

## Commonage Summer School Public Programme

All events take place at the Co-Op, Green Street, unless otherwise stated.

### Wed 1st Aug

Lunchtime heritage tour of **St. Marys**.  
*As part of the Abhainn Ri Festival.* **1pm**

Commonage Summer School **Welcome BBQ**.  
*Steppes Bar.* **8.30pm**

### Thurs 2nd

**Lunchtime heritage talk** on Callan Agricultural Co-Op. *As part of the Abhainn Ri Festival.* **1pm**

**River Heritage and Nature Walk**.  
*Meet at KCAT Carpark.* **5.30pm**

**Getting Lost**, an introductory talk by Commonage.  
*Friary Building.* **7pm**

### Fri 3rd

Lunchtime heritage talk at **Callan Motors**.  
*As part of the Abhainn Ri Festival. At Callan Motors.* **1pm**

### Sun 5th

**I Draw Slow** *As part of the Abhainn Ri Festival. (ticket price: €10).* **11pm**

### Mon 6th

**The Big Shed Project** (*AA Design & Make*, Hooke Park). Talk by architect *Nozomi Nakabayashi*. **1pm**

**HOME:** Exploring ownership and belonging. With artist *Jennie Moran* and architect *Laura Hartly*, curator *Etaoin Holohan* and PhD candidate in Anthropology *Gabrielle Ackroyd*. **8.30pm**  
*(suggested donation: €5)*

### Tues 7th

**Reading Event.** Exploring the political implications of the expanding of the commons. Hosted by artist *Sarah Lincoln*. For advance copy of reading material please email [info@commongecallan.com](mailto:info@commongecallan.com)

### Wed 8th

**TOWN:** Discussions considering gatherings, communities and localities. With architect *Orla Murphy*, artist *Alan Counihan*, architect *Dominic*

*Stevens* and social pedagogue *Aine Taylor*.  
*(suggested donation: €5)*

### Thurs 9th

**FOLLOWING FARMING:** with Commonage Studio, *Ruth E Lyons & Carl Giffney*, The Good Hatchery, *Nuno Sacramento*, Scottish Sculpture Workshop, and *Adam Sutherland*, Grizedale Arts (via Skype). *(suggested donation: €5)* **2pm – 6pm**

*‘Until its time for you to go:’* A meal designed to help new information settle and postpone dispersal. By artist *Jennie Moran*. *Booking suggested. email info@commongecallan.com (suggested donation: €10)* **7pm**

### Mon 13th

*‘What we Leave in our Wake’* screening of a filmic essay directed by *Pat Collins* with post film discussion.

### Tues 14th

**HOPPING FENCES:** Alternative spatial practices. Presentations by *Rionach Ni Néill*, geographer and dancer, *Henrietta Williams*, photographer and *Emma Houlihan*, visual artist. *(suggested donation: €5)*

### Wed 15th

**COPYLEFT:** Traditions of self-build and open source design. Talk by artist/architect *Fiona McDonald*. Presentation on Segal Building Method by architect *Colin Bell*. *(suggested donation: €5)*

### Fri 17th

Summer School Closing Celebration. **7pm**

### Sat 18th

**RIGHTS OF WAY:** A walking tour and talk.  
*As part of Heritage Week.* **4pm**

**Commonage Public Events Information Point**  
Co-op, Green Street, Callan, Co.Kilkenny.  
**T (087) 9912001** [www.commonagecallan.com](http://www.commonagecallan.com)  
**Facebook at facebook.com/commonage**  
**E: commonagecallan@gmail.com**

## Architecture’s Shadowlands

Was it just a dream some of us had? There, in my minds eye, is John Lennon, grizzled five o’clock shadow, owl specs - de rigour in the seventies - and his finger to his mouth, miming ‘shush’ to the camera, ‘it’s alright.’

That picture, for some iconic, may or may not have accompanied Lennon’s pronouncement that ‘the dream is over’ even if, personally, the photo always overlays the phrase. While not knowing its precise date the image of Lennon, the dream being over, and the finger-over-mouth photo, all come from the early emerging days of the contemporary environmental movement. The October 1973 Oil Crisis is often cited as the defining watershed moment for the nascent green world, from which the growth of environmentalism during the decade flowed. In turn a significant part of this proto green-culture organically evolved out of the late sixties ‘back to the land’ movement, morphing into preparing for self-sufficient autonomy and a world without oil and nuclear Armageddon not so far down the road through practical knowledge and skills, and doing so, generally, in rural rather than the urban settings. The early seventies would spawn organisations dedicated to developing the approaches first inspired in the immediate aftermath of the sixties; whole food stores, alternative bookstores, or Greenpeace and the Radical Technology movement. Something had changed, compared to 1969’s baroque psychedelia of the likes of Lennon, Hendrix and a multitude of lesser Gods, with the coming of the seventies, and the commune turned towards the rural, towards land, forests, and farming. The challenges of the real work required for turning these dreams into realities would become, as the seventies continued, clearer - and for some too much - and partially crystallise into the outline of an ‘alternative society’ that, at its best, was re-inhabiting and living lightly on the earth.

It can be hard to believe in, these days, as so little remains. But where it does, the examples show something of the rural-centric envisioned, lo-tech future. One good example – in Britain at least – is the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), founded in West Wales forty years ago in 1972 and still going strong.

CAT epitomises a vision of an ecological future; small-scale, de-centralised, lo-tech, often grassroots approach, a version of environmental practice and thinking encapsulating the seventies dream in a quarry-filled site. Today, the seventies has a terrible reputation and is derided as the worst of recent decades. Critics, however, don’t appear to notice how the heart of the response to the environmental crisis was born in those brief years. If Lennon had visited CAT my hunch is that, despite the day-glo colours the Beatles are remembered in and Yellow Submarine being more akin to Archigram’s techy, bowellistic fantasia’s, he would have seen the point. Like, dig, man.

Indeed, the roots of much of what is found today, on the ground, around Europe can often be traced back to those seventies experiments. From guerrilla gardening, permaculture, and slow food, to the Transition Town movement or - to get specific - the resurgent interest in design and make (if not ‘dream and make’) courses and workshops as hands-on experiential architecture, draw serious sustenance from that time.

It is a tradition that continues, bubbling away at ground level, at times flowing, at others ebbing, but there, present. What is different from forty years ago is how environmentalism is also now at the heart of the mainstream, affecting policy, economics and geostrategic decision-making.

It isn’t so easily straight-forward to pinpoint an exact, totemic date to the mainstream’s acceptance that a more environmental world culture is crucial to the planet’s future as our kind’s home. Various – mainly Western – contender’s, flash across the mind; Hurricane Katrina, An Inconvenient Truth, the Stern Report, the Larsen Ice Shelf breaking away from the Antarctica’s main body. What is clear is that the mainstream response is very much part of the contemporary landscape, and isn’t – as happened previously – going to recede back into the margins.

The parameters and character of the mainstream response is also clear. It is techno-bureaucratic, policy driven, focused on ever more ‘advanced’ technologies as the solution, and framed as one risk among many in the quantitative bureaucratic language of leverage, calculation and probabilities. Whether Carbon-Trading markets, corporate citizenship, or scaled-up techno fixes such as Geo-Engineering, these are abstracted and technical-bureaucratic in their understanding of

the challenge. In its architectural hue, technology is absolutely right in there, along with the pragmatism that comes with the terrain. In the last few weeks the contours of this twenty-first century has been given another example of a part of the shape of this future, with the opening of Europe’s tallest building; Renzo Piano’s 1000 metre plus high Shard in London. Described as the first vertical city, it brings aspects of the future’s built environment into sharp focus, one where compact cities build up to reduce pressure on over-exploited land-masses, in part brought on by rising world population.

Indeed, population growth and exponential urbanism underline the mantras of so much of sustainable development. There are continual references to how the balance has tipped to more of the world’s population living in urban rather than rural habitats. Or to how exponential population increase requires shifts towards verticality, whether as a means to deal with the world’s largest mega-slum; Dharavi in Mumbai or the design and development – in Holland - of vertical cattle and pig farms.

What receives comparatively marginal attention across the mainstream and architectural media is that even with 70% of the world’s population urbanized by 2050 this still leaves between 3 and 4 billion people living rural lives. To draw in a further, yet equally fundamental point in this moment of massive urbanisation is the diminishment, indeed denial, of the ‘somatic’ dimension of our lives; accompanying the human creatures further move away from the land, and the grounding influence it has held for millennia. As the American cultural theorist Morris Berman has repeatedly pointed out, this is a narrative leading not only towards cultural homogenization, but constructed on the denial of the archaic and somatic, of our mind-bodies, our unconscious – “the secret life of belly and bone\*”.

From such a perspective the recovery of ecological understanding, has been and remains only part of a larger recovery that lay – and pretty much continues to lie - dormant and repressed within the Industrial mainstream’s shadow; the wilderness, the feminine, the child, the body, the region. It’s this common thread, in the return of the repressed – heaven in a wild flower, which Lennon and the CAT people would have tacitly understood they shared. And it is also the bedrock from which the seventies sustainable architecture and building culture emerged, a significant if usually unconscious source of its continuing appeal to those less caught up within the

mainstream. For instance, in workshops part of the thrill is in using hands-on technologies, those within our hold and control, rather than the other way round. In Permaculture; the wheelbarrow, the fork and the rake. And in building workshops; hammers, saws, screwdrivers, oxen. All, excepting the last, remarkable technologies.

Berman foresaw – albeit twenty five years too early – the contours of these contrasting ways of knowing, a divide that he described as planetary and globalist world-views. The one acknowledges our place in the universe, the other commences from a mechanical metaphor. Today, I would suggest, the differences are evident enough, whether at the larger-scale or within the architectural realm. If we begin to understand these physical, sensual ways that appeal to architects, designers and other makers and growers as a part of this wider cultural story of the return of the repressed, unconscious shadowlands of Industrial society, another, very different story about sustainable architectural culture to that of conventional Modernist narratives, becomes visible. Think of how Robert Pogue Harrison showed the forest as one of the shadows of civilisation<sup>2</sup>, or how the ‘Surre(gion)alist’, Max Cafard, speaks of the ‘region as the elsewhere of civilisation’<sup>3</sup>. Think, here, also of Finnish theoretician, Juhani Pallasmaa’s architecture of the senses<sup>4</sup>. We may not know where this ‘elsewhere’ exactly is, (and there are, of course – beautiful - complications; reconciling the web’s Glocal nomadism with the wheelbarrow, the rake and the saw), but this is a path which is sensual alive and honours, rather than sublimates, the hidden depths of our kind.

The dream may be over. Still, it isn’t hard to imagine Lennon arriving at CAT, getting caught up in building, picking up a wheelbarrow, and heading off to hammer in straw bale walls from recently harvested fields for some-such building or structure as a gift of time, for any next visitors to draw sustenance from, arriving out of the near future and the near away.

*Oliver Lowenstein is a green cultural theorist and runs Fourth Door Review, [www.fourthdoor.co.uk](http://www.fourthdoor.co.uk), a cultural review of many parts.*

\* A Delmore Schwartz phrase by way of Morris Berman

<sup>1</sup> Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World*, University of Cornell 1981, p279

<sup>2</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadows of Civilisation*, Princeton UP. 1992

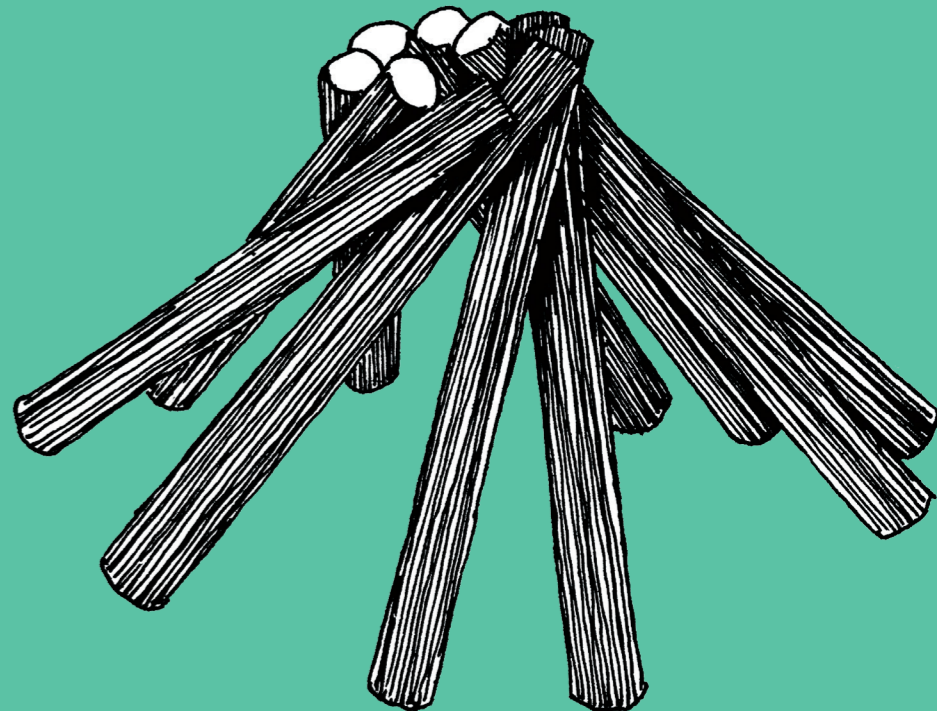
<sup>3</sup> Max Cafard, *Surregionalist Manifesto*, see [www.maxcafard.info](http://www.maxcafard.info)

<sup>4</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses*, John Wiley, 2005

# COMMONAGE

Vol. 3

## SUMMER SCHOOL 1-17 AUGUST 2012



CALLAN, CO. KILKENNY, IRELAND, 1-17 AUGUST 2012  
COLLECTIVE | DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE | ART | BUILDING | THINKING

## Commonage Summer School

The 2012 annual *Commonage Summer School* runs from the 1st - 17th August in Callan, Co. Kilkenny. During this time up to 50 participants, builders and designers from around Callan, across Ireland and further afield (including Greece, Denmark, Scotland, Italy, England) will collect and work together to realise a number of built projects as well as participating in and contributing to a parallel programme of events.

The parallel programme of events will include public talks, screenings, field trips, shared meals, discussions, factory tours, music, guided walks; integrated into the building process with the understanding that thinking and making happen side by side. Summer school designers and participants will present their own practices and create discussion events and workshops.

**Summer school participants:** Kirsty Cassels, Caroline Brayson, Theodora-Rafaela Nani, Kaja Sofie Skytte, Gabrielle Ackroyd, Giancarlo Albino, Ciara McCurtin, Denise Kehoe, Martina Foley, Olivia Hillery, Ethan Dooley, Marcin Woszczyna, Stephen Laverty, David Upton, Lorcan Mulhern, Brian Cregan, Hugh O'Rourke, Robert Chapman, Martin McGloin, Brian Jordan, Andy Kiely, Sam Bishop, Emily-Ann Gilligan, Philip Ryan, John Wallace, Gabriella Kiss, James Irvine, Raelene Casey, Mark Roberts, Aleksander Johansen and more...

### BUILDING

Collectively realised projects will include: a seasonal bridge, design and build led by *LiD Architecture* (**Deirdre McMenamin, Dougal Sheridan, Matthew Beattie**); a series of gates, design and build led by *Superfolk Design Studio* (**Gearóid Muldowney**); and a cow house, design and build led by *The Cowshed Collective* (**Michael Hayes, Samuel Kane, James Kennedy, Scott Morton and Albert Tobin**).

### DISCUSSION

Talks, presentations and discussions will include contributions by geographer **Patrick O'Connor**, architect **Colin Bell**, architect

**Nozomi Nakabayashi**, geographer and dancer **Ríonach Ní Néill**, artist **Jennie Moran** and architect **Laura Harty**, researcher **Gabrielle Ackroyd**, curator **Etaoin Holohan**, architect/artist **Fiona McDonald**, photographer **Henrietta Williams**, artist **Emma Houlihan**, architect **Orla Murphy**, social pedagogue **Aine Taylor**, artist **Alan Counihan**, architect **Dominic Stevens**, **Commonage Studio**, **Ruth E. Lyons** and **Carl Giffney** of The Good Hatchery, **Nuno Sacramento** of Scottish Sculpture Workshop, **Adam Sutherland** of Grizedale Arts and more...

### READING

A reading event centred around the book '*Commonwealth*' by **Hardt and Negri** will be led by artist **Sarah Lincoln**.

### FOOD

Shared meals will include Commonage Summer School introductory BBQ night, and '*Until it's time for you to go*' a meal designed by artist **Jennie Moran** to help new information settle. Jennie will also remotely administer breakfast-time alchemy.

### MUSIC

Including *I Draw Slow* at the Co-op (as part of the *Abhainn Ri Festival Week*), a meitheal day with working songs, and music sessions.

### SCREENINGS

Filmic essay '*What We Leave in Our Wake*' by director **Pat Collins**. Other surprise film screenings.

### WALKS

Guided walks will include a river nature and heritage walk, lunchtime heritage tours, '*Rights of Way*' walk and talk.

### YOUTH

Artist **Siobhán Clancy** will be working with youth collective *Flash:light* as part of Callan's *Abhainn Ri Festival Youth Programme*.



COMMONAGE OPENING EVENT, CO-OP, CALLAN, AUGUST 2011

## Waymarkers

A group sat at the bar in a Callan pub discussing an urgent need for a teleporter. To the outside ear their conversation, which continued to troubleshoot transporting a generator to the top of a motte, would have been inexplicable. But then, we have occasionally found ourselves on seemingly mystifying journeys. We're trying to clear a path, not necessarily a new path, but one that highlights architecture and design as tools to negotiate and reconsider the things that we share. Thinking about new contexts for design and spatial practices in Ireland, we continue to see that Callan, through its distinctiveness and ordinariness, can be a starting point from which to develop a new way of working.

Commonage, in its first iteration, began with an exhibition. Observing the ways in which people came together to help realise this exhibition we understood something about the potential this project held. Last year, to further the idea of collective making, we initiated a summer school to realise commissioned temporary interventions around the town of Callan. Over 10 days, more than 40 people came together to build

these structures. The work was launched with an exhibition opening during the Abhainn Rí Festival and we later held a day long public seminar at the co-op.

This year Commonage has been on a process of refining and defining what we do. It's made us realise that we must constantly strive to remain nimble; listening to the people around us, and able to shift and adapt tack in our new and more durable life as a curatorial, design and research studio. As a studio we are designing, creating and developing situations in which others are invited to work, to talk, to participate and to contribute. We're learning and accumulating. Grounded by our beginnings in Callan, we listen to and support an extended community which so generously listens to and supports us. The local is not so much a geographic location; it's a way of thinking.

So, as we cumulatively build, we simultaneously strip back. In 2012 there will be no exhibition, only a summer school. During the summer school we'll continue to explore the building process as a collaborative and shared non-hierarchical event. We are also developing a parallel programme

of events, exploiting opportunities to include thinking in the 'making' process and ensuring participants can contribute their own backgrounds, experiences, observations and thoughts.

The reciprocal frame illustrated on this programme is a traditional structural framework in which every element is integral and dependant on every other element. Upsetting the hierarchy that 'schools' typically present, participants on the Commonage summer school are understood as collaborators. This year over 50 people from Callan and beyond will come together over 17 days to design and build a series of gates, a seasonal bridge and a cow house at Westcourt farm, all along the pedestrian right of way by the King's river. The realised designs will form way-markers for a longer term aspiration to formally open up this walkway to the public. When we clear a gathering we should not be surprised to see people step forward to fill it. A temporary intervention might need to stay a little longer than originally intended.

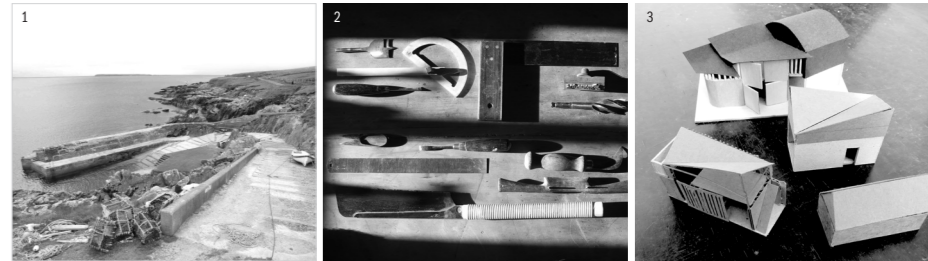
Public talks, film screenings, factory tours, shared meals, seminar afternoons and guided walks will take place during the summer school and are integrated into the building and design workshops. We have been discussing recently ways in which farming and in particular traditional

methods of agriculture inform a way of thinking about design. How these farming practices value the time spent working with and for the land. Oliver Lowenstein, editor of *Fourth Door Review*, has responded with a text that examines this approach within a wider cultural and social legacy, exploring the roots of what we might call a 'do-it-ourselves' design culture. As well as the visceral importance of hands-on technologies and ways of creating that remain 'within our hold and control' this text also touches on the significance of consciously not knowing.

At times along our way, we've felt as if we're journeying without a plan. Now and then, there are incidental moments of clarity when we can see the route which we're taking, the way-marked moments we've left behind us; the group discussing the possibilities of a teleporter to transport a generator to the top of the Norman motte and bailey. When we reflect on these moments, and the many moments more, it's suddenly apparent that a clear intent is emerging.

The path is made by walking it.

*Commonage Summer School and Commonage Studio is led by Jo Anne Butler, Rosie Lynch, Hollie Kearns and Tara Kennedy.*



## Collective Building Workshops

Over the seventeen days of the Commonage Summer School three building projects will be collectively realised in Callan. A seasonal bridge, to create a crossing point on the millrace, will be constructed through a workshop led by *LiD Architecture*. New designs for a system of public access gates will be prototyped through a workshop led by *Superfolk Design Studio* and a cowshed with a rain water collection system will be designed and built in workshops led by *The Cowshed Collective*.

### Seasonal Bridge

#### LID ARCHITECTURE<sup>1</sup>

How can the collective experience of landscape as journey and narrative inform design? *LiD Architecture*, established in 2003 by Dougal Sheridan and Deirdre McMenamin explores the use of landscape theory and strategies in architecture. [www.lid-architecture.net](http://www.lid-architecture.net)

### Callan Gate

#### GEAROID MULDOWNEY OF SUPERFOLK<sup>2</sup>

If a clumsy angler should not be allowed insult a fish by catching it the same could be said of a designer and their materials. Immanuel Kant wrote that "the hand is the window on to the mind" and Richard Sennett (*The Craftsman*) asks that we not pass through that window until we have adequately studied the hand.

Good design comes from an understanding of, and healthy respect for the materials we use. This understanding and respect is something which comes from a hands on experience of working with materials. Many teaching systems are moving further and further away from the hands on approach achieved by the apprenticeship

system. Making, breaking and failing are integral parts of learning and this project hopes to provide an environment for this to happen. [www.superfolk.com](http://www.superfolk.com)

### Cowshed

#### COWSHED COLLECTIVE<sup>3</sup>

The Cowshed Collective is a group of young architecture graduates: Samuel Kane, James Kennedy, Albert Tobin, Scott Morton and Michael Hayes.

The collective is formed through a shared interest in an architecture that responds to the ordinary. An idea that a redefinition of programme might expand a building's potential for use with the everyday.

The brief is for a small milking parlour: room for a cow and her calves, with a hayloft overhead. Enclosing inside and out, the structure gives the farm a yard.

Added to this is an infrastructure: a roof designed for the purpose of gathering and channelling, to store and provide a source of rainwater. More than a shelter, the cowshed collects.