speaking as someone from an architectural background, it's something that I really think we should be moving away from in contemporary building practice. It's a material which releases a huge amount of carbon and has a huge amount of embodied carbon because of that. Mostly in the production of cement, mostly like the aggregate from recycled sources like ground down demolition or sources that are much more sustainable. But yeah, the production of cement is something that we should really be aiming to move on from. But then there's this reflective thing that we also need to do and kind of reassess what we already have and what exists. There's many concrete buildings right now that

were kind of built in the mid century that are being torn down, which is extremely problematic because they have such a high level of embodied carbon but also because they were built on almost a Corbusian principle of a concrete frame with concrete floor slabs which in theory can be adapted to potentially anything. You can turn a grade of columns into anything, that's the whole purpose, that it is a universal thing. So I'm very much in favour of the reuse of concrete, reflecting upon it in a way that doesn't somehow stimulate new uses for it, and there are alternatives that are coming out now – not so much on the island of Ireland yet, but CLT for example and ground earth. The seeds are getting sown and these new materials that might pave the way in some way to reducing concrete are the predominant building material. But maybe that's a bit of a sidenote, but I always feel that I should mention that. But yeah, I find myself always trying to not use it but then getting sucked into using it. Because it's difficult to talk about modernism without mentioning that material, or mentioning steel or plate glass. But I guess, my work tries to form an inherent critique of the use of concrete, in that actually the work, which is made in concrete blocks, is going to be disassembled at the end of the show and I aim for it to be sold on and reused and get swallowed into somebody's garden shed or somebody's front wall or a partition that they're building in their house for a new WC. That to me is as much a part of the work as the installation in the gallery itself. This is something that's common throughout history in the kind of pre-modernist era. I mean modernism tended to think that it was like a solution and it could solve things and that building was the solution, and they never imagined that it could become something else. But, in 19th century and earlier buildings that were made entirely in stone, they were constantly being recycled. If you look at large cathedrals in the centre of a town whenever it was taken down it was used to build adjacent workers' houses. Infrastructure was taken apart, reused; it's all just made in cut stone and can be cut into smaller pieces or dragged somewhere else. There's even a term called *spolia* which refers to that reuse of these fragments, a place that's composed of a junkyard of ruins. I think that's really interesting that my work will almost have a second life with something a bit more modest. But we need to sometimes use concrete as a kind of means to an end or as a talking point. I mean obviously the amount of concrete that's used in the show doesn't equate to the—well it's a drop in the ocean compared to the amount of concrete that's getting thrown up around the city. But yeah, it's complex.

22:19

MR: So actually I've got a brief question for you off the back of that, about going back to social media again and the abundance of accounts that are posting mid-century concrete buildings. Do you think that is a healthy activity? Do you think it is a way to show people what we've got—buildings that would otherwise, without interest, be pulled down. Just thinking of embodied carbon et cetera.

22:42

BW: Absolutely yeah, I think it's important that we all learn from our existing built history, and people should understand why things look the way they do. In the same way that people look at a Jackson Pollock painting and they say 'my two year old could do that'. People also look at a lot of late 20th century buildings and they say 'look at this big boxy thing, isn't it such a beast. It's this gargantuan behemoth that's got no humanity in it' when actually if you start kind of reassessing things or looking closer you see that there's something there that's really important. And maybe when you do that, you start to realise something about the intention behind the work and the disassociation that happens between intent and how it manifests itself in the world. Or also, about socio-political economic forces that made the thing the way that it is in the world today. Perhaps it looks as bad as it does because of associations, or perhaps the intent wasn't fully realised and

maybe there's a problem with something like attitudes towards building practices. Like a lot of buildings in Glasgow for example—high rises were taken down because they were unsafe because they weren't built to the drawings. They were finding out when they were disassembling some of the housing estates that some of the pre-cast panels weren't tied together and they were just hanging there in the air for 20 or 30 years before they were taken down. Sometimes I guess with modernist housing estates as beautiful, universal shared space like car free zones which ended up being really badly managed and began to breed crime were actually faults more of the management of the space rather than the design or the aesthetic of the space itself. So I think the more we look back at these things and talk about them, the more you learn the more useful it is. The discourse should be shared, and it's good that discourse happens on social media because it's to some extent democratised with nobody talked down to.

24:27

CH: I'd really like to ask James about your prints because Matt and I invited you after seeing the other prints you'd done that were these sort of love letters to these brutalist modernist buildings around Belfast, and particularly those that are not widely appreciated or people have that sort of love/hate relationship with the place, or they're at the risk of crumbling because they've not been looked after. How did you go about selecting the buildings and what is it about them that drew you to drawing them?

24:59

JA: So I started drawing about—it was in 2017 I began drawing them. At that time there were a lot of plans going about for buildings in Belfast to be demolished and turned into like high rise hotels, apartments and offices. Some of the buildings are actually privately owned by a third party or property developers. Some of them are actually listed heritage buildings. In the past there's been mysterious fires started in buildings or buildings are just left open to the elements and have weathered and deteriorated away. Particularly if you walk along North Street, in that part of Belfast, that whole street is near enough all empty and is empty buildings. But there's some great iconic ones I've drawn like people associate me with the Transport House drawing. It's actually still owned by Unite the Union, and it's got the great tiled front, who the work towards standing together as one against the corruption of offices and capitalism. And then not far away you've got the North Street Arcade which has been a husk for as long as I can remember. Up the street from that you've got the Bank of Ireland which drew influence from the Chrysler Building in New York. You can see that influence in it. Again, that's another building that's been sitting empty for god knows how long, but I think the last time I checked a few years ago it's planned to be turned into a hotel. Then I've drawn the likes of Belfast City Hospital and a few other ones as well. It's kind of interesting because it touches upon what Ben was saying about these buildings being torn down that weren't drawn to plan. The one from Craigavon is interesting because it was originally planned to be a new city outside Belfast; people were getting paid to move out of Belfast to go to Craigavon. It still very much is a commuter hub that people go into Belfast or you can go as far as Dublin because it's kind of one of the first big spots you get to in north Armagh. When you go to Craigavon there's a lot of roads that go to nowhere or there's a lot of empty areas and estates. That's because they ran out of money and the Troubles started during the 70s when they were doing the development for the new site of Craigavon. But yeah, that's kind of been about my practice and background. With use of colour, I'm kind of known for using a lot of bright oranges or at least very vibrant colours. The designs I've done for *Irish Modernisms*, I actually drew influence from Sainsbury's own label design—Matt would know what I'm talking about it's a book, a collection of signs from Sainsbury's own design team and one of the designer I think is named Peter Dickson, and when you look at the

signs it's all the yellows, oranges, whites and greys that are pretty similar to what I use in my prints. The signs are pretty modernised, even on some of the labels they tend to use the same coloured dots like orange that kind of reminds me of the oval windows they have over in Marlborough House in Craigavon. That's kind of where I drew my influence from with the colours.

28:30

CH: I think Marlborough House is just—the first time I saw it was like it's from outer space. It's such a fine example of the building from its era.

28:44

JA: Yeah, it's so overlooked too, like people I've spoke to before that aren't really engaged with art or architecture or that kind of thing—people think it's ugly and want it torn down. Right across from Marlborough House you've got a big shopping centre or just a warehouse, and you're like 'really? You want to tear down something that looks like it's out of a Kubrick movie for some identical warehouse?'

29:08

CH: Yeah, we've found that the work being in the show, we've had so many people from Craigavon making a beeline for it because it is just this piece that really has shaped perhaps a perception of the city as well.

29:24

JA: Yeah, I've definitely had a lot of people message me and ask me about the Craigavon print. It's something people have been asking me to do for a long time, but at the time I was working on it I couldn't really talk about it. So there'd been a lot of anticipation for it.

29:38

MR: I think it's very interesting that buildings such as Marlborough House really polarise people, and that is the case for many modernist buildings. But it's interesting, you just saying there James, that you've have a lot of messages that I've had too, that people are saying. To be honest, this is what people are saying—not my opinion—'to be honest I think it's quite an ugly building, but it's our ugly building, and I want to own a piece of it.' So there's that need to hang on to it still even if you do think it's an ugly building, which find quite fascinating.

30:06

CH: Yeah, it's such a key part of history and there are so many parts of the world where different ideologies come through and it's through the architecture and, do you want to raze everything to the ground and start afresh all the time or do you keep these elements?

30:19

JA: I think we need ugly buildings in our areas because do we really want every town and every house and street to have the same shops, the same factories, the same identical offices and so on? You need character.

30:34

MR: I totally agree with you, James. Growing up in Cornwall in Truro, which is the only city in Cornwall, there used to be—or there still is—this multi-storey car park, and as a kid I used to say to my mum 'I really like that building' and she'd say 'what are you going on about? It's an ugly concrete building.' You know, the phrase that we hear so often. But

you've got to understand that in Cornwall, that was a very alien presence and it really, really stood out and it felt exciting in a way.

31:01

JA: There's a very similar sort of car park, I think it's been demolished recently, but on Oxford Street, just off Oxford Street in London, it's got these sort of damaged shapes and windows and it'd be a sort of similar thing to what you're talking about.

31:15

MR: Is it called Welbeck?

31:17

JA: That's the one, Welbeck Street.

31:19

CH: Phillip, I'd like to invite you to talk to use about the scandal of the Hobsons of Moy street sign, because I just absolutely love this story. I hadn't encountered it before.

31:33

PM: Sure, well I suppose my whole process of making with the exhibition as well was grappling with the question of why does my work in any way represent modernism or what do I speak to that legacy? So it involved a lot of research, which my work mostly does take the form of, and resist any kind of visible form at the end. But in my research I was drawn to my local area where I grew up and came across this story of a local store that wanted to have a sign for the shop, and yes it was of the time because there was nothing else to be worried about. It wasn't accepted by the local people and it was seen as garish and unsightly. One of the first things I thought of was it would be nice to maybe make a sign for this space because they didn't have it, but I thought that might be too easy a kind of solution to that problem or that history. So I wanted to relate it more to some other research I was doing around queer social spaces and sort of spaces that facilitated the coming together of different groups of people and the support of other people. There was a particular club in Belfast in the 80s called The Carpenter Club that was named after Edward Carpenter. It was a queer social space that had a cafe, that also shared its space with the local anarchist setting, and I liked that coming together of these two disparate groups of people that weren't in any way—they were sort of on the fringes of society and weren't supported elsewhere, and holding each other up I guess. So I wanted to create a sign for that space. A kind of fictional sign for the space. I think actually, in the course of the show, some people have come in to the exhibition, as you'll know Catherine, and say 'that's that space we used to go to' that's been a really nice outcome of the work. And kind of in a broader sense, the whole project in the show has kind of looked at the tentative adaption to electricity within rural Ireland and the resistance to that, and the legacy of that. There is a number of elements in the exhibition and I kind of see them as all as certain parts to a greater whole. So there's the wall painting in the show that refers to the practice of blessing ceremonies that would have happened in rural Ireland with the turning on of electricity, and I know there's been a conversation about colour. There's been a definite decision in my work about light and darkness, and that sort of turning on of electricity and remaining in the dark. But the wall drawing in itself refers to the signature of the patron saint of electricity and electrical engineers.

33:47

CH: Yeah, I found I was learning so much through your work. I never knew there was a patron saint of electricity.

33:57

PM: There's a patron saint for everything.

34:01

CH: But also, I'll probably put a link up with this, there was a fascinating podcast from The Irish Passport about the electrification of the island of Ireland and how involved and how political that was, that I think people from outside the island just don't know about.

34:27

PM: There were some interesting conversations that we were having before about electricity as this really political thing. So like in Ireland, the whole country being hooked up together and there being this solidarity between north and south, and I think it was during when Terence O'Neill was Prime Minister and him wanting to connect all of Ireland with electricity. It'd been seen by a part of the community that it was a step too far and was one of the ways to undermine his ministership was to hijack electricity warehouses and to turn off electricity and hold that hostage. So I thought that was quite a nice gesture.

34:57

MR: I think a lot of really interesting strands off the back of Phillip's work that's actually in the exhibition is this idea of the domestic and modernism in the domestic realm. I think that happens in Phillip's work hosted by Ben's sculptural installation, but it also happens in Grace's work, and I was wondering if I could ask Grace – where does the domestic come into play in your work?

35:20

GM: I think I've always been interested in the Bauhaus movement and that kind of idea of form and function, and these objects that are symbols of intense labour. Within the show there's definitely references between the fireplace and then the floor, and then this fabric wall and this headboard. I guess it's a lot of structures that we bring associations to, so that's what I'm interested in because I think as somebody that grew up in a working class environment in a rural community, I was taught all of these skills and I feel like particularly it's gendered labour. There's this idea that as a woman you have to create free labour for the benefit of others and to almost be like a vessel and be seen and not heard. I think because the materials I use are so extravagant, it kind of has a voice even though it appears to be silent. So I like that idea of being taught to be seen but not heard, but communicating your voice in a way through what you make. So I really like the connections between everything and the associations in creating this kind of internal space that I guess we know a bit more about that even now through living through a pandemic in terms of gathering around these domestic objects and feeling safe within that. So I create work that is essentially geometric and digital, but is handmade and you can see the edges and the back of it, and you can see all the imperfections because I think I try to make everything perfect so that's where I feel most comfortable with that surrounding me. But in a way, I prefer the imperfections.

37:07

CH: It's definitely something that comes through and seeing how our visitors have been responding to your work; that those imperfections and the fact that it is handmade are

visible when you're looking at it but it is through the screen that it does seem almost artificially pristine, and pristine inhuman perfect. It's something that particularly on your work that's the screen where it's exposing the back – it's skewed because of the tensions of the ribbons being pulled and that's very intentional to show that it's not that it's a mistake. It's that we can see that physicality of the labour.

37:48

CH: I think that's really nice to hear from so many of you as well in this conversation. Just to finish this recording, Matt, it's been so nice to work with you as a co-curator and to work with all of you as our artists as well. We've had so many great conversations with you and it's been really positive and a reciprocal experience from my perspective.

38:13

MR: Yes thank you, thank you so much. It's an absolute pleasure to be invited to co-curate with you, and lovely to work on a project that was fun to work on, and really opened my eyes to the possibilities of modernism.

38:27

CH: And this is where we pause our conversation. You can listen to the second part of this Round Table on Spotify, iTunes, Anchor, Google and other podcast providers. Irish Modernisms is open until the 18th September 2021, at CCA Derry~Londonderry, and for those of you unable to visit, you can see images at our website CCADLD.org and across our socials @CCADLD. This Round Table is made possible thanks to the support of Art Council of Northern Ireland, Derry City and Strabane District Council, the Art Fund, British Art Network, the Paul Mellon Centre, Yale, Arts Council England, and Tate. And thanks to Jessica Jukes, Martin Myrone, Danielle Goulé, Mel Bradley, Laura McCafferty, and Fiona Allan. Thank you for listening.



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