

Subscriber Only Culture

# Culture Night Dublin 2023: An outsider's insider guide to where to go on September 22nd

Do Culture Night at your own pace, equipped with tools including earplugs or headphones and good walking shoes. Try your best to be patient too

Expand



Performers Jessie Thompson, Jason McNamara, Lino Bento and Jaqueline Alves at the launch of Culture Night Dublin 2023, taking place this Friday, September 22nd. Photograph: Julien Behal Photography

Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan

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It's a September evening in 2016, and I am running my first [Culture Night](#) event. The queue on Wellington Quay in Dublin is getting longer as door staff manage the growing crowd. People are grumbling in line, and bar staff are shooting me death looks as they squeeze past a wall of warm bodies. That night hundreds of people move through a windowless subterranean room as performers sing, dance and act on a tiny stage. It is trial by fire, a chaotic, sweaty, anxiety-inducing experience, but one of the most rewarding and exciting events I have ever managed, and one I will never forget.

It was only four years earlier that I landed in Dublin. I was completely new to Ireland and knew only one person, a friend from university who was working at Google. I began writing for an online events zine (RIP LeCool Dublin), which pointed me in the direction of Culture Night. When I mentioned I would be attending an event at D-Light studios, my new Google friends gasped in shock, telling me that everything north of the River Liffey was incredibly dangerous and I must never go there alone. I rolled my eyes and went anyway, to be rewarded with an incredible aerial performance by the Paperdolls. This was the first time I had explored north of the river, and I've been in love ever since, especially on Culture Night, when the events have a particular warmth.



Visit D-Light Studios for a screening of *North Circular*, a musical trip through inner-city Dublin.

For [Culture Night Dublin 2023](#), on Friday, September 22nd, you can visit [D-Light Studios](#) yourself for a screening of North Circular, a film that takes you on a musical trip through the bustling streets of inner-city Dublin, exploring its rich history, music and stories. More northside highlights this year include workshops at [Dublin Buddhist Centre](#); sweets and treats from the [Muslim Sisters of Éire](#), who will be changing it up from their soup run to feed Culture Night attendees in front of the GPO; exhibitions, tours, films and events at [Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre](#); and a literary event at [Chime](#) for writers who are hard of hearing or deaf, or who have tinnitus, to present their work. You'll find gravity-defying aerial performances at [Spencer Dock](#), along with other events and workshops. And for an event that really captures the essence of Culture Night, drop into the [Irish Writers Centre](#) for readings, performances and a writing workshop at Rambling House – the name refers to a tradition where neighbours went “night visiting” for an evening’s homespun entertainment. These few events alone show what an incredible array of diverse organisations and performers bring the northside to life, both on Culture Night and year-round.



Drop into the Irish Writers Centre for readings, performances and a writing workshop at Rambling House.

*[\[ Culture Night 2023 to see 1,800 events across Ireland in September \]](#)*

I can't talk about this area without mentioning Capel Street. Named one of the coolest streets in the world by Time Out, it is home to food from many cultures, pubs, sex shops, cafes, hiking stores, charity shops, hardware stores and much more. It is also host to a number of queer spaces, such as [Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre](#). This building, at 105 Capel Street, was one of the first 12 Georgian buildings in Dublin; only four of those are left standing, and Outhouse is the only one open to the public. On Culture Night it will be running Fundamental: A Series of Queer Story Times in its library with GCN, Small Trans Library, Sex Workers Alliance Ireland and others, alongside an exhibition in its theatre space. The pedestrianised street outside will also host pop-up events throughout the evening.

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At a time when queer people and their human rights are regularly under attack, Culture Night will provide space to participate, advocate, educate and celebrate. Crossing the river, we come to the [Wood Quay Amphitheatre](#),

a Culture Night cornerstone, this year filled with gospel, dance performances, opera and, most excitingly, the Vogue Ball with QueerMania. At Meeting House Square we have events ranging from [Dublin Theatre of the Deaf](#) to [Strawberries Queer Dance Party](#) for anyone craving a late-night bop on the evening.

Now we're firmly in Dublin 2, home to many Culture Night fixtures, including [Freemasons' Hall](#) (everyone has to go once) and the dazzling mix of offerings at the [Alliance Française](#), [Instituto Cervantes](#), [Italian Institute of Culture](#) and – my own favourite – [Goethe-Institut Irland](#), which once again brings the weird and wonderful to the masses, with From Déad Art to Swinging Bones, an exhibition celebrating Bram Stoker's Dracula and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's film Nosferatu.



Italian Institute of Culture, Dublin: Giulio D'Agostino on mandolin for Culture Night.



The Freemasons' Lodge in Dublin.

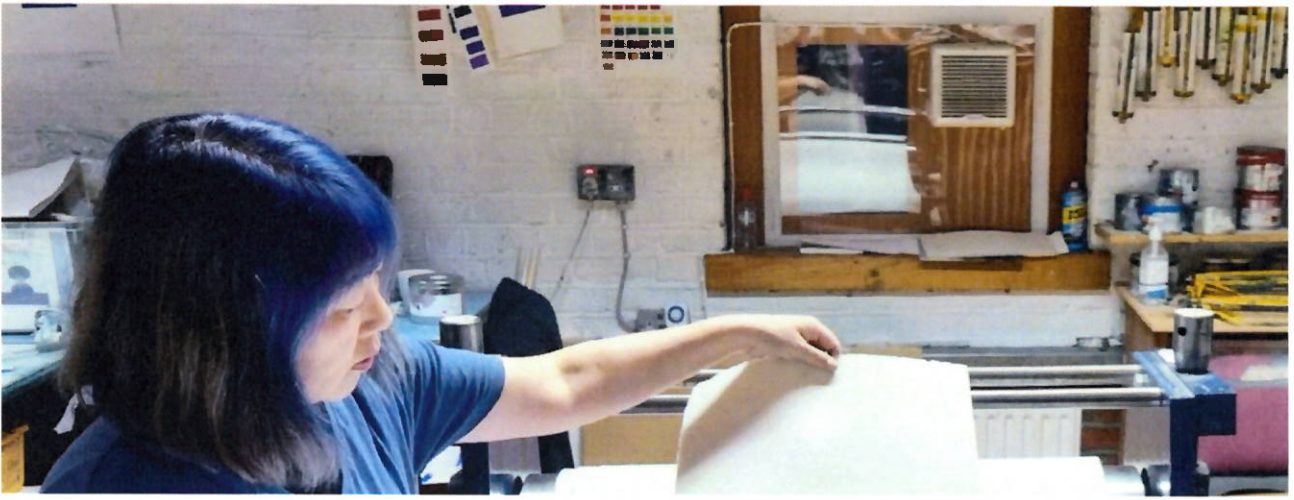
Speaking of weird and wonderful, there are always interesting talks, walks and niche events to attend. My top choice for talks is [Trinity Long Room Hub](#)'s event about Terry Pratchett (also available to watch online), followed closely by the [DIAS Geophysics](#) talk about earthquakes and other geohazards, and Richard Carson's [Race and Place in the City](#) walking talk on Gardiner Street, inspired by the work of the black theologian Willie Jennings.



Race and Place in the City.

For a star-studded event, head over to the [Sugar Club](#) with [Dublin Rape Crisis Centre](#), where the author Roddy Doyle, the intimacy co-ordinator Ita O'Brien, the film director Lenny Abrahamson and the author (and [Irish Times contributor](#)) Sarah Gilmartin will be discussing the history, evolution, challenges and importance of representing consent, sexual violence, power imbalance, gendered stereotypes and cultural misconceptions in their work.

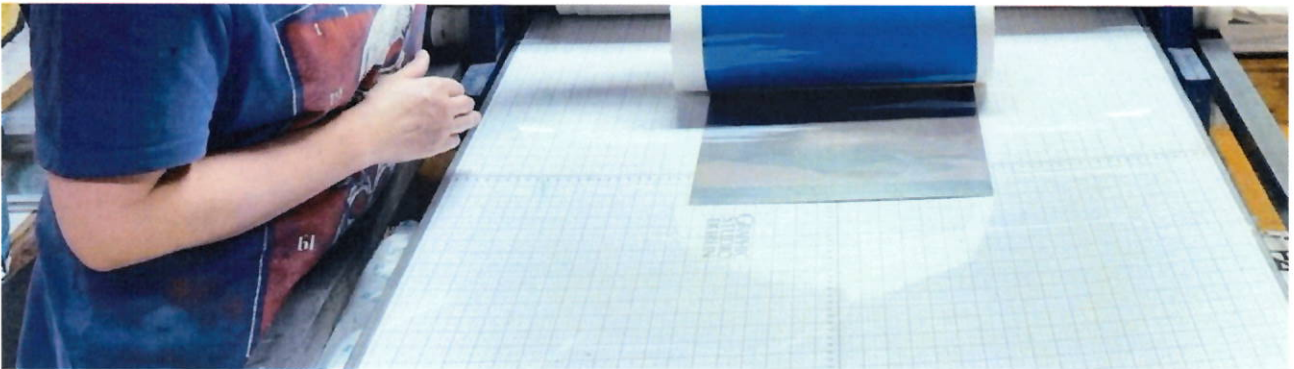
When I am in the mood for a more hands-on Culture Night experience, there is an endless supply of workshops and sessions. In Temple Bar you can make a sculpture or paint with coffee with [This Must Be the Place Dublin](#), or you could make your own rings at [Silverworks](#). If printmaking is your thing, you could watch demonstrations at [Black Church Print Studio](#) or [Graphic Studio Dublin](#), and then have a go yourself at [Damn Fine Print](#). This year's programme is chock-full of workshops across all disciplines, so if you're looking for a focused, interactive way to spend the evening, there's plenty to work with.



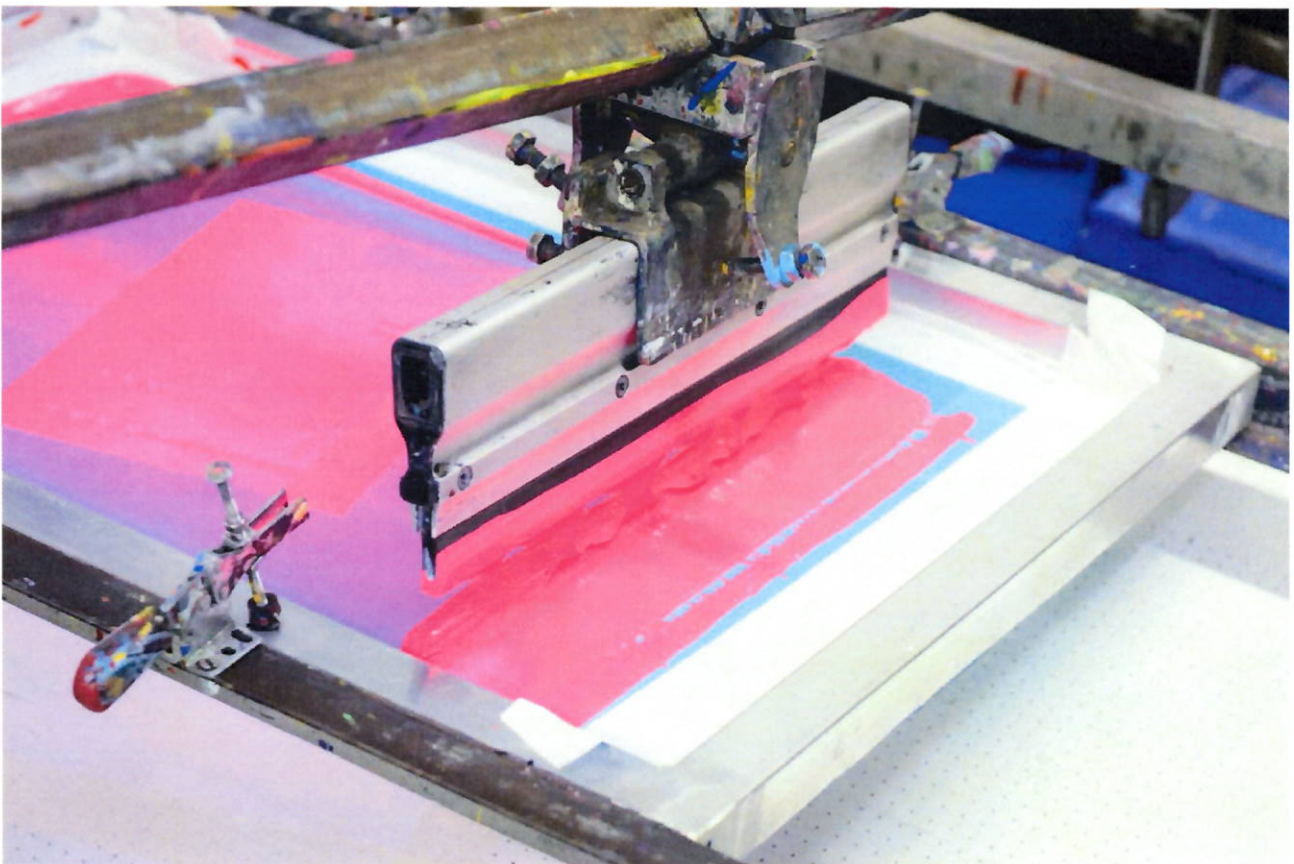
Sections

14°

Hi Ulrike



Printmaking at Graphic Studio Dublin.



A squeegee during screen printing at Damn Fine Print.



Despite being a diehard northsider, I defected for the past few years to Dublin 8, an area steeped in history while also making room for new and vibrant venues and events. Here we have weaving demonstrations with the [Liberties Weavers](#), tours and events at [Stillgarden Distillery](#) and an exhibition at [Pallas Projects/Studios](#). One event that truly brings together the classical and the radical is [Irish National Opera](#)'s screening of the Scorched Earth trilogy – satirical films inspired by environmental disaster and the lack of serious climate action – at the Digital Hub.

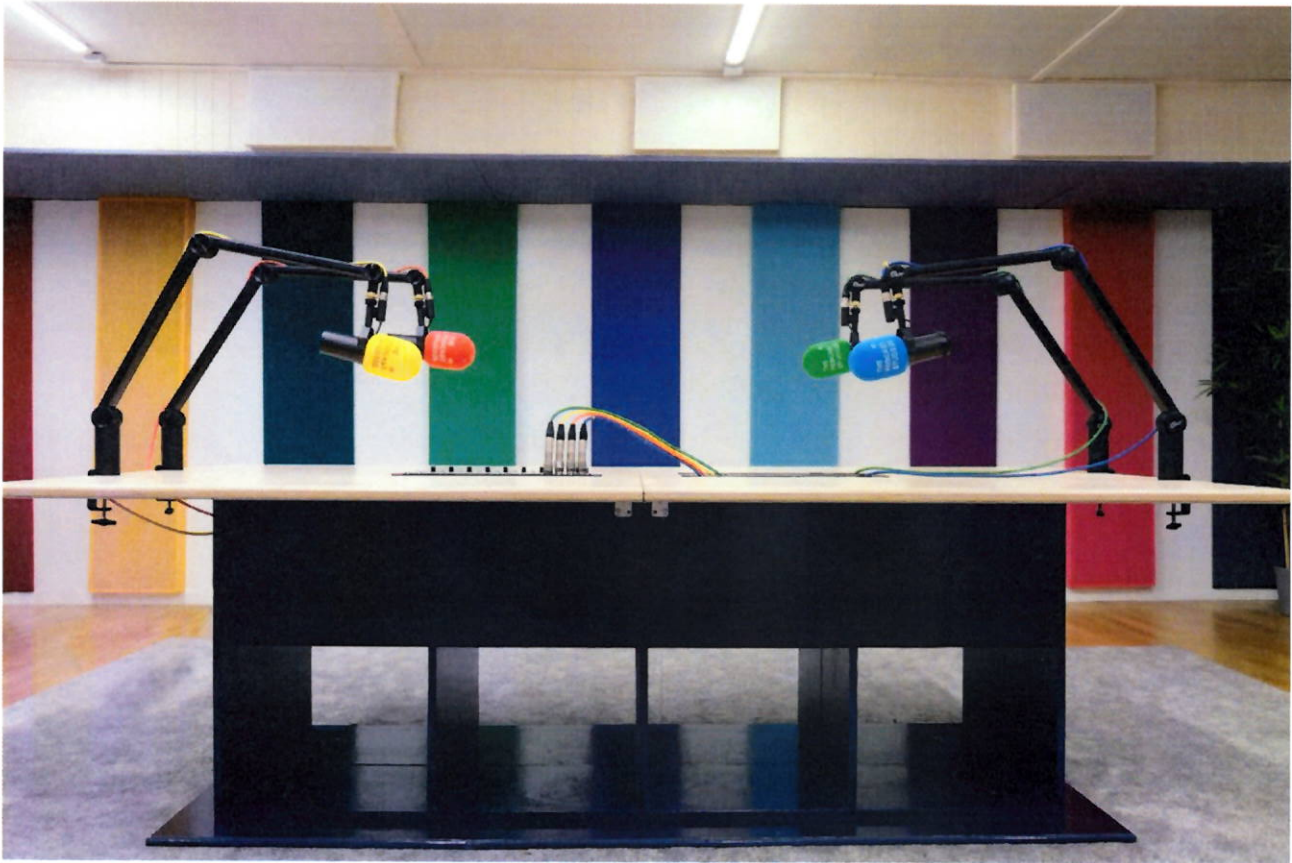


Pallas Projects Studios: Clarissa Explains It All, 1991. 80x60cm.



Irish National Opera is screening the Scorched Earth Trilogy on the side of the Berkeley Library at Trinity College Dublin for Culture Night. Photograph: Neil Harrison

As a writer I might even turn to Culture Night for a bit of creative development. This year I could pitch a book idea to [O'Brien Press](#), create a five-minute professionally recorded podcast at the [Podcast Studios](#) or learn about connections, entrepreneurialism and resilience at [Trinity's Ideas Workspace](#).



Podcast Studios, Dublin.

One silver lining of Covid-19 is the blossoming of online and hybrid events, making Culture Night somewhat accessible to those of us unable to attend in person. As an autistic person, Culture Night can be a bit of a sensory challenge, although manageable with earplugs and through choosing quieter events. But if I'm not able for the buzz and bustle, it's great having the option to tune in online with [Dublin Painting and Sketching Club](#), the [Irish Traditional Music Archive](#) or the [Rotunda Hospital Chapel](#), along with some of the events mentioned above, which can be attended digitally. I hope there will be more online events in the future – which will also, with luck, give venue staff a bit of a breather too.

[\[ Temple Bar plaza to be transformed into outdoor roller disco for Culture Night \]](#)

My parting words of advice are: do Culture Night at your own pace, equipped with tools including earplugs/headphones, good walking shoes or mobility aids. If you're in need of a lift or ramp, all events on the website can be filtered by venue accessibility. There will be queues, so bring friends or a well-charged smartphone or ereader to pass the time. Try your best to

be patient, and of course be sound to all venue and event staff, who are doing their best to get through a crazy night.

When it's increasingly hard to love a city determined to outprice, erase and evict us, this is one bustling, truly alive night when Dublin throws its arms open, so accept the invitation on your own terms and enjoy.

*Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan is writer-in-residence for Culture Night Dublin, on Friday, September 22nd, which features more than 300 events across the city and county. You can see the full programme at [culturenightdublin.ie](http://culturenightdublin.ie)*

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