

*Two Invited Curators* is a new IMMA initiative that aims to bring diverse curatorial voices to our program. Coming from Dublin, Ireland and Bombay, India respectively; Kate Strain and Sumesh Sharma have very different but complementary curatorial practices.

*The Plough and other stars\** proposes some alternatives to death – space travel, time travel, reincarnation. Works by Riccardo Arena, Richard John Jones, Lara Khaldi and Yazan Khalili are brought together in the immortal domain of the museum, to explore strategies towards life extension, by artistic if not other means. The exhibition functions as both a show, for people to come and visit, and a rehearsal space for the development of a new theatrical production, in collaboration with The Centre For Dying On Stage.

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#### About the artworks:

**Richard John Jones's** work takes the form of a series of fabric hangings and a ceramic floor sculpture made of unfired clay. These new works are inspired by medieval travel journals and *Isolariii* ('island books' that first appeared around the 5th century in Europe). Jones is interested in this body of literature as a mixture of embellished real accounts of foreign lands and extravagant fictional stories. Considered as factual at the time and often heavily illustrated, these manuscripts represented an early form of mapping – the 'elsewhere' in both political and geographical terms always being used as a way of imagining and defining the idea of 'here'. For his fabric/ceramic works, which he often refers to as paintings, Jones imagines medieval monsters, islands and fictional travellers as avatars for species now becoming extinct through global warming, pollution and industrialisation. Jones enacts a queering of history by exploring how representation and story-telling act as a form of reproduction, in a time when humans are at the centre of what could be their own imminent erasure and perhaps subsequent fictionalisation.

**Riccardo Arena** presents a celestial collage based on his expansive research

project *Vavilon*. This project began four years ago, in the Solovki Islands - a remote constellation of islands in the White Sea. Arena's enquiries brought him into close contact with Russian cosmism, a philosophical movement that encourages practitioners to think beyond the limits of human possibility, and seek eternal life through science and space travel. Arena intuitively links between disparate things, moments, and energies. From the hard and ancient soil of the Solovki islands he reaches up into the celestial heights of aeronautical travel. His work as part of *The Plough and other stars* is an elaborate collage, a kind of exploded visual narrative that articulates his layered process of understanding, through the labyrinthine portrait of a voyage. Screenings of Arena's video work *Vavilon* will take place at intervals during the exhibition. Please see [www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie) for updates.

In his silent video work, **Yazan Khalili** presents a series of photographs of masks he shot at two colonial museums - the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam and the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. He juxtaposes these mug shots alongside the moving image of a live human face. Both the ancient masks and the figure on-screen are scrutinised by basic facial recognition software in-built within the artist's phone. The human tries to trick the technology with hopelessly gestures that obscure her features, in an effort to make herself undetectable. The work is an exercise on how to disappear in the digital age, under the weight of history and against the flow of time. It is also a meditation on what it means to be seen, how we apprehend whose gaze, and the effect the mechanical eye can have on our future as well as our past.

From Jones's material encounters with forgotten histories, to Arena's metaphysical enquiries; from Khaldi and Khalili's efforts to communicate with bodies who have disappeared, to the ghostly presence of the The Centre For Dying On Stage; the artworks and artists in this exhibition imaginatively explore the poetics of immortality.

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#### Programme of events:

*Love Letter to Mars*  
26 November 2016

**Lara Khaldi** and **Yazan Khalili** present a new iteration of a live lecture performance. *Love Letter to Mars* is based on an exchange of letters between two earthly lovers and their fictional friend. This character, named Wa'ad, has left the dying ecosystem of planet earth, in search of a new life on Mars. Here the letter acts as a kind of time travel, transcending the limitations of linear time in space, to become the vehicle through which the pair reflect on ideas around loss and distance, the occupation of territories, and the inherent dangers of language as a tool for colonisation. This will be presented at IMMA as part of a symposium on 26 November, please see [www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie) for updates

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#### *The Centre For Dying On Stage*

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, at irregular, unannounced intervals, artists participating in the performance project - The Centre For Dying On Stage - will assemble in the space of the exhibition to conduct meditations, workshops and rehearsals, influenced by and responding to the artworks on display. The Centre For Dying On Stage is a research body and performance project that generates new artistic undertakings, anchored to notions around death and the stage. Participants will use artworks from *The Plough and other stars* as prompts and props for thinking through strategies to overcome death, through metaphor and artifice. In this manner the exhibition will feed into and inform the development of a new play, which will act as a reincarnation of some of the ideas explored in this exhibition. The play will be presented in association with Cow House Studios, at Wexford Arts Centre, on the 12th of November 2016. The acting members of the performance project The Centre For Dying On Stage are:  
**Jessica Foley / Marjorie Potiron & Lisa Hoffmann / Steven Randall / The Artist and Himself at 29 (TAH29)**

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#### Opening Gallery Talks: Invited Curators Projects

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**Thursday 15 September, 11.30am – 12.30noon, Meeting Point, Main Reception, IMMA**

Join us for the opening of two exhibition projects, *The Plough and other Stars* curated by Kate Strain and *Historica – Republican Aesthetics* curated by Sumesh Sharma, presented concurrently in IMMA's galleries. In two short gallery talks both curators will introduce their individual exhibition ideas and the artist's they have selected to be part of their IMMA project. Conversations will continue over a coffee/tea reception afterwards.

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#### Curators Lunchtime Talk Series

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**Fri 7 October, 1.15-2pm Meeting Point, Main Reception, IMMA**

Seán Kissane, Curator Exhibitions, IMMA, introduces IMMA's new invited curators initiative with current projects by Sumesh Sharma and Kate Strain.

**Kate Strain** is Artistic Director of the Grazer Kunstverein, Austria. She also makes up one half of the paired curatorial practice RGKSKSRG. In 2016 she is curator in residence at Cow House Studios. On-going projects include The Centre for Dying On Stage, and the Department of Ultimology, Trinity College Dublin.

\* The title of the exhibition is a play on a play. It is derived from Seán O'Casey's incendiary masterpiece, *The Plough and the Stars*. Plainly speaking, the plough is a man-made mechanical instrument developed to farm agricultural land. It is also one of the names given to a grouping of seven stars in the night sky. Both O'Casey's seminal text and *The Plough and other stars* represent two worlds crashing into each other simultaneously; that of the Plough – land, living, labour – and the Stars – death, the unknown, and eternity. This exhibition explores some potential scenarios for what happens at their point of collision.

Booking is essential for all talks. For free tickets and a full programme of talks and events visit [www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie)

**Exhibition Team at IMMA:**

Sarah Glennie, Director  
Seán Kissane, Curator: Exhibitions  
Karen Sweeney, Assistant Curator: Exhibitions, Curatorial and Partnerships  
Marguerite O'Molloy, Programme Production Manager  
Jennifer Phelan, Programme Production Coordinator  
Cillian Hayes, Technical Crew Supervisor

*The Plough and other stars* is curated by Kate Strain.

For a full list of artist biographies please see [www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie)

**Front cover:**

Richard John Jones, *Strategic Assemblages (flag)*,  
in collaboration with Michael Oswell, 2014



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telephone: + 353 1 612 9900  
email: [info@imma.ie](mailto:info@imma.ie)  
[www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie)

Guthán + 353 1 612 9900  
R-phost [info@imma.ie](mailto:info@imma.ie)  
Láithreán gréasáin [www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie)

IMMA - IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
EAST WING GALLERIES  
15 SEPTEMBER - JANUARY 2017

*The Plough and other stars*  
Riccardo Arena / Richard John Jones/  
Lara Khaldi / Yazan Khalili

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE CENTRE FOR DYING ON STAGE  
AND COW HOUSE STUDIOS  
INVITED CURATOR KATE STRAIN

