



Museum Roscommon

## Now You're Connected to the Past: Echoes in Clay and Light

A poetic reflection on art, myth, and the Irish landscape

**2024**

I am staying at the artist-in-residence location Polranny Pirates—a place wrapped in the magic of ancient tales and rugged nature, the perfect base for my projects. The journey began on the ferry from Cherbourg to Rosslare. With my old Dacia Logan, I travelled along back roads through the French countryside toward Cherbourg. As soon as I crossed the French border, a sense of freedom washed over me. The warm, gentle weather calmed me, and my thoughts drifted to the summers with Renée.

To avoid rushing, I spent a night in a chambre d'hôtes near Rouen, where I heard the distant call of an owl. The next day, well ahead of schedule, I arrived in Cherbourg after exploring the country's windy lanes. The sea was calm. A few hours later, I sat on the ferry deck as we left the harbour and the sun slowly sank below the horizon. The gentle sway of the North Sea rocked me, and I wondered what this journey might bring. The journey ahead would surpass my boldest expectations.

The following afternoon, we made landfall. Again, I drove alone along country roads—my goal was to cut diagonally across to Achill Island. After two stops, I reached my accommodation around six in the evening. The morning had already begun magically, with a prayer spoken by the host of my B&B. I had booked online through a well-known company, yet nowhere had it mentioned that I would be staying with a Jehovah's Witness family. As it turned out, a whole Belgian enclave of Jehovah's Witnesses lived in central Ireland.

Later that day, I visited the Gregg Dolmen. This Neolithic tomb stands on a hill, surrounded by green fields and brown bulls. It felt like a timeless occurrence. The massive boulders lay seemingly undisturbed, arranged as if for ritual.



The fleeting nature of our earthly existence dissolved at the sight of the dolmen. Here, amid green fields and brown bulls, I felt a deep resonance with the invisible forces that shaped the earth. It was an awareness of value, of meaning, and an ancient love that seemed to flow through everything. The impermanence of life awakens in me a longing for the tangibility of the old—knowing that invisible energies are at work, forces that play with us, as fate reins in its whims, and allowing love to flow.

My next destination was the small museum in Roscommon. It was the stone itself, earlier that afternoon in a display case, that had caught my attention. Lost in thought, I unexpectedly struck up a conversation with Marian, the curator. Her infectious passion for history soon sparked a lively exchange about prehistoric cultures and mythical tales. I asked her about her personal connection to the landscape, the world of the Druids, and her favourite finds in the collection.

“Now you are connected with the past,” she said, after retrieving a stone axe head from the case. Suddenly, she began searching for the tiny key. She asked if I wanted to hold the stone—something she had never before done for a visitor. Several drawers were opened, and it took her a while to find the little key to the wooden sliding cabinet. The stone—dark, smooth, anthracite-coloured—had been found on the shores of Lough Funsinagh, a seasonal lake. Her eyes glowed with a quiet determination. She seemed surprised by herself.

That same evening, I arrived at The Folly. To my surprise, Peti, one of the ‘pirates’, was still there. She looked at me in astonishment. “You dare,” she said, “after what happened to that house two years ago.” I smiled. I felt a strong inner urge to return to this place. The magic of this land had touched me, and the thought of this journey had captivated me for a long time. It felt as if fate had led me here, and I was welcomed on a deeper level.

Soon, Peti drew me into her stories of the region. She spoke of rugged, little-known northern coastlines, and of the seasonal lakes on Clare Island—sometimes there are thirteen, sometimes eleven, depending on how many have dried up. They are also called the black lakes, named after their peat-covered bottoms.

We spoke of the landscape, which seemed steeped in magic. Of ancient rituals from before the Christian festivals, when people still lived in tune with the rhythms of the planets and the seasons.

Peti told me about Brigid—the bee-fairy, the druidess—a figure who also plays a role in my projects, as a symbol of healing and interconnectedness.

We drank coffee. Peti promised to return in a week. Then she would take me to a writers’ event on the island.

I stoked the stove high with turf, coal, and wood piled beside the house. From the kitchen, I saw the old ash tree. It felt familiar to be here again.

Before sunset, I wandered through the wild garden, toward the bog where tufts of white cotton grass waved to me. Beyond lay the ocean bay, flanked to the left by the mountain of Achill Island. When I returned, the room was warm and comforting.



I let the wonder of the day pass through me. I thought of the stone I held and looked at my phone—at the photo Marian took of me and the stone.



Sculpture *Eenling*

Material: Ash wood. Circumference (middle): 150 cm. Diameter: 47.5 cm. Length: 90 cm.

With stones like this, clearings were once made in primeval forests. It is estimated to be eight to fifteen thousand years old. Lough Funsinagh means “lake of the ash tree.” It makes me think of my sculpture 'Eenling', carved from ash wood.

The stove burns. Surrounded by clouds, summer feels far away.

Later, my thoughts return home. To Toto, my cat, who sometimes sleeps atop 'Eenling', the ovoid figure of ash wood, as if he stands guard there, softly dreaming beneath the rhythm of another time.

A few hours later, I go to bed. I leave the light on for a while. My gaze wanders over the books displayed on the shelf—Arabic, English, and Dutch. The branches of the oak tree gently tap against the large window beside my bed.





Inishkea

What follows unfolds in another layer of reality.

In the silence of the night, a journey begins—not only through time and space, but also through inner landscapes, memories, and cosmic imagery. Dream and reality begin to merge.

The flint becomes a guide, the landscape a portal, and my sculpture and island projects evolve into living symbols.

What I experience in the darkness of night forms the heart of the three magical-realist chapters 'Now You're Connected to the Past'—which dissolve the boundaries between reality and myth, and with which I conclude my autobiography.

Here begins the vision. The call of the stone.

This is accompanied by the short film 'In Search of a Hidden Now': a film-poem as the closing piece of this autobiography. The footage was shot on Inishkea, a deserted island I reached by boat. With Sean Lavelle at the helm, we felt the force of the Atlantic Ocean. The wind, the shifting light, even the seagulls that attacked me, all emphasised how alive and dynamic this landscape is, steeped in its megalithic past.

On our return, we were accompanied by a playful pod of dolphins, their graceful leaps offering us an unforgettable farewell. With my camera, I captured the raw beauty—an ode to timelessness.

### **Nephin Secret Cave**

An unforgettable experience.

We had arranged to meet at Shramore Church, where a sign bore the words: Mary – Mother of the Universe. Michael didn't come alone—he brought Molly, a woman with a background in wildlife ecology, once called "Little Grandmother" by a tribal elder in Montana.



On the way, Michael sang like a boy set free into the mountains. He spoke with fire about the vegetation—mosses, plants, and how each found its place within the greater whole. The path demanded attentiveness—boggy ground, hidden holes, and stones. But the views... they were breathtaking. Only nature, no trace of the Western world.

After more than two hours of climbing, followed by half an hour of scrambling over steep rocks, I asked repeatedly:

“How much further, Michael?”—like a child struggling to keep up with her parents.

He always replied with a smile and a joke.

My legs held up bravely, but my heart was pounding.

We reached a large boulder with a narrow opening. Flat on our bellies, pushing with our left leg, slowly sliding down—into a hidden chamber of darkness. My headlamp, Michael’s torch, and Molly’s iPhone lit the space.

What I felt there is beyond words. In that silent, shadowed depth, the abstract notion of unity became suddenly tangible. The dampness of the stone, the scent of earth, the silence that seemed to swallow all sound—it was as though time itself stood still, and I became part of something far greater.

Michael spoke of his first discovery of this place, guided by years of wandering through the landscape—and finally by a fox. His father had taught him to listen to the language of the mountains, the animals, the trees.

In the cave lay the skeletal remains of twelve people, dating from 5600 to 4400 years ago—family members, buried without clothing. Surrounding the bodies was white marble, placed to neutralise odours and protect the dead. After a year, the larger bones were relocated; skulls were cracked, allowing the soul to continue its journey.

Charcoal was also found—approximately 8000 years old the bones have since been transferred to the National Museum of Ireland—too fragile to be displayed. I was allowed to film only briefly.

[The Magical Discovery of Michaël Chambers in Nephin Mountain- SD 480p Duration: 5:11 min.](#)

### **Twice I let myself be enchanted by Cathedral Rock.**

At the foot of the Minaun Cliffs, where the ocean sighs against the land, I discovered a natural cathedral of stone — a place where time is not measured in days, but in layers.

I stood there alone, surrounded by walls that opened like books, revealing their geological stories.

I took seven photographs — seven silent witnesses of what has unfolded deep beneath our feet.

The rocks revealed themselves in hues reminiscent of faded frescoes: ochre, rust, slate-grey, deep purple — a palette of minerals shaped by heat, pressure, and centuries of erosion.

In some layers, I saw traces of movement, of folds and fractures that seemed to breathe; as if the earth itself had once trembled with an inner storm.







These rocks belong to the Dalradian complex — ancient, born in a time when Ireland was still part of another continent.

Under the pressure of the Caledonian orogeny, sand, clay and mud were transformed into slate, schist and quartzite.

What I saw there was not merely a landscape, but an archive of transformation.

What struck me was how alive it felt — as if I were gazing into an old skin where life still shimmered beneath the surface.

Perhaps it was the salty air, or the whispering wind between the cliffs, but I felt embraced by a larger, geological rhythm.

And as I watched, my thoughts drifted to the stones in the lakes of central Ireland—smooth, polished fragments resting in clear water, lying still among aquatic plants and shadows. They too were shaped by time and current, carried by glaciers, cradled by water.

It is possible that a stone from this cliff once made its journey inland—a silent remembrance of sea and depth.

These seven photographs are not mere illustrations, but openings—windows through which one might listen to the voice of the earth. In every vein, every gradient of colour, lives an echo of what once was.

And perhaps also: a whisper of what is yet to come.



Drumlins, Clew Bay



The day before my departure from “Villa Kakelbont,” I boarded the boat of Mary Gavin. At dawn we set off, shortly after a ring in the engine block had been replaced. The swell and the overcast skies were not ideal for filming with my GH6 photo-film camera. Still, I managed to capture some of the drumlins.

We sailed toward the island once purchased by John Lennon and Yoko Ono—a place where they briefly lived out a shared idyll, together with a small community. Along the way, a drumlin known as the “seal-drumlin” drew much attention: like a resting figure, it rose from the water—a sentinel between dream and reality.

Everything felt like a puzzle slowly coming together, guided by unseen forces. This journey was not merely a physical one, but an inner pilgrimage—a profound connection with the stories of the past and the energies that shape us. Along Ireland’s rugged coasts and in the hidden depths of Nephin Mountain, new layers of meaning were revealed.

My time in Polranny—the confrontation with the landscape, the ancient stones, and the stories of the Druids—enriched not only my work but also my way of seeing. This journey became a bridge between personal experience and my artistic calling: to give new form to our connection with nature and the past. An ending, and a new beginning...

A visit to the Hill of Tara, Knowth, and Newgrange marked the closing of this journey.

## 2025

In the hidden chambers of Newgrange, a new adventure begins, where I hope to learn more about the Tuatha Dé Danann, guided by author and researcher Anthony Murphy. This essay forms a tangible layer within my ongoing art project '**A Swarm of Drumlins: The Power of the Gold of the Earth, Islands of Honey & Clay**'. The project is a poetic, ecological, and spiritual exploration of drumlins—hill-shaped, glacier-formed landscapes—and their resonance as symbols of time, memory, and transformation.

Drumlins are seen as "islands of clay," shaped by earth and movement—just as we are. In this work, geology, myth, and bee-wisdom converge. I sculpted 366 small islands of clay, each covered with a thin layer of beeswax.

One extra island—for the leap day—marks the Celtic belief that in such years, the veil between worlds is thinner. Together, these islands form a swarm: a swarm of time, consciousness, and remembrance. The sculptures together form an archipelago of connectedness in the making. Each small island—shaped from clay and cloaked in a mantle of beeswax—carries the echo of a place, a thought, a dream. Just as droplets of wax hold light within them, so these islands preserve the memory of earth and time.





A swarm of drumlins is a swarm of life — slow, still, carried by earth and enlivened by the golden light of the bee.

Perhaps I will film the installation at low tide, in the briny clay of the broken dike—at that threshold where stone meets soil and the bees retreat to their hive, while the evening sun gently paints the land. They speak of the cycle of the seasons, the breath of the elements, and the quiet interplay between human, nature, and cosmos.

In June, I will return to “my” beloved pirate’s nest—a place that always invites me to deepen and to become still. During this stay, I hope to complete the final two chapters of my autobiography. Once finished, it will consist of 33 chapters, accompanied by one mid-length and several short poetic films, poetry, and photography. I also hope to capture new footage of whatever arises along the way—in the landscape, in the light, in the unexpected.

After completing this work, I will seek a publisher or literary agent to offer this life’s work a worthy vessel. It has become an organically grown creation—a confluence of life, art, and reflection. And I look forward to once again being held by the silence, the ruggedness, and the hospitality of Polranny. A place that feels like a gateway between worlds.





May, 2025

Ingrid van de Linde

