

Open Call for Artists Visual Arts Commission

Closing date for Applications: Thursday 2nd April, 2026



To coincide with

'Millenium: 2027 European Year of the Normans'

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 art 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 Artists' Studios, Wexford. The artist must be based in Ireland.

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

Artist's Grant

This 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 as well as the production of new artwork. There will be a separate artist exhibition fee for the 2027 exhibition in Wexford as part of the Normandy Contemporary Arts Trail.

Residency accommodation

The artists will be offered free residency accommodation in Wexford (Cow House Artists' Studios) and in Normandy (location to be confirmed), for up to 3 weeks in each location, over the residency period. Dates for Wexford and Normandy residencies are flexible and subject to availability with our residency partners.

Artform

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. This was 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, many adapted to Irish ways and Brehon laws. Over the proceeding centuries, many Normans intermarried and learned to speak the Irish language, while at the same time, bringing 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 being explored through the Normandy Contemporary Arts Trail include:

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

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an important part of this commission, linking to Wexford County Council's Creative Ireland programme and '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 with in the development of the work.

Management/ Supports

This artist's commission is managed by Wexford County Council's Art Office who will be the main point of contact. To support the artist's 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 Wexford Art Centre's curator Catherine Bowe. The artist will also have access to Wexford Library/Archives Department for assistance with their research as well as the support of Wexford's Heritage Officer. In addition, the artist will have the opportunity to connect with the Royal Hospital Kilmainham (RHK) /Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) and their research into the site and its Norman legacy.

Presentation of Artwork 2027

This commission will result in a new body of work to be exhibited in Wexford (October – November 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

- **Thursday, 2nd April, 2026, 4pm: Closing date for applications.**
- Wednesday, 15th April, 2026: Shortlisted artists contacted and invited for interview.
- Monday, 20th and/or Tuesday, 21st April, 2026: Shortlisted artists meet with selection panel to discuss their initial ideas, in person or online.
- Friday, 24th April, 2026: All artists are notified.
- Thursday, 30th, April, 2026: Selected artist is announced.
- May 2026-August, 2027: Arts commission – development of work.
- October-November, 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 resonance with their arts practice, as well as the local context of Wexford.

Making an application

Please send the following documents to arts@wexfordcoco.ie by **4pm Thursday 2nd April, 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. Please outline if there are specific communities in Wexford you would like to engage with. (maximum 500 words)
2. Timescale and budget breakdown including research, community engagement, production, and delivery of work.
3. An up-to-date CV highlighting relevant experience (2 pages).
4. Examples of relevant 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.

Applications received after the closing date will not be accepted. Digital applications only.

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.
- Feasibility (budget, timeline)

Please note as part of the assessment process, candidates may be called for an interview either in person or online on 20st or 21st April, 2026.

For all queries in relation to this commission, please contact Wexford County Council Arts Office on 053 9196564 / 9196369 or email arts@wexfordcoco.ie.

Related Links

- <https://historyireland.com/1169-and-all-that/>
- <https://www.irishhistorypodcast.ie/podcast-series/norman-invasion>
- <https://thenormanway.com>
- <https://rostapestry.ie/>
- <https://www.normandie.fr/2027-european-year-normans>

Publications

- Arrogant Trespass, Anglo-Norman Wexford, 1169–1400 - Billy Colfer publication
- 'Carrick County Wexford' Ireland First Anglo-Norman Stronghold – edited by Denis Shine
- Invasion 1169 – edited by Sean Duffy & Peter Crooks
- Ireland in the Middle Ages – Sean Duffy publication
- Lost Wexford – The Forgotten Heritage - Nicky Rossiter publication
- Wexford's Castles – Billy Colfer publication
- Ireland under the Normans, 1169–1333 – G.H. Orpen publication
- Medieval Wexford: Essays in Memory of Billy Colfer – edited by Ian Doyle & Bernard Brown