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BLACK CHURCH PRINT STUDIO  
PRESENTS

# UNLIMITING THE EDITION

Ailbhe Barrett  
Maya Brezing  
Niamh Flanagan  
Margot Galvin  
Des Kenny  
Grace Ryan

12 – 30 January 2024  
The Library Project, 4 Temple Bar,  
Dublin 2

Curated by Ria Czerniak-LeBov  
Winner of Black Church Emerging Curator Award

## Unlimiting the Edition

Ria Czerniak-LeBov

As contemporary print practices continue to expand beyond the boundaries of tradition, everything from the formal and material qualities of the medium, to the social and economic status of Print have become the subject of re-evaluation. In the practices of Ailbhe Barrett, Maya Brezing, Niamh Flanagan, Margot Galvin, Des Kenny and Grace Ryan, it is the concept of the *limited edition* itself, that is being expanded. Divorced from the rarity value system that governs the formal edition, the matrix's potential to iterate and generate ad infinitum becomes an exciting prospect, one that allows these printmakers to build and fragment, collage and extract, tell stories and challenge existing narratives. Unbound by convention, these artistic approaches to the multiple, allow for unlimited experimentation.

Drawing from the rural landscape in which she spent her formative years, Ailbhe Barrett creates large-scale gestural works using a wide range of printmaking techniques. Forests and country roads are revisited time and again across Barrett's practice, their silhouettes obscured by the fleeting light of dawn or dusk. Transient ephemera find permanence in Barrett's sublime works on paper, the artist's homeward journeys transforming into ritual pilgrimage through repeated reiterations, simultaneously unique and familiar. Employing the parallax effect, Barrett's recent installation invites the

viewer to complete the transformation of still to moving image, as they move through the gallery. Double-sided, these prints require circumnavigation, their deeply embossed carborundum and wispy drypoint branches swaying gently, not with the breeze but with the passing of the viewer. Fragmented strips of hinterland suspended in their wooden supports, themselves the stuff of forest, take root within the gallery, forming a circular meta-materiality in motion.

Maya Brezing's practice also focusses on the material qualities of print media, combining papermaking, etching and screenprinting with found objects and mass-produced images. Brezing's assemblages speak of an imagined world, post-Anthropocene, post-human, in which nature has asserted its dominance over the abandoned urban debris in its midst. New shoots push through cracks in concrete, vines scale dilapidated walls and trees emerge from the remnants of old houses. Brezing's combination of the handmade, mechanical and found image, mirrors her subject matter, the crumbling boundaries between the natural and the man-made, stamped within the organic, uncertain deckled territories of her moulded paper. Using process-driven, slow media to highlight the perils of our rapid consumer society, Brezing's fragments bear witness to the emergence of nature, reborn from the rubble. Discarded building supplies, obsolete flyers and deadpan snapshots are carefully gathered, taking on new meanings within this artist's rich visual vocabulary.

Like Brezing, Niamh Flanagan also uses print to build alternate worlds. Working in etching, monoprint, screenprint and carborundum, Niamh's collages weave

narrative threads as her dwellings, forests and islands repeatedly relocate, forming new and often surreal landscapes. Visions of utopia and dystopia, shelter and danger, community and solitude are re-imagined with every new collage, as constituent parts are stripped of their surroundings only to find themselves re-appear in unfamiliar terrain. The uncanny nature of these works is contingent upon multiplicity. It is not that Flanagan's mountains look similar in multiple works; rather, they are birthed from the same matrix. Like the literary and oral lore that inspired them, the artist's central themes, symbols and figures have evolved with each retelling. In her hands, mountain peaks stand proud, before transforming into desolate islands; tiny houses anthropomorphise, gathering conspiratorially before slipping through time and space into the exquisitely blended abyss.

Juxtaposing vibrant, graphic imagery with layered, gestural abstraction, Margot Galvin's sculptural printed works lend themselves to repeated reconfiguration. Screenprinting onto an array of materials including aluminium, glass, mirrors and canvas, Galvin's substrates then become movable building blocks in the construction of her intimate, precise installations. Through her choice of materials, palette and imagery, these works can be seen as architectural models for imagined utopian microcosms in which the natural environment harmoniously co-exists with the urban. Sharp geometric forms on metal and glass show the built environment at home amidst Galvin's forests and rivers, precariously balanced anew with each showing. Throughout these works, motifs are repeated, altering with each iteration as Galvin intuitively improvises. Each

combination of layer and pigment is as unique as the final modular construction, their constituent parts possessing ambiguous auras of sameness and difference, highlighting the malleability of the print processes involved.

At the core of Des Kenny's practice is an undeniable playfulness. His palette can only be described as plastic, his motifs resembling the spirographs and stencils of childhood. His large-scale screen prints possess a vibrancy and spontaneity that seem to speak, not only of play but of contemporary society's excesses. Geodesic domes, stars and falling leaves clamber over one another, a jumble of matter competing for space among the layers of artistic production. A decade ago, Kenny began creating his *infinity series*, marking the bottom left of each print with an infinity symbol, where one would normally expect an edition number. Some works are hard to tell apart while others deviate wildly from any notion of an edition. His use of this otherwise earnest mathematical symbol, calls into question the commercially-codified conventions of the limited edition, while pointing to the phenomenon of contemporary society's seemingly infinite production and consumption.

For Grace Ryan, traditionally gendered materials are subject to re-examination. Animal skins, talon-like nails and latex seamlessly fuse with Ryan's printed and cast multiples. These works are characterised by hybridity, queering notions of beauty and gender, desire and abjection. In Ryan's newest work, we see a material intervention. Originating in China, over 2000 years ago, the antique folding screen can be seen as a movable boundary, often used as a temporary demarcation of

privacy behind which its user dresses and undresses. Printed upon latex and inserted within the panels of this decorative divider, Ryan's intervention destabilises the significance of this femme-coded domestic object, highlighting the vulnerabilities of her combined materials. Resulting from the chemical reaction that takes place between the latex and the copper matrix when they come into contact, Ryan's prints on latex only have a short lifespan. As this prophylactic boundary gradually degrades and decomposes, the screen transforms from barrier to portal.

Across their practices, these artists explore a diverse range of themes and contemporary phenomena, in an equally diverse range of traditional techniques. The resulting works possess a shared sensibility, one that acknowledges the complexities and contradictions of making art in unprecedented times. Climate crisis, gender identity, consumerism and the enduring, and all too human, search for a place to call home are thoughtfully and often, playfully explored through the hand-made, printed multiple. Unlike the definitive nature of the conventional print edition, these works embrace the speculative, iterative and exploratory potential of the medium, resulting in limitless configurations and re-imaginings. With its unparalleled capabilities for multiplication, printmaking offers a rich, process-driven vehicle with which to explore the increasingly complicated times we live in.

Excerpts previously published in *State of Play* by Ria Czerniak-LeBov,  
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## CURATOR STATEMENT

Ria Czerniak-LeBov

My practice as both a curator and writer is rooted in printmaking, its position within the wider contemporary visual landscape and the rarity value systems it so often conforms to. Print's historical links to early mass production, technology, craft and the democratisation of the Art image are unique to the medium. *Unlimiting the Edition* is the culmination of an academic research project which focussed on the widely accepted convention of limiting editions of hand-made, original fine art prints. In the wake of digital reproduction and online image saturation, the analogue, tactile and material processes embedded within printmaking have become sites of conceptual and technical exploration. *Unlimiting the Edition* features 6 printmakers, each of whom engage with the printed multiple as medium. These practices complicate conventions, pushing Print beyond the limits of the edition.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Ria Czerniak-LeBov** is an artist, writer and curator based in Dublin. She recently completed her MA Art in the Contemporary World at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, where she is also an assistant lecturer. Ria is a full-time member of Graphic Studio Dublin, since receiving their graduate award in 2016. Her writing and curatorial practices focus on contemporary printmaking, collaborative print practice, technology and value systems. Her paper *Irish Printmakers in the Age of Digital Reproduction* was selected and published by IMPACT International Print Conference (Bristol, UK) in 2022 and

led to Ria's curatorial debut *Oscillation* (Graphic Studio Gallery) in 2023. Her work has been exhibited widely including RHA, RUA, National Botanic Gardens, SO Fine Art Editions, Trinity College Dublin and OPW. As a writer, she has been featured in *Printmaking Today*, *Pressing Matters* and *The Honest Ulsterman*.

**Ailbhe Barrett** is a visual artist practicing in paint, print, drawing and photography. Originally from Co. Limerick, she is now based in Dublin. Initially a landscape painter working mainly in oils, she later studied printmaking in Limerick Printmakers and Graphic Studio Dublin and continues creating work in both paint and print. She held her first solo exhibition *Infusions* in Graphic Studio Gallery in Dublin in 2017, and has been included in many selected exhibitions. Her work is in many collections including Northern Ireland Arts Council, OPW, National Gallery of Ireland and the Museum of Literature Ireland, and was the recipient of the ESB Keating Award at the Royal Hibernian Academy in 2019. Recently, she held the solo exhibition *Contemporaneity and the Elusive* in SO Fine Art Editions in Dublin and the Hyde Bridge Gallery in Sligo 2022/23. Group exhibitions include *Geomancy* at IMPACT12 in Bristol in 2022, and the upcoming *Kwaidan*, which includes 40 selected artists, exhibiting in venues across Japan and Ireland in 2024/25.

**Maya Brezing** is an emerging Irish artist working and living in Dublin. She graduated NCAD in 2022 with a BA (Hons) Degree in Fine Art specialising in printmaking. Her multi-disciplinary work looks at nature reclaiming derelict spaces through the mediums of printmaking, photography and sculpture. She was awarded the Black Church Print Studio Graduate Award 2022 and is

currently a full time member. In January 2023 she received the Fingal Recent Graduate residency at MART Gallery and Studios and exhibited in the MART Awards show. Brezing has been involved in numerous group shows in Ireland and the UK. These include Halftone Print Fair, Ironbridge Print competition and "The Ladder is Always There", curated by the Shell/Ter collective in association with ten emerging artists. Her upcoming exhibitions include a three-person show in Ardgillan Gallery in April 2024. Brezing's work is held in the Office of Public works, St. Vincent's University Hospital and the DCU art collection.

**Niamh Flanagan** graduated from the National College of Art and Design, and is a member of Graphic Studio Dublin where she works as Programme Coordinator and Master Printer. Selected recent exhibitions include Dower House Gallery, Emo Court, (OPW), (2023), Kwaidan- Encounters with Lafcadio Hearn, Matsue, Japan (2023), Blickar mot Landskap, Galleri Helle Knudsen, Stockholm (2023), Thin Places of Escape and Return, SO Fine Art Editions, Dublin (2022), London Original Print Fair and InkMIAMI (2022), represented by Stoney Road Press, Dublin, Grafik fran Irland,(2020) at Galleri Helle Knudsen, Stockholm, Inside Worlds, (2017) SO Fine Art, Dublin and Collision, (2017) the Law Society of Ireland. Her work is in the collections of the OPW, The Law Society of Ireland, the British Library and the National Gallery of Ireland. Awards include Arts Council Mentorship Scheme, Travel and Training, RHA Graham Wilkinson Print Prize, Culture Ireland Grants. Residencies include Cill Rialiaig Project, Lindart International Artists' Colony, Slovenia, 'Where Borders Meet'; Poland and Edinburgh Printmakers, Scotland. She has worked

extensively in education, developing the Etching Programme at Graphic Studio Dublin. In 2013 she set up Mobile Print Project with Clare Henderson, an initiative that promotes printmaking through education in Ireland.

**Margot Galvin** is an artist living and working in Dublin. Her work explores ideas about place, home and belonging. She uses psycho-geographical explorations of various locations to question how a 'sense of place' or belonging is developed by how closely our current environment echoes our place of origin. These locations have varied from the Dodder river, the industrial landscape around Ringsend and the architecture of Dublin City. Other imagery draws on methods used to chart our experience of place. Some aspects evoke aerial photographs of topographical details, land masses and sea, while other details could be interpreted as ordnance survey maps and charts, seismic waves or weather map details. Margot graduated from NCAD in 2012 with a 1st Class honours degree in Fine Art print. She completed her Masters in Fine Art there in 2014 and is currently a member of 'AtHome' artist group and The Black Church Print Studio, Dublin. She has exhibited in the RHA and RUA annual exhibitions, Cairde Visual, RUA RED Open, Galway Arts Festival, and more recently Draiocht 'MakingArt Print' as an invited artist. Her work is held in AXA, OPW, Law Society of Ireland, Dean Hotel collection as well as many private collections.

**Des Kenny** is a multi-disciplinary artist from Dublin. He has been a member of Graphic Studio Dublin for over twenty years, working in a wide range of printmaking techniques including screenprint, lithography, etching and mono-print. His practice has also evolved to include

sculpture, painting, photography and digital media. He has exhibited widely, including solo shows at Solstice Arts Centre (2012), Draiocht Arts Centre (2011) and group shows at Tallaght University Hospital (2008), Pallas Projects (2008), The Lab (2006), Marketplace Arts Centre, Armagh (2005) and Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny (2005). Kenny has taken part in several residencies. He was artist in residence at Draiocht Arts Centre in 2003 and at Prince of Wales Drawing Studio, London in 2001.

**Grace Ryan** is a multidisciplinary artist based in Dublin. She recently graduated with a degree in Fine Art Print from the National College of Art and Design in 2023. Since graduating she received the Black Church Print Studio graduate award, as well as featuring in the RDS Visual Arts Awards in IMMA. Her work presents itself through the mediums of expanded printmaking, sculpture and installation. Indebted to the idea of the hybrid as a vessel for transgression, her practice looks at themes of symbolism, female subjectivity, mythology, gender roles and transmutation. Throughout Grace's practice, she explores the ways in which material culture and gendered objects shape art reception and can provoke sublime or visceral experiences in viewers. Through purposeful displacement and altering of norms and aesthetics, the objects in Grace's work are seen to upset the patriarchal systems in place. Her uncanny installations, invite the viewer to reconsider the boundaries of desire and disgust, as a mode of engagement and critique with social, gendered and material histories.

Limited edition exhibition zine commissioned by  
Black Church Print Studio to accompany  
Unlimiting the Edition, curated by Ria Czerniak-LeBov

Featured images by Des Kenny, Niamh Flanagan and  
Margot Galvin







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