

The Winnowing Basket: Art, Loot and The Commons

An art trail across Swan Park, Barrack Hill Park and The Bath Green



[Peasant Woman with Winnowing Basket] Artist: Unknown (French) Date: late 1870s Medium: Albumen silver print from glass negative. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

- The Artlink project The Winnowing Basket is an art trail presented in May 2025 within three parks and commons (Swan Park in Buncrana, Barrack Hill Park in Carndonagh, The Bath Green in Moville) across the Inishowen peninsula in County Donegal, Ireland.
- Artlink invites artists to submit existing work or propose new work for selection, for the art trail/s across one or more of these parks/commons in May 2025.
- The Winnowing Basket is essentially an art trail and so any proposed work/s should be suitable for installation within that format. Any form of work or works may be proposed: from participatory, to performance, sculpture, image-based, time-based; and proposals will also be considered for the making of works in-situ on the art trails as an open studio/residency. A selected artist may make new work, and/or explore the opportunity to adapt their existing work/s in this new context.
- Proposals and submissions are invited that consider the curatorial research across the following pages; and proposals and submissions are invited that consider any other diverse contexts and histories and media that may relate an artist's practice to the site/s.
- The number of artists included in the project is dependent on proposals received and selected.
- The two options for project budgets for artists are:
5000 euro inclusive of fee and costs available to a maximum of three artists for making new work
and
1000 euro inclusive of fee and costs to a minimum of nine artists to submit existing work.
- As The Winnowing Basket is essentially an art trail, artists should especially consider any proposed works within that format, and consider how any proposed new work or existing work befits a trail that leads/guides visitors across the sites.
- Proposals should be received by 15th December 2024 and should include a proposed budget.
- Proposals should be emailed to sheehan68@gmail.com and info@artlink.ie with 'The Winnowing Basket' in the subject line.
- The project is funded by Arts Council Ireland and curated by Declan Sheehan and Artlink.



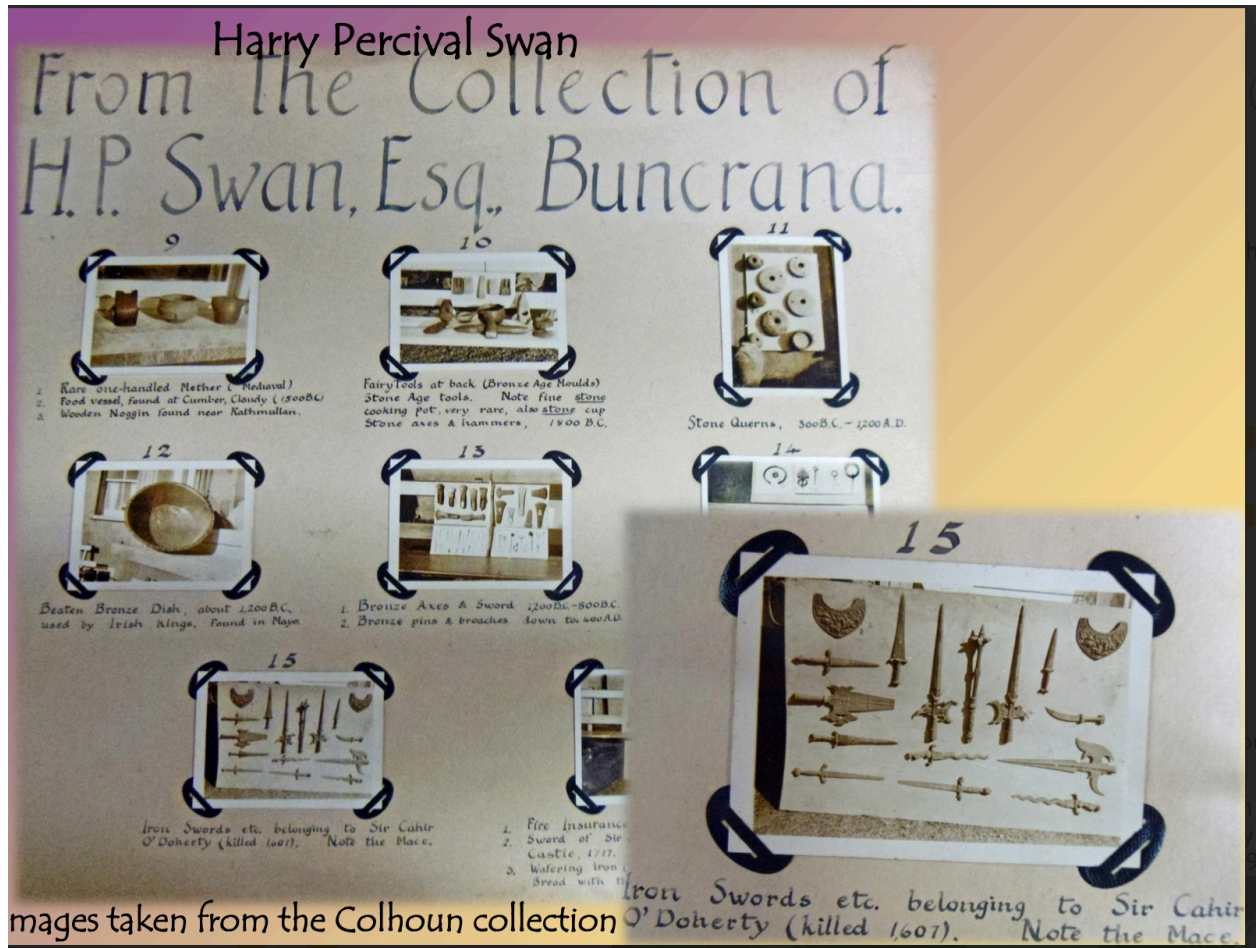
Views of Barrack Hill Park in Carndonagh, Swan Park in Buncrana, The Bath Green in Moville

**“There was a big high wall there that tried to stop me.
The sign was painted, said ‘Private Property.’
But on the backside, it didn’t say nothing.
This land was made for you and me.”**
(One of the ‘lost’ verses of “This Land is Your Land”, Woody Guthrie 1940)

Who gets to demarcate the private and the commons, to write the legacies and heritage of our past, present and future, to define what counts as antiquities or heritage or loot?

The word ‘loot’ comes from Hindustani into English in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first uses of the word ‘loot’ in English were related to the capacious extraction of profits, resources and riches from India by history’s original ‘corporate raiders’, the empire-building corporation/army The British East India Company. There are traces of such history in the three parks and commons (Swan Park in Buncrana, Barrack Hill Park in Carndonagh, The Bath Green in Moville) of the Inishowen peninsula, within the many diverse aftermaths, legacies and bequests that still influence

Inishowen's present and futures. The 2025 Artlink project *The Winnowing Basket* invites artists to look at Inishowen and its three parks or commons (Swan Park in Bunrana, Barrack Hill Park in Carndonagh, The Bath Green in Moville) and to trace the encounter with diverse histories such as these, histories that have navigated outwards across oceans into empires and that have acquired, accumulated, rebelled, conformed, collected, and bequeathed.



Page from an archive album compiled by antiquarian Mabel Colhoun, that itemises and illustrates the personal collection of Harry Percival Swan of Bunrana, Co. Donegal. The album is in the collection of Derry and Strabane Museum and Archives and the album and/or images of it will be available to view by artists.

Within Inishowen, one such accumulation of a commons, and a heritage or legacy of loot or antiquities, are the bequests from Bunrana businessman, antiquarian, and author Harry Swan (1879–1970). Swan bequeathed to the town of Bunrana its

commons, Swan Park, from his estate. And he assembled the eclectic Harry Percival Swan Collection of antiquities, objets de vertu, archaeological artefacts, and items of historical interest, found or bought as he travelled throughout the country, and bequeathed the collection to the Royal Irish Academy, which was then deposited to Ireland's National Museum where the collection now resides mostly in storage. There are 524 objects in Ireland's National Museum catalogue that were donated in the Harry Percival Swan Collection. Some glass, metalwork and coins from the collection are at Ireland's National Museum site at Collins barracks, but there is also a lot of objects in Ireland's National Museum Folklife and Natural History collections. An Excel database from Ireland's National Museum listing the works can be shared with artists who request it and/or images of the object/s or visits to see collection items in person may be able to be negotiated.



Left, Liathróid Cailligh (a 'witch ball') , c. 1800, part of the personal collection of Harry Percival Swan of Bunrana, Co. Donegal. Right, a Perpetual calendar and speed chart engraved on tobacco box, dated 1729, part of the personal collection of Harry Percival Swan of Bunrana, Co. Donegal.

Just like Swan Park in Bunrana, the heritage of Movice's scenic commons The Bath Green as a bequest is well recognised – in Movice's case, The Bath Green being a bequest made in the early twentieth century from the estate of the Anglo-Irish aristocratic family the Montgomerys. It is less recognised that within this wealth of the Montgomery estate, and the wealth of their legacies and their bequests, there is deeply ingrained the capacious loot of the British East India Company: Robert Montgomery, born in Movice in 1809, ruling for several years as Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab in The British East India Company in India, and being established as 'Sir Robert Montgomery' after playing a defining role in the defeat of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and with a district of the former Punjab Province of British India, in what is now Pakistan, being named Montgomery District (since 1967 named Sahiwal District), and with an attendant accumulation of familial wealth capacious enough to enable Robert's

son Bishop Henry Montgomery to then bequest part of their Montgomery estate land in Merville, The Bath Green, as a Pleasure Park for the town.



Left, Tour of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab [Sir Robert Montgomery] through Cashmere (sic), Meeting of the Lieutenant Governor [Sir Robert Montgomery] and the Maharajah of Cashmere at Jummoo, Illustrated London News, 8 September 1863.

Left, Lahore; Sir Robert Montgomery's Camel Carriages, Government House about 1863–1864. Samuel Bourne (English, 1834 - 1912) (Getty Museum)

Similarly, Inishowen born Frederick Young (1786 -1874) went on to develop his status and legacy as part of the British East India Company in India, joining the East India Company army as a fourteen year old an ensign in the early 1800s.



"THE POTATO GARDEN."



His legacy includes the small hill station Mussoorie in one of the most picturesque parts of the Himalayas, that grew up around the hunting lodge set up there by Young in 1823, a town now of haunted architecture of old sprawling homes with Scottish and Irish names, with a legend, retold in the 2018 short story *Captain Young's Ghost* by one of India's most loved and longest read authors Ruskin Bond, that it is said to be haunted by Young; a tale in which almost everyone in the hill-station is seen exchanging fables of the dead Irish captain – whose military career as a commander of the first Gurkha battalion also carries a legend of him raising the first Gurkha regiment, and a legacy of cultivating the potato for the first time in this region of the Himalayas.

Conversely, the nineteenth century Irish nationalist MP Charles O'Donnell, from a Carndonagh family, cast himself as a champion of the Indian peasantry in the nineteenth century. In the British Parliament he often spoke on British imperialism in India in analogy with Irish matters.

THE
BLACK PAMPHLET OF CALCUTTA.

THE FAMINE OF 1874.

BY
A BENGAL CIVILIAN.

(ENGLISH EDITION.)

"Close ambition varnished o'er with zeal."
Paradise Lost.

LONDON:
WILLIAM RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY, W.
1876.

Price Two Shillings.

His national reputation was developed from his controversialist campaigns, in anonymous and vitriolic tracts such as *The black pamphlet of Calcutta* (1876), and *The ruin of an Indian province* (1880), alleging that the ruin of India was being imposed by the acquiring of loot and the extractive forces of Empire, and that the Empire's ineptitude and corruption adulterated the relief operations during the 1874 Bengal famine.

These brief sketches of research above can serve to usefully indicate the many diverse and uncommon encounters, that can be traced within the contexts, histories and media that relate to the three parks and commons (Swan Park in Buncrana, Barrack Hill Park in Carndonagh, The Bath Green in Moville), across the Inishowen peninsula in County Donegal, Ireland.

The project *The Winnowing Basket* offers a discrete moment for art in situ to revision and reimagine these three parks or commons in this ethos: an encounter across an art trail with such diverse readings, histories and futures related to Inishowen as those above, and any other such diverse contexts and histories and media that artists may propose from their own practice.
