



Kate MacDonagh

MOVING STILL







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n the wall in front of my desk, there is a small composition by the Irish artist Kate MacDonagh. It shows two ovals – one upright, one lying on its side. The upright oval resembles a grey face, while the white lateral oval is like rounded shoulders.

They are not connected, more like shapes floating free on a light grey background. The texture is wonderfully uncertain, allowing the parchment on which they are printed to come shining through with what looks like – veins, capillaries, arteries, smudges, freckles, imperfections.

This abstract image contains something deeply human, an expression of energy existing beyond the surface. It seems both static and full of motion, like a living presence.

It brings to life the viewer's imagination. It

allows me, as a novelist, to slip in behind all that restraint and find an expanding galaxy of thoughts and stored memory. Here I am, working in prose, translating into language what this image does so successfully in its silence. Those invisible stories found in places where no words have been used.

For me, there is an entire novel inside that image. It reminds me in some way of the work of Lydia Davies, the American writer of short powerful passages of prose that stop short each time and allow the reader to fill in the larger background. Each fragment becomes a movie to us. Like the story of a flight attendant buying a cup of coffee in Starbucks and being asked if she wants caramel drizzle or caramel syrup, that tiny glimpse of her day gives us a true portrait. We can fill in the family, the lovers, the heartbreak, the happiness.

There is something in those truncated observations that opens up enormous hidden biographies. We enter a dialogue with art, it speaks to us, lighting up our emotions with a bright torch, blinding us when it's good. What strikes me about the work of Kate MacDonagh is her ability to allow us to participate. We become co-artists, filling in the details.

I remember standing in front of a Rothko painting at MOMA and wondering how many people had seen this piece before me. As always, it seems to me that part of the painting is soaked up by the viewer, while at the same time, a deeply intimate place in the viewer's imagination becomes transposed into the art. That Rothko painting must have soaked up a million hearts. It felt like being at a rock concert with all the previous visitors around

me, all focused on those shifting bands of colour. The painting seemed to be unfinished. As if the artist is waiting for us to come and bring it to life.

Kate MacDonagh grew up in Sligo where her parents ran a successful restaurant. Her father also took a great interest in theatre, directing many productions of Yeats plays around rural cities and towns in the West. She travelled with him in a Volkswagen van loaded with props. It was inevitable, perhaps, that she would begin her artistic career as a set designer for theatre, and then eventually go on to take a deep interest in Japanese art brought on by that formative influence coming through the Yeats Noh plays.

In a physical sense, her work has been influenced by the landscape of the west of Ireland. It brings to mind all that moisture in the climate,



the bareheaded mountains, that noisy rushing of the Garavogue river through the town of Sligo, those layers of sphagnum moss pressed down over centuries into the memory of blanket bogs, all merging with the same slow centuries of human calmness and meditative power found in Japanese landscapes and architecture.

In her studio in south Dublin, surrounded by brushes and small disks used to smooth out the ink onto paper, Kate MacDonagh explains to me how the subtle colours showing in the work come through from the back. Each composition takes on multiple layers and even then, the texture of the paper, which she sources in Japan in large rolls, comes through like underground life.

She has travelled extensively to Japan, taking up three lengthy residencies there which

allowed her to build up strong relationships with other artists in her realm of work and to acquire that remarkably disciplined craft where the minimal form becomes the expression.

In a series of subtle, swaying images, her new exhibition shows that ancient mastery of materials which she has taken from Japanese traditions. It is as if there is something inside the paper and the frugal amount of ink soaked up in the printing that make it fluid – ‘more cloth than paper’ as the artist herself would say. Each piece in this collection holds not only the colour and the texture of paper itself, but also the block used to print the ink onto the paper, leaving behind the growth design inside the wood.

It contains, what the artist calls the history of its own making, each surface drying in waves,

evolving in patient layers of time. Shapes that produce powerful echoes like a steady beat going through the work. All those timeless places in the landscape where she comes from set alongside distant cultures in the far east.

One composition which was still in progress shows the night sky at a time of pandemic isolation when no flights were crossing the world. A deep, moonless black space, like visual silence. Only one

star awake, as Yeats once said. It has since taken on three more levels of ink, as if the absence of traffic has filled the sky with further layers and layers of distance, an infinity of darkness. If you listen carefully, you can almost hear the noise of the universe.

**Hugo Hamilton**

*Author of The Pages (4th Estate)*

**BORDERLESS** (*overleaf*)

*Size: 60 x 95 cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*











**Kate MacDonagh**

MOKUHANGA

**CADENCE 3**

*Size: 60cm x 95 cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*





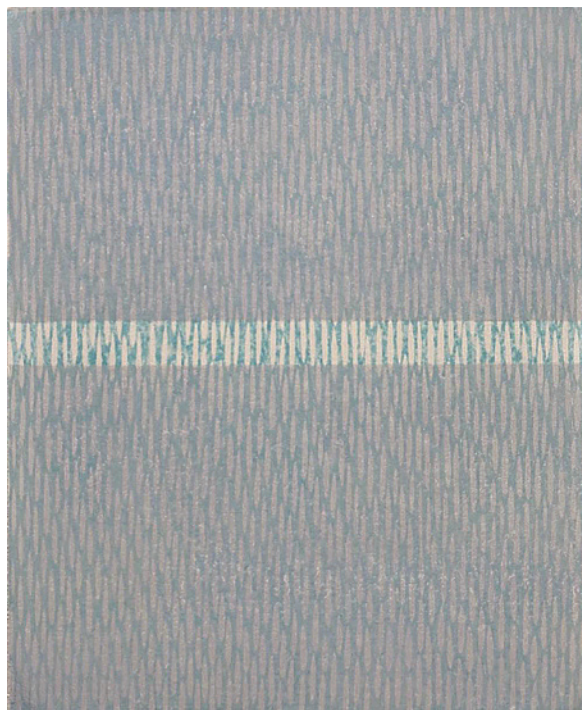
**BLUE SHADE 2**

*Size: 34cm x 28cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*





**OCHRE SHADE 1**

*Size: 34cm x 28cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*





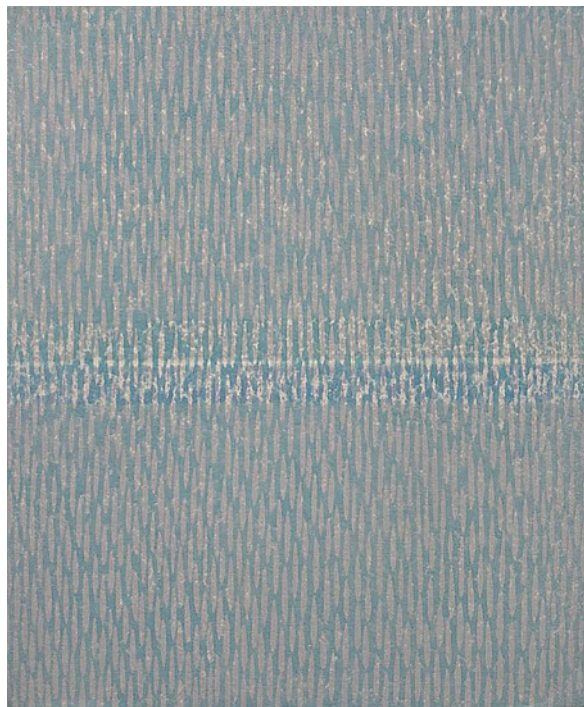
**BLUE SHADE 3**

*Size: 34cm x 28cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



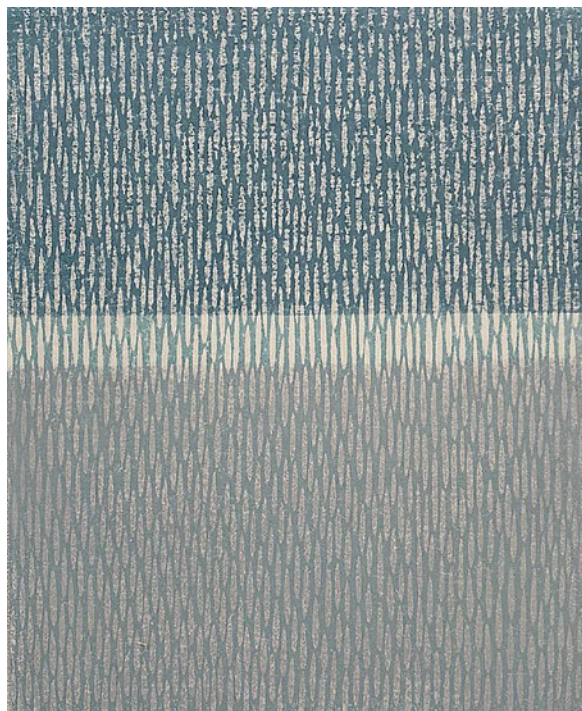


**BLUE SHADE 1**

*Size: 34cm x 28cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



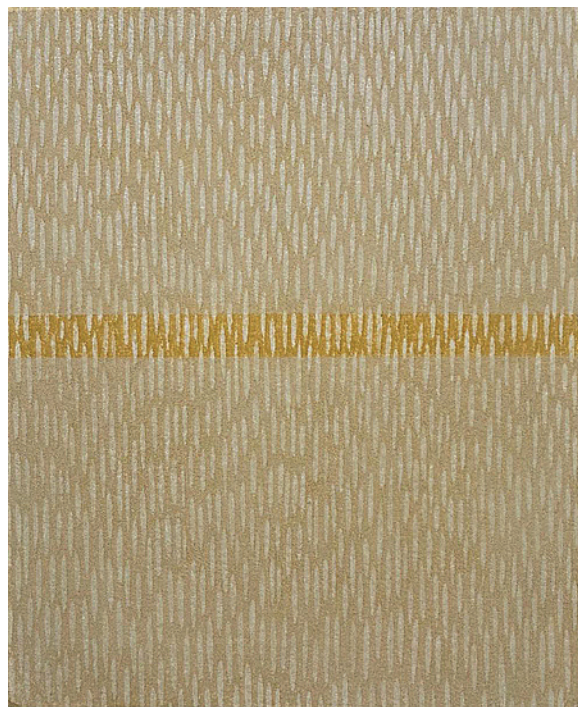


**BLUE SHADE 3**

*Size: 34cm x 28cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



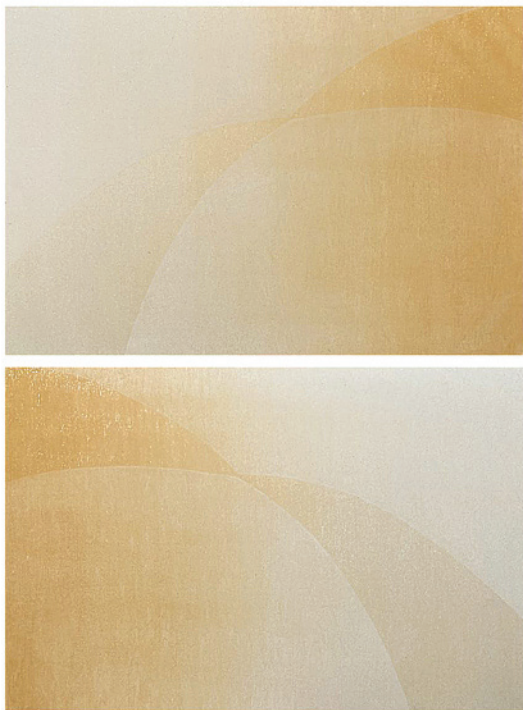
**SISSONE 2**

*Size: 120cm x 95cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



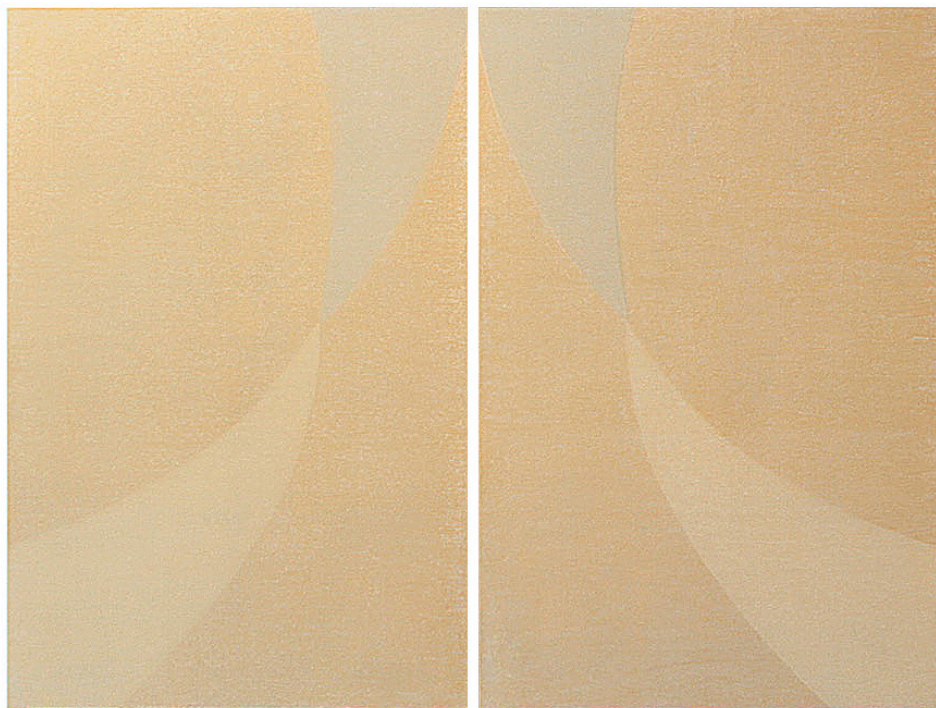


**SISSONE**

*Size: 120cm x 95cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*





**SISSONE 3**

*Size: 120cm x 95cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



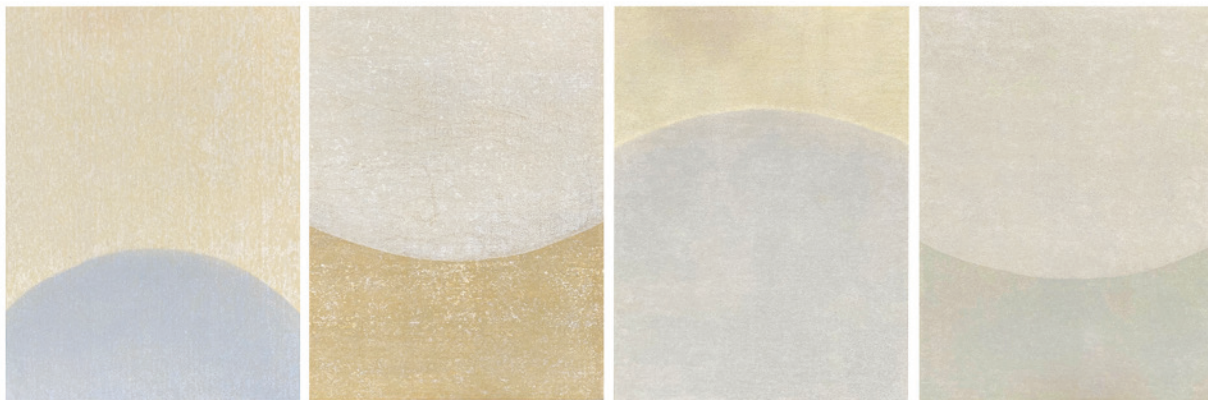
**MOVING STILL 1,2,3,4**

*Size: 30.5cm x 23cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



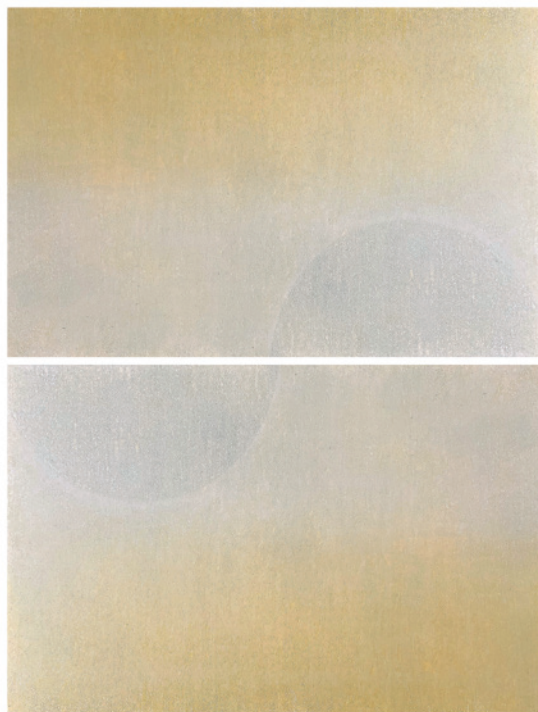


**CADENCE**

*Size: 120cm x 95cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



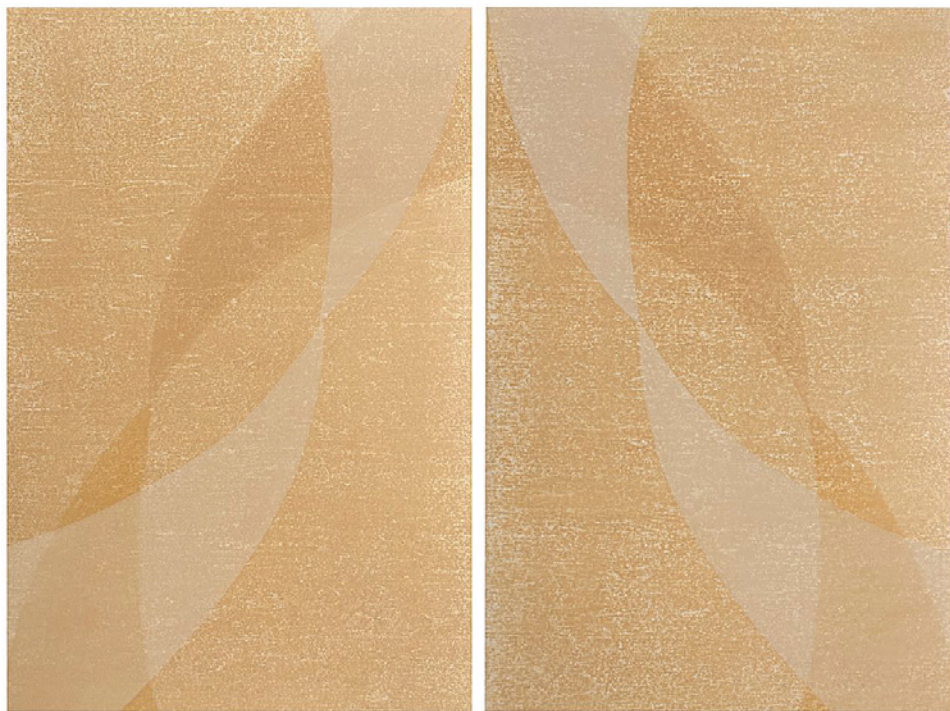
**SILVER LIGHT** (*Dptych*)

*Size: 36cm x 40cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*





**CADENCE 2**

*Size: 60cm x 95 cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*



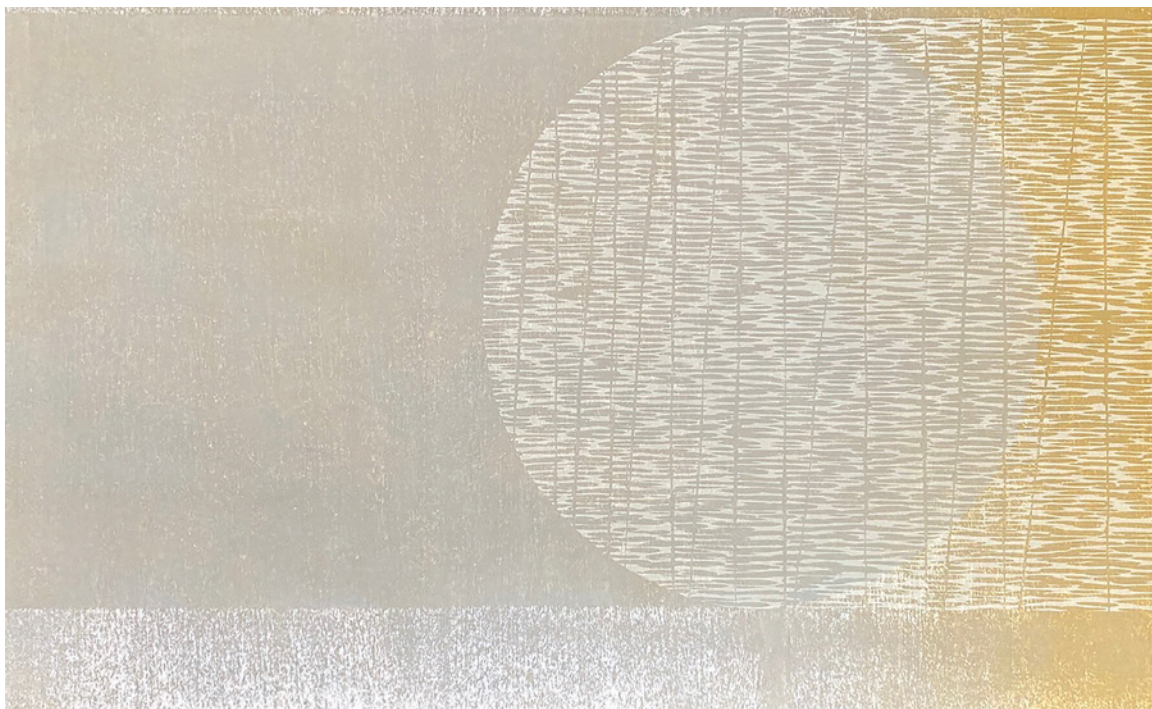
**CADENCE 1**

*Size: 60cm x 95 cm*

*Medium: Mokuhanga*

*2021*









**Kate MacDonagh**

CURRICULUM VITAE



## Education

- 1975 Limerick School of Art and Design, Limerick, Ireland
- 1981 Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid, Spain
- 1982 Bob Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, New York, USA

## Exhibitions

2022

- 'Moving Still', Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Co. Mayo, Ireland
- "Linking", Coppell Art Center, Texas, USA.

2021

- Sumi Fusion: Mokuhanga & Nara, Japan
- 191st RHA Annual Exhibition, RHA, Dublin, Ireland
- Woolwich Contemporary Print Fair, London
- 'Moving Still', Solo Exhibition, Graphic Studio Dublin
- CROSSINGS, Boyle Arts Festival
- Summer Show, Solomon Fine Art, Dublin, Ireland
- 'FAR IN FAR OUT', Cairde Arts Festival, Sligo, Ireland

2020

- Hida-Takayama, International Contemporary Woodblock-Prints Triennale
- Diamond Point, Graphic Studio Gallery, Dublin
- Kanreki, The Model, Sligo
- Woolwich Contemporary Print Fair, London
- London Original Print Fair, London
- Our Colours, DLR County Collection, Lexicon, Dun Laoghaire
- Summer Exhibition, Solomon Gallery, Dublin



2019

Solo Exhibition, Foyer Gallery, The Model, Sligo.  
Somewhere in Between, SO Fine Art Editions, Dublin  
Light/Shade, CfsHE Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.  
Impressions, Printmaking Biennial, Galway, Ireland  
Royal Ulster Academy Annual Exhibition, Belfast  
Echoes, Maria Simmonds-Gooding & Kate MacDonagh, Graphic  
Studio Gallery, Dublin  
St Brigid's Day Contemporary Exhibition, 90 Women Artists, 12  
Star Gallery, London

2018

The Lighthouse & The Sea, Impact 10 Encuentro, Santander,  
Spain.  
RUA 137th Annual Exhibition, Belfast  
Summer Show, Graphic Studio Gallery, Dublin.  
Japan WYPW, West Yorkshire, England.  
Walking Birds' Mountain, The Factory, Sligo.  
An Irish Airman Forsees His Death, Hamilton Gallery, Sligo.  
Gathering, Boyle Arts Festival, Co. Roscommon.  
Cairde Visual, The Model, Sligo.  
Nebensonnen, Seidlvilla, Munich, Germany  
MI-LAB/CFSHE Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2017

Royal Ulster Academy 136th Annual Exhibition, Belfast, Ireland  
EFA RBPMW Annual Members Show, New York, U.S.A  
Pier Printers Unframed, Filmbase, Temple Bar, Dublin, Ireland  
CISHE Gallery 3331 Arts Chryoda, Tokyo, Japan.

MISA, St James Hospital, Dublin

Beauty of Mokuhanga: Discipline & Sensibility, IMC, Hawaii,  
USA

RHA: 187th Annual Exhibition, RAA, Dublin

A lonely Impulse of Delight, Geidei University, Tokyo, Japan

Crazy Jane, Hamilton Gallery, Sligo

2016

Mi-Lab, Cfshe Gallery, Arts Chiyoda, Tokyo, Japan

A Terrible Beauty is Born, Hamilton Gallery, Sligo

Legacy, National Fine Art Print Exhibition, Hyde Bridge Gallery,  
Sligo

Summer Exhibition, SO Fine Art Editions, Dublin

A lonely Impulse of Delight, Hamilton Gallery, Sligo & London  
Art Fair

2015

A lonely Impulse of Delight, SO Fine Art Editions, Dublin

Of this Place, El Ateneo, Espacio Prado, Madrid and Hamilton  
Gallery, Sligo

CISHE Gallery, Arts Chiyoda 333, Tokyo, Japan

2014

Winter Exhibition, SO Fine Art Editions, Dublin

Wandering Shades, Factory Performance Space, Sligo

Royal Ulster Academy 133rd Annual Exhibition, Ulster Museum,  
Belfast

2013

Open, Catherine Hammond Gallery, Glengarriff, Co. Cork

Pressed, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, County Hall,

Dún Laoghaire curated by Graphic Studio Dublin  
The Japanese Connection, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan  
The Wanderer and the Well, Reflections on Yeats, with Brian  
McDonagh, Hamilton Gallery, Sligo  
Open Submission Exhibition, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County  
Council selected by Tara Murphy, Solomon Gallery

2012

Works, Hamilton Gallery, Sligo  
Group Exhibition, Boyle Arts Festival, Boyle, Co. Roscommon

2010

RHA: 180th Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy,  
Dublin, (Invited Artist)  
RHA: 179th Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin

2009

46th Slikarska Kolonija, Galerija Medija, Zagorje, Slovenia

2008

Group Exhibition, Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, Co. Wicklow  
45th Slikarska Kolonija, Galerija Medija, Zagorje, Slovenia

2007

44th Slikarska Kolonija, Galerija Medija, Zagorje, Slovenia  
Margin, OPW, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin

2006

Paper Unframed, Sligo Art Gallery, Sligo

2005

Group Exhibition, County Buildings, Wicklow

Showcase, Grafton Suite, Grafton Street, Dublin

2004

Light, Kate MacDonagh and Harry Vince Coulter Bank of Ireland  
Arts Centre, Dublin, opening by Catherine Marshall

2003

Pool, Solo exhibition, Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire, Co.  
Dublin,  
New Works, William Frank Gallery, Monkstown, Dublin

2002

Aimsir, Kate MacDonagh and Harry Vince Coulter Dún Aímhígin  
Gallery, Department of community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs,  
Dublin

1999

Masks from Yeats' Plays, The Factory Theatre Space, Sligo

1994

An tOireachtas, Guinness Hop Store, Dublin  
Aisling, The Pantheon Gallery, Dublin  
RHA: 161th Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin

1993

Recent Work, Kate MacDonagh and Lucy Hill, The Factory  
Theatre Space, Sligo  
Tipperary Images, South Riding, County Museum, Clonmel

1992

Art in Tipperary, Clonmel Art Gallery, Clonmel



1991

Recent Work, Kate MacDonagh & Pauline Kinahan, The Dolan  
Moore Gallery, Athlone

COE '90: Claremorris, Co. Mayo

Art in Tipperary, Cahir, Co. Tipperary

1990

The Thinking Eye, Sligo Art Gallery, Sligo

Western Artist's Exhibition, Galway Arts Festival

1985

Etchings and Photographs, Kate MacDonagh and John O'Leary,  
Sligo Art Festival

1983

New York Prints, Kate MacDonagh & Pauline Kinehan, Limerick  
Printmaking Collective

### Collections & Commissions

MacDonagh's work is held in Public collections in Ireland including the Office of Public Works and private collections in Slovenia, Spain, USA and Japan including Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, The Office of Public Works, Dublin, FÁS Office Sligo and Dublin, Tipperary County Museum, Izlake Collection, Zagorje, Slovenia. She has undertaken two commissions working with the architect to create work specifically for the buildings Sheppard Moscow Ireland Ltd., Dublin and Rooney Associates Architects, Dublin.

### Awards & Residencies

2021

Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris, France

2020

Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Co Mayo  
Creative Ireland, Artist in Residence,  
St. James's Hospital/MISA, Dublin  
Arts Council of Ireland, Professional  
Development Award

2018

CARA Residency Award, The Model, Sligo

2017

MI-LAB Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory,  
Lake Kawaguchi, Japan.  
Dlr Arts Grant- Professional Development

2012 & 2006

Residency, Cill Rialaig Artists' Retreat, Co. Kerry

2008 & 2007

Residency, 45th Colony of Painters, Islake, Slovenia  
& 44th Colony of Painters, Islake, Slovenia

1981

Scholarship, The Bob Blackburn Printmaking  
Workshop, New York

1980

Scholarship, Spanish Cultural Institute Cervantes,  
Dublin

1979

Prize Winner, Claremorris Fine Art Exhibition,  
Co. Mayo

## MOKUHANGA

The term “mokuhanga 木版画” literally means “wood /impression/picture”.

木 moku- wood

版 han- impression

画 ga- picture

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Design & Artwork by Eyecon Design Consultants*

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