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## A Site of Change: The Masterplan

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3 October 2016 18.00–20.30

Light House Cinema



# THE MAKING OF THE MASTERPLAN

A screening of a documentary film to celebrate leading contemporary artists engaging with young people

## ART SCHOOL

### Special thanks to:

Fourth, fifth and sixth class students of  
Dublin 7 Educate Together National School  
(school year 2015–2016)

### Also many thanks to:

Patrica Clerkin, Jenny Haughton, Brian Fay,  
Niamh Ní Chlochartaigh, Fiona Hyland,  
Eoin Vaughan, Ruth Fitzgerald, Paul Bermingham,  
Mary Beadle, Amy Dunican, Catherine Lovely,  
John Lovely and the Light House Cinema

The Masterplan is a community-based arts initiative that took place during May–June 2016 and represents a new partnership between curator Jennie Guy (Art School), artists John Beattie and Ella de Búrca, and Dublin 7 Educate Together National School. The school has been temporarily located in Grangegorman Lower, and will be relocated on the new site as part of the Grangegorman redevelopment. This transition is articulated as the theme of this project.

The project's ambition is to provide students with access to a deeper connection to the way that the city is changing around them. By the nature of this partnership between

the artists and the school, the project is firmly rooted and connected within the local community, the strength of the partnerships aids the legacy of the project. An underlying premise of the work is the belief that if you place artists as active researchers in a learning environment that the students quickly become inventive and creative learners.

The Masterplan was commissioned within '...the lives we live', the Grangegorman Public Art Programme. The pathway that the project was commissioned within centres on community-based projects and events and aims to increase local participation and engagement with life through the arts.

## A Site of Change: The Masterplan

When I was in fifth class, we had a visit from a poet. He, for it was a he, stayed with us for an entire morning. He read some of his work and spoke to us about how he made a poem. He explained what prompted this act for him, what it was like to read his work in public, and what it was to be a poet. His clarity, enthusiasm and way of thinking intoxicated us. We were transfixed. He was in our classroom, but he wasn't our teacher, we were learning from him, but not in a way we knew before. There were no specific outcomes, and something new emerged for us – how an artist might engage with the world. This encounter, brief as it was, was on reflection a site of change.

Change is an arc of transition from past, present to future. While in this instance I recall a memory from my time in primary school, we must acknowledge that school is a temporally rich site. It builds on knowledge that has gone before, its daily timetables and schedules frame our present, and it must also be future orientated, creating an environment that prepares students for the future. Using the moment of the Dublin 7 Educate Together National Schools own transition and change to a new site The Masterplan creatively and directly poses three important temporal questions; What is school for? What was school for? And What will school be for?

What makes this collaborative community-based project so compelling is its creative weaving of these stages through the mediation of curator Jennie Guy, the engagement of artists Ella de Búrca and John Beattie, and importantly the commitment of the teachers and pupils from Fourth, Fifth and Sixth

classes. Guy's curatorial ethos, to provide a platform for schools to meet artists and for artists to meet schools in an unmediated encounter is special. The governing principle here is that the artist does not have to go outside of their practice and 'become a teacher'. Instead they provide a sustained exposure to contemporary art practices and theories for the pupils, presenting modes of performance work both non-verbal and choral, creating temporary sculptural works, writing and scripting works for film. The Masterplan provides a collaborative and dialogical space for the pupils to forge their own voices.

One Dictionary definition of a Masterplan is 'an organized set of decisions made by one person or a team of people about how to do something in the future'. This succinctly describes the future orientated nature of participants on The Masterplan. As Jennie Guy in her extensive work with Schools has observed 'The gestures we make now make a difference', and the works and gestures that comes from The Masterplan will make a difference in how we frame change and how we can employ new languages in the future.

While The Masterplan will produce many outcomes and artefacts perhaps the real legacy is in the new thinking it will produce for all the participants and for the new ecology of Grangegorman itself. It certainly will provoke excitement, enthusiasm, action and in time to come further reflection. Similar perhaps to the reflection of the impact one poet, Brendan Kennelly, had on a classroom a long time ago.

**Brian Fay, Artist and Head of Fine Art,  
DIT Grangegorman.**