

# Digital Publishing Brownbag Series

## The Tim Robinson Archive, NUI Galway

Dr Nessa Cronin, Centre for Irish Studies, NUI Galway



James Hardiman Research Building, NUI Galway  
1 November 2016.





# Tim Robinson | Person

## Biography:

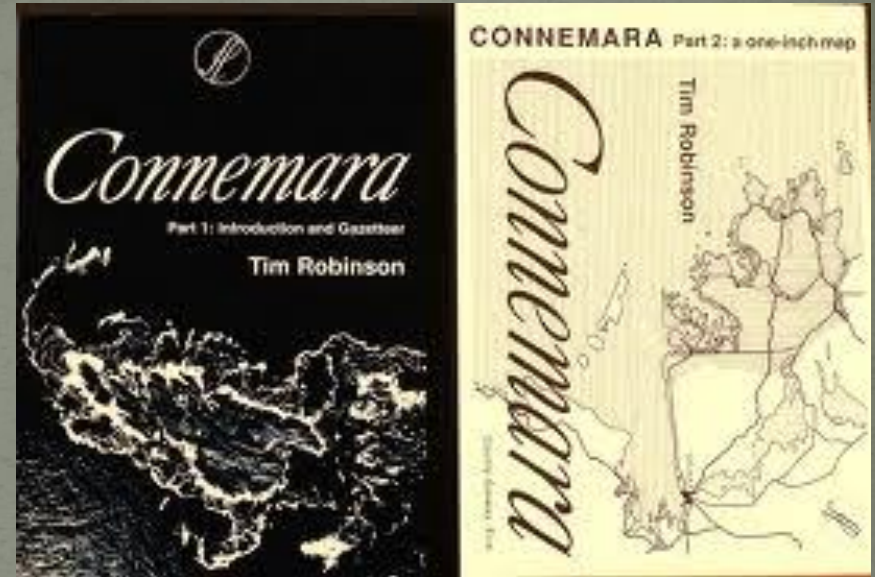
- Born in Yorkshire in 1935 and studied mathematics at Cambridge University. After a career as a visual artist in Istanbul, Vienna and London, he settled in the Aran Islands with his partner Máiréad in 1972 and began a detailed study of the landscape the West of Ireland through the lens of cartography and writing.
- The Folding Landscapes mapping project was Ireland's winning entry for the Ford European Conservation awards in 1987.
- He was elected to Aosdána in 1996, and to the Royal Irish Academy in 2011.
- He was the Parnell Visiting Fellow at Magdalen College, Cambridge in 2011.
- Visiting Artist at the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris in 2012.
- His paintings 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.
- He has won two Irish Book Awards for his writing on Ireland, and has undertaken a translation of Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* with Liam Mac An Iomaire which will be published with Yale University Press in 2015.
- 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*.

## Works on Robinson include:

- Documentary Film: *Tim Robinson: Connemara*, Directed by Pat Collins (Harvest Films, 2011)
- Essay Collection: *Unfolding Irish Landscapes: Tim Robinson, Culture and Environment*, edited by Christine Cusick and Derek Gladwin (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2015)
- Articles by scholars such as Eamon Wall, Christine Cusick, John Wylie, Karen Babine, Kelly O'Sullivan, Derek Gladwin, Gerry Kearns, John Wilson Foster, and others.



# From a geometry of place, to the 'ABC of earth wonders'...

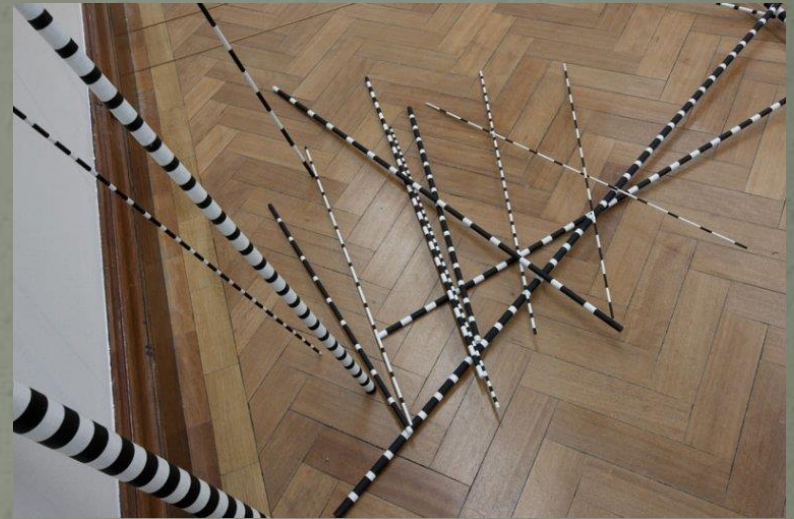




# Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 1997.

‘The question became sharp for me recently as I approached the contemplation of the body of texts and maps I would have claimed had been inspired by my encounter with the west of Ireland, because in trying to foresee what I might do next I mentally revisited that earlier time of change, unwrapped [p.10] some artworks stored away from my last year in London before the transition date of November 1972 – and discovered in them a concentrated abstract of the suite of images that has controlled my subsequent writing and is implicit in my cartography.’

- Tim Robinson, *The View From the Horizon*, pp. 9-10





# Tim Robinson | Archive

## **The Tim Robinson Archive, NUI Galway**

In 2006, the Robinson Archive was officially donated to NUI Galway as part of a generous gift to the people from the region from Tim and Máiréad Robinson. The process of depositing and cataloguing the archive commenced in July 2013 with a team of librarians and scholars, with the majority of the items being deposited in Autumn 2014.

## **Archive Contents: (Maps, Manuscripts, Placename Index Cards, 'Stuff')**

- 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



# ‘You have to have the map’

Francis Whelan, X-PO Mapping Group, Co. Clare.

- ‘Most of these writings relate to the ABC of earth wonders - Aran, the Burren, Connemara - that I have been spelling out in the maps; some go farther into holes and corners, others fly off into wider spaces’

- Tim Robinson, ‘Preface’, *Setting foot on the shores of Connemara & other writings*, 1996



- ‘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.’

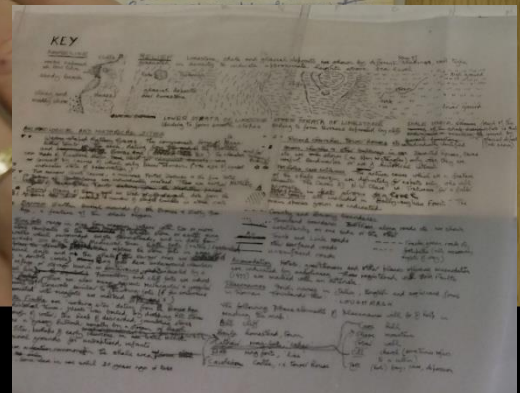
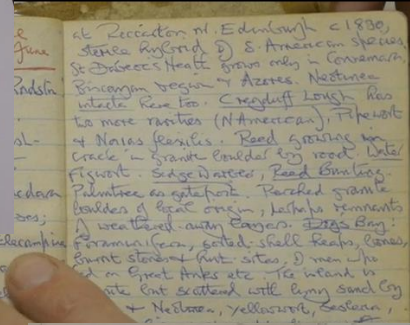
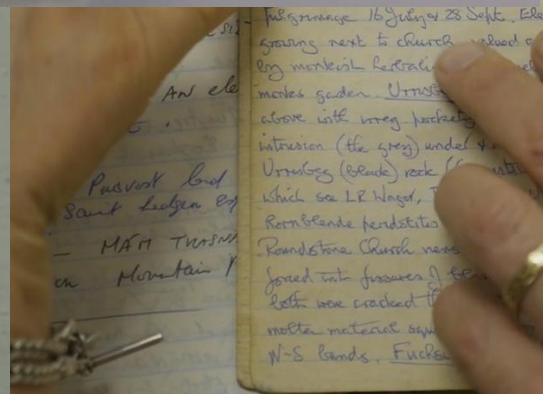
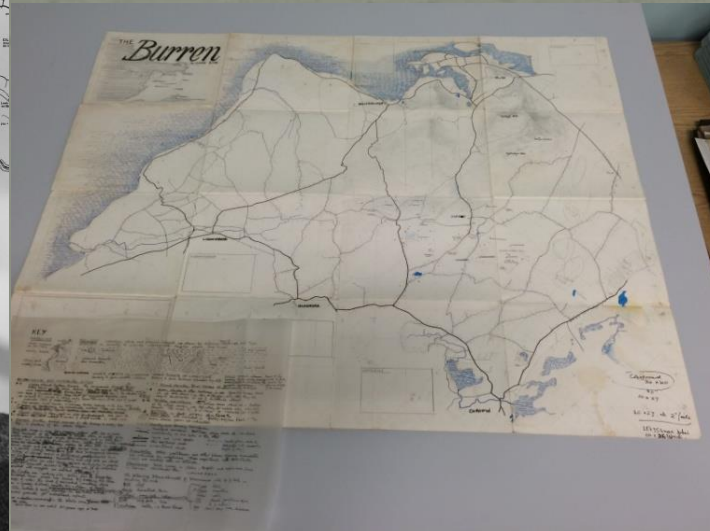
- Tim Robinson, ‘The Seanchaí and the Database’, *Irish Pages*, 2003



# IARSMA - Artists in the Archive Project

## January - June 2016, NUI Galway

Live Performance: UNISCAPE International Conference 29 June 2016



Excerpt from Burren Map,  
Tim Robinson Archive, NUI Galway





# Counter-geographies of knowledge: Maps as 'interim reports'



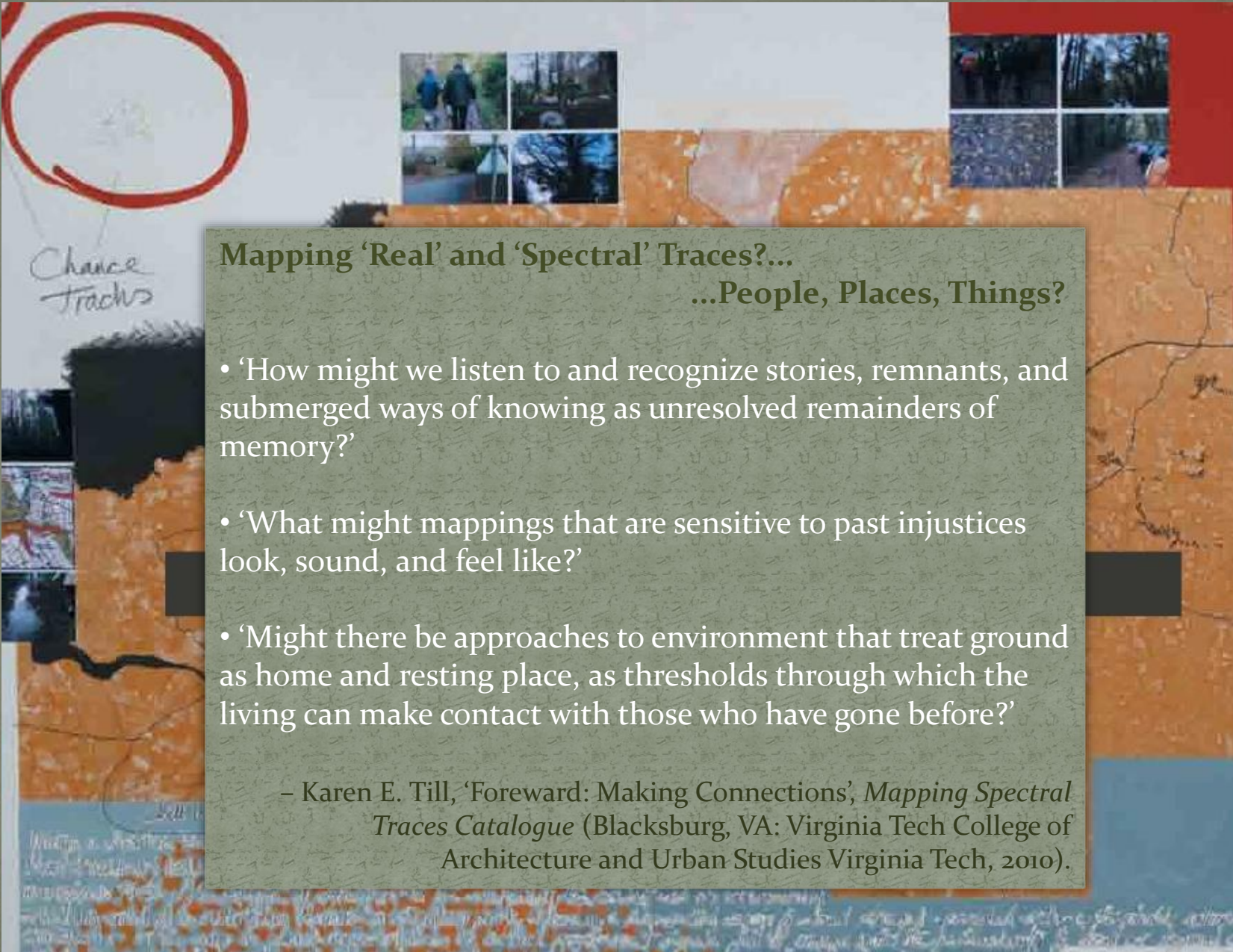
'I approached mapping as an art-form particularly suited to ordering large amounts of fact into an expressive whole.

So I came to the practice of cartography largely ignorant of its specific techniques, theories and received ideas, or to say **deeply suspicious of its technological and organizational structures that distance the drawer of the map even farther from the place to be drawn, alienating the hand from the foot.**

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.'**

– Tim Robinson, *'Interim Reports from Folding Landscapes'*, pp. 75-76





## Mapping 'Real' and 'Spectral' Traces?...

...People, Places, Things?

- 'How might we listen to and recognize stories, remnants, and submerged ways of knowing as unresolved remainders of memory?'
- 'What might mappings that are sensitive to past injustices look, sound, and feel like?'
- 'Might there 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?'

– Karen E. Till, 'Foreward: Making Connections', *Mapping Spectral Traces Catalogue* (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies Virginia Tech, 2010).



## Clifford McLucas

“There are ten things that I can say about these deep maps”

<http://cliffordmclucas.info/deep-mapping.html>

### *Deep maps are*

1. Big
2. Slow
3. Sumptuous
4. Achieved only by the articulation of different media
5. Have to have 3 basic elements: graphic, time-based, and database (open, unfinished)
6. Engagement of both insider and outsider
7. Bring together the amateur and the professional
8. Might only be possible/imaginable now
9. Deep maps are political, passionate and partisan
10. Deep maps are unstable, fragile, temporary.

...“They will be a conversation and not a statement”





# Rethinking the Radical Archive I

## – Art and Geography?



## Landing

eight collaborative projects between artists + geographers

Installation of *Landing* exhibition at the Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, 20 June to 27 July 2002.

'More widely, *Visualising Geography* posed a series of overlapping questions: What sorts of imaginative, creative and reflective practices are involved in the production of academic text and works of visual art? How do the conventional forms of academic and artistic output shape different kinds of knowledge and understanding? What is meant by collaboration and how do different models of this relationship work? What might result from the encounter between shared and distinctive approaches? What are the similarities and differences between notions of individual autonomy and achievement in the academic and artistic domains, and to what extent are they disturbed by new forms of collaboration between them? *Visualising Geography* was not about artists depicting the work of geographers, nor about geographers utilising an artist's work as source material for analysis.

We hoped for more productive and challenging exchanges, despite being to some degree sceptical or at least not absolutely assured of the ease or benefits of these relationships. This 'experiment' involved all the sensitivities of any social relationship. It brought together individuals with different sorts of expectations, interests and amounts of time. 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. Those that were halting or hesitant, that stalled or faltered, or were marked by senses of diffidence, insecurity, defensiveness, resistance or assumptions of authority are by their nature difficult to document - the collaborative enquiry rather than expose is more appropriate here. These discoveries of limits of interest, time or understanding are as significant as the meeting points across different ways of thinking and working. *Landing* reflects the varied nature and diverse dynamics of these relationships. True to the project's inter/cross-disciplinary nature and collaborative character, it sits between the conventions of research report and exhibition catalogue, between academic writing and artistic work, posing explicit questions and offering suggestive reflections.'

- Felix Driver, Catherine Nash, Kathy Prendergast

<http://www.gg.rhul.ac.uk/landing/texts/intro.html>

# Rethinking the Radical Archive II - Archiving Bodies?

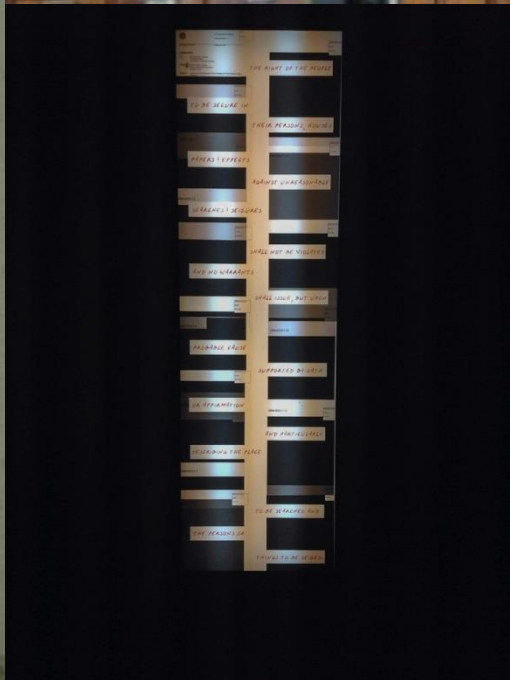
## 'Index of the Disappeared' Mariam Ghani & Chitra Ganesh

Public programs, texts, website, installations, 2013-14  
Hosted by the NYU Asian/Pacific/American Institute

'Mariam Ghani & Chitra Ganesh have collaborated on the project *Index of the Disappeared*, a radical archive of post-9/11 polices and their effects, since 2004.

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.'

'embodied/ performed archives; archive and repertory; buildings as archives; oral and informal histories; private versus public archives, and transitions between those states; warm versus cold data'



'radical archival practice: [Archives and Absence](#), or lost and counter-archives; [Archives and Affect](#), or embodied archives; [Archives and Ethics](#), or stealing from and for archives; and [Archive as Constellation](#), or archive as method, medium, and interface.'



# The Radical Archive III

## Critical Perspectives and Pathways

Radical Archives <http://www.archivejournal.net/issue/5/archives-remixed/>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with multiple tabs open. The active tab is the Archive Journal website, specifically the 'Archives Remixed' issue page. The page features a large header image of wooden filing cabinets with the text 'Archives Remixed' and 'Critical Perspectives and Pathways' overlaid. Below the header, the issue is edited by Lisa Darms and Kate Eichhorn. The main content area includes an introduction by Lisa Darms, which discusses the theme of 'Radical Archives' and the Riot Grrrl Collection. To the right, there are profiles of Lisa Darms and Kate Eichhorn, along with a list of featured articles: 'Archival Seduction: Indexical Absences and Historiographical Ghosts' by Zeb Tortorici, 'Signs Taken for Wonders' by Glenn Harcourt, and 'Art, Work, and Archives:'. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'www.archivejournal.net/issue/5/archives-remixed/'. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows various open applications and the system clock at 13:34.

Archive Journal  
Issue 5 • Fall 2015

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In this Issue 360° Archives Remixed Notes + Queries

# Archives Remixed

## Critical Perspectives and Pathways

### Radical Archives

Edited by Lisa Darms and Kate Eichhorn

**Introduction by Lisa Darms**

As an archivist working with the archives of experimental artists and collectives, and as the founder of the Riot Grrrl Collection (which documents the feminist, punk youth movement of the early 1990s), I am often asked to comment on the theme of "Radical Archives." I always wonder: What does radical mean in this context? Usually, radical refers to extreme political or social change. In the United States, it's primarily synonymous with the Left, but in fact could refer to any extreme break with tradition or the mainstream. A radical is generally thought of as a revolutionary, someone willing to take extreme or even violent action to effect social change.

What, then, are the radical archives under discussion here? Does radical refer to the content of archives? To the activities of the archives' creators, and the actions documented by archives? To the formats and genres being collected? Or can radical refer to extreme or activist practices in the archivist's basic tasks of acquisition, arrangement, description, preservation, and access?

One can just as easily ask (as we did in our [CFP](#) for this issue), what are archives? This query is not as straightforward as it first seems. "The Archive" is a subject that theorists have been mining deeply for decades; but this theoretical archive has tended toward the abstract, seldom engaging with actual archival materials, and even more rarely with actual archivists. As co-editors of this issue, Kate and I felt that a radical approach to discussing radical archives might begin

**Lisa Darms**  
Senior Archivist, Fales Library & Special Collections – NYU

**Kate Eichhorn**  
Assistant Professor of Culture and Media Studies – The New School

**Archival Seduction: Indexical Absences and Historiographical Ghosts**  
Zeb Tortorici

**Signs Taken for Wonders**  
Glenn Harcourt

**Art, Work, and Archives:**

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Robinson's personal placenames index-card cabinet.  
Film still, *Iarsma: Fragments from an Archive*, ©2016.

## The Radical Archive IV The Living Archive?

### The Performing Landscapes Collective

*Iarsma: Fragments from an Archive*, is the Artists in the Archive project initiated by Nessa Cronin in 2015 where a group of artists were commissioned to jointly work in collaboration on the theme of landscape in relation to the Tim Robinson Archive at NUI Galway.

Choreographer Ríonach Ní Néill, composer and musician Tim Collins, and visual artist Deirdre O'Mahony worked with Nessa over a six month period to form the *Performing Landscapes Collective* which seeks to explore and investigate new ways in which studies of the Irish landscape could be encountered, envisaged and re-imagined through various disciplinary lenses and arts practices.

The film was directed and produced by **Deirdre O'Mahony** on location in the Robinson Archive, the Burren and Connemara.

The 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's** recorded and live movement segments, 'Bird in the Archive', 'Léarscáil an Cheathrú Rua', and 'my foot is my pen' utilise contemporary dance environmental research and embodied mapping practices.



'Bird in the Archive', Ríonach Ní Néill.  
Film still, *Iarsma: Fragments from an Archive*, ©2016.

<https://vimeo.com/177667932/775452859b>



# Person (Tim Robinson) Place (Scale?- Sir Donat's Road) Performance (The Archive)

"Sir Donat O'Brien of Lemaneagh looms large in the popular memory. He made the old straggling lane-way, traceable in fragments sometimes a mile apart, from Lemaneagh over Roughan hill and north-eastward through the barony of Inchiquin, and it is known as 'Sir Donat's road.' He bought Moghane Hill near his property at Dromoland for threescore cows and twenty bullocks. His mother, Maureen Rhue, apprenticed him to a London goldsmith. When the later Civil War broke out, Sir Donat and his (apparently elder) brother, Teigie O'Brien, doubted sorely which side to support. At last Donat suggested that the brothers should take opposite sides, so that, whichever won, the family would have a friend at Court."



"Cromwell (who was never nearer to Clare than the extreme southern border of County Limerick, fifty miles away) is said to have marched to attack Limerick along 'Crummil's Road,'—not the road so named on the Ordnance Survey maps, but an old hollow lane, evidently of great antiquity, a little above it and on the top of the long ridge from Ardnataggle House to Ahareinagh Castle, to the west of Clonlara and to the north-east of Limerick City. He is reputed to have destroyed most of the ruined castles in south-east Clare, and to have knocked down Kilnaboy round tower with his guns. His men cut down the trees and killed the deer in the Deer Park of Lemaneagh. General Irayton (Ireton) was remembered for many acts of cruelty and violence in eastern Clare. Cromwell, or 'an army of Cromwell,' attacked the very curious stone fort called 'the Doon' at Ballydonohan between Bodyke and Broadford; the army destroyed it, and went on to Galway by way of Scariff, and a sword was found there (Ballydonohan).

County Clare Folk-Tales and Myths by  
Thomas Johnson Westropp.

[http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/folklore/folk\\_tales/chapter10.htm](http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/folklore/folk_tales/chapter10.htm)

I believe I gave offence locally by saying that Cromwell had never been in Clare."



## Performing the Archive? – some reflections

### Archive: ‘Traditional’/ ‘Radical’?

1. Archive as Fragment (‘iarsma’)
2. Archive as Provocation
3. Alternative modes of knowledge making, formation and dissemination
4. How *fields* of enquiry (disciplines) shift to *modes* of enquiry (practices/methods)
5. Folding landscapes – unfolding the archive...

### Person: ‘Tim Robinson’ (artist, cartographer, writer, ‘figure/persona’?)

1. Person: Life as ‘fragment’ (practice, or in entirety?)
2. Geography: Choreography of place
3. History: ‘postcolonial reparation’ (Robinson in interview with Brian Dillon)
4. Teanga: language as ‘worlding’ the world (G. Spivak, 1985) (Irish/English; embodied/remembered/invented; oral/aural; visual/textual/sonic; etc)

### Critical Perspectives and Pathways...

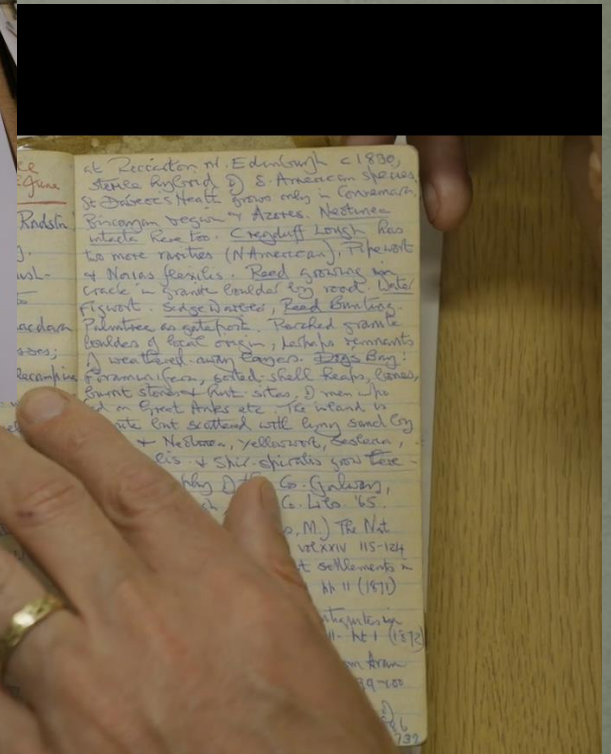
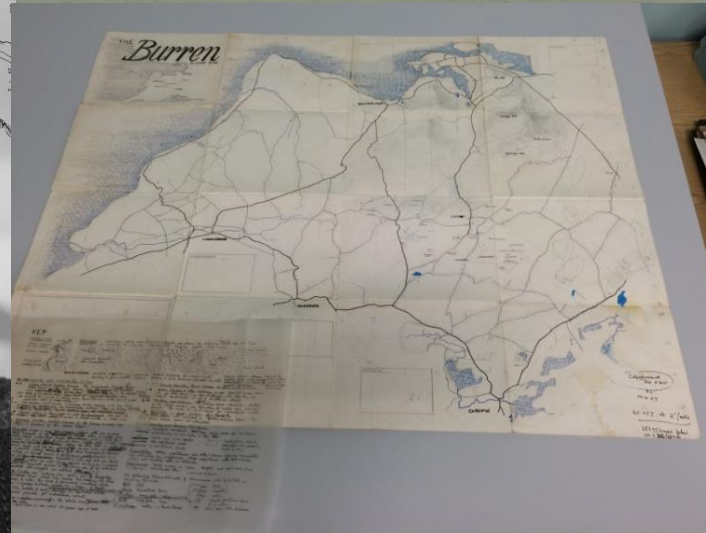
1. Creative Geographies
2. Deep Mappings
3. Radical Archives
4. Transdisciplinary Research Practices – agency and activation, reflective and *reflexive* practices
5. Creating and *creative* audiences? – (warming the corpse in the archive?)
6. Public Geographies: Socially engaged, and socially *responsive* research



# IARSMA - Artists in the Archive Project

## January - June 2016, NUI Galway

IARSMA - remainder | remnant | relics | mark | remains | after-effect | progeny | trace



Excerpt from Burren Map,  
Tim Robinson Archive, NUI Galway

