

THE AMATEUR AMATEUR

Feb 2026

Issue #1



The Arts Council
Ireland
Article

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Confidence is Key
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Temptation
Poem
Ao Canning

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Organic Green
Chaos
Mixed Media
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I See Red
Mixed Media
Niamh Baron

The Arts Council Ireland; *Get Paid to Make Art.*

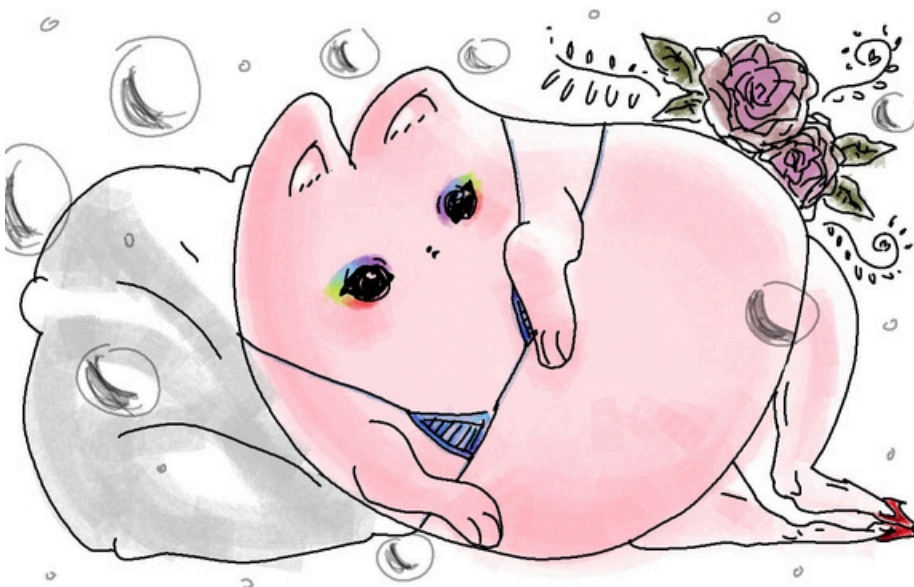
Article by N.

The Irish Arts Council is a government funded agency that aids the growth of art and culture across the country. They invest and work with both individuals and organisations, with a given budget of €140 million for 2025. Results from their 2024 investments show that they were able to fund 1 in 3 submitted funding requests. Currently, they are seeking an increased budget for 2026. While they invest in all artists, they have a special focus on individual artists, young people, equality, diversity, and inclusion as well as places and spaces for art.

For more on the
Arts Council;
artscouncil.ie

The arts council provided a total of 45 opportunities for funding (2025). Those were available both to individuals as well as organisations. These different opportunities are open for application at various times throughout the year, so there is almost always something that artists can apply to. The funding they support can go toward any art forms under the following which they have listed.

While all of these are viable options, please keep in mind that due to the variations in funding applications at certain times, there is not always a funding source for the art form you may need.



Digital Art
by Bria Alabi
**Confidence
is Key**

Temptation

Poem by Ao Canning

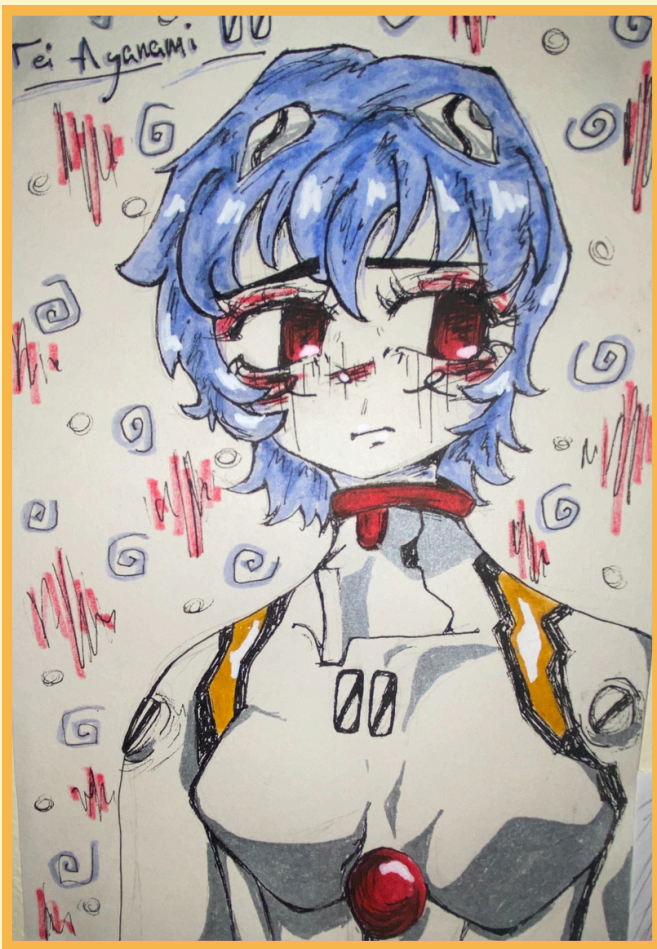
Is a firm muzzle
On naked skin
Moist and warm
Like hot cocoa
It presses once
Then again
Pleading
For the damn
Cantaloupe
On your plate

She doesn't even like cantaloupe



Twin Fields

Mixed Media by
Niamh Baron



Pilot 00

Marker by
Anonymous



Sunna Fanart

Digital Art by
Bria Alabi



Digital Art
by Bria Alabi

Sparkles



Stephen Murray

Poet, father and founder of Inspireland, this exclusive interview gives a glimpse into the life and ideas of Stephen Murray.

Q. How did you find yourself first writing poetry?

I wrote my first poem aged 8, at primary school in England. I had an amazing teacher, Mr Spark. Yes, that was his real name. He was a tall silvered-haired, red-faced man of supernatural flamboyance, on reflection, probably gay, definitely magical, terrifying when he wanted to be. We cowered from his wrath, and collapsed in fits of giggles at this humour. We loved him and feared him in equal measure. At Christmas he read us, A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens. Then as homework he asked us write a poem about it, to hand in when we returned in January. My first poem was called Marley's Ghost. It is lost but I do remember three lines:

*Thump of footstep
hammer on a nail
Marley's Ghost appears.*

The morning after I handed it in, he called me, looking very angry to the front of the class. He was like an active volcano, his face molten red, smoke billowing from his ears.

Do you think me stupid, boy? He erupted. Who wrote this poem?

I did, I replied and then he let loose about cheating and copying from others. The room shook, darkness fell, children cowered. I started to tremble with tears and anger. I started to cry.

But I did write it, I wept. Mr Spark looked at me and in an instant he melted into kindness. He knelt down to my eye level, put one hand on each of my shoulders and said:

I'm so sorry, my boy. It's just it is absolutely brilliant, and I am so, so sorry.

Then he gave me a hug and he whispered to me that I was brilliant. He championed me from that day.

Three years later, in my first year at secondary school (you started at 11 in the UK back then), my English teacher set us the exact same homework to be submitted to a National Schools Poetry Competition. I entered Marley's Ghost, and she didn't believe I had written it. A lad in my class remembered it from our primary school, and he vouched for me. It came runner-up out of several thousand entries, and I read it on front of the London Mayor of London that Spring.

Q. What do you believe are the benefits of engaging with poetry from a young age?

Engaging with poetry from a young age, gives us a greater understanding off the nuances and hidden messages of language. The more we understand language, and its power, the more equipped we are to defend against it, when it used by dark actors and those who look to radicalise us. Writing poetry helps us to empty our heads of the things that stress us out. Eastern wisdom and mediation teaches us to separate ourselves from our thoughts, to achieve wellbeing. Writing does the same thing. Our thoughts are smaller on a page than in our heads. Reading them written down provides separation.

Q. Is there a poet or artist that you look up to in particular?

I met Tracy K Smith last year, and we became good friends. She is the Harvard Professor of Poetry and African American Studies. A Pulitzer Prize Winner and former American

Poet Laureate. She was/is quite something. I researched her work before meeting her, and it blew me away. It actually reignited my passion for poetry. I started writing again.

There is a real magic about her, an old soul in a mortal form, eternally searching the spaces in between the here and now for gifts to impart, and wisdom to share. Her talent, her intellectual creative searching, and her invincible kindness are just awe inspiring. She seemed to me to be like a Goddess of listeners, who requires no worship, but rather worships those who will stop to listen, learn and find the courage to raise their voices above the endless stamping of cold hard iron boots in these challenging times.

In fact, I have just read her book "Fear Less, Poetry in Challenging Times". Anybody who teaches poetry, reads poetry or struggles to connect with it, should read this book. As a poet and teacher, it has been a life-changing read. Every English teacher should read it. It is also full of amazing poets I had never heard of.

Dylan Thomas has probably been my biggest influence. There is a word-dense spell craft to his text. It reads the way the sound of a river speaks to a part of us we do not always tune in to. Love Sylvia Plath, Heaney, the beat poets. Contemporary poets I really enjoy include Dave Lordan, Neil McCarthy, Jess Traynor, and Elaine Feeney. There are some amazing performance poets and spoken word artists out there. A poem by Holly McNish, "For the Young Men who Think Flowers are Beautiful", which everybody should listen to. Kae Tempest's "Hold Your Own".

To Be Continued...

Q. What inspired you to write your most recent book, "The Sleep Thief?"

Becoming a father, witnessing the miracle of childbirth, and the divine power of creation bestowed upon women, and the juxtaposition of birth and death, inspired The Sleep Thief.



Watercolor by
Kris Van Der Riet

Pencil by
Anonymous

Your Blood

BSNAPS



Aqualibrium

Digital Art by
Ao Canning





Elvira

Pencil by
Anonymous



**Stranger Things
Fanart**

Digital Art
by Janiya Gigo

**Organic
Green Chaos**

Mixed Media by
Niamh Baron



I See Red

Mixed Media by
Niamh Baron



THE AMATEUR

staff thanks you for reading



Ao Canning



N.



Janiya Gigo



Bria Alabi



Niamh Baron



Kris Van Der Riet

We are a by student, for students Art Magazine intended to uplift and support artists under 18. We know how hostile adult spaces can be, so we're here to make our own. We aren't always gonna get it right, but we'll always keep trying.

Our mission is to release our magazine, "The Amateur" every month to a wide audience. We accept submissions from students ages 12-18 across Ireland, but we have a focus on Cork for now.