



UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



RESEARCHER

Fionnuala Doran

OUTPUT TITLE

*Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man/
Granny Alice in Slumberland*

OUTPUT TYPE

Artefacts: Illustrations

DATE

2018 – 2020

FIG. 1
Fionnuala Doran, *Granny Alice in Slumberland*, 9 panel single leaf comic illustration, digital print, 40 x 30cms, 2018. Image Fionnuala Doran.



01 / STATEMENT

This practice-based output is comprised of two original comic illustration works, created in the style of graphic novels: *Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man* (2018) and *Granny Alice in Slumberland* (2018).

Doran created the works during her invited participation in a 10-day international artist residency at the European School of Image, Angoulême, France. The residency was part of *Wom@rts*, a €1.6M European Union Creative Europe Programme. Participating artists were invited to respond to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, on the 70th anniversary of its publication.

Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man is a single loose-leaf comic illustration (30 x 40cms) consisting of 4 full-colour panels. It is a visual and textual exploration of Christine Blasey Ford's accusation of sexual assault against the Supreme Court Judge Brett Kavanaugh in 2018; a case that achieved instant notoriety for exposing the machinery of political power. Doran's work presents itself as a feminist critique of this case, and employs comic illustration to interrogate the dynamics of male-dominated political institutions.

Granny Alice in Slumberland is a single loose-leaf comic illustration (40 x 30cms) consisting of 9 full-colour panels. The work presents a critique of the work of de Beauvoir and other first-wave feminists in their relative oversight of working-class and other marginalised women. It does so through a quasi-fictional account of Doran's great-grandmother's career as a writer – which explores conflicts within the female identity. Text and image are combined in such a way as to explore a world where barriers to female cultural participation do not exist.

The two works were presented in a touring international exhibition, at the following venues and accompanied by a programme of artists' talks, outreach workshops, press conferences and opening events.

Women (Be)Coming,
UGM Studio, Maribor, Slovenia,
8 March – 1 June 2019.

Women (In)Between,
Vilnius Town Hall, Lithuania,
24 July – 31 August 2019.

(In)visible,
Auditorio de Galicia, Santiago de Compostela,
Spain, 30 October – 15 December 2019.

(Title TBC),
Rijeka, Croatia, 15 April – 5 June 2020.
(Postponed due to Covid-19).

Women (RI)Visible,
Tower Centre, Rijeka, Croatia, 8–21 July 2020.

(Title TBC),
CMAE and Casa de Cultura de Avilés,
Aviles, Spain, 3 July – 30 August 2020.
(Postponed due to Covid-19).

(Title TBC),
The New Factory, Angoulême,
26 October – 6 December 2020.
(Delayed due to Covid-19, new dates TBC).

(Title TBC),
Church Gallery, LSAD, Limerick, Ireland,
March 2021.
(Dates may be changed due to Covid-19).

(Title TBC),
Centro Municipal de Arte y Exposiciones
(CMAE), Aviles, Spain, March – June 2021.

A reproduction of the work is on temporary open-air display at Vilnius Town Hall Square, 1 November – 1 December 2020.

Why Can't a Woman be more like a man?

As I sit & think, in America, Christine Blasey Ford testifies that Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, sexually assaulted her in 1982.

"I'm not questioning if Dr Ford may have been sexually assaulted by some person, in some place, at some time. but I have never done that to her or to anyone."



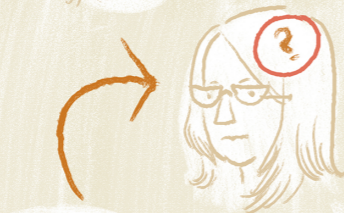
← FOR it be he

Asked Rex Harrison in My Fair Lady.

"Where is the 'Reset to default' button, which will restore WO-MAN to the default, WO-less, setting?"
I think, at my desk in Angouleme.



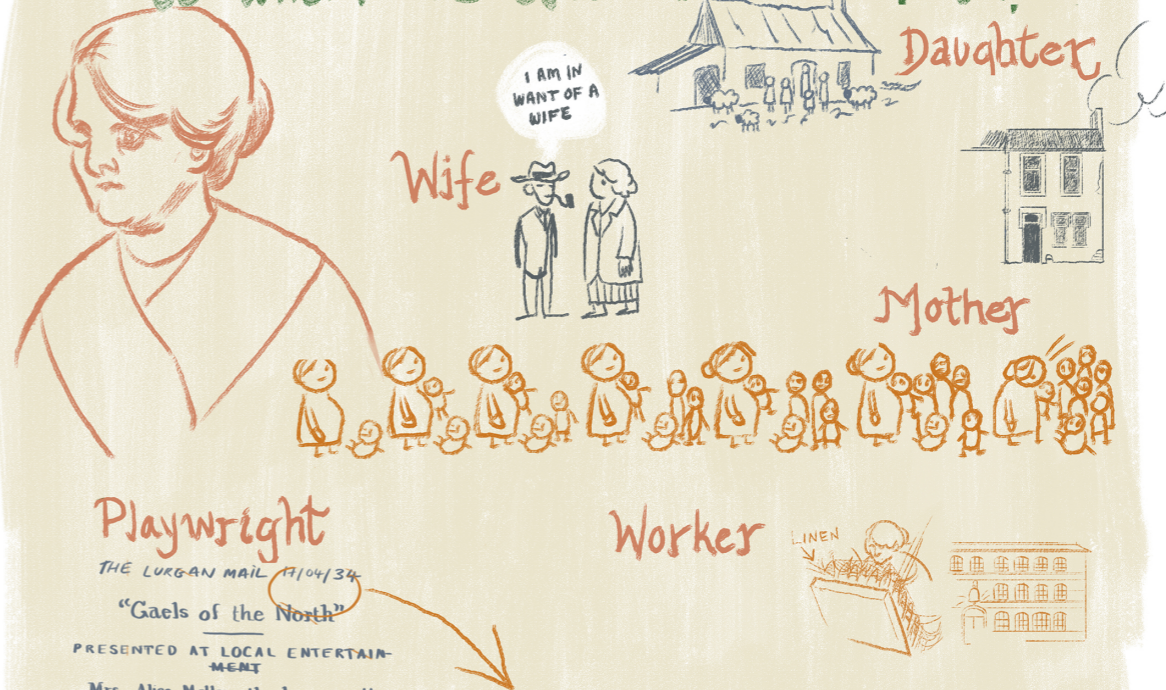
Christine Blasey Ford



IF THIS BE TRUE

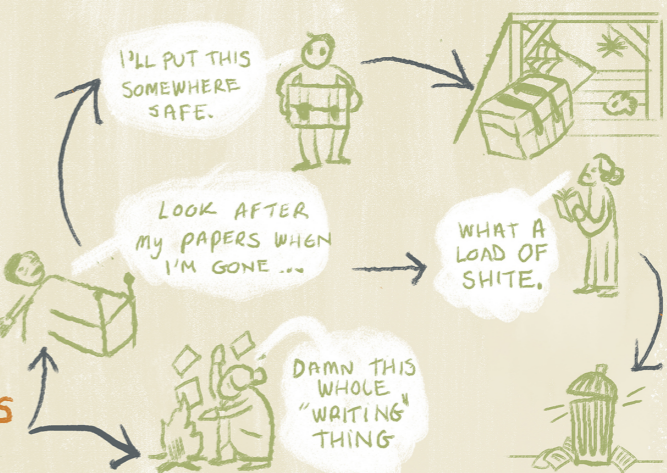


I think of my great-grandmother, to whom I've often been compared



THE LURGAN MAIL 11/04/34
"Gael of the North"
PRESENTED AT LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT
Mrs. Alice Molloy, the Lurgan author and playwright, successfully produced her own play "Gael of the North" in the Lurgan Town Hall, on Thursday evening. A prophet may have no honour in his own country, but Thursday evening's entertainment proved the exception to this rule as a large and appreciative audience showed their pleasure at the play and its production in no uncertain manner. Mrs. Molloy is already well known as a writer of short stories and her literary ability has been inherited by the members of her family.
"Gael of the North" is a drama of 1921, and the story concerns the Lough Neagh fishermen's fight against the invasion of the English. The members of the Lurgan Dramatic Company put it over in fine style and whilst every member of the cast is to be congratulated on excellent work, the portrayal of Widow Nancy O'Neill by Miss McAtamney with exceptionally good. Mr. James McStay was an outstanding success as Owenie McGowan, a fisherman, and Miss Bridie Molloy sustained a difficult part as Mrs. Kearney as an English visitor.
The play was in three acts, the main action taking place in Nancy O'Neill's kitchen. The artistes taking part were—Nancy O'Neill, a widow—Miss Sally McAtamney; Sean O'Neill—John Doran Pat O'Neill—Jim Molloy—Seamus O'Neill—Tom Molloy—sons of Nancy; Owenie McGowan, a fisherman—James McStay; Julia Brannigan, a neighbour—Miss Mary McStay; Mona Brannigan, her daughter, Miss Kathleen Tennyson; Mrs. Kearney, an English visitor—Miss Bridie Molloy; Constance Kearney, her daughter, Miss Nellie Boyle; Rabbin Smith, leaders of rebels—Michael McDowell; Hughie Monroe—Harry McCann, Terence Brady—John E. McDowell.
The main play was preceded by a

- AT TIME THE PLAY WAS PERFORMED:
- ☺ MY GRANDA, 6-7 YEARS OLD
 - ☺ ROSALEEN, 14 (ISH) YEARS OLD.
 - ☺ JIM, (UNKNOWN AGE).
 - ☺ TOM, 18 TO 23 YEARS OLD.
 - ☺ MINNIE, 23 YEARS OLD.
 - ☺ LIL, 26 YEARS OLD.
 - ☺ SARAH ANN, 27-28 YEARS OLD.



BUT WHERE ARE THESE SHORT-STORIES & PLAYS?
Why Patrick Kavanaugh the fame & admiration, & not Alice Molloy?

FIG. 2 Fionnuala Doran, Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?, 4 panel single leaf comic illustration, digital print, 30 x 40cms, 2018. Image Fionnuala Doran.

This comic illustrates the artist's great-grandmother, Alice Molloy, going to bed in her slum-like terraced house circa-1920. She is surrounded by squabbling children, dirt and rags. As she dreams, she is visited by two sprites – the spirits of her great-granddaughters, visiting her from 70 years in the future.

The two girls open the window and fly into the night with Alice, bringing her to central Dublin to meet W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, founders of the Abbey Theatre.

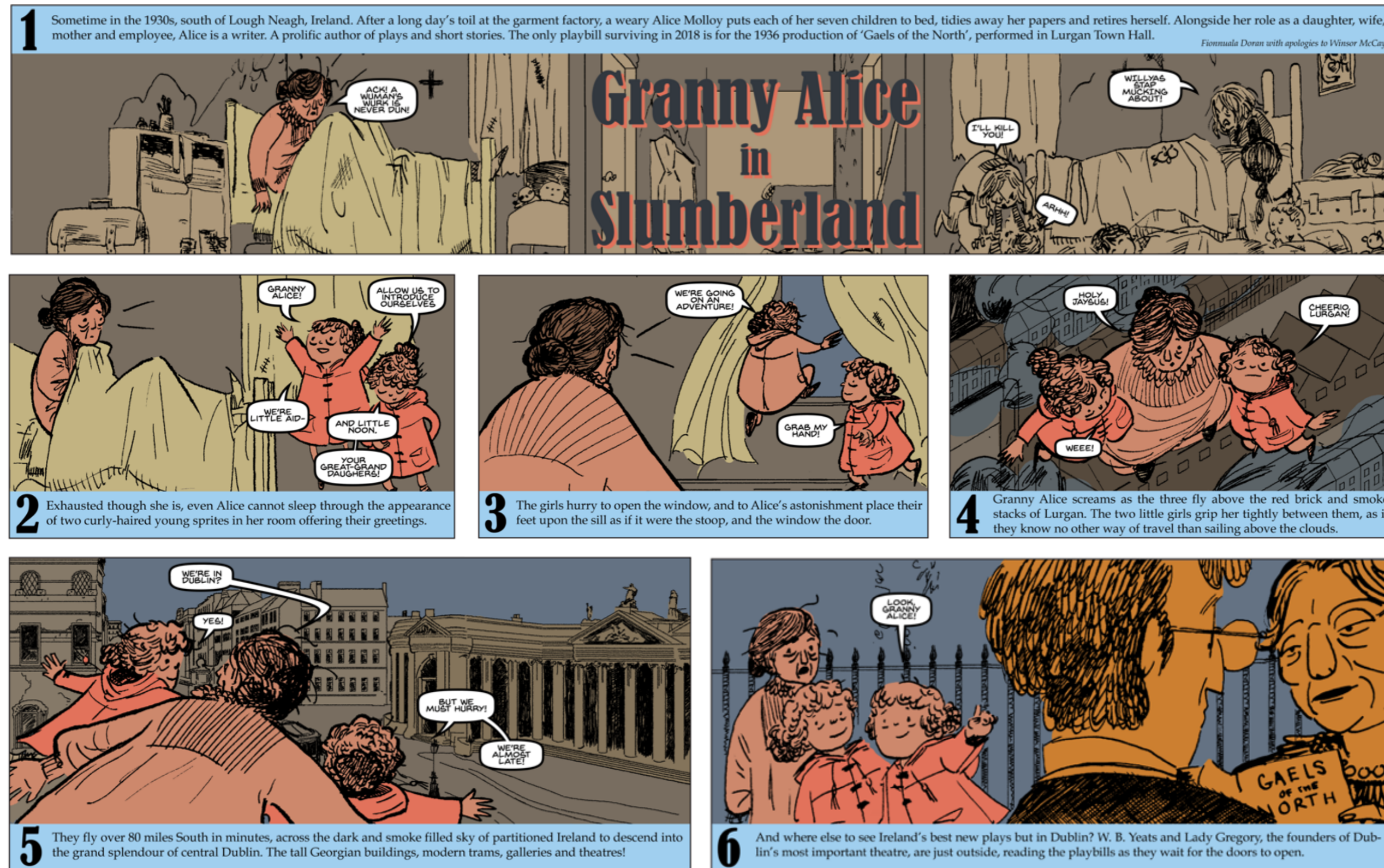


FIG. 3
Fionnuala Doran, *Granny Alice in Slumberland*, panels 1–6 of 9 panel single leaf comic illustration, digital print, 40 x 30cms, 2018. Image Fionnuala Doran.

FIG. 4
 Fionnuala Doran, *Granny Alice in Slumberland*, panels 7–9 of 9 panel single leaf comic illustration, digital print, 40 x 30cms, 2018.
 Image Fionnuala Doran.



7 Her own work, being read by Yeats and premiering at the Abbey theatre with queues around the street! But she must rush inside, if she is to take her place on stage as the director and get the best performances from her cast.

Continuing the story from page 7, the two girls show Alice that her play is being read by Yeats and that this crowd of people are here to see it premiere at the Abbey. Alice takes her place on stage to applause from the audience. In the final panel, Alice awakes from the dream at the sound of her children fighting with each other.

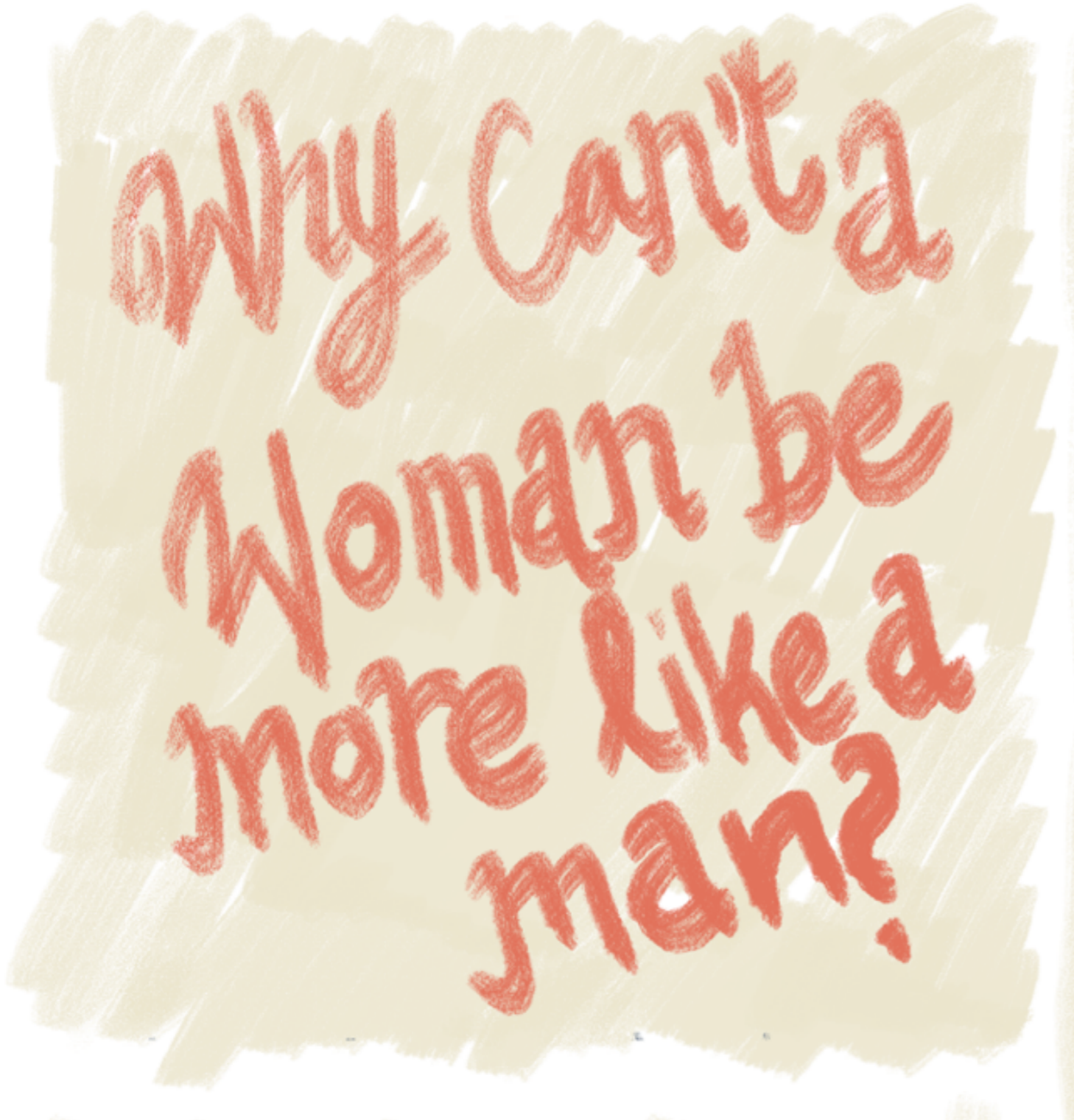


8 The crowd stands to applaud Granny Alice and her debut production, *Gaels of the North*, as the cast and she bows at the close of third act. "Encore!", "Authentic, so true to life!", "The finest work on rural Ireland since O'Casey!" they cry. Roses are thrown at the stage and the literati of Dublin queue to shake the hand of this newfound talent. She longs for the applause, and the night to continue, even as the noise of the early risers making their way to the factories of Lurgan creeps into her ears and rouses her in her bed.



9 The morning sun enters Granny Alice's room in the real world, and she awakes. No longer in Slumberland's Dublin, but at home.

FIG. 5
Fionnuala Doran, *Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?*,
1 panel of 4 panel single
leaf comic illustration,
digital print, 30 x 40cms,
2018. Image Fionnuala Doran.



02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man and *Granny Alice in Slumberland* were practice-based research investigations into the concept and potential of intersectional feminism investing action into the practice of illustration.

The research was orientated around 3 main questions:

- How can illustration and narrative reflect intersectional feminism?
- How can the medium of graphic novels and comics (sequential art) be used as a unique critical tool to comment on current events?
- How can the methods, techniques and visual language of illustration and sequential art be expanded to enhance its character as critical commentary?

The research sits within the broader field of feminist, genre-defying, English-language graphic novels such as the works of North American artists Julie Doucet and Alison Bechdel.

It also looks back to older traditions of comic strip art, such as the work of the early 20th century illustrator Winsor McCay, and attempts to deconstruct these traditions, employing and augmenting their features to new ends.

As I sit & think, in America, Christine Blasey Ford testifies that Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, sexually assaulted her in 1982.



IF THIS
BE TRUE



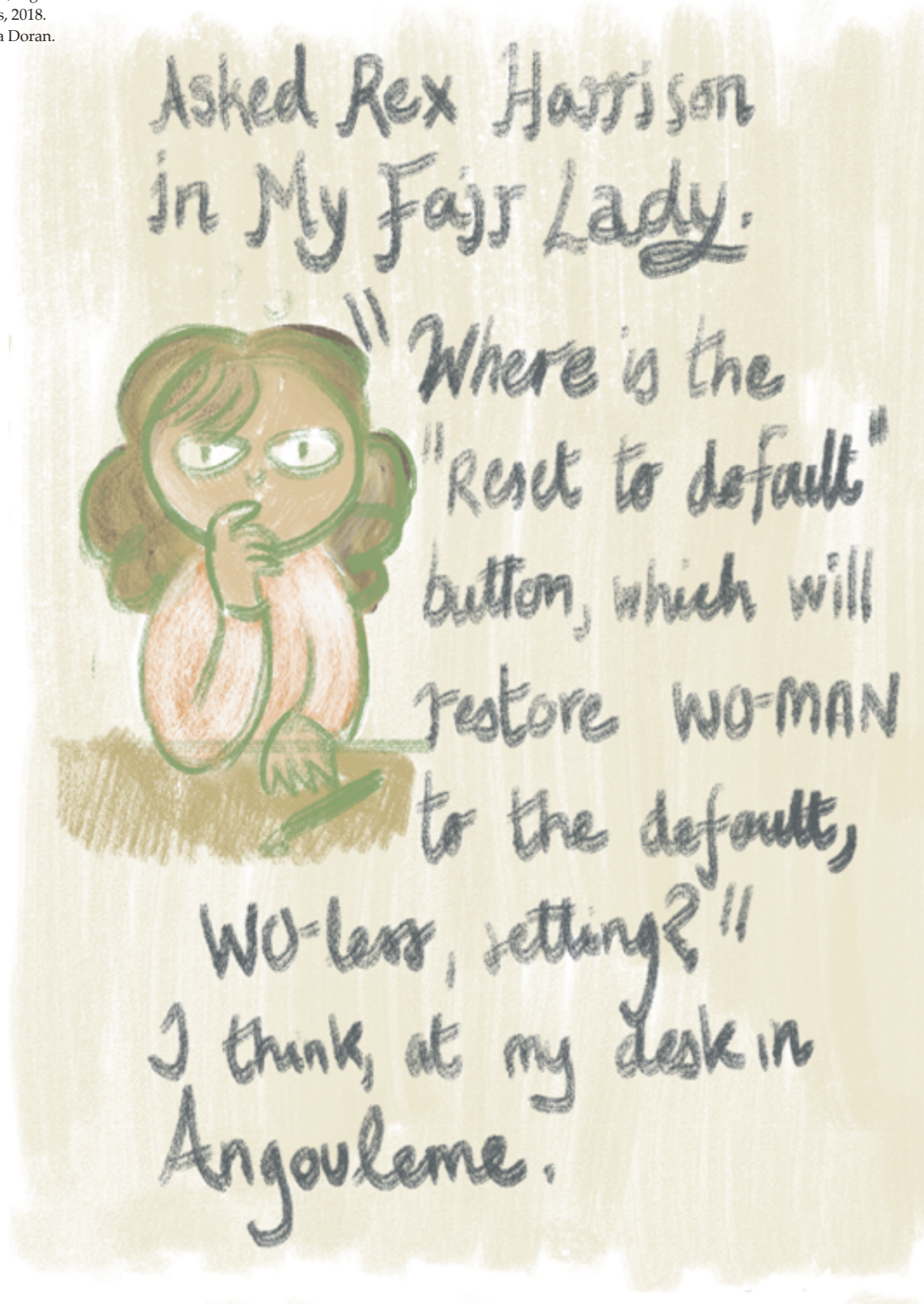
"I'm not questioning if Dr Ford may have been sexually assaulted by some person, in some place, at some time. but I have never done that to her or to anyone."



← FOR it
be he

FIG. 6
Fionnuala Doran, *Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?*,
1 of 4 panels, single leaf
comic illustration, digital
print, 30 x 40cms, 2018.
Image Fionnuala Doran.

FIG. 7
Fionnuala Doran, *Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?*,
1 of 4 panels, single leaf
comic illustration, digital
print, 30 x 40cms, 2018.
Image Fionnuala Doran.



03 / ORIGINALITY

The output contributes to the field of illustration by introducing intersectional, disruptive feminist themes and approaches to the traditionally masculine space of graphic novels and comics, as an innovative take on female-centric non-fiction memoir.

Doran combines this free-flowing, non-traditional mind-map structure, stripped of visual structural elements, with chaotically hand-written text as a device to embrace the concept of hysteria and chaos, as a label for female behaviour that strays outside of social norms. The work builds upon, and amplifies, methods pioneered by previous generations of female cartoonists, such as the American Lynda Barry.

Granny Alice in Slumberland satirises the class and gender conventions of Winsor McCay's iconic comic strip, *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905–1927). Doran's work utilises classic, linear storytelling and panel structure to tell the story of an atypical heroine and setting – a provincial, poor, middle-aged, plain, woman. In place of the rich and jewel-like colours of McCay's *Little Nemo*, the palette of *Granny Alice in Wonderland* creates an earthy reality of brick, smoke and stained linen, introducing a level of realism and starkness appropriate to the loaded nature of the thematic content, and which was absent in the proto-Disney visual language of McCay's work.

In *Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man*, Doran employs the visual motifs of the French bande-dessinée style of sequential storytelling, using empty space as a de facto panel border rather than black outlines. Doran creates an innovative non-linear structure, using a mind-map style to combine text and image, drawn in a traditional children's comic book style.

The two works were presented as single leaf comic illustrations: self-contained stories. This breaks with the normal practice of exhibiting comic books as individual sheets extracted from larger books, and avoids the usual fragmentation of narrative that accompanies the exhibition of comic book content in gallery spaces, such as The Citi exhibition *Manga* at the British Museum in 2019.

The digital nature of the work disrupts the established practice, such as that used by the British Museum, of exhibiting 'original', hand-made comic book artwork. Being digitally created, the raw data of a file cannot be locked in canon, or given a saleable value. There is no 'true' original of either work.

04 / RIGOUR

The research process began with Doran's investigation into a notable recent event in women's rights: Christine Blasey Ford's accusation of sexual assault against Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

Doran chose this as her subject for a feminist investigation of illustration because Ford's testimony was streamed live during her residency in Angoulême.

Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man? consists of 4 full colour panels (30 x 40cms). Doran constructed the work in the style of female romance-cartoonist Posy Simmonds, known for her satire of middle-class romance combining first-person narrative and dialogue with an impressionistic visual style.

Doran used digital imaging tools to combine extracts from the court case, personal musings about the socio-political implications of the case and quotes from the 1964 film *My Fair Lady*, which she chose for its patriarchal theme. Using digital drawing tools she created expressive illustrative sketches to accompany the text, and generate a distinctive, fragmentary visual narrative. The finalised digital images were printed on paper.

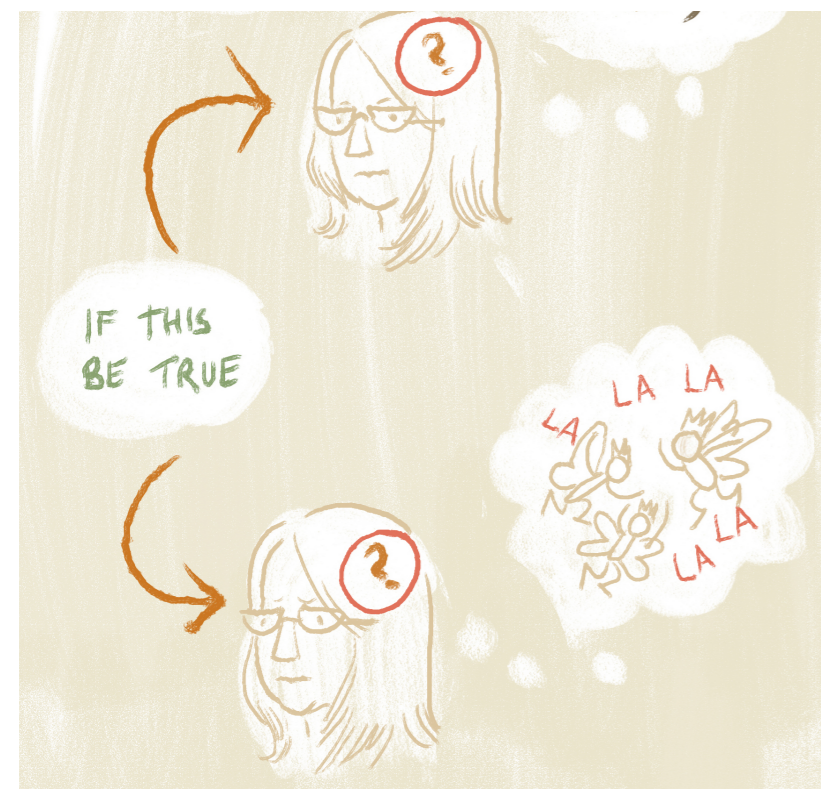
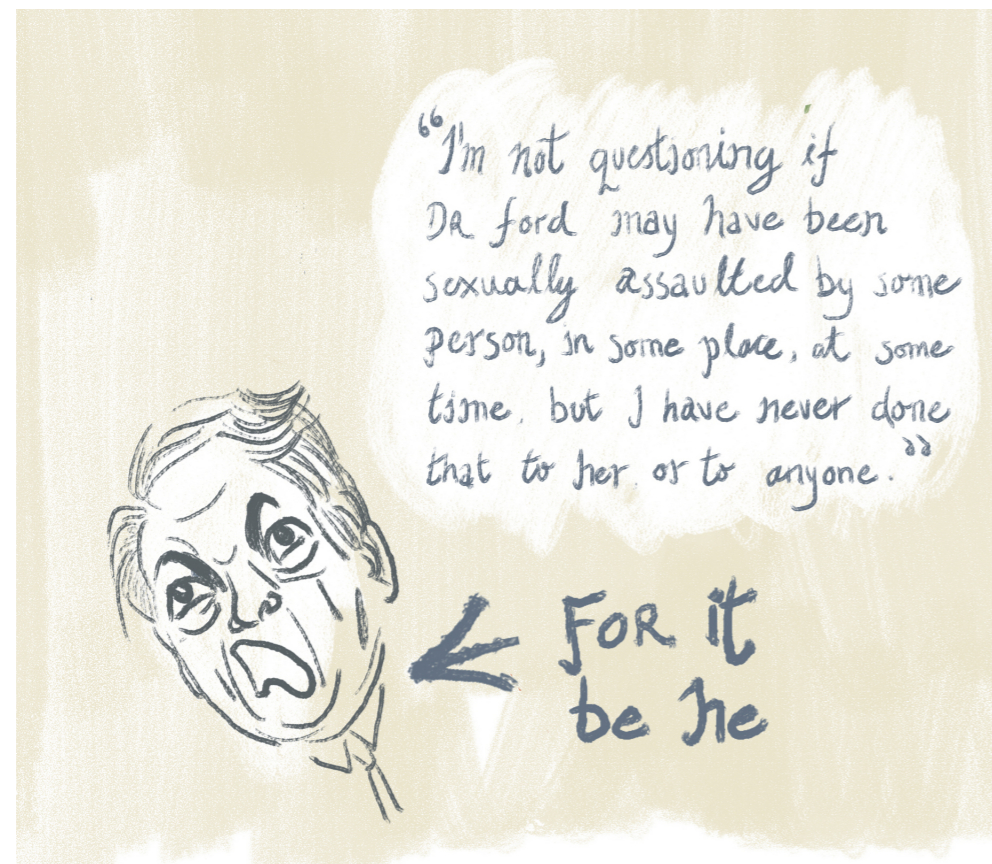
The title *Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?* was taken from the *My Fair Lady* song 'A Hymn to Him (Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man?)'. Doran used the patriarchal nature of the song's lyrics – 'Women are irrational... their heads are full of cotton, hay and rags!' – to illustrate the behaviour of the male legislators towards Christine Blasey Ford.

Granny Alice in Slumberland was developed as a 9 panel full colour comic (40 x 30cms) in the style of early 20th century full page newspaper cartoons. Doran initially drafted a text that narrated her grandmother's biography. She then set the text within the comic illustrations through speech bubbles.

This personal narrative was made to intersect with a second text, also written by Doran. This latter text expressed the official, established Irish literary canon to which her great-grandmother was an outsider. Doran underscored its difference from the biographical text by setting it within comic narrative text boxes rather than speech bubbles. The contrast between these textual and visual registers gave expression to the complexity of identity of woman as creator, mother, wife, Irish Catholic, and member of the non-landed classes.

The text was accompanied by drawings depicting Doran's grandmother and family. These were based on archival materials that Doran created using digital drawing tools. The work was first developed using a Wacom Cintiq tablet with the iPad app ProCreate and Photoshop. ProCreate was used for its sketchbook-like drawing properties on the iPad, added to by Photoshop to create pure black/white pixel layers to digitally 'ink' over certain portions of the image, creating an ultra-crisp black line reminiscent of Hergé, creator and artist of Tintin. This addition of black 'ink' lines to the image was influenced by *Re: A Guide To Reproduction*, an 1990s online publication by underground zine makers, David Choe, Ron Rege Jr., Brian Ralph, and Jordan Crane. The images were printed and hand coloured in ink, re-scanned and the final layout digitally combined before printing the final compositions on uncoated paper.

The work was developed through peer review and group discussion in the open studio environment of the Wom@rts residency.

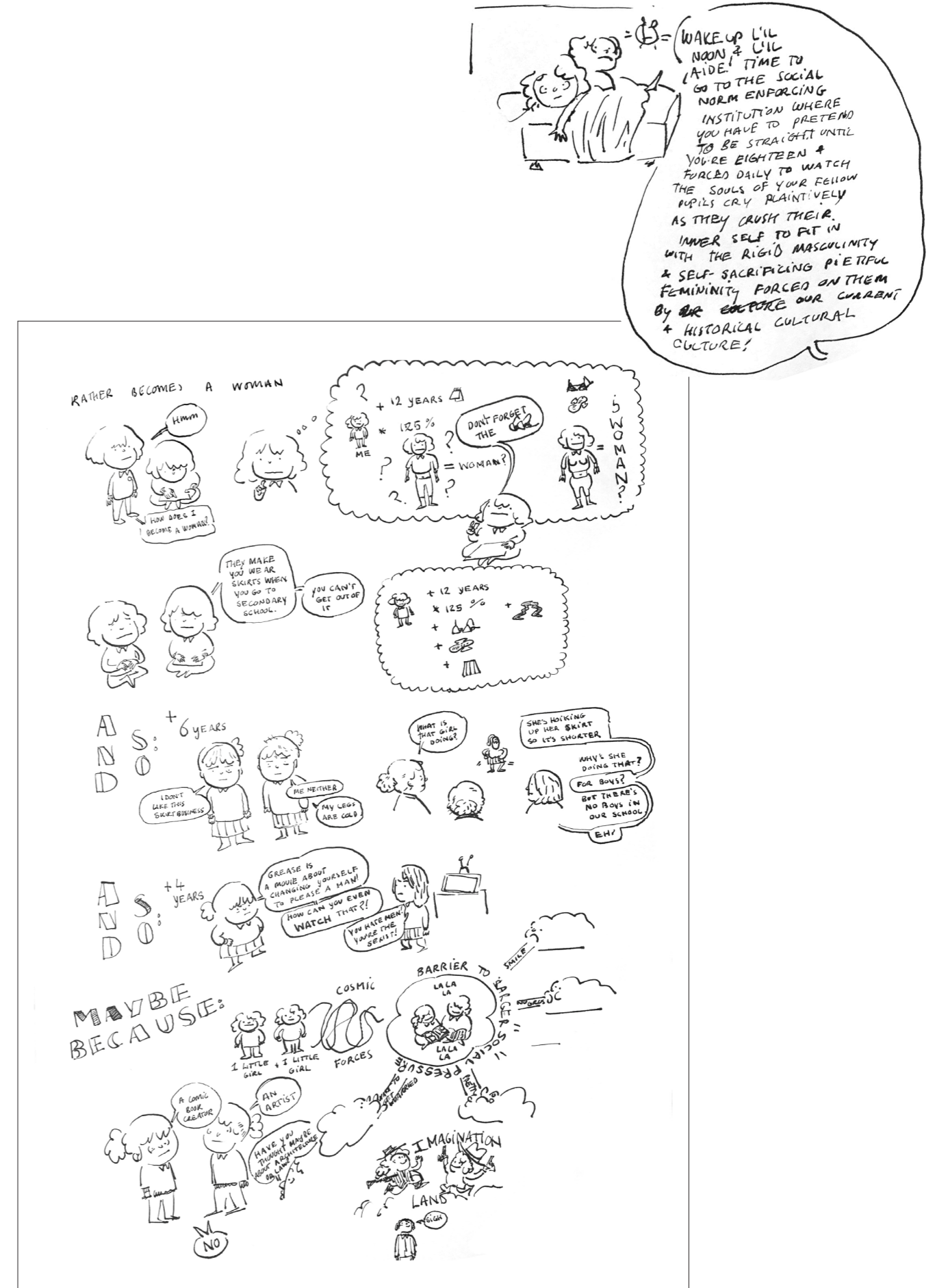
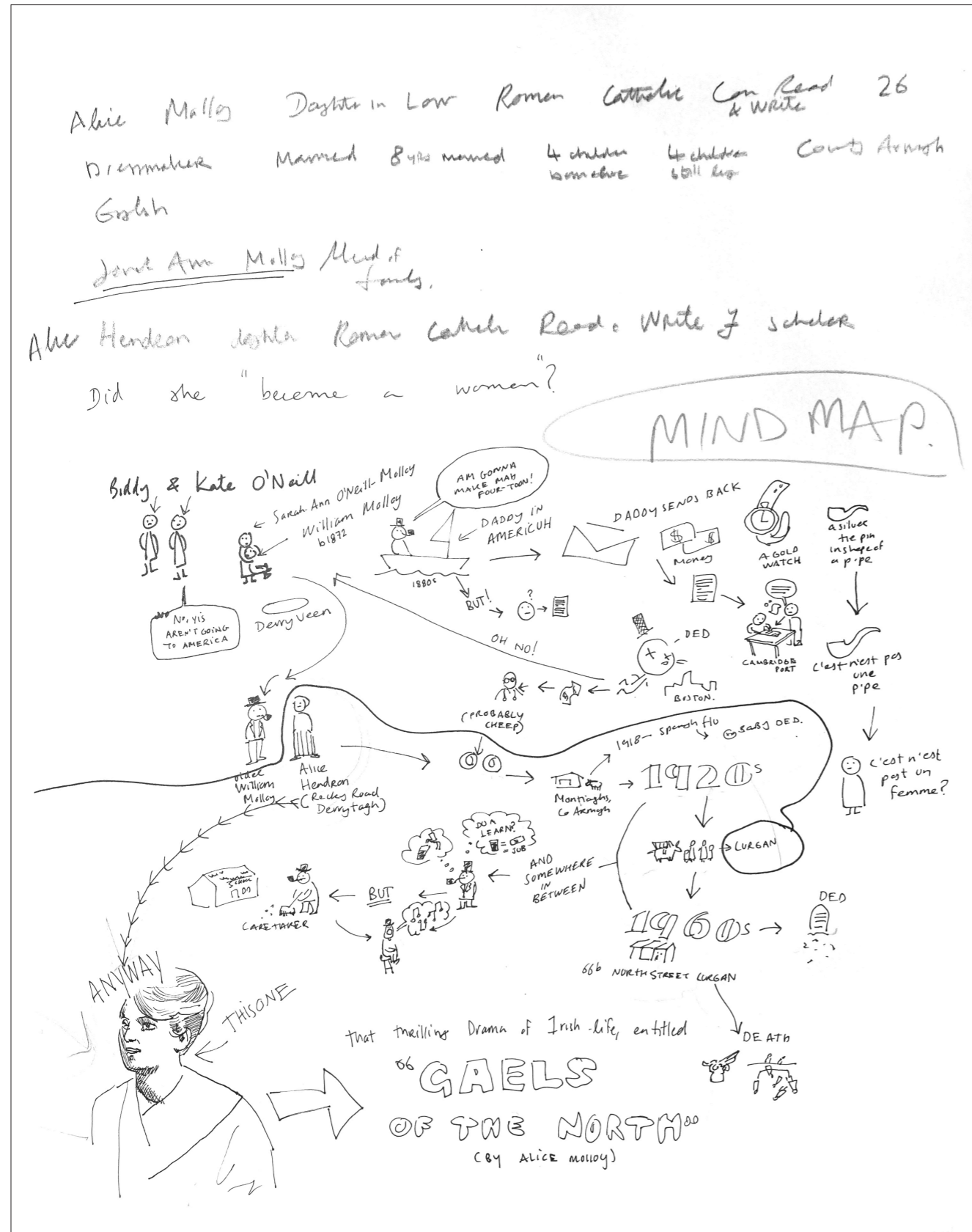


FIGS. 8-9
Fionnuala Doran, *Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?*, details of single leaf comic illustration, digital print, 30 x 40cms, 2018. Image Fionnuala Doran.



FIG. 10
Fionnuala Doran, *Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?*, 1 of 4 panels, single leaf comic illustration, digital print, 30 x 40cms, 2018. Image Fionnuala Doran.

FIGS. 11-13
Fionnuala Doran, Granny Alice in Slumberland, development sketches, 2018. Images Fionnuala Doran.



FIGS. 19-22
Fionnuala Doran, *Granny Alice in Slumberland*, development sketches, 2018. Images Fionnuala Doran.



FIGS. 23-24
Fionnuala Doran, *Granny Alice in Slumberland*, development sketches and screengrabs of work-in-progress in Adobe Photoshop, 2018. Images Fionnuala Doran.

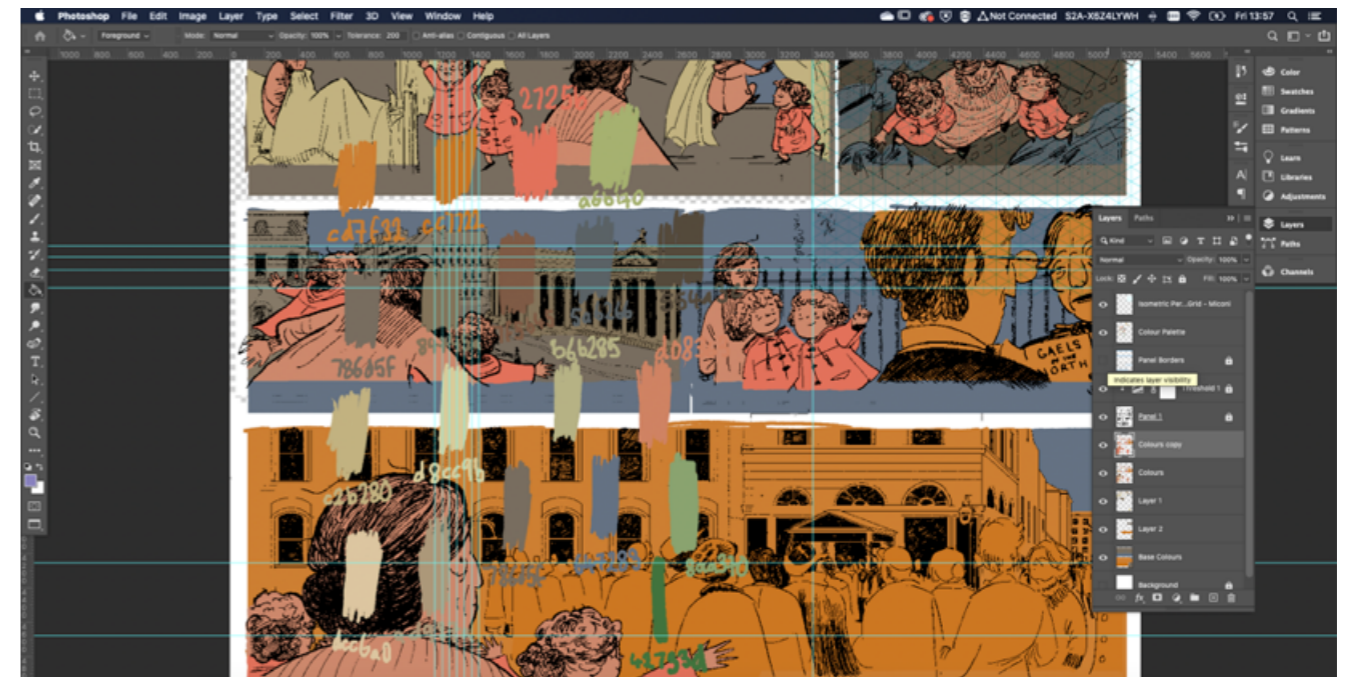
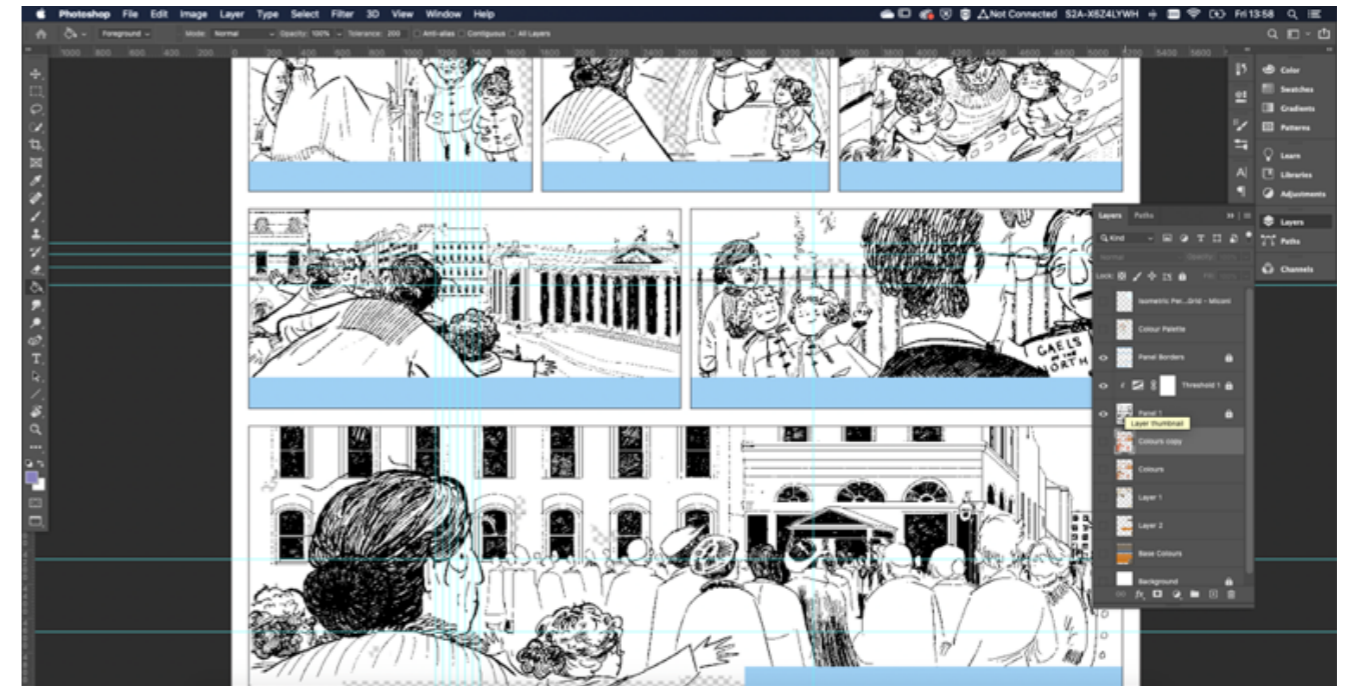
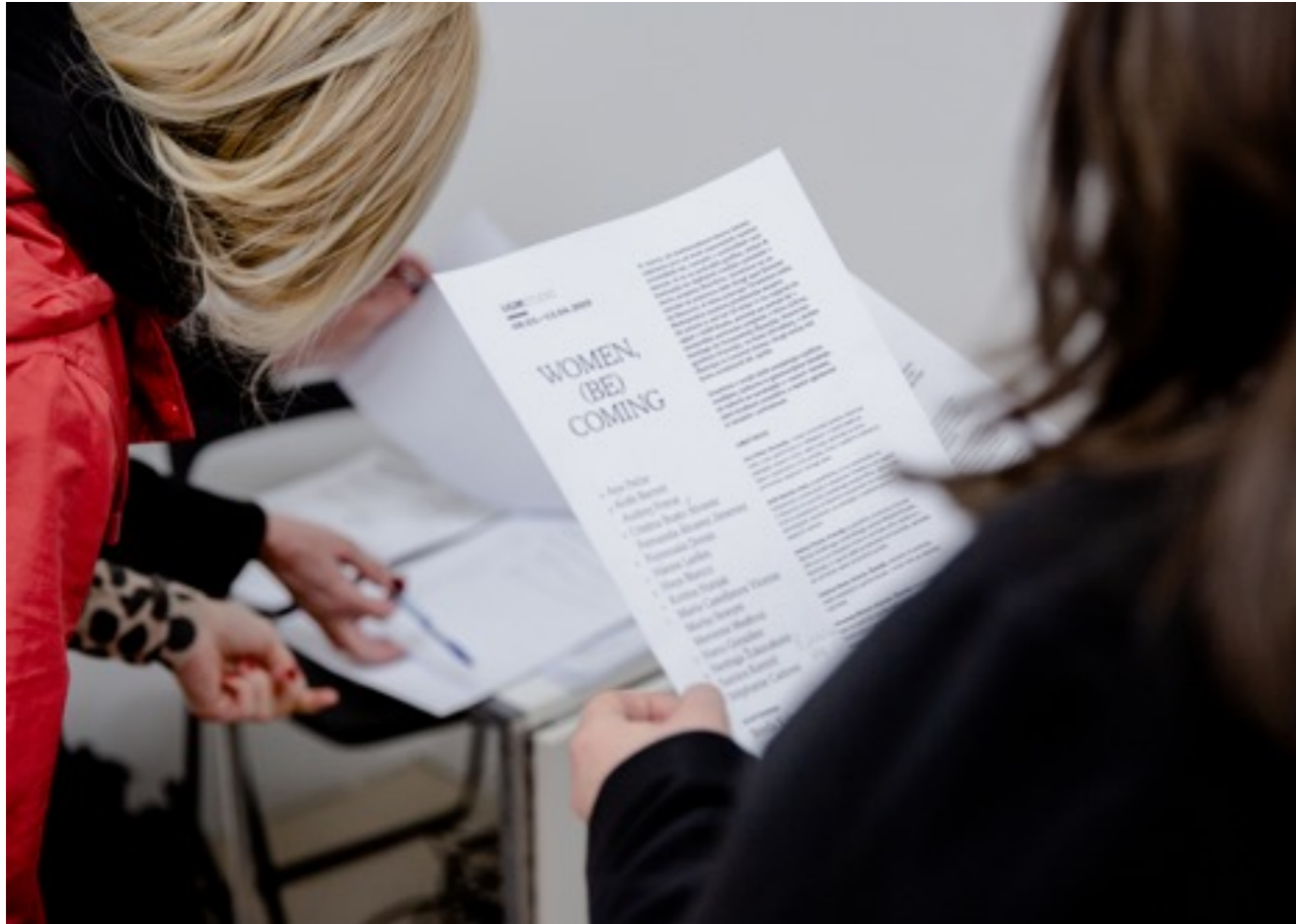


FIG. 25

Granny Alice in Slumberland,
exhibition view, *Women (In)
Between*, Vilnius Town Hall,
Vilnius, Lithuania, 2019. Photo
courtesy of Jan Suchodolski.



05 / SIGNIFICANCE

The two works that comprised Doran's '*A Response to Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex on the 70th Anniversary of Its Publication*' were created in response to Doran's invited participation in the €1.6M *Wom@rts* international residency at the European School of Image (ÉESI), Angoulême, France, September 2018.

The residency was one of three European residencies organised by the EU. Running over 5 years it aimed to broaden participation of women digital artists, illustrators and comic artists and printmakers, bringing together over 30 artists from 10 countries.

Doran was one of 10 artists competitively selected for the Comic & Illustrators strand of the residency in 2018, one of three discipline specific residencies, alongside Printmaking and Lens Based Digital Media.

Between 2019 and 2020, the works produced in these residences were included in a touring exhibition entitled '*The Second Sex*', in homage to the well-known text written by Simone de Beauvoir on the 70th anniversary of its first publication.

Doran's work reached international audiences through the exhibition and associated events and media coverage. The 3 exhibition presentations included:

Women (Be)Coming,
8 March 2019 – 1 June 2019,
UGM Studio, Maribor, Slovenia.

Women (In)Between,
24 July – 31 August 2019,
Vilnius Town Hall, Lithuania.

(In)visible,
30 October – 15 December 2019,
Auditorio de Galicia, Santiago de Compostela,
Spain.

The exhibition was due to travel to Croatia, Aviles (Spain), Grand Angouleme, France and Limerick, Ireland – these have been postponed/impacted due to Covid-19.

FIG. 26
Granny Alice in Slumberland,
exhibition view, *Women*
(In)Between, Vilnius Town Hall,
Vilnius, Lithuania, 2019. Photo
courtesy of Jan Suchodolski.



FIG. 27
Granny Alice in Slumberland,
exhibition view, *Women*
(In)Between, UGM, Maribor,
2019. Photo courtesy of
Damjan Švarc.



FIG. 28 *Why Can't a Woman Be
More Like a Man?*, exhibition
view, *Women (In)Between*, UGM,
Maribor, 2019. Photo courtesy of
Damjan Švarc.



06 / APPENDIX

Wom@rts Official Website

<http://www.womarts.eu/>

Women (Be) Coming, UGM, Maribor, Slovenia

<http://www.womarts.eu/activities/roaming-exhibition/the-openings/women-becoming-maribor-slovenia/>

Women (In)Between, Vilnius, Lithuania

<http://www.womarts.eu/activities/roaming-exhibition/the-openings/opening-vilnius/>

(In)Visible, Compostela Cultura, Spain

<http://www.womarts.eu/activities/roaming-exhibition/the-openings/invisible-exhibition-opening-santiago-de-compostela/installment-santiago-de-compostela/>

FIG. 29

Women (In)Between, exhibition signage, Vilnius Town Hall, August 2019. Photo courtesy of Jan Suchodolski.



FIGS. 30-31

Granny Alice in Slumberland and *Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man?*, exhibition view, *Women (In)Visible*, Auditorio of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 2019. Photos courtesy of Óscar Corral.





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