

# “Public Cultures and the Commons 2011”

## An International Seminar Series on Rural/Urban Culture, Connectivity and Contestation

The rural is on the move, now as always. [...] mobility is central to the enactment of the rural. Markets, employment, shopping, socialising, schooling, attending church, seeing a doctor, visiting parks: these all require traversing space, often great reaches of it, whether one lives in a rural place or is travelling to one. From this perspective it is reasonable to claim that the rural is at least as mobile as the urban, if not more so.” (Michael M. Bell and Giorgio Ost “Mobilities and Ruralities: An Introduction”, *Sociologia Ruralis: Special Issue on Mobilities and Ruralities*, Volume 50, Issue 3, pages 199–204, July 2010)

Because of the mobility of people, goods, information and lifestyles, rural areas are experiencing profound change. The end of the rural exodus, the transformation of lifestyles and images attached to the countryside are contributing to the design of new areas and are the presage of renewed dynamism. One major aspect of the future of ruralities resides in the increasingly intricate relationships between rural and urban areas. More and more, agriculture is sharing space with residential zones and natural environments. On the one hand, urbanisation is transforming the context of farming activities, while on the other, interactions between agricultural and natural areas need to be enhanced. However, although rural areas no longer seem set to decline, their future is dependent upon finding solutions to many questions. (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, *New Ruralities in France 2030*, July 2008.)

In the widespread discussions of public culture in contemporary art and critical debate, there has been a tendency to focus on urbanism and the concentrated populations of contemporary cities. There has been a relative neglect of the question of extra-urban, rural, or non-urban contexts. This international seminar series seeks to open up a dialogue that works through questions of public-ness and the commons, with particular attention to the interchange and complex interactions of the rural and the urban. The discussion seeks to move beyond any simple opposition between town and country.

When we talk about ‘public-ness’ we often refer to urban space and environment such as the market-place of the city or the public square. On the other hand, when we talk about ‘the commons’, we seem to refer to the rural and to the countryside, and to draw upon a different set of spatial metaphors. But both ‘public-ness’ and ‘commons’ have come to be used as terms that are not simply about space and place, but that also refer to cultural practices, behaviours and encounters. We have begun also to think about ‘public time’ and what this might mean in a number of different contexts. This new collaboration between Scottish Sculpture Workshop and the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media, Ireland will provide an opportunity to examine these issues in a series of exchanges between Scotland and Ireland.

Part of the challenge in these discussions will be to address contemporary constructions of the rural, which are not reduced merely to the ‘countryside’ but which take account of the social, economic, cultural, and political complexity and instability of contemporary ‘ruralities’.

Topics in the series will include:

- *What is ‘the commons’?*
- *What is ‘public time’?*
- *What is public in globalised ruralities?*
- *What are the relationships between food, politics and public culture?*

If you would like to be informed of these seminars and the schedule in 2011, please email [mick.wilson@gradcam.ie](mailto:mick.wilson@gradcam.ie)

# Programme

Friday February 4 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Dublin, GradCAM	What is 'the commons'?
Friday March 18 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Lumsden, SSW	What is public in globalised ruralities?
Friday September 16 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Lumsden, SSW	Skills as a Commons
Wed-Thurs November 16 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Dublin, GradCAM	Food as a Commons

## About the Organisers



### Scottish Sculpture Workshop

Scottish Sculpture Workshop was established in 1979 by Fred Bushe OBE RSA, with the aim of providing high quality facilities for artists to make sculpture, supported by technical and artistic expertise. Since its inception, Scottish Sculpture Workshop has forged links with international artists, and has hosted thousands of residencies for visual arts practitioners from all over the world. From its base in rural north-east Scotland, an area characterised by its outstanding landscape, history and culture, Scottish Sculpture Workshop continues to provide a stimulating and creative environment in which to meet and work with artists from different disciplines, backgrounds and countries. Scottish Sculpture Workshop provides residencies, training and exhibition opportunities for visual artists who wish to research ideas, experiment with new techniques or develop existing skills. Our high quality making facilities are supported by excellent technical staff, and a residency at SSW offers time, space and engagement with other visual artists from the UK and beyond in the stimulating rural environment of north-east Scotland.

### Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media

The Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM) is Ireland's leading centre for doctoral research across design, visual and performing arts, media practice and their associated critical, historical and theoretical discourses. The School provides structured doctoral studies and research development for the creative arts and media sector. It is a collaboration initiated between the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), the National College of Art & Design (NCAD), the University of Ulster (Ulster), and the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire (IADT). The Graduate School of Creative Arts & Media (GradCAM) was established in 2008 with funding from the Higher Education Authority's Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLII) to provide a framework for doctoral education and research for the creative arts.

