

Imogen Stuart and MIC

MIC has 14 pieces by Imogen Stuart (RHA), one of Ireland's foremost sculptors with a stellar career that began in the 1940s. Born in Berlin in 1927, Stuart moved to Ireland in 1949 and became one of Ireland's most renowned sculptors, with her work placed in both public spaces and private collections throughout Europe and the U.S.

In her own words, Imogen described how she came to have a special connection with MIC: "One of the first big commissions I received after coming to live in Ireland in 1951 was from Mary Immaculate College. The renowned Limerick architect, Andy Devane, acting on behalf of the sisters of Mercy, invited me to carve three lifesize statues. My relationship with the College has lasted more than 50 years. I am very pleased that my works are beautifully situated within the College and very well cared for, which is important to me."

Scan to watch the opening of 'In Her Hands' exhibition launched by President Michael D Higgins in MIC :



Fáilte, Welcome, Willkommen...

TO THE German Art Trail IN LIMERICK

To mark Ireland's 2026 Presidency of the Council of the European Union, each of Ireland's 26 counties has been paired with a specific EU Member State. Inspired by Limerick's pairing with Germany, the Art Trail invites you to explore the rich range of German artworks and works inspired by German-Irish connections found in museums, galleries, colleges, universities, and cathedrals across the city.

This brochure highlights the depth of these connections. It was initiated by the Centre for Irish-German Studies at UL, and was made possible through excellent collaboration with partners including LC&CC, the Hunt Museum, LCGA, MIC, UL and Studio GBM among many others.

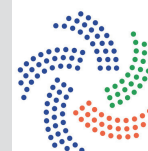
Limerick's links with Germany are extensive and multifaceted, stretching back several centuries. In 1709, German-speaking refugees known as the Irish Palatines settled in County Limerick. Fleeing war and famine, they established vibrant farming communities that left a lasting mark on Irish agricultural life and culture. Since then, cultural and economic ties between Germany and Limerick have continued to flourish across engineering and industry, art, literature and music, business, and academia.

The German Art Trail offers a chance to discover some of the fascinating and beautiful results of these connections and we hope you enjoy the journey.

In addition to the Art Trail, scan the QR code to find a full programme of events taking place across Limerick City and County and links to brochures of individual institutions.



Centre for
Irish-German Studies
Zentrum für
deutsch-irische Studien



ÉIRE2026.EU
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Uachtaránacht na hÉireann ar
Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh 2026
Irish Presidency of the Council of
the European Union 2026



VISIT THE German Art Trail



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Cover image: Imogen Stuart (RHA), Mary Immaculate College

Imogen Stuart (1927-2024)

Imogen Stuart (1927-2024) is one of Ireland's best-known sculptors. Daughter to German art critic Bruno E. and Katharina Werner, she grew up in Berlin in a family immersed in artistic and intellectual life. Following World War II, she trained under artist and woodcarver Otto Hitzberger in southern Germany, where she met her future husband, fellow sculptor Ian Stuart. When Imogen moved to Ireland in 1951, new church commissions were creating opportunities for artists, though rarely for women.

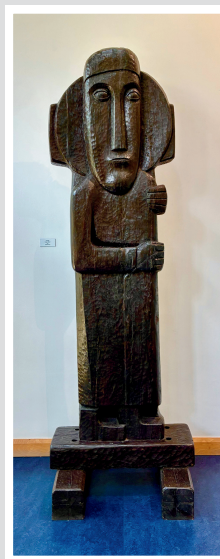
Her relationship with MIC began when the Sisters of Mercy commissioned her to carve three life-sized wooden saints for the Limerick campus. Since that first commission in the 1950s, her works have shaped MIC's artistic landscape, inviting contemplation and providing inspiration to our students, staff and, hopefully, visitors to the MIC Limerick campus.

Imogen's sculptures reflect not only her rootedness in medieval European carving traditions and early 20th century German Expressionism (especially Ernst Barlach), but also the visual rhythms of Irish manuscripts and art. Her sculptures offer a distinctive visual language in which Irish and German traditions remain closely intertwined.

Imogen Stuart Art Trail on the Mary Immaculate College (MIC) Campus

Reception Area:

The Scholar and the Blackbird (1996) is a carved wooden bench in MIC's Main Reception area. Carved from old pitch-pine rafters, it was designed as a reading bench for students. The sculpture features a scholar holding a scroll and a blackbird, as well as quotes from an English translation of a 9th century poem written by an Irish monk about a scholar in his cell, who takes note of the gift of nature -- green trees and "bird song".



Tara Building:

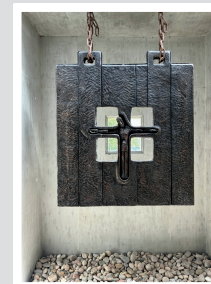
In the **TARA building**, Án tSlí means "the way" or "the path" in Gaelic/Irish and corresponds to Imogen's sculptures exhibited along this corridor of MIC's main building of teaching and learning. Imogen's works here suggest a path attentive not only to intellectual growth but also to ecological awareness and responsibility, opening outward toward a wider world in which human learning, the natural environment, and spiritual reflection go hand in hand.

In Principio (1977) – "in the beginning..."

Imogen evokes both the Genesis and a chant by German abbess and polymath Hildegard von Bingen, fuses the human form with the cross, and includes scholastic ogham, the Old Irish language, on the back.

Window on the World (1991)

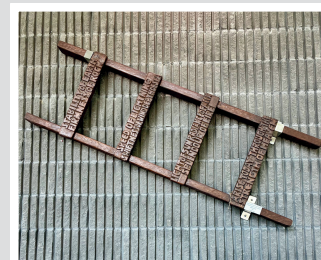
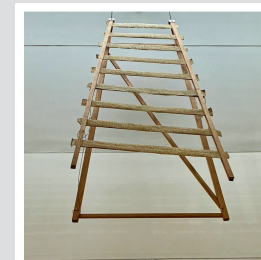
A crucifix carved from railroad timbers in the form of an Irish cottage window, imagines Christianity and Irish traditions as a starting point, inviting both contemplation and inquisitiveness.



The Ladder Trilogy (ecological prayers)

- The Litany of Daniel No. 3: An Ecological Prayer (2001; lead on wood)
- St. Patrick's Ladder (2003; lead on wood)
- The Psalm No. 8: An Ecological Prayer (2005; Indian paper & wood)

Imogen's ladder sculptures unite text and form in a way that transforms a familiar object into a meditative and inspirational structure. The inscribed phrases are drawn from biblical and liturgical traditions (e.g. the Book of Daniel, invoking an expanding chorus of creation, and the Lorica of Saint Patrick, an ancient Celtic Christian prayer and 'spiritual shield'). The ladder implies action: stepping, placing one foot before the other, and rising gradually rung by rung; each rung becomes both a physical support and a stage in reflection, as well as a symbol for learning and education.



Outside:

Don't miss Imogen's stone sculpture Madonna and Child situated between the Tara Building and Summerville House.

German
Art Trail

