



Unknown, Old Thomond Bridge, Oil on linen, 62.5 x 89cm, part of the Permanent Collection of LCGA

LIMERICK CITY GALLERY OF ART
STATEMENT OF STRATEGY: 2020 – 2025
FINAL REPORT



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City
& County Council



Statement of Strategy – Context:

Limerick’s municipal art collection actually dates back to 1937 when the first works of art were acquired, a dedicated gallery was developed in 1948. The local authority had the foresight and vision to determine that a dedicated gallery space was warranted and that *open access to quality art* is an important part of the range of services that contribute to making Limerick a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

In 1985, the Carnegie Building home to Limerick City Library was handed over for the exhibition of art and Limerick City Gallery of Art (LCGA), as we know it today, was established. Since 1985 LCGA has built a solid partnership with The Arts Council and is now one of 18 strategically funded visual arts organisations in Ireland. This partnership recognises the quality of work shown by LCGA, and its role as the preeminent dedicated gallery space serving the Mid-West, South-West and West of Ireland.

This commitment to visual culture is part of tradition which sets Limerick apart; from its Georgian architecture, to the establishment of Limerick School of Art and Design, to LCGA, through to EVA International – Ireland’s renowned biennial exhibition – in which LCGA played a formative role.

Looking ahead, 2023 will be the seventy-fifth anniversary of the extension to the Carnegie Building and the establishment of a permanent home for the Municipal Collection. This strategy (2020 - 2025) aims to ensure that LCGA can build on seventy-five years of service and success, and continue to support Limerick’s role in developing the visual arts in Ireland, and underpinning the role of culture in the continuing regeneration and development of Limerick.

Discussions with stakeholders engaged by LCGA in the development of this strategy proposed that: *‘Being a municipal gallery means operating with clarity, a sense of civic duty and a commitment to remain relevant to the artists, audiences and communities that you serve’*. The team at LCGA, together with Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) recognises that LCGA is represented by a civic and cultural building, by a civic and cultural organisation, by the manner in which LCGA presents itself and welcomes artists and audiences, and by an organisation whose role and impact extends beyond the walls of the gallery. Being a municipal gallery is borne out of a civic ambition that great art is not the preserve of the few and therein confers a leadership responsibility to ensure that – in as far as resources allow – LCGA delivers work on a par with that which could be enjoyed by audiences anywhere else in the world.

LCGA has achieved a lot, but it knows it cannot stand still. Visual culture continues to be more central in our society, and in the ways through which we mediate our own lives and the world around us. As a key pillar within the cultural offer of Limerick City and County Council, within the quality of life offer in Limerick and the wider Mid-west and within the visual arts nationally, a new phase of ambition and continuing development is required; *delivering open access to quality art, enhancing our programme and engaging in partnerships where LCGA can make a difference.*

Statement of Strategy – Mission, Vision and Ambition:

Mission statement for Limerick City Gallery of Art

This statement of strategy is also developed in the context of the mission of Limerick City Gallery of Art. As a leading municipal gallery in Ireland, the mission of Limerick City Gallery of Art is to deliver:

Open access to quality art.

The vision for this strategy:

This strategy has been developed for implementation from 2020 – 2025. Within this timeframe, in 2023, LCGA will also celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the first dedicated municipal gallery space for art at the Carnegie Building, which remains the home of LCGA to this day. The 75th anniversary is an important target date for implementation of key investment and for the delivery of programme ambitions that need to be set in place now.

In delivering on our mission, the vision for this strategy is twofold:

*To become a model of
a civic gallery for the 21st Century*

Integrating Ambition:

This vision for LCGA will be achieved through delivery of four integrated ambitions, focusing on:

- **Artistic Programme**
- **Access – Developing Audiences**
- **Access – Strengthening Engagement**
- **Investment for the Future**

Statement of Strategy – Process

The proposal to develop a new strategy for Limerick City Gallery of Arts was agreed with Limerick City and County Council and the Arts Council. Following a procurement process, LCGA engaged M.CO, a strategic design and project management company, to work with LCGA over a number of months.

A key focus of this work was harnessing the insights of **key stakeholders from across the range of professionals working with Limerick City and County Council, from the Arts Council, as well as from artists a range of professionals working in cultural, community and socio-economic development within Limerick.** M.CO collaborated with LCGA in the design and delivery of two workshops and a range of individual meetings with stakeholders in Limerick and Dublin, in order to ensure that a wide range of feedback and perspectives informs the strategic development of LCGA.

LCGA's statement of strategy is set out within this document.

Statement of Strategy – Format

This document initially sets out an assessment of LCGA's current standing, compiled from the feedback of stakeholders engaged in the strategy process and summarised under:

- **Strengths and Opportunities**
- **Weaknesses and Risks**

Building on the current standing, and further informed by stakeholders, the strategy sets out key actions to be implemented, monitored, and evaluated across each of the four areas of ambition:

- **Artistic Programme**
- **Access – Developing Audiences**
- **Access – Strengthening Public Engagement**
- **Investment for the Future**

LCGA will review implementation of the strategy twice yearly, in Q1 and in Q3, sharing these reports directly with key stakeholders and publishing them on our website.

LCGA – Strengths and Opportunities

A number of strengths were identified through the strategy process, noting that LCGA:

- Has a reputation for its commitment to presenting work of **quality**;
- Has key attributes associated with the best proactive public galleries; a **civic** space; an important permanent collection, a dynamic contemporary programme, and a role in the development of a national and international initiative for Limerick and for the visual arts in Ireland, through EVA International;
- Benefits from **experienced, qualified and dedicated staff**;
- Provides excellent, free-of-charge, seven-day-week **service** with late opening, in a quality **facility that continues to improve with the times**, and with a good café;
- Is well located, close to the central bus and rail station, close to the city centre, within the Georgian quarter, a short walk from other cultural attractions, and **situated** as part of the beautiful People's Park.
- Has consistently worked **in support of artists** and provided opportunities for artists to present their work in a gallery of national standing.
- Has a value in excess of €25m (including the permanent collection) and represents an asset through which a greater **return on investment** can be leveraged.

Opportunities for the future development of LCGA were identified as:

- The appointment of an **education/outreach** curator and the establishment of an education and outreach programme (building on the new pilot partnership with the Hunt Museum and Limerick Museum and The Shinnors Scholar in conjunction with LIT);
- Digitising **the collection** as an educational and marketing resource;
- Enhanced **marketing and audience development**, particularly in relation to relatively low-cost investments in a stronger online presence which can build on LCGA's strengths (above) and on the proposed programme partnership and outreach initiatives;
- **Partnership with other areas of the local authority** on relevant developmental programmes;
- **Partnerships with other organisations/spaces** in initiatives and events beyond the walls of LCGA; and
- Establishing an initiative to **engage with emerging artists**, in order that LCGA is recognised as a model of practice, which is supportive of artists and their development at all stages of their career.

LCGA – Weaknesses and Risks

A number of weakness and risks have been identified through the strategy process, noting that LCGA:

- Is not as strongly **connected to its locality and region** as it could be;
- Lacks **a dedicated audience development/marketing function**, with poor online visibility/presence. Promotion of LCGA is inadequate and does not celebrate the work and potential of LCGA;
- Lacks a dedicated **education and/or outreach programme**;
- Has inadequate **public way-finding** and signage in the city;
- Is currently resourced to present a quality exhibition programme and provide excellent in-house service, but is **under-resourced and under-funded** to address many of its weaknesses.

Risks to LCGA include:

- That LCGA could be **taken for granted**, precisely because it is so well-established;
- That the building does not benefit from a planned maintenance and enhancement programme to take account of the ambition of the local authority for Limerick and the ambition of LCGA to become **a more sustainable building, while developing upgraded facilities** to support its cultural, educational, social and promotional potential;
- That the potential of **the permanent collection** is under-developed, with no provision for further acquisitions;
- That LCGA does not take steps to **maintain and develop local, regional and national relevance** – particularly in how it communicates and collaborates;
- That LCGA is **unable to tap into the ambition and expertise of Limerick City and County Council** – *ambition*: in terms of developing the quality of life in Limerick and promoting Limerick's offer; *expertise*: in terms of mapping the customer journey and the means through which LCGA seeks to attract and welcome people. This applies across architecture and capitalising on the location and setting of LCGA, and also in terms of expert partners working in areas of cultural, tourism, social, health, economic development, recreation and regeneration across the local authority whose agendas connect with LCGA and its programme.
- That a strategy for LCGA is adopted, but **implementation is not progressed and/or delivery investment is not forthcoming**, and stakeholder confidence becomes diluted – contributing to the potential of LCGA remaining unrealised.

Integrating Ambition

The LCGA strategy will be delivered through four integrated ambitions:

- **Artistic Programme**
- **Access – Developing Audiences**
- **Access – Strengthening Engagement**
- **Investment for the Future**

Artistic Programme:

LCGA's ambition is to:

- Develop and present a dynamic and quality exhibition programme for local communities and national/international visitors;
- Work in support of artists, and provide opportunities for regional, national and international artists to experiment, develop and present their work in a gallery of national standing
- Acquire, conserve, mediate and exhibit works from the Permanent Collection for purposes of research, study and enjoyment
- Deliver a high-quality public service by providing stimulating cultural experiences, enabling the appreciation of art, and exploration of our world through engagement with quality art experiences

In delivering on these policies, through this strategy, LCGA will:

1. Continue to deliver a contemporary programme of the highest quality, which will appeal to audiences locally and nationally. By exploring diverse content it will offer a range of entry points to LCGA and build a bridge to art and the work of artists.
2. Realise the potential of the permanent collection through exhibition, loan partnerships, digitisation and online access, promotion and continuing acquisitions.
3. Engage in one curatorial partnership with national/international partners on a biennial basis (commencing 2020 for delivery in 2023, and annually thereafter). The first curatorial partnership will celebrate the 75th anniversary of LCGA.
4. Engage in one curatorial partnership per annum with local/regional partners.
5. Strengthen the Shinnors scholarship programme with LSAD/LIT by jointly reviewing previous scholarships and developing recommendations for future development of the programme.
6. Develop a bi-annual initiative to support the development of an emerging artist/artists (commencing 2020 for delivery in 2022, and bi-annually thereafter).
7. Monitor the level and quality of critical coverage and acclaim achieved by LCGA.

The development and articulation of LCGA's programme will continue to work with the Programme Advisory Panel (See Appendix A).

Access – Developing Audiences

By delivering open access to quality art and emphasising the welcome that LCGA can offer, LCGA will aim to achieve a 30% increase in visitor numbers over the life of this strategy (from 80,000+ visitors to 104,000+ visitors in 2025). This increase takes account of the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and is subject to resources required to support increased marketing and public engagement.

In delivering on this ambition, LCGA will:

1. Continue to provide free-to-enter, seven-day-week access to LCGA while also exploring options for amended / augmented opening hours to support other events and enhance Limerick's evening and night-time economies, where resources allow.
2. Work with Limerick City and County Council to establish effective way-finding/branding for LCGA, in addition to reviewing the frontage and environs of LCGA to create a more vibrant and welcoming on-site presence.
3. Plan key marketing activities for exhibitions 12 months ahead, and review proposals and marketing activities with Limerick City and County Council Marketing Team twice yearly. The range of marketing activities will be geared towards local and regional audiences, towards the vibrant primary, secondary and tertiary student populations in the region, but also targeted towards visitors and tourism partners, and extending to national arts audiences. The plan will tie in with existing platforms.
4. Establish, manage and maintain stronger social media presence for LCGA through outsourcing (as LCGA does not have resources in this area) in line with a social media plan, with clear targets and review processes, developed in partnership with Limerick City & County Council Marketing Team.
5. Explore partnership opportunities with Tourism Service in LCCC, neighbouring museums and attractions and with key festival events in the city and region, with a view to cross selling, and the development of itineraries / experiences to enhance the Limerick offer.
6. Build relationships with elected representatives and remind people that LCGA is open to all citizens, while also serving as a means for Limerick and the Mid-west to make connections with other places, regions and communities.
7. Engage in regular survey work with our audiences and visitors (both on-site and on-line) to understand where they come from, how they come to visit LCGA, how they find out about LCGA and which audiences we are reaching and not reaching.
8. We will engage in survey work around Limerick every second year, to gain wider perspectives on LCGA. We will enhance and amend our marketing activities according to the data and feedback received.
9. Review the brand of LCGA to ensure that it aligns with the ambition of this strategy, with the new Limerick brand and with the shared national and local ambition for the development of Limerick in line with Project Ireland 2040 and Limerick 2030.
10. Strengthen promotion of the permanent collection, particularly following the development of the digital archive, and taking account of potential resonances of the work in the collection.

Access – Strengthening Public Engagement

LCGA presents work of national and international standing and houses an important civic collection, but lacks the means through which to support engagement with that work, or to leverage these resources to build the role that LCGA can play in the life of the city, county and region.

LCGA has embarked on a pilot project with Limerick Museum and Hunt Museum. A first phase review of this pilot will be carried out in 2020 and LCGA will seek to build on this momentum through the appointment of a full-time Learning & Public Engagement Co-ordinator. This role will feed into LCGA's marketing activities, but their primary responsibility will be towards longer-term partnerships.

By delivering a quality full-time learning & public engagement programme, LCGA will develop partnerships across primary, secondary and tertiary education, with community partners and with partners across Limerick City and County Council

In delivering on this ambition, LCGA will:

1. Work with Hunt Museum and Limerick Museum in the appointment of a shared Public Engagement Coordinator to design and deliver a programme that will focus on the Permanent Collection as a resource. LCGA will review the current pilot project in 2020 and develop a full-time staff resource in this area, which is then supported by programme resources to ensure that a greater return on investment can be achieved from the work and exhibition programmes of LCGA and extend the reach of LCGA's work.
2. Engage across Limerick City and County Council three-to-four times yearly to ensure that the work of LCGA is integrated with relevant programmes and partnerships where quality cultural engagement and resources in the visual arts, and in LCGA, can support wider social and economic development, tourism and place-making.
3. Take the lead in engaging with other arts organisations in Limerick and the Mid-west to look at opportunities for more expansive and ambitious partnerships that can extend engagement with art and with Limerick and the Mid-west as a creative place. (This will build on the pilot project)
4. Develop a multi-strata education programme initially focussing on primary schools, with a view to extending this to secondary and tertiary education partners as resources allow.
5. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the public engagement work.
6. Continue and enhance our programme of talks by artists and curators in LCGA.
7. Explore opportunities for LCGA to develop local interventions and programmes through partnership with the Limerick City and County Council's Tourism and Events section and the branch library service.

Investing for the Future

As a municipal gallery, LCGA is part of Limerick City and County Council's commitment to making Limerick a great place to live, work, visit and invest. Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) recognises that diverse and informed voices are needed to support the continuing growth and development of LCGA and its programme. LCCC has established a Programme Advisory Panel for LCGA as one such support and will continue to work with LCGA to ensure that the potential of LCGA can be fully realised through strategic support and investment.

In delivering on this ambition, LCCC and LCGA will ensure:

1. That – where possible – staffing resources will be enhanced. In the delivery of this strategy, a focus will be placed on achieving the resources required in relation to public engagement (education/outreach), in relation to supporting the marketing and audience development ambitions of LCGA and in relation to strengthening a dynamic and excellent exhibition programme.
2. That we work closely with partners to secure the programme resources required to meet and promote the ambition of this strategy.
3. On-going access to policy support and guidance for LCGA, from elected representatives through the SPC structure, from senior management, along with enhanced access to the expertise available within LCCC,
4. Explore external advice and inputs required to support the ambition and work of LCGA.
5. Continued support for initiatives such as the Shinnors Scholarship and in seeking to enhance our support for artists to experiment, develop and present their work
6. Up-to-date building reviews take place, with a programme of planned maintenance, review of energy performance and ways to improve the buildings sustainability.
7. Review of the needs and potential of future enhancements to LCGA and its facilities, taking particular account of the ambition to increase visitor numbers and enhance public engagement. This review will also seek to strengthen the relationship of LCGA with Pery Square and The People's Park.
8. That all LCGA policies and strategies are made publicly available on LCGA's website, along with the membership of any committees / advisory panels working with LCGA.
9. That LCGA will review implementation of this strategy twice yearly, in Q1 and in Q3, sharing these updates directly with key stakeholder and publishing them on our website.

APPENDIX A:

TERMS OF REFERENCE – LCGA Programme Advisory Panel

Terms of Reference for the establishment of an advisory panel to support Limerick City Gallery of Art via Director on the temporary artistic programme and the development of the Permanent Collection.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Programme Advisory Panel is to provide advice via the Director on the evaluation and development of the temporary exhibition programme and Permanent Collection.

2. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Programme Advisory Panel provides advice and support to the Director in relation to the:

- 2.1 Development of policies and guidelines to assist the exhibition programming of the Galleries including the Permanent Collection
- 2.2 Development of effective and transparent processes for evaluation of proposals
- 2.3 Guidance and advice in the development of networks of support amongst national and international institutions
- 2.4 Other matters as identified from time to time by the Executive of LCGA pertaining to the programme.

3. EXTENT OF AUTHORITY

The Programme Advisory Panel is a recommending body only and it does not have the authority to:

- 3.1 Make policy or programme decisions
- 3.2 Will be an advisory body only.

4. COMPOSITION OF PANEL

The inaugural Programme Advisory Panel will include: Damien Brady, Limerick City and County Librarian; Niamh McCann, Artist; Ann Mulrooney, Director of The Science Gallery; Christina Kennedy, Head of Collections, IMMA; Niamh Nic Ghabhann, Head of Festive Arts, UL; Jurgen Simpson, Director of DMARC, UL.

The following LCGA staff members will also attend meetings:

- Director/Curator of LCGA
- Care of Collections, Administrator

The panel will appoint the Chair.

5. MEETINGS

The Programme Advisory Panel will meet twice yearly at six month intervals

6. TERM

Members of the Programme Advisory Panel will serve for a period of two years, with the possibility of extending for a second term of two years.

7. STATUS

The Programme Advisory Panel is an advisory body solely and has no decision-making delegations or legal obligations.



Installation view of East Gallery, exhibiting works from the Permanent Collection



Installation view of Lobby Gallery.

