

U2 Dialogue

Reflecting upon my discussion with Franca López Barbera, I felt the bulk of our dialogue provided little impetus for my work moving forward. Responding to my output from Unit 2, Franca suggested that I focus further on rendering visible the underlying structures of the internet. With this in mind, she referenced Maddie Rose Hills and Victor Hwang's sustainably-designed website *Mater.com*. I found this reference to be interesting but perhaps beyond my practice as someone without a background, or much interest, in coding. Overall, I felt our discussion didn't go into depth and skirted around the themes of tradition, ceremony, and identity that were present in my work. I was disappointed in this, as I felt these aspects to be more in tune with my interests and skill set.

This being said, Franca did question the use of the word vernacular in the field of research surrounding digital death practices. She referred me to an article titled *A Rejection of the Term Vernacular* by Javier Syquia. The piece highlights the colonial implications inherent in the term, contextualising this within the realm of Filipino

design. The writer quotes Clara Balaguer, explaining the concept of cultural cringe whereby “*the culture produced in an ex-colonial or colonial country is seen as inferior to that being produced in the colonial seat*”. The result being a local community that underappreciates its own culture until “*an excolonial power [...] places value on the very thing*”. (2021)

I had been reading about Irish design and found this concept elucidating to my own national context. Ireland’s case differs from that of the Philippines due to the country’s whiteness and proximity, both culturally and geographically, to the centres of Western, Anglophone power. Nevertheless the nation historically genuflects to the superiority of outsiders. This has taken diverse forms from unquestioned obedience to the papacy to an exploitation of the ties with our American cousins. All conducted via the guise of the cute (here meaning something close to crafty) but unthreatening and intellectually unequal Paddy. The exploitation of Irish tax laws by multinational corporations is permitted to exist due to this post-colonial self-doubt (as well as the real-politik of existing as a small island nation that must take its wins where available). Indeed

the founding of the Kilkenny Design Workshops in 1963 reflects a similar pattern. With a mandate to elevate Irish design internationally, the workshops were established upon a basis of imported Scandinavian knowledge to create products to sell to the American market.

In recent years, this trajectory seems to be somewhat changing, thanks to a generation of creative talent who came of age during the successful abortion rights and marriage equality campaigns. Designers and collectives such as Oscar Torrens and Ecliptic of Culture often play with imagery taken from Irish pre-Christian sources. Type designers such as Liam Morrow are creating unical-style scripts that can be used outside the context of Irish themed bars in Sydney or New York. All-in-all there seems to be a gathering appreciation for the visual culture of home that is informed by, but doesn't necessarily pander to, the outside world. A phenomenon perhaps born of disgust towards the country's housing crisis - one of the many results of such pandering. One that is nevertheless hotly contested, and at times described in terms of

internalised commodification. (The Ecliptic Newsletter, 2022)

This reading coincided with some of my own previous work both within and in parallel to my output on MAGCD. At the end of year, I was creating collages for screen print; gathering megalithic forms with excerpts from medical texts. Interestingly, after re-downloading instagram in order to re-engage with the above mentioned artists for my research; I discovered that they and many others have been using megalithic forms in their work - a strangely specific coincidence that (surely) has to indicate something in the water.

I also experimented in dialogue using the Irish language which, due to my (and many others) poor understanding of it, often exists as an inscrutable symbol for a form of Irishness. A form that reflects a chip upon the shoulder for many who cannot attain it.

Moving forward, I am exploring how cultural artefacts can be repurposed and recontextualised to new ends. As part of Unit 1, I worked on rendering 3D models of Silé na Gigs with an idea to print these as wayfinding makers for a city-wide tour. I recontacted Enid

Conway, the editor of the Irish feminist publishing collective Bloomers with a view to instigating this project. We spoke about celebrating traditional Irish cultural artefacts for their own value and how the Silé na Gig has taken on a new significance tied to Irish feminism. She felt Cork city could be a great choice for such a project, as it is usually Dublin which gets all of the country's attention. We agreed to reconvene in October once her schedule frees up, with a view towards contacting the Ecliptic of Culture instead should this not work out.

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