

National Open Call

Artist's Commission 2026-27

To coincide with Millenium - 2027 European Year of the Normans
Closing date for Applications: Monday, 30th March 2026

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Wexford County Council's Arts Office, in partnership with Creative Ireland, invites applications from visual artists to develop a new body of work which explores Wexford's Anglo-Norman heritage and legacy.

The commission is socially engaged in nature and will involve the artist undergoing research and working with local communities in Wexford County in the development of the work over a 16-month period (May 2026-August 2027). As part of this commission, the artist will also have the opportunity to undertake research and a short residency in Normandy supported by our Normandy partners and a short residency in Cow House Studios, Wexford. The artist must be based in Ireland.

The final artwork will be presented as part of a major exhibition taking place across Wexford County Hall and Wexford Arts Centre in June 2027, as part of the Contemporary Arts Trail to mark 'Millenium, 2027 European Year of the Normans'.

Artist's Grant

The commission is valued at €20,000. The artist will receive an artist's grant of €18,000, and an additional €2,000 will be allocated towards travel and expenses. This grant includes the cost of the artist's time for the research and production of new artwork. There will be a separate artist exhibition fee for the 2027 exhibition in Wexford as part of the Norman Contemporary Arts Trail.

Residency accommodation

The artist will be offered free residency accommodation in Caen, Normandy, in Les Ecuries/Centre Cultural Lorge in Caen for up to 3 weeks over the 12-month period. In addition, the artist will be offered free residency accommodation in Cow House Studios in Wexford for up to 3 weeks. Dates for Wexford and Normandy residencies are flexible and subject to availability with our residency partners.

Arts Forms

This residency is aimed at visual artists while acknowledging the scope for collaboration and interdisciplinary arts practices.

The Context

The Anglo-Normans played a central role in the medieval history of Ireland, and in particular County Wexford, where they first landed at Bannow Bay in south Wexford in 1169 (at the invitation of the deposed King of Leinster, Diarmuid Mc Murrough, who had requested their aid to regain his kingdom in return for lands in Wexford). Thus began the Norman colonisation of Ireland, where, despite resistance from the native Irish, they proceeded to conquer and seize further lands across Ireland.

The Anglo-Normans' role and legacy in Ireland and Wexford is therefore a complicated as well as a contested one. On the one hand, they played the role of the coloniser, displacing many native Irish from their lands, while on the other hand, as many historians agree, 'many become more Irish than the Irish themselves'. Over the proceeding centuries, many Normans adapted to the old Irish ways and Irish laws, intermarrying and learning to speak the Irish language. At the same time, they brought their languages, laws, architecture, and new farming practices to Ireland.

The focus of this new art commission will be on these rich intercultural links, which are particularly evident in the county of Wexford and the southeast of Ireland. Throughout Ireland, the legacy of our Norman heritage can be found in our lands, laws, monuments, castles, language, and farming methods, which from the 12th century onwards evolved within the native Irish tradition, fostering a dynamic cultural hybridity.

Themes

We invite artists to explore this rich, complex, and contested history and consider its legacy today through the lens of contemporary visual art, framing it within the broader social, political, and geographic context we find ourselves in today. Themes currently being explored through the Normandy Contemporary Arts Trail include:

- Architecture / built heritage
- Colonialism
- Contested narratives
- Interconnectedness
- Labour
- Landscape / sense of place
- Language
- Migration / home
- Mythology
- The role of women
- Reconstruction

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an important part of this commission, linking to Wexford County Council's 'Creativity and Culture Strategy,' which aims to enable local communities to engage in creativity through arts, heritage and cultural programmes. We invite artists with experience of or interest in socially engaged/participatory arts practice to apply. The artist selected will be expected to engage and work with communities of place or interest in Wexford County, as well as undertake research in Normandy, France. While Wexford County Council Arts Office & Creative Ireland departments can assist with supporting initial introductions to local communities, it is the responsibility of the artist to be proactive in identifying communities they would like to engage in the development of the work.

Management/ Supports

This artist's commission is managed and supported by Wexford County Council's Art Office who will be the main point of contact. To support the residency, quarterly meetings between the artist, Arts Officer, and Wexford's Creative Ireland Coordinator will take place throughout the year, as well as meetings with curator Catherine Bowe. The artists will also have access to Wexford Library/Archives Department for assistance with their research as well as the support of the Heritage Officer. In addition, the artist will have access to the Irish Museum of Modern Art's (IMMA) Norman archive.

Presentation of Artwork 2027

This commission will result in a new body of work to be exhibited in Wexford (October 2027) in a major visual art exhibition across Wexford County Hall and Wexford Arts Centre, as part of the Normandy Contemporary Arts Trail to coincide with the 2027 Year of the Normans. This Contemporary Arts Trail will take place in a variety of arts venues across Normandy, France, as well as in Ireland.

Timeline

- Monday, 30th March 2026, 5pm: Closing date for expressions of interest;
- Wednesday, 1st and Thursday, 2nd April 2026: Shortlisted artists invited to meet with selection panel to discuss their initial ideas, in person or online;
- Tuesday, 7th April 2026: All artists are notified of the outcome of the open call;
- Tuesday, 21st April: The selected artist is announced;
- May 2026-August 2027: Arts commission – development of work;
- November-December 2027: Exhibition in Wexford County Hall and Wexford Arts Centre as part of Normandy Contemporary Arts Trail;

Who May Apply?

This award is aimed at mid-career/established visual artists who have a good track record of working with communities and for whom the subject matter has particular interest to their arts practice as well as the local context of Wexford.

Making an application

Please send the following documents to art@wexfordcoco.ie by 5pm on Tuesday, 30th March 2026:

1. A proposal of 1-2 pages, setting out your artistic approach to the residency and areas of interest (maximum 1,000 words).
1. A statement outlining your experience of working with communities of places and/or interest and your community engagement strategy for this commission (maximum 500 words). Please outline if there are specific communities in Wexford you would like to engage.
2. Timescale breakdown including research, community engagement, production, and delivery of work.
3. An up-to-date CV highlighting relevant experience (2 pages).
4. Examples of work to date i.e., documentation in the form of 10 JPEG images, and/or links to 3 films, videos, or audio works;

Submission Notes

Please adhere to the following while preparing your application:

- Please format all information in **one PDF document** and keep to the word limits (max. size of PDF file is 12MB);
- Please save each JPEG image with the following details: Artist's Name_Title_Medium_Dimensions_Year;
For example: NoelSmith_LandscapeInBlue_AcrylicOnWoodenPanel_43x30cms_2019
- Please save each film, video, or audio work with your name, work title, and duration, or alternatively send YouTube or Vimeo links with relevant information;
- Do not submit any hard-copy material, for example, catalogues, invitations, artist books, etc.;

Applications received after the closing date will not be accepted.

Assessment process

A selection committee will shortlist applicants based on the following criteria:

- Quality of proposal and meeting aims/objectives of the commission;
- Track record of the artist – CV, supporting documentation;
- Community engagement strategy;

Please note as part of the assessment process, candidates may be called for interview either in person or online on Wednesday, 1st or Thursday, 2nd April, 2026.

Related Links

<https://www.normandie.fr/2027-european-year-normans>

<https://thenormanway.com>

<https://rostapestry.ie/>

Publications

- Lost Wexford – The Forgotten Heritage - Nicky Rossiter publication
- Wexford's Castles – Billy Colfer publication
- 'Carrick County Wexford' Ireland First Anglo-Norman Stronghold – edited by Denis Shine

