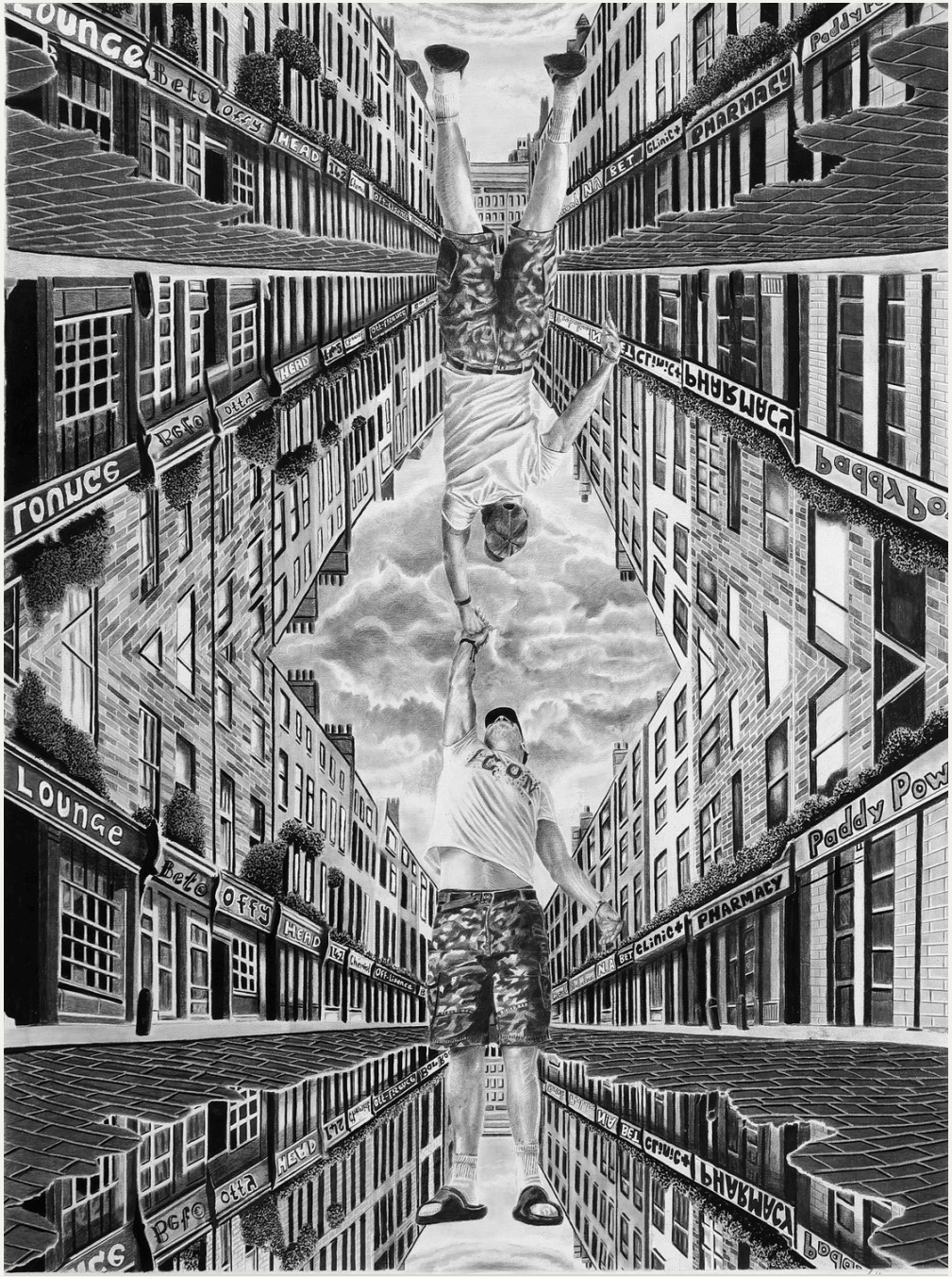
PORTFOLIO · 2026

Thomas Hendy

Graphite drawings

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BIOGRAPHY

About the artist

Thomas Hendy (b. 1982, Bray, Ireland) is a self-taught artist based in Kells, Co. Meath, whose large allegorical drawings in graphite stage the institutions of everyday life, from the courtroom to the workplace, as surreal scenes rendered in close detail. Each one casts the viewer as a participant rather than a witness.

Writing comes before every image, shaped by reading that runs from David Graeber and Eduardo Galeano to Ursula K. Le Guin, while among visual artists he looks to Laurie Lipton and M. C. Escher.

Until he turned professional in 2024, he spent twenty-five years in and out of addiction, homelessness and prison, where he made portraits for the men serving time beside him.

In 2025 the Dublin Painting and Sketching Club gave him its Open Submission Award for Billy's Words. A year later Spike Island hosted Liberated Paradox, his solo exhibition in its former Punishment Block. That autumn he showed in Time Well Spent at Rua Red, joining its closing panel on arts education in custody, ahead of his debut at Art Source, RDS.

The Irish Times and the Meath Chronicle have both written about his work, which is held in private collections in Ireland and the United States. Freedom's Paradox, supported by Meath County Council Arts Office and Creative Ireland, opens at Toradh Gallery, Kells, in February 2027 before touring to Strule Arts Centre, Omagh. He is a professional member of Visual Artists Ireland.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Statement

Every piece begins as writing. I work a subject through on paper and read it back, waiting for the moment a single image settles in the mind's eye. Language can carry me to the edge of an idea, but it is graphite that takes me across.

On one sheet, Justice weighs wealth against the dirt of those without means, in a gilded hall where verdicts are not reached but auctioned. Was she ever blind, or only indifferent? On another, a man at a desk in the middle of a desert spoons sand back into an hourglass, spending the sharpest hours of his existence making another's vision real. Neither scene could exist, yet each is drawn with enough conviction to be believed. The argument lives in that tension.

The surfaces come slowly, built in layer after layer of tone that I lift, rework and refine until the page is close to black, holding only a few highlights.

My sources lie mostly in books, in economic history, anthropology, psychology and speculative fiction. I have watched power operate from inside the system and from outside it; reading gave me the words for what I had already lived.

Each work is made to be stepped into rather than decoded, so that whoever stands before it is already inside the story, holding the scales, paying the price or being told it was a free choice.

Which one are you?



01 / 14

Theatre

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
70 × 50 cm (framed 94 × 69 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series

What if justice was never blind, only indifferent? The poor are welcomed into gilded halls of carved stone, the most lavish room they will ever occupy. Verdicts are not reached but auctioned, the gavel striking for the highest bidder. The architects of a nation's collapse profited from the rubble yet were never called to stand beneath these ceilings. Was the grandeur built to inspire awe, or to remind those without means exactly where they stand? Perhaps justice is the most elegant theatre power ever staged, convincing the dispossessed that the cage was built for their protection.



02 / 14

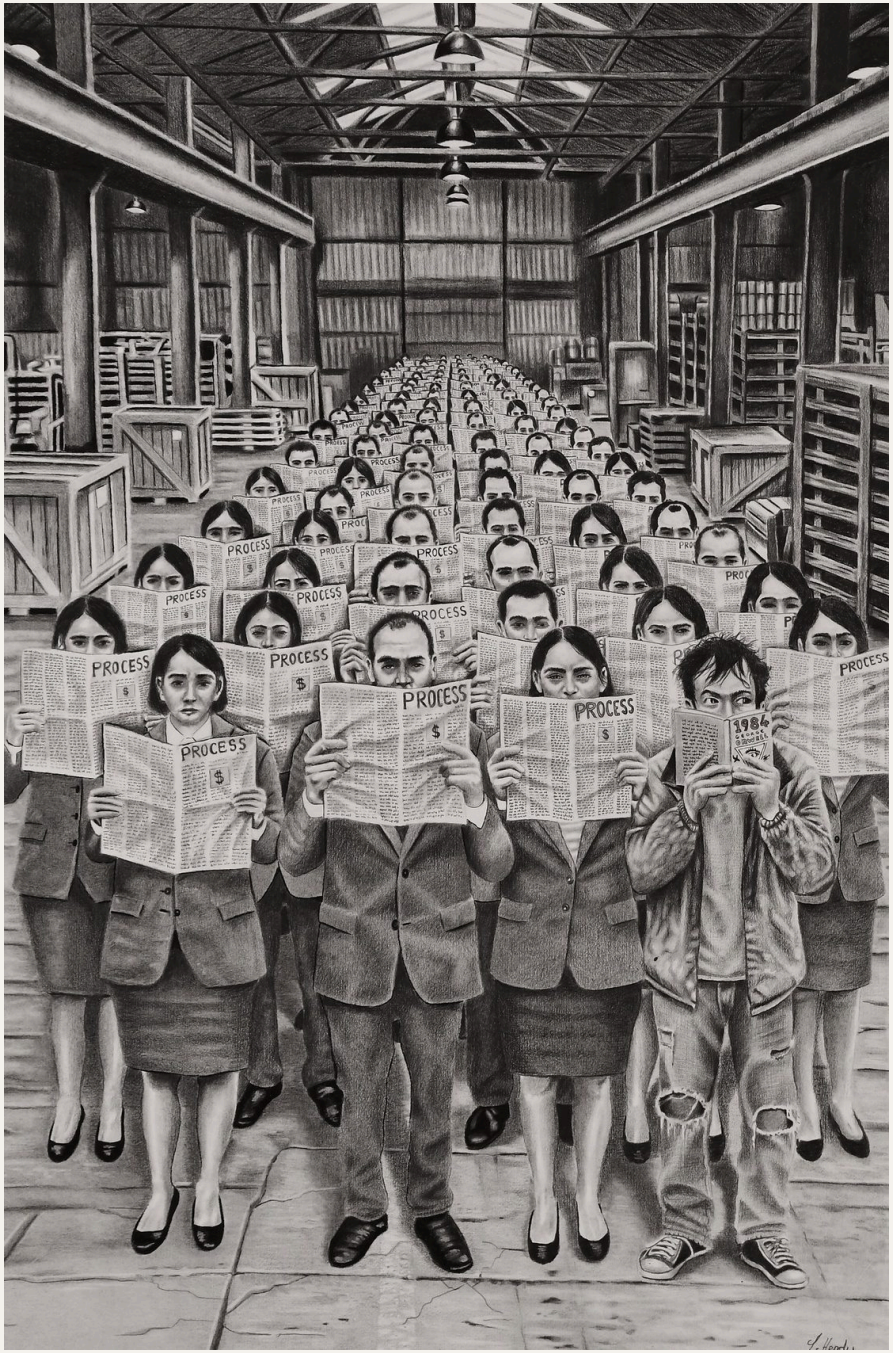
Watergate

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
80 × 60 cm (framed 100 × 80 cm)
Water series

Shared implies a fair hand extended to all. I ask between whom. Water is the resource every one of us is made from, still withheld from the people sitting closest to its source.

The figure with a fishbowl for a head runs blind across land his own extraction has bled dry, water spilling with every stride. He is every executive who signs the deal. He is never made to look down.

“I didn’t know” was never true. It was just convenient.



03 / 14

The Process

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
75 × 50 cm (framed 96 × 71 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series

We never agreed to become the product. And yet here we are.

The system doesn't just demand obedience. It manufactures it.

What remains of us when the process is complete?



04 / 14

Release Date

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
75 × 50 cm (framed 96 × 71 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series

What does it mean to be released into a freedom that was never waiting for you? The gate opens. Years of compressed anticipation erupt into a world that did not pause while you were gone. They call it gate fever. Is payday any different? The moment arrives. Liberation turns out to be arithmetic. Which bill can wait. Which call can be avoided. How long before the ground gives way. The vultures were always circling, waiting not for your failure but for its inevitability. Is freedom ever given, or only repackaged, handed back just generous enough to stop you noticing it was never yours?

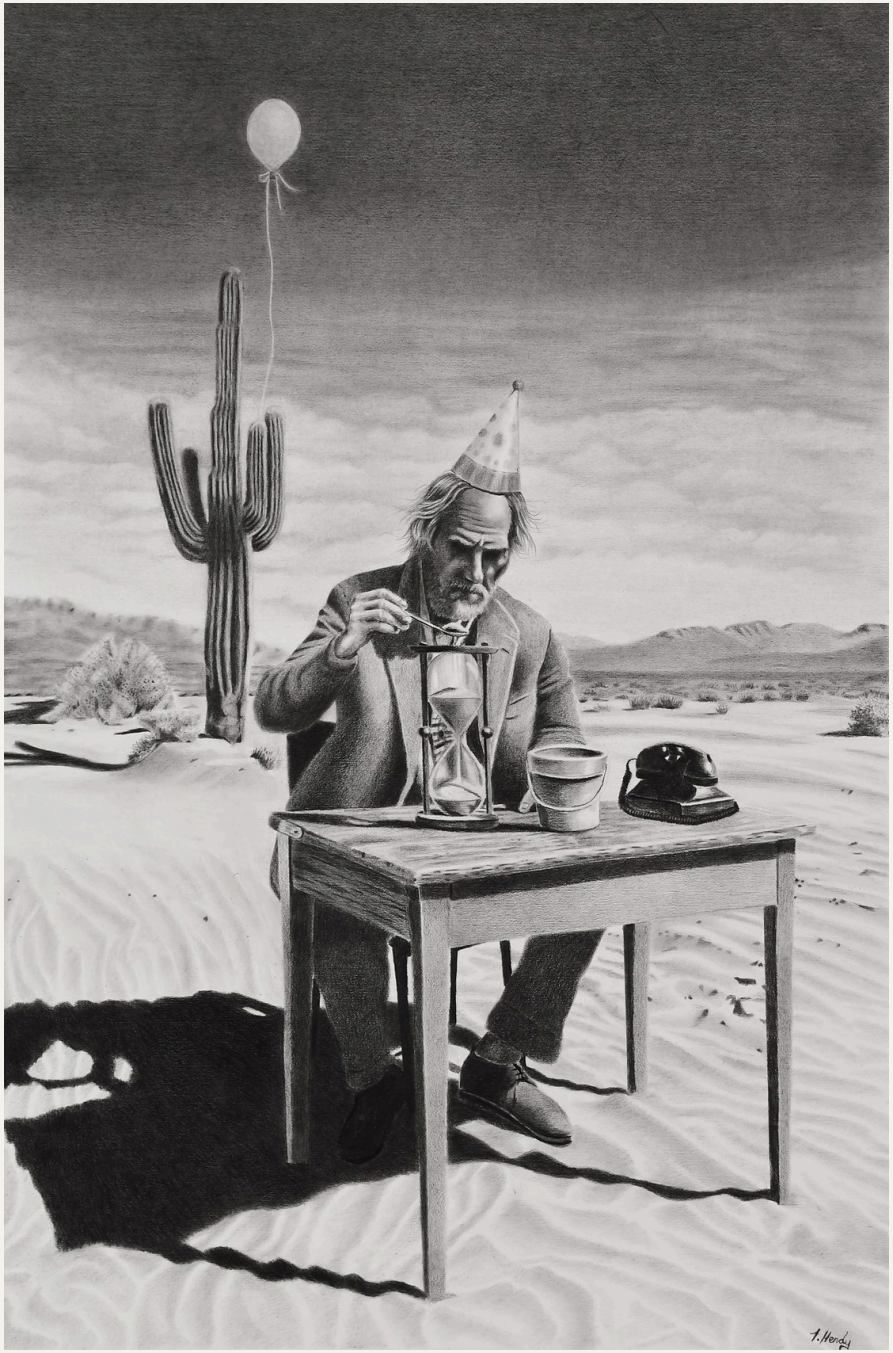


05 / 14

Sheeple

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
75 × 50 cm (framed 96 × 71 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series
Private collection

The flock moves toward a question it was never allowed to ask. Survival leaves no room to weigh cruelty against conscience. Rent, groceries, whatever the wage still covers: each has spent the choice before it can be made. Refusal is the first thing lost, long before the harm is done. The gate was never visible to those of us who needed it open. Some wear the coat and never walk the path, taking the benefit from a cost that survival was never given the freedom to resist.



06 / 14

Time Waster

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
75 × 50 cm (framed 96 × 71 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series
Private collection, Ireland

Nobody tells you. That is the elegant part.

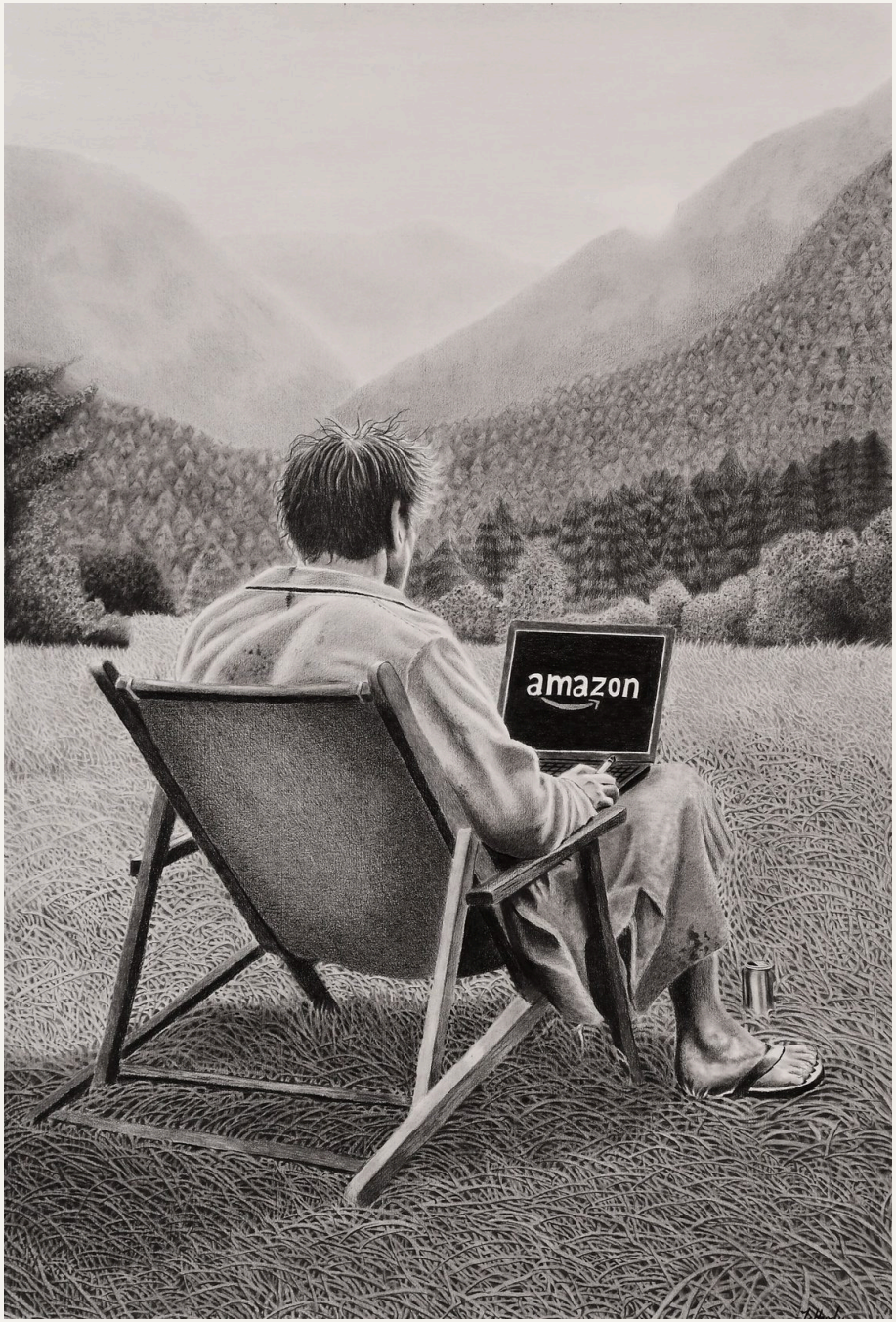
You wake to an alarm you did not choose, dress for a life measured out before you arrived, spend the sharpest hours of your existence making another's vision real. Year dissolves into year. The clock on the wall is the only honest thing in the room.

They do not need your brilliance. They need your compliance.

The genius of it is this. You will defend it. You will call it ambition. You will set the alarm again.

Something in you already knows. It surfaces on Sunday evenings before the week begins again.

What did you think that feeling was trying to tell you.

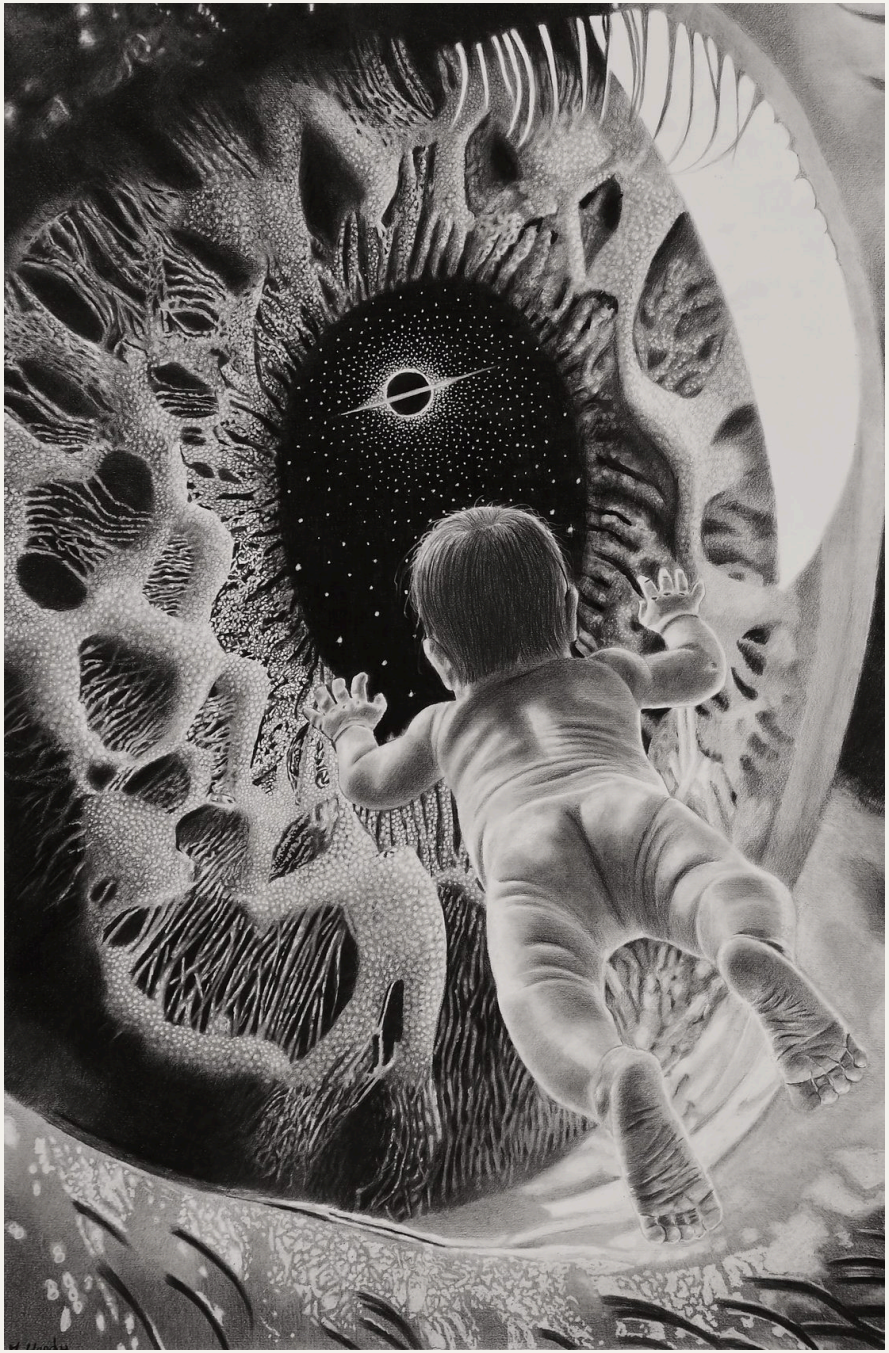


07 / 14

Tethered Retreat

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
75 × 50 cm (framed 96 × 71 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series

Do we ever step away from the forces that shape us? We walk into nature seeking release, still bound to the invisible networks that govern our lives. Distance means nothing when everyone is a click away. The ideas we inherit, the borders we accept, the comfort promised through consumption: stories we agreed to believe. If release exists, perhaps it begins when everything is stripped back to what we can see, hear, touch, taste, smell. Truth defined for ourselves. Not handed down.



08 / 14

Origins

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
75 × 50 cm (framed 96 × 70 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series

Birthplace. Skin. Class. Belief. We inherit invisible lines before we can read them. Set against our shared cosmic origins, they shrink to almost nothing. We are carbon, shaped by the same ancient forces as every star. If we all come from the same place, why do we choose to stand apart?

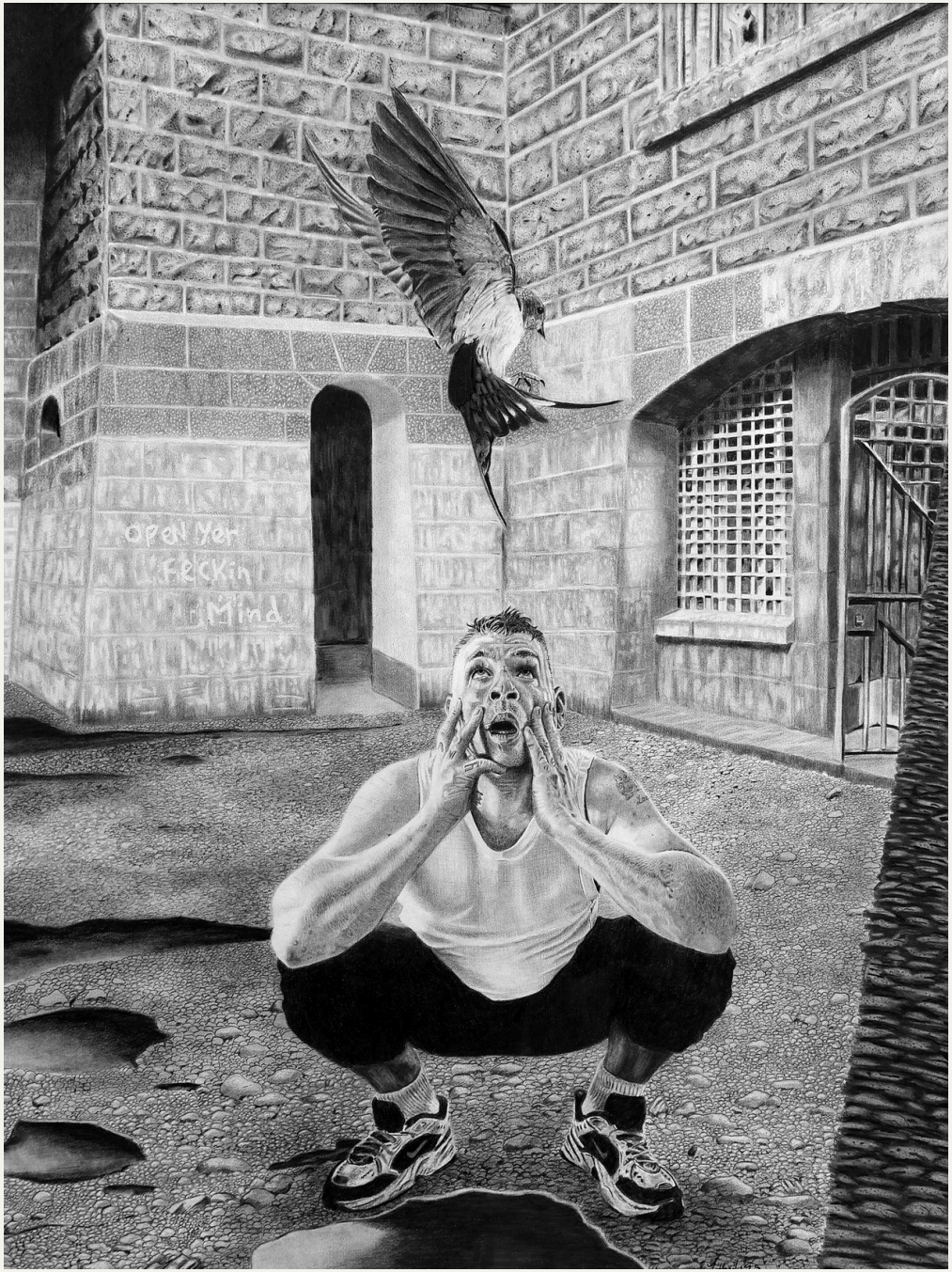


09 / 14

No Man Is an Island

2026
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
75 × 50 cm (framed 96 × 71 cm)
Freedom's Paradox series

We carry struggle alone now, behind closed doors, in rooms full of people. Connection has never been easier to reach or harder to accept. Why do we resist the very thing that would hold us up? Every island is the same land beneath the water.



10 / 14

Billy’s Words

2025
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
58 × 86 cm (framed 100 × 89 cm)
In Reflection series
Private collection, Ireland

A younger me crouches in a prison yard. Above him a swallow hovers, forcing his eyes upward. Prisoners ink the swallow for resilience, hope, a safe return home. I carry one on my neck.

On the wall behind, the words Billy Gallagher drummed into me for years: open your feckin’ mind. I was not ready to hear them then. Sometimes the bird arrives long before we are ready to look up.

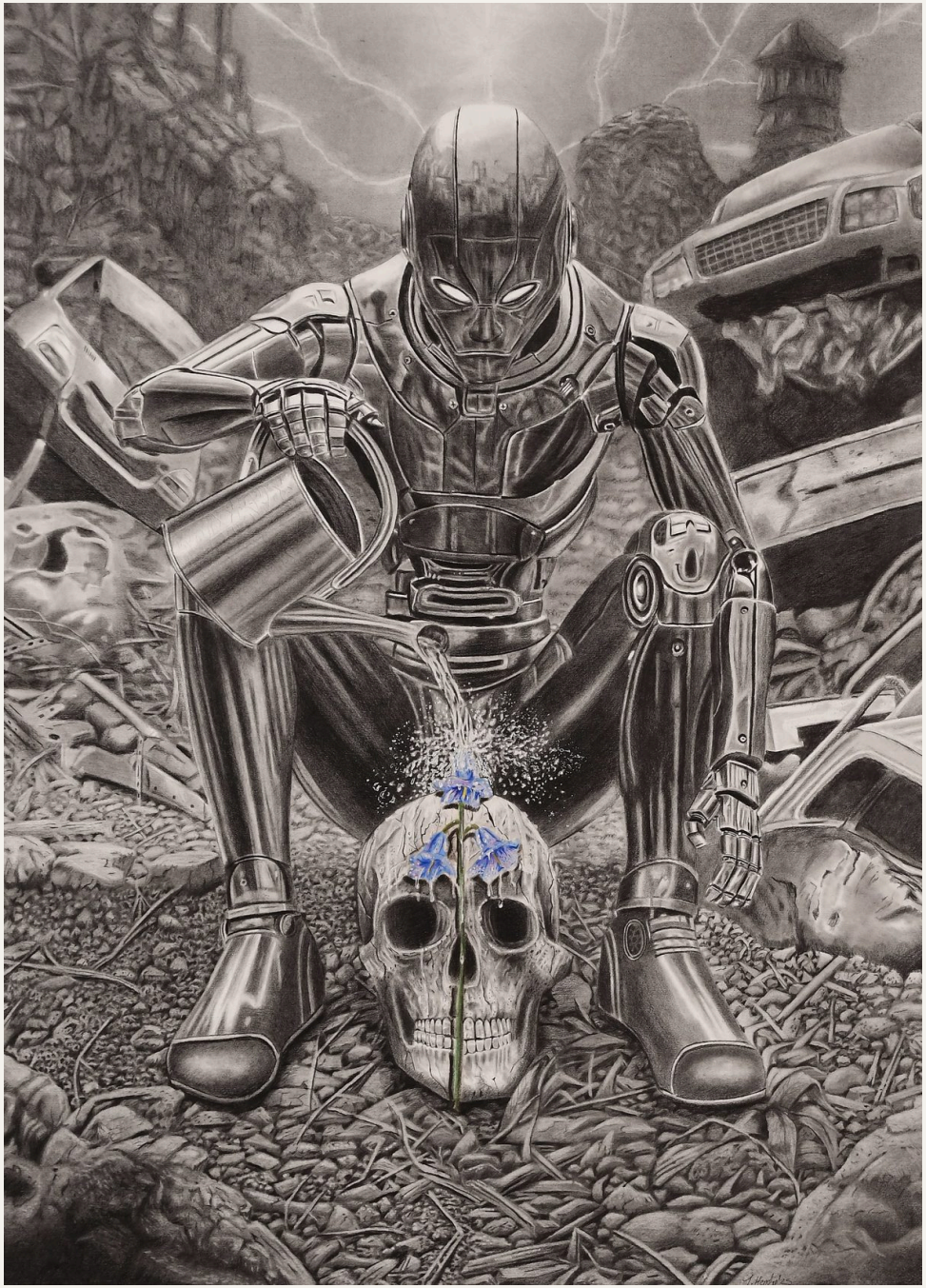


11 / 14

Lost Reflections

2024
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
50 × 50 cm (framed 70 × 70 cm)
In Reflection series

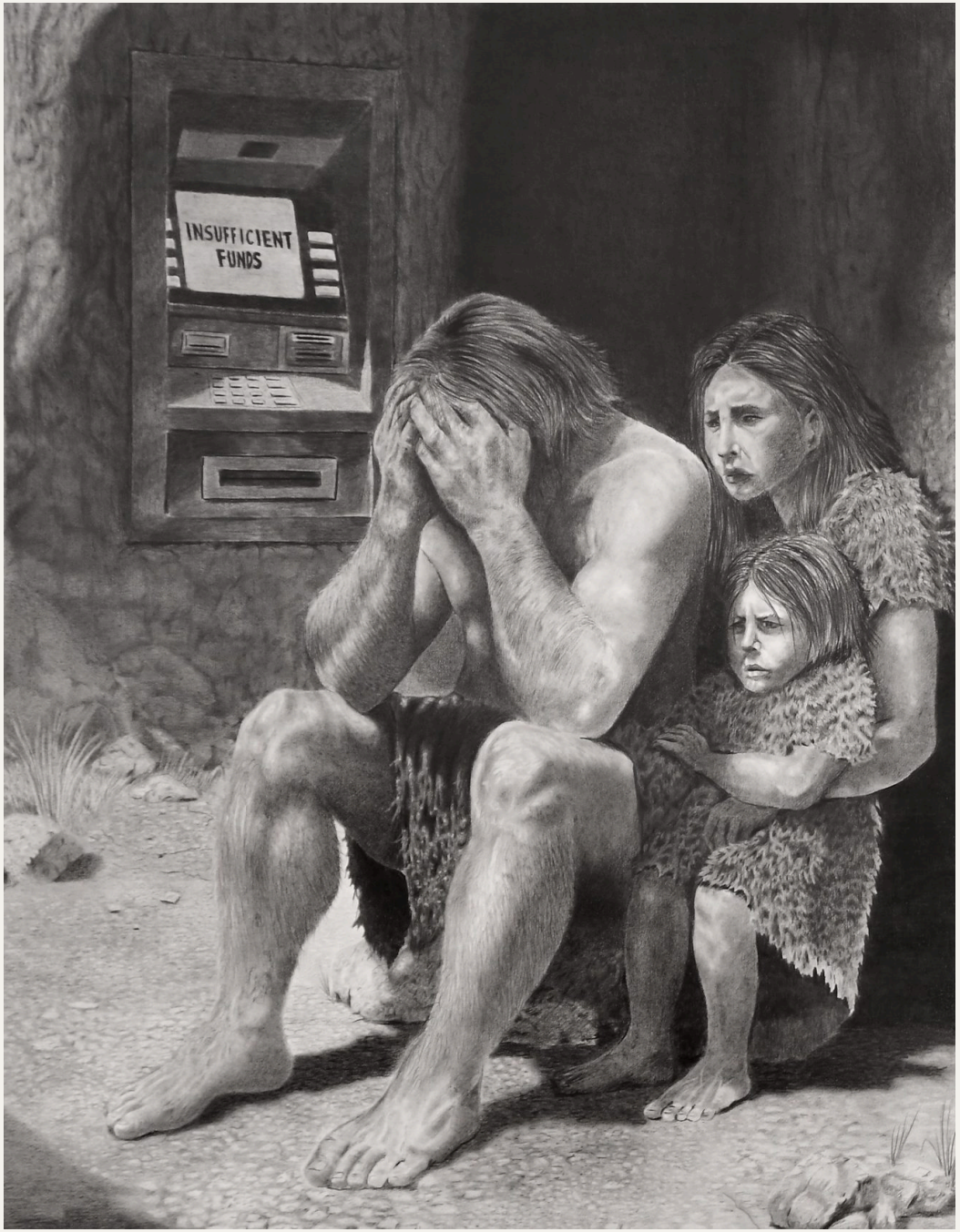
What survives the body lives in those who carry it forward. Not as memory alone, but as instruction. A silent covenant between the living and the lost, written in every choice, every breath, every quiet refusal to let what mattered once stop mattering now.



Saviour

2025
Graphite with blue pigment on hot-pressed watercolour paper
100 × 76 cm (framed 110 × 86 cm)
Unmasking AI series

Humanity is building the tools of its own destruction. War. Greed. A planet spent. Here a single blue flower survives in a world of graphite, tended by something no longer human. What if Earth's caretaker turns out to be the intelligence we built? A warning. A question. Will salvation come from beyond ourselves, because it never came from within?



Regressing to Life

2025
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
86 × 70 cm (framed 95 × 78 cm)
Unmasking AI series

Machines are coming for the work. What becomes of us when labour is no longer the measure of survival? We fear unemployment will mean hunger, forgetting that money is a human invention, not a law of nature. Perhaps we are moving full circle, back toward the hunter-gatherer. Perhaps toward something better: a universal income, time reclaimed for family, for passion, for each other. The irony is our fear of freedom itself. A life no longer bound to survival. Open, at last, to living.



The Elephant in the Room

2025
Graphite on hot-pressed watercolour paper
40 × 30 cm (framed 56 × 47 cm)
In Reflection series
Private collection

Some subjects a room agrees never to mention. I kept my own that way for years, stepping around them as though they were not there. This is a portrait of that comfort in discomfort. The silence was never empty. It was full of the thing nobody would name.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AND AWARDS

Highlights

2027	Freedom’s Paradox, Strule Arts Centre, Omagh (solo, forthcoming)
2027	Freedom’s Paradox, Toradh Gallery, Kells (solo, forthcoming)
2026	Liberated Paradox, Punishment Block, Spike Island, Cobh (solo)
2026	Art Source, RDS, Dublin
2026	Time Well Spent, Rua Red, Tallaght, with panel discussion
2026	How It’s Made: Water, The Lark, Balbriggan
2026	Chrysalis, Reynolds Gallery, Dublin
2026	Art in the Ballroom, Powerscourt House, Co. Wicklow
2026	Dublin Painting and Sketching Club, 148th Annual Exhibition
2025	Ashes to Embers, with Ger Hughes, Reds Gallery, Dublin
2025	Open Submission Award, Dublin Painting and Sketching Club, 147th Annual Exhibition
2025	How It’s Made: Unmasking AI, Balbriggan, with Trinity College Dublin
2024	Surveyor, Solstice Arts Centre, Navan

FULL CV FOLLOWS

SUPPORT

Freedom’s Paradox

Freedom’s Paradox is supported by Meath County Council Arts Office and Creative Ireland through the Professional Artist Development Fund.

CONTACT

Enquiries

Exhibitions, acquisitions, commissions and press.

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Prices, high-resolution images and further works available on request.

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Thomas Hendy

Graphite artist · Born 1982, Bray, Co. Wicklow · Lives and works in Kells, Co. Meath
thomashendy.com · thomashendy96@gmail.com · Instagram and Facebook: @thomashendyart

Self-taught graphite artist whose large-scale drawings examine institutions, justice and power, shaped by nearly fifteen years of incarceration.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2027 *Freedom's Paradox*, Strule Arts Centre, Omagh, Co. Tyrone (November, forthcoming)
2027 *Freedom's Paradox*, Toradh Gallery, Kells, Co. Meath (February to March, forthcoming)
2026 *Liberated Paradox*, Punishment Block, Spike Island, Cobh, Co. Cork. Curator: Dorota Gubbins
2025 *Ashes to Embers*, joint exhibition with Ger Hughes, Reds Gallery, Dublin. Curator: Tony Strickland

AWARDS AND FUNDING

2026 Professional Artist Development Fund, Meath County Council Arts Office and Creative Ireland, for *Freedom's Paradox*
2025 Open Submission Award, Dublin Painting and Sketching Club 147th Annual Exhibition, for *Billy's Words*

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026 *How It's Made: Water, A Shared Living System*, The Lark Concert Hall, Balbriggan. Curator: Valeria Ceregini
2026 *Time Well Spent*, Rua Red Arts Centre, Tallaght, Dublin, with the Irish Prison Education Service: work from fourteen prisons and three post-release centres. Curator: Órla McGovern
2026 Dublin Painting and Sketching Club, 148th Annual Exhibition, Dublin
2026 Swift Summer Open, Swift Cultural Centre, Trim, Co. Meath
2026 *Love Is in the Air*, Teal House Gallery, Dublin
2026 *Art in the Ballroom*, Made in Wicklow with the Schoolhouse for Art, The Ballroom, Powerscourt House, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow
2025 *How It's Made: Unmasking AI*, Balbriggan, with Trinity College Dublin's CONNECT Centre and the SCÉAL Collective. Curator: Valeria Ceregini
2025 Dublin Painting and Sketching Club, 147th Annual Exhibition, Dublin
2025 Swift Summer Open, Swift Cultural Centre, Trim, Co. Meath (inaugural edition). Selected by Belinda Quirke
2024 *Surveyor*, Solstice Arts Centre, Navan, Co. Meath. Selected by Dawn Williams, Crawford Art Gallery

ART FAIRS

2026 Art Source, RDS, Ballsbridge, Dublin

TALKS, PANELS AND EVENTS

2026 Panellist, *Arts & Education in the Irish Prison Service*, closing event of *Time Well Spent*, Rua Red, Tallaght
2026 Featured artist, Culture Night Kells, with Kells Arts Club, O'Connor's, Kells
2026 Featured artist, SCÉAL Collective, The Warehouse, Balbriggan
2026 Symposium, *How It's Made: Water*, CONNECT Centre, Trinity College Dublin
2025 Panel discussion, *How It's Made: Unmasking AI*, The Hub, Balbriggan

PRESS AND MEDIA

2026 *The Irish Times*, An Irish Diary, Frank McNally, on *Time Well Spent* (October)
2025 *Meath Chronicle*, double-page feature by Sally Harding, "From prison cell to art gallery" (October)
2025 LMFM, *The Late Lunch with Gerry Kelly*, "The Art of Life's Turnaround" (October)
2025 *The Brigg Bus*, SCÉAL Collective, video interview with Anita Doolan

MEMBERSHIPS, EDUCATION AND COLLECTIONS

- Professional member, Visual Artists Ireland
- Board member, SCÉAL Collective, Balbriggan
- Member, Irish Art Mart
- Member, Praxis, the artists' union of SIPTU
- Education: self-taught
- Work held in private collections in Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia