Restaging the Object
A Participatory Exploration of Long Kesh/Maze Prison

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Dispersed Presence, PS² Belfast

Transforming Long Kesh/Maze
Edition of 64 postcards
Peace and Beyond Arts Fringe

Glossary

Acknowledgments
Mention the term “community arts” here in Belfast and the faces of artists tend to go blank. It’s not the most exciting artistic practice. Sure, one could earn some money doing workshops with kids on the street, but it is hard to gain an artistic profile with it. Like the term, the community arts themselves are a bit outdated: a trodden path of resolving issues through creative means, expecting a clear, rainbow-happy outcome at the end; a simple solution to complex conflict in paint, patchworks, and public participation.

But, it is a necessary routine in Northern Ireland.

A recent, forty-seven-page application form for an arts engagement project in Belfast repeats the formula more optimistically: The project “must be creative, participatory and empowering for the people involved […] engaging with people who are hard to reach or do not participate in cultural activity for a complex range of reasons, related to social exclusion factors, education and accessibility.”¹ This is interesting, bearing in mind that the wording comes from a city council, a fresh approach that diverges somewhat from the traditional concept of community arts delivered by many

¹ Belfast City Council, Core Multi-Annual Funding (CMAF) Application Form. (Belfast: Belfast City Council, 2018).
established organisations—or shall I say an industry—over the last couple of decades in Northern Ireland. But does the adaptation of socially engaged art practice by the city council demonstrate the pinnacle of official validation of community arts engage-ment, or its decline, its reduction to a mere instrument for social cohesion and urban regeneration?

More than many other places, Northern Ireland has, in the past, produced outstanding community arts initiatives, emerging first in the performing arts and theatre, then later in the visual arts. It was a creative response by individuals and small groups at the grassroots level to the Troubles and the underlying social-political conflict and struggle of national/cultural identity, dividing neighbourhoods and communities—a term typically used in the plural, meaning British or Irish; Protestant or Catholic; Loyalist or Republican.

Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* from the 1970s in Brazil resonated widely in this country, offering techniques and tactics in theatre performance, and later in participatory arts practices in general. The Troubles set the ideal-but-sad backdrop for creatives to use the arts to counteract the effects and causes of the political struggle and indicate transformative actions and ways of self-expression—not for a cultural elite, but for afflicted communities and neighbourhoods. In the 1980s and early 1990s, community arts was indeed a provocative term and a controversial creative practice.

I want to highlight the outstanding position of performance artist Alastair MacLennan within an understanding of community arts. The long-duration performances by the Belfast-based artist and teacher had a great influence on many generations of art students in the city and—to my mind—on community arts or more contemporary, dialogical arts. With his preference for public spaces and street audiences (instead of exclusive galleries), MacLennan emphasised in his “live art” (or as he calls them “actuations”) social, political, and spiritual issues through a performative process in front of a co-creating public.

So where are we now? In my opinion, the tradition of community arts and live art is in a sleepy state, with only a few new impulses coming from individuals and groups. The “Art in Public” MA course at Ulster, University Belfast, lasted only five years before it closed down in 2012; a missed chance to revitalise the practise of, and research into, community arts, or as the terms and practices shift: “art in public,” “art in context,” as well as “participatory,” “relational,” and “dialogical” art.

There is a loss of urgency and originality of engaged community practice today. And it just kept alive by the steadily diminishing resources of an overly bureaucratic funding system bent on instrumentalising art, organisations, and their creatives as social workers or urban-regeneration specialists with an outcome—all to be delivered within a 12-week development and implementation period. Socially engaged art as a fast-track, entertaining solution to a complex of problems.

Not so with the project in this book and exhibition. Far from it. This work exhibits three critical and enriched progressions from community arts to dialogical art in terms of time, process, and outcomes.

Time: given its extensive research period and intertwining of different approaches—with the artists taking on the roles of archivist, ethnographer, historian, workshop facilitator, listener, and editor—it developed at a slow pace (similar to MacLennan’s performance movements and timescales).

Process: this project developed in stages and in different strands. Genuine interactions happened through conversations, active listening, workshops and collective archiving (including photo documentation, labelling, objective and subjective descriptions/testimonies) outside the white cube of an art gallery in private homes or community centres. The delicacy of working with the highly charged subject of the former prison site required a deliberate process, fun, and outcomes that an overdetermined “community art” couldn’t offer.

(How many cups of tea were drunk at kitchen tables, how many emails sent, and how many times were the following questions asked: Why do you want to know? What for?).

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Outcome: although the subject of O’Beirn and Krenn’s project is the material culture of Long Kesh/Maze, their resulting material offers no solutions. Quite the opposite. The archived artefacts, the newly made or re-made objects of cultural reaffirmation—or disobedience, as I would call them—do not dissolve any conflicts, but rather assist in articulating their operating mechanisms and human impacts.

With O’Beirn and Krenn’s subversive decision to produce new objects, the following question can be asked: what is the real artefact, the authentic voice, and what is the re-make, the fake? For me, all the elements of this project—the entire process—forms the outcome: a dialectical movement, fluid and in transformation, just like the question of cultural identity and the forms of its expression.

Peter Mutschler is an artist and curator/director of PS2, Belfast, an artist-run project space and studios. His interests lie both in art and cultural production, especially that which is socially relevant, experimental, unconventional. He tries to link society and art through work and processes that connect with people’s everyday lives, be it inside the art space or other locations. He stubbornly continues to work on two long-term projects with artists and communities in the small village (and former British Army site) of Ballykinler, and PeasPark at an interface area in North Belfast.

Transforming Long Kesh/Maze: Methods for a Social Sculpture
Martin Krenn & Aisling O’Beirn

Transforming Long Kesh/Maze is a social sculpture that explores the future of the former prison, Long Kesh/Maze, whose legacy makes it a site of contentious cultural heritage. The project asks how perceptions of the prison might be transformed, with a view to positively engaging with the knotty realities of its past.

The prison, located outside Belfast, is famed for housing most of the prisoners, both Republican and Loyalist, who were imprisoned as a result of the recent conflict in Northern Ireland. Its narratives are known. Its complex history, which is still very much within living memory, and the thorny issue of its legacy, are well documented. However, no political agreement has yet been reached regarding the site’s future. Plans for a sports stadium and peace centre were shelved in 2013 against a backdrop of political tension. Indecision about its future at government level is revealing in terms of the political climate of “post-conflict” society in Northern Ireland.

Now partially demolished, with only some indicative structures remaining, the closed and inaccessible site articulates much about the relationship between the spectres of the conflict’s legacy and the current state of political stagnation. This former prison site therefore has both a physical presence and a conceptual importance, despite its inaccessibility to the general public. During the course of this three-year project, we were to find that its political tangibility lies not so much in
the abandoned site or its architectural shell, but more in its dispersed manifestations, which are to be found well beyond the prison gates, where its artefacts are largely dispersed in a range of public and private collections.

After an intense year of initial research, we took a lead from Laura McAtackney’s important work on the material culture of the prison, drawing attention to the vital role that first-hand testimonies play in allowing the prison to be understood through such objects.¹ Surviving prison material ranges from chunks of prison infrastructure to contraband communication devices and a huge range of prison art. Many of the artefacts in question have not been seen publicly before. We recognised their potential to offer lesser-known narratives about this politically charged site, and with this in mind we developed our artistic approach to address the following question: “Can the very obstacle of the site’s inaccessibility present a means to address future possibilities by engaging with its vernacular and lesser-known narratives?”

To answer this question, we contacted people from across the political spectrum, aiming to work with interested individuals and communities who had first-hand experience of the prison. Participants who took up this invitation include ex-prisoners (both Republican and Loyalist), former visitors, community museums, prison staff, and a former member of the independent Board of Visitors. Their commitment to work with us on this project showed us that the site’s inaccessibility is symptomatic of the hurdles that exist for a “post-conflict” society in dealing with difficult legacy issues. As the prison went from a state of occupancy to dereliction, its former inmates, staff, and visitors dispersed—for the main part back into their respective communities—taking with them artefacts from the prison along with their attendant testimonies. Inside the prison walls, the site was partially cleared, with some elements retained. Redevelopment plans were made and then shelved, followed by stagnation resulting from the collapse of the Stormont power-sharing executive. On the outside, community museums developed and grew, acting as collectors, custodians, and curators, and to this day a generation of private individuals continues to safeguard objects and memories. Many such individuals, with their personal memories, are not put into the foreground of familiar prison narratives or the evolving canon, but nonetheless they are still very much present. Time plays its role in the processing of such memories, revealing context as historical facts emerge.

However, as time passes there is also the attendant risk that some memories and contexts may be lost forever. Many people across the political spectrum told us that some ex-prisoners and former staff face significant health issues, whilst both Republicans and Loyalists reflected on the decreased life expectancy of the ex-prisoner population. This emphasised the importance of developing an artistic methodology to engage in dialogue with the people who had first-hand experience of the prison. Their testimonies become all the more vital as the prison’s material presence potentially becomes increasingly dispersed with the risk of artefacts being forgotten or lost.

These sensitivities and urgencies necessitated ways of working that avoided the simplification or sentimentalisation of such an ideologically loaded context. The prison artefacts varied from hand-made crafts and artworks by prisoners, which were often gifted to people on the outside, to pieces of prison infrastructure salvaged from the closed site by people who identified their future historical significance as objects with the potential to testify. To this end, we developed three primary methods to responsively explore the prison’s lesser-known narratives using artefacts and objects from the prison as catalysts for a dialogical process. Our methods stemmed from the participants’ personal relationships with these objects, either as makers, owners, or caretakers, which allowed testimonies to evolve from artefacts that were preserved, lost, or even imagined.

**Method 1: Re-staging**

Photographically re-staging artefacts collaboratively with participants allowed us to distil lesser-known narratives about the prison. We used a mobile photographic studio, taking it

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to a location nominated by the participant where we could collaboratively position, label, and photograph the object while recording an interview that would allow us to develop the final participant statements, which were integral to the photographic images. The participants were involved in the entire process, which led to them titling, and often dating, the object according to their relationship with it.

Using their title we made a label on site with a portable labelling machine. The label was then positioned within the image frame, before the object was photographed. Thus, "naming" became as integral to the re-staging process as the object itself. These practical and conceptual acts of "positioning," "labelling" and "photographing" the artefact created the conditions for dialogue, which we recorded.

After a process of editing and consultation this became the participant’s final statement, which would accompany the photographic image. The statements are a reflection of the participant’s relationship to the object, as opposed to a description of its form. This process invited participants to reflect on their personal experiences of the site and to create labels and statements of a poetic nature for the respective object whilst all the while being an active agent in the image-making process. All of the project participants engaged in the restaging process, allowing lesser-known or previously unknown narratives about the prison to emerge. Throughout the course of the project, our aim was to avoid the reiteration of pre-existing ideological narratives. Sometimes this process resulted in surprises; when photographing a set of objects brought to us by Loyalist ex-prisoners, we were told by a participant that he had made a jewellery-box cottage, but hadn’t brought it in as it was damaged. On bringing it down from his attic that morning he had discovered that a mouse had eaten the render from the cottage. Prisoners had to be resourceful and creative in finding materials and working methods within the confines of the prison. Porridge was frequently used to make a rough pebbledash render for such cottages. An incident that might have been initially considered a drawback to the project thus actually yielded nuanced information about the relationships between makers and the material act of making whilst in prison. We offered to repair the cottage and were trusted to do so by its maker. We photographed it in its damaged state, and in repairing it we gained a heightened awareness of the material process, inventiveness and time needed to make such objects. We returned the cottage after repairing and re-photographing it.

**Method 2: Re-appropriation**

Our dialogical photographic process further prompted us to ask participants about objects of importance that no longer existed. It was a natural speculative step in the process; in recalling an anecdote about a long-forgotten ‘thing’ the participant actively formed new images as well as engaging with existing artefacts. These images ultimately resulted in new objects, crafted by O’Beirn and photographed by Krenn. In constructing them we re-appropriated material methods and processes traditionally used in the prison to make prison art, based on accounts and anecdotes about the creation of objects by participants. As with repairing the damaged cottage, making these objects highlighted the need for material resourcefulness, time, patience, and concentration on the part of those making art in prison.

**Method 3: Re-telling**

Having used “Re-staging” to explore previously-untold or under-represented narratives and “Re-appropriation” to engage participants further in speculative image making, the next logical step was to work with participants to make new objects to articulate their personal narratives. The 50+ Group, under the umbrella of “Tar Anall,” an organisation dedicated to the welfare of Republican ex-prisoners and their families, became very engaged in the project in this way. This group of older politically engaged Republican women visited male relatives in the prison. They still meet regularly and share a close camaraderie. The group worked closely with us to make new objects. Their female narrative and their cohesiveness as an established close-knit group gave another, often lesser known, perspective on this all-male prison. The objects that they made, a minibus and a taxi, reference years of prison
visits, and two models of prison structures, a Nissan Hut and H-Block, hark back to particular periods in the prison’s history. They were crafted by the women through a series of workshops over several months using lollipop sticks and matchsticks with great tenacity in a re-work employing techniques and materials that were frequently used to produce prison art. During this process, the objects were also photographed in their unfinished state to document their transformation.

Working with the participants, we employed images and objects produced during the project as a material base to dialogically explore the potential of lesser-known prison narratives, as articulated in the participants’ statements. The participants generously and openly engaged with us over an extended period of time, against a background of ongoing political stagnation. The exhibition presents the photo-text works of objects and artefacts from the prison as well as new objects created by the participants and ourselves in response to the participants’ testimonies.

This book documents the artistic process and its outcomes. As well as documenting the artwork, which features previously unseen objects and artefacts from the prison along with personal testimonies, it contains material relating to our extended participatory process. As a result of this process, we believe that a multi-perspective discussion, based on human experiences, rather than reiterations of already established narratives, would serve to productively address the sites’ difficult past and uncertain future. The aim of the book, Transforming Long Kesh/Maze, is to contribute to a transformative discourse that will contribute to the ongoing peace process in Northern Irish post-conflict society.

Martin Krenn, born 1970, is an artist, artistic researcher and curator who teaches at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. He works with various types of media, especially text, photography, and video. Most of his work in public space takes the form of social sculpture. His key area of interest lies in the strained relationships between art and society. By consistently expanding the field of art, he tries to initiate discussions about socio-political topics and challenge conventional thinking. His work has been shown at numerous international exhibitions and festivals. Krenn holds an M.A. (Mag. art.) from the University of Applied Arts Vienna. In 2011, Krenn received the Vice-Chancellor’s Research Scholarship at the University of Ulster in Belfast (UK) for his Ph.D research in the Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment and was awarded a Ph.D by Ulster University in 2016. In 2017, Krenn was awarded the Venia Docendi in “Art and Communication Practices” at the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

Aisling O’Beirn, born 1968, is an artist based in Belfast and an Associate Lecturer in Sculpture at Ulster University. Her work is interdisciplinary and explores the relationship between politics and place, uncovering the tensions between disparate forms of official and unofficial information. She examines space and place as physical structures and political entities by making and animating forms relating to observed and theoretical structures being studied by contemporary astronomers and physicists. Her work also questions how people process and understand both scientific and political developments. Her work takes various forms, including sculpture, installation, animations and site-specific projects depending on the context. Dialogue is key to her practice, which has been facilitated by Armagh Observatory, Dunsink Observatory and The Centre for Astronomy NUIG, Galway. O’Beirn has exhibited nationally and internationally. She was included in Northern Ireland’s first participation in the 51st Venice Biennale and was shortlisted for the MAC International prize in 2018. Her work manifests variously as sculpture, installation, animation, and site-specific projects.
Photographs and Testimonies
AUNT BELLE 1976

It can be lowered down or drawn up. The little bucket is made from the cap of a toothpaste tube. Maybe you recognise it. It was made in Long Kesh in 1976, by a prisoner who was since killed in a shooting in Belfast.

The well is made from lollipop sticks. The base is made from a panel of a crisp box. It’s obviously been hammered, and the gravel around the edge is the coloured gravel used to decorate the base of a fish tank. The bigger stones obviously have come from somebody’s grave. These materials have got a type of family connection as they have been sent in or smuggled into the jail.* It’s a wishing well sent out from the jail to his aunt Belle.

* Depending on the period of the prison’s history or whether the prisoner was so-called “conforming” or “non-conforming,” some materials such as mahogany or leather were allowed into the prison when people came on visits. Other materials were provided within the prison via the tuck shop, while some were recycled from day-to-day objects.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Roddy McCorley Society Museum.
LOYALTY 1974

We’ve actually got the postal order stubs from the LPA* sending money over to prisoners caught smuggling weapons. They were imprisoned in England, such as in Wormwood Scrubs. They were sending them over five pounds a month on a postal order as part of their welfare. I loved finding that. This was all found in the same old brown leather attaché case.

* LPA is an acronym for Loyalist Prisoners Association, a support group set up for Loyalist prisoners and their families.

Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, Loyalist ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre.
HOTEL 8 CIRCA 2000

This radio set came from inside Long Kesh, and these radios were normally used by the prison staff who manned the internal watchtowers. Each watchtower would have had a radio set that acted as a transmitter and a receiver. These were sold at an auction in County Down after the prison closed. Luckily, we heard about them being put up for auction and were able to acquire this one. They do have a value,* as regards history, as they were part of Long Kesh.

* It is interesting to consider how an auctioneer would value such an item, but it’s telling that it made its way to an auctioneer’s house rather than a scrapyard.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Roddy McCorley Society Museum.

Description: Radio transmitter and receiver with microphone and aerial, pressed metal, and moulded black plastic casing. "Hotel 8" inscribed by hand in pen on the metal casing.
ALWAYS THERE

The Black Taxi Association started with private cars when there were no buses on and people couldn’t get to work. Then, you paid them very little. The private cars were getting harassed by the army, so then as the years went by they got more organised, and they started bringing in black taxis.

The army wasn’t able to take them off the road in the way you could have taken a private car off the road because they were legitimate taxis and it was a public service. We couldn’t have done without them. Everybody supported the black taxis. When the trouble was bad and they (protestors) burnt the buses, the bus service was pulled. If there were no buses the taxis were always there.

Testimony courtesy of the 50+ Group; artefact made by the 50+ Group with Krenn and O’ Beirn.
PORRIDGE STAGE 1

For the cottages that we made, we actually used porridge and painted them with glue. It was okay for the exhibition in November 2016. It was put back up into the attic. When I went to get it last night a mouse had eaten all the porridge off it. I’d say it’s dead after eating 20-year-old painted porridge.

It would be pretty easy to repair, just glue it and stick the porridge on again. It is worth doing because it is very nice. I never look at it very often but it’s there. It’s nice to have it there, you know?

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner, repaired by Krenn and O’Beirn.

Materials: Brass fittings, broom bristles, doll’s bed, draughts pieces, lollipop sticks, matchsticks, paint, plum velvet, printed pictures, prison yard pebbles, wood, and varnish.
PORRIDGE STAGE 2

Materials: Brass fittings, broom bristles, doll’s bed, draughts pieces, lollipop sticks, matchsticks, paint, plum velvet, printed pictures, prison yard pebbles, wood, and varnish.
BIG MID’S DART BOARD 1974

This dartboard* was probably sent out from Long Kesh in the end of 1974 or 1975. It says at the bottom “From Martin, with respect.” He would be among the last few internees to be released because he had such a big name in Republican circles. He and certain other people were let out last, for whatever reason. The British obviously thought that up.

A guy called “Big Mid” had given the dartboard to us. I said to the person who brought it in, “could you give me an address and Big Mid’s name so that I can let him know that we’d received it and put it on show in the museum.” But he did not give me the name and replied: “just call him Big Mid.” There must have been major security surrounding Big Mid. Apparently, this guy is very well-known in Ardoyne.

* The Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre also has a dartboard made by a Loyalist using the same technique.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Roddy McCorley Society Museum.

Materials: Coloured metallic threads, lollipop sticks, green baize, metal chain, panel pins, and plywood.
IN RECOGNITION JULY 1983 AND JANUARY 2013 (2)

My wife decided to advance her career in catering and went from an officer very quickly to a principal officer, and she was very highly thought of. She was head of catering within the service, and then she received her early retirement, just like me.

Testimony courtesy of Phil Holland, former prison officer; artefact courtesy of Ms. Holland.
BILLY 1993 TO 1994

The big caravan is partly broken but it was made by an ex-prisoner, who is unfortunately now dead. As soon as I look at it I just think of a friend that’s passed away. He was released and then he had a heart attack. He worked for Lisburn Community Self-Build* for a while. When he was released he was a builder on one of our projects. He was a life sentence prisoner but he was very artistic. And he was very fit, walking the yard winter and summer. He ran marathons, he pushed weights, and his way of unwinding in the evenings was to make things. He would have made anything for anyone. Nothing was too much for him. There were other prisoners who weren’t as talented. They would say “Could you make me one?” He was very obliging that way, a gentleman. Unfortunately, he is no longer with us.

* Lisburn Community Self-Build Ltd. describes itself as “a social economy construction business, run under the umbrella of the Resurgam Trust, a community development trust based in the Lisburn area. It was formed in 2000, providing training skills in construction for young people and the unemployed who have little prospects of employment.”

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.

Materials: Brass fittings, curtain trim, laminated lollipop sticks, and wood.
MEMORIES 1981

My brother and son were both in Long Kesh when he died. It just reminds you of them all when you look at it.* I have all the objects in my bedroom.** I’m surrounded by them all, on the windowsills. I often see people walking past my window who look in to see all the objects. They actually stop to look at them. I should have had them all washed and polished for coming in today.

* Whilst many objects made in the prison were dedicated to particular individuals and sent out as gifts to relatives and friends, objects were often also made as memorials for people who died and given to a family member. While this cross was made as a memorial to Chrissie’s father, it also memorialises the ten hunger strikers who died in the prison in 1981.

** Chrissie McCorry has a large collection of artefacts from the jail, as every time she visited her son in prison his friends gifted her things they had made.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Chrissie McCorry, 50+ Group.

Materials: Carved mahogany, inlaid black and white memorial photograph, paint, and varnish.
**BROTHER DIED 1972**

This plaque is of my brother and it was made by a good friend of mine, from the Short Strand. My brother died in 1972 from gunshot wounds and a few months later the plaque was sent out to me as a personal friend, as well as one for my mother and father. That came from Long Kesh and it’s signed at the back “1972.”

* Many objects made in the prison have personal dedications written on the back or base, which often provide information about who made it, when it was made, and who it was for outside the prison. This often hidden, handwritten information gives a link between the personal, the prison, the object, and the “outside,” as well as acting as a record of historical events.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Rosemary Lawlor McCormick, 50+ Group.

Materials: Acrylic paint, pen, plywood, and varnish.
CAT’S WHISKERS 1980S

These crystal radio sets were smuggled into the H-Blocks.* I think every H-Block had at least one. There’s an earpiece, and also a small crystal within the radio—you didn’t need a battery because of the crystal. There is a 35mm film container into which everything fitted, and a black wire that acted as the aerial with an on/off switch at the bottom. They used to put it up against the wall. The cream piece is the earphone. You could get the news, you only used it for that.

There would have been one in each leg of each block. They were called the “Cat’s Whisker,” or “Maggie Taggart” radio. You could say either. Maggie Taggart was actually a newsreader at that time, in the 80s and 90s. It was called the “Cat’s Whisker” because of the small wispy aerial.

* The radios were small, compact, and in a waterproof container, as they had to be smuggled into the prison inside peoples’ bodies.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.

Materials: Black insulation tape, coated copper wire, plastic moulded earpiece, radio crystal, 35mm film canister.
COMPETITION 1994 TO 1995

This particular shield was made for a darts competition inside the prison. It was made from wood and porridge. These were the prisoners who won it in 1994, and in 1995 other prisoners won it. They must have changed it from a group, team, competition to an individual competition. It was in a different block in 1995, so the plaque moved about the prison.

If you went to the medics and said you had a sore back they gave you a board. The board was the dimensions of a bed base so it went in under the mattress to make the bed hard. That’s how you got the timber. Everybody went to the medics for a bed board and then these were cut up to make everything.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.

Materials: Acrylic paint, porridge, plywood bed board, and varnish.
COUNCILLOR

This jewellery box belongs to my friend. Her brother, who was a councillor and an MLA,* made it for her when he was in the Kesh. He served eight years for driving a stolen car, which was strange since he had never learned to drive. Her other brother was shot dead in one of the feuds between the “Sticks”** and the INLA.*** He had previously been a member of the Workers Party before joining the INLA.

* MLA: Member of the Legislative Assembly, an elected government minister of the Stormont Assembly.

** The “Sticks,” or “Stickies,” is a nickname for the Official IRA and the Workers Party, as they wore adhesive-backed, stick-on commemorative Easter lilies, whilst Provisional IRA and Sinn Féin supporters wore commemorative Easter lilies affixed with a pin.

*** INLA: Irish National Liberation Army.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Mary Ferris, 50+ Group.

Materials: Brass fittings, crushed velvet, and wooden dowel.
SOUVENIR 2000

The date would be 2000 because this was one of the souvenirs I took away at the end. There were a number of these lying around* when the prison was empty, and it happens to be one of the phone cards that was for use in the prisons. On each wing inside the Maze, there was a card-operated phone for use by the prisoners. They had to have an appropriate card to be able to make their occasional phone calls out.

* A contributor in the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum also mentioned how documents and objects were seen to be strewn around the floor of abandoned wings soon after the prison shut.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Simon Bridge, former member of the Board of Visitors.

Description: Credit-card-sized, prison-issue, 40-unit BT phone card.
CREATIVE 1978

Darts and pool would have been played in the prison. We had a dartboard,* believe it or not. That’s all you had basically. You’d have come out a professional dart player and pool player.

Woodstock was the neighbourhood of the Loyalist prisoner who made this. It was for his local bar, and the local darts club would have been in that bar. That would be the relationship with that artefact and the local area.

* The Roddy McCorley Society Museum also has a dartboard made by a Republican using the same technique.

Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, Loyalist ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre.
SECTION 2000

We have a section of the H from one of the H-Blocks. It could be from any of the H-Blocks because they were all built in the same way then. They were all grey brick. But I’m nearly certain that came out of H2. They were knocking it down and this section of the wall, from one of the wings, came along with the cell door that we also have. These blocks are where the blanket protests, dirty protest, and hunger strikes took place. I don’t know how people did it. These protests dragged on for years. There was a lot of psychological damage to people. It can be seen now, not just in the men, but women too. The women prisoners in Armagh were also on protest.*

* The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum was established in 2007 on the first anniversary of the death of Eileen Hickey, who collected, researched, and organised the material. Eileen Hickey was OC (Officer in Command) in Armagh Women’s Prison between 1973 and 1977. She started archiving for the museum, recognising the historical importance of collecting the various artefacts. It is of note that the lesser-known narrative of the women involved in the conflict is represented here.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.

Description: Section of H-Block wall, two partial courses of grey brick with grey cement mortar.
CÚ CHULAINN 1973

This purse was made by my father for my brother. He did a lovely picture of Cú Chulainn on it, and he managed to do it in different colours.* It was made in 1973. He was inside for two years as an internee and released in 1974. My brother still has the purse and he’s very proud of it.

* Much of the leather used in the prison by Republican prisoners was sourced by Ms. McGettigan, also of the 50+ Group, who was a very active member of the Prisoners Dependents Fund, which later became the Green Cross, an organisation set up to look after the welfare of Republican prisoners and their families. She frequently used to travel to Capel Street in Dublin to pick up supplies that could be distributed and brought in on visits to allow prisoners to make such leather goods. She still has many of the original receipts for the leather she stored in her roof space.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Patricia Hume, 50+ Group.
FOLDER 1995 TO 2000

This was a folder which, as far as I remember, was issued to each member of The Board of Visitors* and kept in our office, into which the system could put any relevant documentation. It was used, for instance, for a new travel claim for each month, or a copy of a report which we needed to have. Every time we went in we’d go to our folders and update all the correspondence. Don’t forget that in those days you had very little email. It was all hard copy.

* The Board of Visitors was an independent body whose members had access to all areas of the prison. This voluntary board was officially appointed by the Secretary of State so that they could report on the work of the Prison Service. Their stated prime function was “to act as independent overseers of the prison system” with the duty of “seeing that the prison [was] properly administered.”

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Simon Bridge, former member of the Board of Visitors.
FATHER JULY 1974

The bag was made by my father, who was interned in Long Kesh in 1974.* He was one of the oldest men in the Kesh at the time. He was in his 60s and he was arrested from his workplace, a home bakery. He was released two days before I got married so he was able to give me away. I was very pleased about that.

* “Internment without Trial” was introduced by the British Government with mass arrests under “Operation Demetrius” in August 1971. As a result of this policy, nearly 2,000 people were interned without charge or trial over a four-year period. Most of them were from Republican communities, but a small percentage from Loyalist communities were also interned. Some people were held for up to four years. The policy was a crude response to the escalating conflict, but perhaps unsurprisingly, rather than quell it, the conflict escalated due to this measure. In 1976, the European Commission of Human Rights described interrogation techniques used on prisoners as torture, but this was downgraded to “inhumane and degrading treatment” in 1978 by the European Court of Human Rights, who gave this judgement prior to it being revealed that the British Government had authorised the use of torture. In December 2014, the Irish Government asked the ECHR to revise its 1978 ruling.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Patricia Hume, 50+ Group.

Materials: Tooled leather, leather thong, and fittings.
GLORIOUS MAY 1993

That’s a personal item made for somebody, and I wouldn’t know when it was made. The Rangers football team* got nine wins in a row with internationals from many different countries playing for the club. They were a joy to watch, but unfortunately I wasn’t able to get to the matches in those days. I did go to matches before being imprisoned. I am still a regular attendee when I can get to a game.

* Rangers FC is a Glasgow-based football team founded in 1872. They have a strong support base in Unionist and Loyalist communities.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.

Materials: Acrylic paint and handkerchief.
STANDARD ISSUE 30 YEARS

That was the standard bowl, plate, knife, fork and spoon. The bowl was for soup, custard and different desserts. They still use that type of thing today in the prisons. They were mostly plastic* made by the one firm, probably in England, then they sent them over to the prison. These were standard-issue until they changed them to standard-issue, plastic Dixie trays.

* Plastic utensils are durable, but perhaps more importantly from the prison system’s point of view, less effectively used as weapons.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.
FATHER 1995

I made the tobacco tin for my father while I was in prison in Long Kesh/Maze in 1995. Every time I’m in the museum I look at the tin. It reminds me of my father. It’s a tobacco tin, and he smoked so it has that dark side because he died of cancer. He was a member of Gertrude Star Flute Band,* which is also on the tobacco tin. That was the flute band that I and most of my family were in as well.

* The Gertrude Star Flute Band is a Loyalist flute band established in 1961. Loyalist flute bands traditionally take part in Loyalist parades over the summer months.

Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, Loyalist ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre.

Materials: Lollipop sticks, matchsticks, tobacco tin, paint, and varnish.
FROM THE LADS 1972

I took all my jewellery out and threw it on the bed. This is the jewellery box.

Fáilte* is written over the door, and that means “welcome.”
“To Mrs. McCorry from all the lads.” It’s from everybody; I didn’t even notice that written on it. If I hadn’t seen that inscription they would be phoning me up and asking “could you give it back!”

* Irish or Gaelic words and phrases were often used on objects produced by Republican prisoners. Many people in prison used their time to learn Irish, as well as studying other subjects. Gaeilgeoirí is the Irish word for Irish speakers, and those who learned their Irish in prison are sometimes nicknamed jailgeoirí.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Chrissie McCorry, 50+ Group.
I’m thinking about the future. This is how we wanted to use this flat area for cross-community, safe cycling for children. The H-Block, the wall as you come down from the main gate and the two aircraft hangars is the most ideal place. There are toilets and changing where adults can sit and watch whilst children enjoy themselves. What I want is only a small thing. It will be completely self-funded by parents of children who use it. I’m the chairman of the David McCall Foundation and we work tirelessly for youth cycling, promoting youth teams, for nine years now. That’s all we wanted to do, just use the area.

I always think to myself, “wouldn’t it have been great if I’d been able to do this with my own children.” There’s probably a lot of prisoners would actually say the same thing, spending a life sentence in prison with their children outside.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Phil Holland, former prison officer.
LIKE ARDGLASS 1971 TO 1972

My son made that cottage. We used to have a small country house many years ago in Ardglass. He said that it reminded him of it, and that’s why he made it. It was actually like the house we had, which afterwards got burned down.

That is a small axe. There used to be a summer seat and small shovels on it too, but I don’t know what’s happened to it. I think I actually took one of them off because there’s only half of it still there. You couldn’t tell what was there as it’s not there anymore.*

* Many of the objects produced in the prison are delicate and subject to damage, as they are scattered across so many different collections, both public and private, and stored in different conditions. This was a concern expressed by a range of people that we spoke to. One Loyalist ex-prisoner we met had made a cottage with porridge render (see page 28) and he discovered it damaged after a mouse had eaten the render.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Chrissie McCorry, 50+ Group.

Materials: Brass chain, card, lollipop sticks, matchsticks, prison yard pebbles, paint, and wood.
CULTURE JULY 1992

I didn’t make the drum, other prisoners made it. There were band uniforms and band instruments inside, too. You actually played it so there were six of those drums.* There was also a flute smuggled in. The drum snare is made with guitar strings and the body is just cardboard stretched round—it’s all cardboard.

* Marching band parades commemorating the victory of William of Orange at the Boyne and other historical Loyalist milestones are part of Loyalist tradition. Hundreds of band parades are held annually, primarily during the summer months. Imprisoned Loyalists kept up the seasonal marching and band parades within the jail, making or smuggling in instruments, triumphal arches, and banners to use in their parades.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.

Materials: Cardboard, cord, fitting, guitar strings, sheet plastic, and paint.
RESTRUNG 2017

The harp could be played, but then the children broke the strings. They said they wanted to learn to play the harp and the next thing it broke. I will leave it downstairs to Crann go Beatha,* who said they would get me the cord. I was going to fix it myself but it’s better to have it done here.

* Crann go Beatha Community Shed – Tree of Life Centre is a project dedicated to providing people with free drop-in arts and crafts workshop access and support. This workshop project also makes and repairs objects brought in by members of the public. It is used by some ex-prisoners, amongst others in the community, and its workshops and classes help to keep skills acquired in prison alive.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Chrissie McCorry, 50+ Group.

Materials: Carved mahogany, marker, and metallic thread.
Everybody saw the monitors. They were mounted high and only recorded one image. They monitored the front door, the sides of “The Circle,” and the whole area. That monitor was no. 2, but there could be up to six monitors. There was also a secure room where a prison officer sat monitoring the Circle, the hub of the administration block, for the whole H-Block. He was locked in there; if prison officers were overpowered or there was any sort of incident, he could not be touched. He would hit the alarm. Within a few seconds, it would sound across the whole camp.

The monitor continually recorded one image, which eventually became burnt into it. There is also a black, blurred shape visible because prison officers did the same route over for years. It must be them moving. They look like ghosts; you can actually see it on screen.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.
DISCIPLINE JANUARY 1992

I first came across this in January 1992 on being sentenced to Long Kesh/Maze prison. After arriving on the wing, after you got settled, this would have been produced and obviously, you would have been asked to read it and to agree to it. It was to make life more comfortable for the prisoners because you had around thirty on one wing in quite cramped conditions. This was a big help because everybody read it and knew what was expected of them. Because you were in prison didn’t mean you had to drop your morals and aspirations. It was there to make sure that the prison ran on a good even footing; to show respect, trust, and loyalty amongst all the prisoners. It was a good idea and well-conceived. That’s the discipline of the agreement.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.
**PEG CHAIR EARLY TO MID 1970S**

I’ve seen a number of other objects made from recycled clothes pegs and wooden clothes pegs, but we don’t have any other examples of these type of objects in our museum. It’s the only thing here that’s actually made out of clothes pegs,* I’ve seen harps and even crosses attempted, but never anything as small as that. It makes it more beautiful too, for all its size and uniqueness.

* Family, November 1994 (see page 82), depicts a musical jewellery box that a Loyalist prisoner also made from clothes pegs. The jewellery box additionally used other materials such as velvet, brass fittings etc., but was made in an era and context where the prison regime was more relaxed about letting materials into the prison.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Roddy McCorley Society Museum.

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Materials: Clothes pegs, glue, and varnish.
I was in the Maze in 1989, and the Crumlin Road Jail* in 1991. I was released in 1996, so it would have been made between 1992 and 1996. It’s made of clothes pegs. The legs are from the bottoms of the pawns in a chess set. It took a long time and effort—many nights spent—but it was enjoyable making it.

When the door closed, you were locked up. That’s the bottom line. You had to do something, and I was always doing something with my hands. At that stage, there was no TV, so it was either read books or get involved in handicrafts.

* Crumlin Road Gaol is a former prison in central Belfast where people were held on remand before being sentenced to Long Kesh/Maze or other prisons. It was linked by an underground tunnel to the former courthouse which was directly across the road. The site of the jail has now been developed as a visitor attraction. The former courthouse lies derelict awaiting redevelopment.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.
THANKFULLY NEVER USED

I had a prison-issue baton, but I don’t have it any more. It was something that was part of my uniform.

If there was any trouble you knew to call for help because a lot of the time in the prison you were on your own. You could have been quite isolated at times. You used to only hope that you never needed to use it.

Testimony courtesy of Phil Holland, former prison officer; object made by Krenn and O’ Beirn in response to testimony.
DIXIE MID 1970S

The Dixie was the tray with three compartments. In the '90s, when I was inside, a plastic tray was used. Stainless steel trays were the old trays, maybe from the mid-70s, then they moved onto a plastic one. The plastic ones were deeper, with three segments in each. You got your soup, potatoes, gravy and meat with your custard and cake all in this tray. When you were walking back down to your cell, the gravy would go into your dessert, the dessert would go into the soup. Everybody used to say to me “What part of dinner did you eat first?” and I answered “the soup,” as everything went into everything else!

Testimony courtesy of a Republican ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.
THE BULLY BULLY BUS

A Hamill St. resident drove the bus.* It was called the “Bully Bully Bus” because the first time we went on a visit all the young women on it with their babies and young children were singing rebel songs. We couldn’t sing because we were crying so much. It was miserable. The women were amazing because some of them were very young but they kept their spirits up by singing.

* Local people volunteered to drive relatives to the prison once a week for visits. Many of the women in the 50+ Group got to know each other going on these gruelling weekly prison visits. This system of someone volunteering to drive relatives to their visits was also used by Loyalists. We photographed a table made as a thank-you to someone who drove a bus for relatives of Loyalist prisoners.

Testimony courtesy of the 50+ Group; artefact made by the 50+ Group with Krenn and O’Beirn.

Materials: Card, glue, lollipop sticks, paper tape, wood, and varnish.
EARLY PRISON DAYS EARLY 1970S

When I first went to jail in 1971, some prisoners were still making this sort of pegboard design, like this clock.* It was being superseded by more political artwork. If you were on remand or sentenced, the first thing you probably would have done would be to draw on handkerchiefs, putting a Republican message on them to send out to your friends as presents.

* There are more examples of this type of early work in Republican collections, including a pair of owls and a to-scale dartboard. Examples also exist of this type of technique being used for political insignia and symbolism in Loyalist collections.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Roddy McCorley Society Museum.

Materials: Coloured metallic threads, russet red baize, metal chain, panel pins, and plywood.
ESCAPE 1983

This harp was sent out to me by a friend from Ballymurphy. He was one of the 38 men who escaped during the last escape from the H-Blocks. He was never recaptured. Underneath it’s dated 1983. At the time, I didn’t know the significance of it, but I know now because that’s when the escape happened.* When I saw him again, the first thing he said to me was, “did you get the harp?”

* The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum has a telephone, which was located in the secure room of one of the H-Blocks and only ever to be used in case of an emergency such as an attempted escape. They also have a copy of the newspaper An Phoblacht (The Republic), which carries a detailed interview with an escapee, illustrated with a diagram and map showing the route of the escape. “How We Did It,” An Phoblacht, 6 October 1993, 7-9.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Rosemary Lawlor McCormick, 50+ Group.

Materials: Carved mahogany, copper wire, green corduroy, and varnish.
**EMERGENCY ONLY 1980S**

This is an emergency device, so if anything happened, the person manning it could contact administration immediately. It could be a fight or something where they didn’t have to raise the alarm. The prison officer would lift the receiver just like the red emergency telephone in a hospital. The British army would have been early respondents. The prison probably had a direct line to them if they did see anyone escape.*


Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.

Description: Cream plastic push-button telephone with embossed adhesive labels, paper stickers, inscriptions in marker and Sellotape.
Many prison officers were assaulted and murdered. There was a children’s foundation set up. As you can see a prison officer is holding the hand of a child, The Keys Children’s Foundation. These foundations were formed to help the families of some of the prison officers who were being attacked and murdered.

This is the badge of a Second World War pilot, and his aircraft crashed into Long Kesh. Prison officers reckoned there was a ghost, whom they saw during the night in the H-Blocks, and they christened him “Harvey.” They believed the ghost of Harvey patrolled the H-Blocks after crashing in Long Kesh.*

* Harvey is not the only ghost mentioned to us in relation to Long Kesh. The Circle, 2000 (p.78) shows a prison security monitor in the care of the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum with an image of “the circle” area of a now demolished H-Block forever seared into it from years of monitoring the same location. Rota, an image of an old prison guard rota with names still faintly visible, like hovering ghosts, is from the same collection.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Phil Holland, former prison officer.
This medicine ball came out of the H-Blocks of Long Kesh around the year 2000, just after the jail closed. More than likely it was taken out by an ex-prisoner. The reason that a lot of these objects were taken out of the jail in the first place was that there was a threat, or people thought, that the Long Kesh site itself was going to be demolished,* and with it all the artefacts would be lost. Hence it ended up in the Roddy’s Museum.

We are safeguarding these objects, that’s the reason behind the museum. We have to keep them and protect them so that people can still come and visit them. There is lots to do. There must be hundreds and hundreds of objects in people’s roof spaces or under beds, stored in places like that. They could be put on the show but they’re obviously not. People just can’t bear to part with them; they’re so holy to them, so precious.

* Peoples’ fears proved partially correct, as much of the site was demolished in 2006 with only a few indicative structures remaining, namely one H-Block, a Nissan Hut, the prison hospital, and the prison chapel.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Roddy McCorley Society Museum.
MESSAGE 1981?

Many years ago there was a particularly strange scenario.* I remember kites being flown from the prison. It must have been connected to the hunger strikes, but I’m not sure, it might have been before that. The kites were flown so high that they looked just like very small coffins. They cut them and there was about 200 metres of fishing line on each to launch it into the sky. I remember it well because we followed one of the kites for about 2 miles from where we lived. We found the kite and it had messages written on it in Irish. I brought it home. My Mum and Dad both worked and when they walked in that night there was a white coffin just sitting on the floor. It was the kite. I’ve never been able to get an explanation, it was definitely Republican prisoners. I’ve heard that it might have been the Official IRA sending messages out. I don’t know whether that’s true or not. It would be interesting to find out what that was all about because it wasn’t just one kite, there was a number of them, made from white bed sheets.

* The author of the statement grew up as a child in a housing estate very close to Long Kesh/Maze. Years later, as an adult, he eventually got arrested and became an inmate of this prison. His experience as a prisoner is described in “Reflection.”

Testimony courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner; object made by Krenn and O’ Beirn in response to testimony.

Materials: Chalk, found display drawer lined with plum-coloured velvet, fishing line, panel pins.
MURDER 1970S

My friend’s brother made this bodhrán* for her when he was in Long Kesh. He served twelve years for a stolen car incident. He was innocent of this conviction because he couldn’t drive!

* A bodhrán is a traditional Irish drum made from a goatskin stretched over one face of a cylindrical wooden frame held rigid with two crossbars. The instrument is played with a hoc, a dumbbell-shaped wooden stick. The player can control both pitch and timbre by placing one hand inside the drum occasionally putting pressure against the skin whilst beating out a rhythm (jig, reel, or polka) with the hoc. Bodhráns are often played in traditional sessions accompanying other instruments such as flutes, fiddles, whistles, squeezeboxes, guitars, and bouzoukis.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Mary Ferris, 50+ Group.

Materials: Bent plywood, brass tacks, goatskin, indelible ink, and wooden dowel.
ESCAPEE 1983

This cross was made by an escapee. He escaped from Long Kesh with another group of men. One was injured in the escape. He brought the injured man back and then he escaped again. He was caught on the motorway because he didn’t have enough time to get away as by then the wardens had been alerted and he was arrested fairly quickly.*

* The escape, known in Republican circles as “The Great Escape” saw thirty-eight IRA prisoners escape from H7 in the biggest breakout in Irish or British history. Having had to abandon a hijacked lorry they breached the perimeter gate and fled across the fields. Nineteen prisoners were recaptured over the coming days, and nineteen escaped. A prison officer who was stabbed during the escape died of a heart attack, another who was shot survived; other prison officers and prisoners were also injured.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Patricia Hume, 50+ Group.
ORGANISED 1975

They* had audited accounts telling how much money they were collecting, going right up from 1974 to 1976. Collection boxes were put in shops all around Belfast to collect people’s small change. People knew it was going to look after the welfare of prisoners’ families. There were dinner dances, ballots, burger vans, and all the money was going to the LPA. Unbelievable.

* Loyalist Prisoners Association (LPA).

Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, a Loyalist ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre.
The little cottage* was given to me by a neighbour and both he and his wife were lifelong friends. He spent eight years in Long Kesh, and I think the house represents him, his wife and his five children. He did eight years for his country.

* Cottages, which doubled up as jewellery boxes and sometimes as music boxes, were made by both Republicans and Loyalists. A wide range of materials were used in the cottages, which tend to either date from the Long Kesh era of the early 1970s, or the 1990s, periods when materials were more readily available. Some materials such as the brass fittings were brought in by the prison and sold to prisoners via the tuck shop, where visitors could pay in money as credit for their loved ones. Visitors sourced and brought other materials in for prisoners, such as the leather sourced in Dublin by Ms. McGettigan. The mahogany was sourced by many individuals, whilst the velvet used to line the jewellery boxes was sourced by Kathleen (of the 50+ Group), who worked as an upholsterer.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Brid Foyle, 50+ Group.

Materials: Broom bristles, lollipop sticks, matchsticks, paint, plywood, prison yard gravel, scrim, and wooden dowel.
RANK PO 2012

These belong to my wife, actually. She was a principal officer, they were her epaulettes.

Testimony and courtesy of Phil Holland, former prison officer; artefact courtesy of Ms. Holland.

Description: Two navy blue prison uniform epaulettes with HMP with three silver buttons and silver HMP motif.
REFLECTION

One of my memories was that in the evenings as the sun was going down I was walking around the prison yard and saw the reflection in the window of the lookout tower where the prison staff would sit to monitor the prisoners. I could actually see the small housing estate on which I was born, bred and brought up, where my family were still living at that point. That sight brought with it mixed emotions, being so close and yet so far.

Testimony courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner; object made by Krenn and O’Beirn in response to testimony.

Materials: Compact mirror, corrugated cardboard, matchsticks, and wood laminate.
SACRIFICE 10 MARCH 1974

Two of these soldiers were only seventeen. They were brothers. It was a tragedy, cruel and callous. They were taken from a bar and brought up into the wilderness, where they must have been terrified, then brutally executed with a shot to the back of the head. They were just dumped there. Even today the memorial is regularly attacked and defaced, but the locals come out every time and clean it up. It just shows you what one human can do to other humans, and we must never forget about it.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.

Materials: Coloured pens, frame, handkerchief, picture glass, and twine.
FOREVER FRIEND FEBRUARY 1998

This was made by a Sinn Féin councillor. He had no family, and I took him home when he got cancer, to look after him. He was buried from my house. He was born in County Fermanagh. He left Fermanagh when he was six months old and he was sixty and six months when he went back to Fermanagh to be buried.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Pat McGivern, 50+ Group.
**GAUGE 1980S**

This is a blood pressure monitor from the hospital wing that took the hunger striker’s blood pressure.* Every day, whilst they were on hunger strike they got their blood pressure taken, were weighed and had their vital signs checked. It says “HMP Maze Hospital.” It was acquired about ten years ago.

* After even a few days on hunger strike, blood pressure levels can drop to below-average levels due to the body calling upon reserves of fat and muscle tissue as alternative sources of energy.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.

Description: Pump-action blood pressure gauge, with mercury gauge, and brown cloth cuff housed in a pressed-metal, clip-shut casing.
The tie, which I confess I had forgotten I’d got, is an unused prison officer’s tie. My suspicion is that we were probably given them right at the end because it’s a tie for the prison staff in the Maze prison. When we left and the Maze was being closed, I suspect there was a stock of these and as there would be no more staff in the Maze they had nothing else to do with them so they just gave us one each as a souvenir.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Simon Bridge, former member of the Board of Visitors.

Description: Polyester prison officer’s tie still in polythene wrapping.
FREEDOM 1976

The “Che” Guevara banner* was made by my friend’s brother, Michael Ferguson** for his sister. Michael Ferguson later served as an MLA. “Freedom” is the word we associate with it.

* Bedsheets were often used to make banners by both Republicans and Loyalists. Images of or references to “Che” Guevara can be seen in Republican artefacts, as many Republicans would identify with other left-wing and revolutionary figures. The Roddy McCorley Society Museum has another example of a souvenir portrait made as a gift for a soon-to-be-released prisoner by fellow prisoners (“Going Home, June 1976”). This portrait of the prisoner also has a “Che” Guevara quotation. More unusually, and perhaps surprisingly, we saw a leather bas-relief of “Che” in a private Loyalist collection.

** Michael Ferguson served firstly as a Sinn Féin councillor for Lisburn City Council before being elected as an MLA (Minister for the Legislative Assembly) for West Belfast, between 26 November 2003 and 24 September 2006. He died of cancer in 2006.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Mary Ferris, 50+ Group.

Materials: Bed sheet, marker, and paint.
THE QUIET MAN 1995

That was actually made for my mummy by a fella who came from Derry. He always said it was from the film *The Quiet Man* with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara.* When my Dad went up to visit all he did was talk about *The Quiet Man* and the cowboy pictures.

* *The Quiet Man* is a 1952 Technicolour American release directed by John Ford. Much of the movie was filmed in Cong, The Mamm Valley, Co. Galway, where there is a museum dedicated to the film with replicas of some of the sets for tourists to have the “Quiet Man” experience.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Chrissie McCorry, 50+ Group.

Materials: Green baize, inlaid religious images, Letraset, lollipop sticks, painted prison yard pebbles, varnish, and wood.
OVERLOOKING 1976

This was overlooking H7, one of the H-Blocks in Long Kesh. It was a security light, a searchlight* and it operated on a swivel. You could actually move that one. I think that you could follow something or somebody, as there’s a handle at the side so that you can angle it.

* Army surveillance helicopters also had very powerful directional searchlights which could flood a room with very bright light if angled accordingly.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.
THANKS 1975

This is a table donated by the son of the man who drove the bus for the Loyalist Prisoners Association. It was a minibus that took prisoners’ families and visitors up to Long Kesh, six days a week, Monday to Saturday. One of the prisoners in Long Kesh made that table for the driver. Whenever he died, last year, his son was in clearing his house out, and that was in his attic.

You find these things coming out of people’s attics because the armed conflict is finished. All these artefacts are coming to the fore now, with people dying and their families clearing their houses and finding all these things. That’s where we’re getting most of them.

Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, a Loyalist ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre.

Materials: Brass feet, brass and wood trim, tapered wooden legs, reverse painting on a glass disc.
FRIEND MARCH 1974

This cross* was made by a friend who was imprisoned in Long Kesh in 1974 for shooting two soldiers. He was a very good friend of mine, and he made this cross for my birthday. Later on, he married my best friend and we are still friends today. I have given this away now to his daughter as she has just moved into a new house.

* Carved Celtic high crosses are a very common artefact amongst Republicans. They take their form from carved stone Celtic Irish high crosses, which can be seen in graveyards across Ireland, Clonmacnoise having a particularly fine example. Many of these crosses have intricate Celtic knotwork patterns, which would provide a prisoner with time on their hands with an interesting challenge.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Patricia Hume, 50+ Group.

Materials: Lollipop sticks, matchsticks, religious picture, and wooden inlays.
VISIT DIARY 1996 TO 2000

This is my personal log book, which I found useful to record each time I was in the prison; who I’d seen, what we’d done, so I could refer as a reminder for the future. I’ve got brief notes of all the visits that I’d made and then at the back of the book I’d actually put one line for each visit with the exact time, what it was for and the mileage as a basis of which I could then complete the travel claims.

Staff never went into the wings, except when they went in bulk to search, whereas in normal prisons staff would have walked up and down the wings when prisoners are shut in their cells. Here they left prisoners to free range the wings. We as visitors walked into the wings, but the staff didn’t.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Simon Bridge, former member of the Board of Visitors.
THANKFULLY NEVER USED 1976 TO 2000

The only thing that I kept of my own, that I thought worthy of keeping, was my prison service issue alert whistle. I don’t know why I kept it, but it’s just been there. I’ve had that from when I first joined in 1976. It was something that was part of my uniform. It was like an adornment between the two breast pockets.

You would have used it if needed, and if you’d had time to do so. If there was any trouble you knew to call for help because a lot of the time in the prison you were on your own. You could have been quite isolated at times. You used to only hope that you never needed to use it.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Phil Holland, former prison officer.
WELFARE 1974

This was the key find for me. It’s a monthly minute book from 1974 of the Loyalist Prisoners Association (LPA), the welfare section of the UDA. Money was managed through the LPA. My uncle was chairperson and went up to Stormont to see the British Government in 1973, as part of a UDA delegation.

There are two years of monthly minutes, and there’s my uncle’s signature, “T. Stitt, chairman.” It tells how much money was given during the Ulster Workers’ Council Strike.* There’s a piece of information about the roadblocks everywhere and how they (the LPA) couldn’t get to meetings, even though these were UDA men. It tells a story about how prisoners were an integral part of the organisation. It was managed by a committee specifically set up to look after the welfare of prisoners and their families outside.

* The Ulster Workers’ Council Strike (15 May 1974–28 May 1974) was a general strike which massively disrupted day-to-day life and basic services in Northern Ireland. It was organised by Loyalists opposed to the Sunningdale Agreement, which proposed giving the Dublin government a role in governing Northern Ireland. The strike brought down the power-sharing executive.

Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, a Loyalist ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre.
I made this for my mother in 1992.* It was my way of showing appreciation for her help and support. She was steadfast in all the years that I spent incarcerated. You couldn't give her money, she didn't want gifts. I remember when I gave her that it had pride of place in the house until her death. Then after her death, obviously, that's what I wanted and I returned it to my house. So yeah, it's very special, especially this morning when I was taking it down.

* Handkerchiefs with either personal or political dedications were common amongst both Loyalist and Republican prisoners. Many recount how a handkerchief was one of the first things that they made in the jail. They were relatively easy to make, the materials were also easy to acquire and the finished handkerchiefs were easy to send out. They could have a personal or a political function. So ubiquitous were handkerchiefs produced in the jail that they even lent the jail the nickname “The Hankie Factory.”

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.

Materials: Coloured inks, frame, handkerchief, and picture glass.
SUFFERING

The conditions were very bad. They were all cramped in. They were tortured and then they were on the dirty protest. They used to get big hoses that firemen would use to wash the men down. I think that was desperate. It was the families who brought stuff up to the fellas because they were getting nothing in there. A lot of the fellas died as a result of the conditions and everything that happened in there. They were spraying CS gas in there and nobody knows what’s in that CS gas. It ended up that a lot of them have died young from being in there.

Testimony courtesy of the 50+ Group; artefact made by the 50+ Group, with Krenn and O’ Beirn.

Materials: Glue, matchsticks, paper tape, wood, and varnish.
HAPPY CAMPERS

The British decided that they would break the mens' spirits by interning them without trial. Imprisonment was for an indefinite period. The guys never knew when they were getting out so they organised themselves to keep their spirits up. They did lots of things, including getting an education. A lot of people I knew came out qualified so they called it “The University of Long Kesh.” They got degrees, and even solicitors came out of Long Kesh. That’s how they did it and their spirits were always good, so “happy campers” is a good name.

Testimony courtesy of the 50+ Group; artefact made by the 50+ Group, with Krenn and O’ Beirn.

Materials: Carpark gravel, corrugated card, glue, matchsticks, paper tape, wood, and varnish.
HEROES 1971 TO 1976

I just made one wallet and one wallet only. It was a skill in itself. Leatherwork was an art. I learnt it from other life-sentence prisoners who had been doing leatherwork for over ten years. They transferred their skills on to anybody who wanted to look, listen, and learn. Meeting those people, learning from those people, as far as handicrafts were concerned, was a major thing for us. You’d plenty of time on your hands. You achieved something.

Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, a Loyalist ex-prisoner; artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre.

Materials: Brass buckle, embossed leather.
HE MADE IT 1973 TO 1974

I was amazed that he was able to make anything like that object because he wasn’t great with his hands.* He has a great brain. Only that he told me that he made it I would have thought that he got it from somebody else, but he made it!

* Various ex-prisoners told us that for many serving time prison was the first opportunity where they had time to make such intricate objects. It was often difficult for people to keep up their acquired craft or skill on the outside due to time constraints. For those Republican ex-prisoners who still make things, many use Crann go Beatha Community Shed—Tree of Life Centre, a community project dedicated to providing people with free arts and crafts workshop access and support.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Kay Walsh, 50+ Group.

Materials: Tooled and stained leather, leather thong, and fittings.
REJECTION ONGOING

It would be fantastic for cross-community, safe cycling, and healthy lifestyles. It ticks all the boxes, but unfortunately it gets no further than OFMDFM (Office of First and Deputy First Minister). All correspondence that we have had with the prison was really a paper exercise, it’s never gone any further.

Politicians aren’t interested in our requests, which would be important to most people. Our requests are way down their list of priorities. Nobody in Stormont seems to want to know. The last email I sent to a local politician didn’t even receive a reply.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Phil Holland, former prison officer.
PRESENT NOVEMBER 1993

I think this was made around 1993 in the Maze. It would have taken months, and it was therapeutic to make. Making takes your mind off somewhere else. Everything is put together, filed, and sanded down. It takes you away from all the anxieties and traumas that you’re worried about. It is hands-on. I never thought I would make something like that. When I look at it now the prison yard springs to mind. The base is clad in gravel collected out of the prison yard which you walked round for exercise.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of a Loyalist ex-prisoner.

Materials: Brass fittings, chess pawns, lollipop sticks, matchsticks, paint, porridge, wood, and varnish.
When he went into Long Kesh, he was in “the compounds”* in an era before the H-Blocks. This was made there. When I saw it, I was proud of him for doing it, but it broke my heart to think that my child was in a place where this was what he did to pass his time. I’ll never forget it. It’s all done and dusted now and in the past.

He was out for three years and then he was sent back to the H-Blocks, which was a whole different kettle of fish.** It could have had a bad ending. There were the fellas who died in jail or who came out and weren’t okay, but he is fine. He’s dealing with it. I’m really and truly proud of him and how he handled his time because he handled it much better than I did. You have to be thankful for that.

* “The compounds” was a term used to refer to the fenced areas of Long Kesh Internment Camp. Each fenced area contained several Nissan huts.

** “A different kettle of fish” is a vernacular phrase meaning “a very different situation.”

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Kay Walsh, 50+ Group.
ROTA

This is the “Night Guard Radio’s” rota. The list of posts, Tango 3-9, are written on a gridded sheet of paper, sandwiched between a piece of ply and Perspex that can be wiped down. The codenamed posts are presumably the various watchtowers. Prison officers’ names and pass numbers are entered against the respective posts so it can be seen who is on duty at a particular time. It’s possible to still make out names and numbers, presumably one of the last of the duty rotas before it closed in 2000. The names are faint, like ghosts hovering.*

We have several items, such as visitor log books and Tally Room keys, found strewn around the prison. People, allowed to visit the site after the prison was closed, salvaged items and donated them to us recognising their historical significance.

* This is not the only piece of prison infrastructure holding ghosts. “The Circle, 2000” (p. 78) shows a prison security monitor in the care of the same museum with an image of the Circle area forever seared into it from years of monitoring the same location.

Testimony courtesy of a Republican contributor; artefact courtesy of The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast.
“Somewhere my Love” was the song that plays on it. There’s a name on it “To Chrissie McCorry ó Dinny.”

Ó Dinny, that’s a fella from Derry. I don’t even know his second name. Dinny was my son’s friend who was also in jail. I was given many objects, every time I went on a visit I got something. I keep it in my bedroom. Most nights when I go in I turn it on to listen to the song, as it’s one of my favourite songs.

* “Somewhere my Love” is a song from a 1966 album by Connie Francis. The song is a leitmotif of “Laura’s Theme,” composed by Maurice Jarre, made famous as the theme tune of the 1965 film Dr. Zhivago.

** “Ó Dinny” is the Irish translation of “from Dinny.”

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Chrissie McCorry, 50+ Group.

Materials: Music box, brass chain, brass tacks, lollipop sticks, mahogany, matchsticks, paint, timber strips, upholstered velvet, and wood.
LOVE NOVEMBER 1971

My husband was interned in November ’71. I had a child and a small girl who had died the year before. I was pregnant again at the time. Unfortunately, my son lived two days and died. That was my second child who died and it was a very hard time, but there was a lot of love in our relationship.*

* Many small intimate objects such as jewellery boxes and music boxes were produced in the jail and sent out as personal gifts; however, prisoners also made much bigger objects for the home, such as the wooden rocking horse that Alice’s husband made. The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum has some other examples of household furnishings, such as a cradle, signed by many on the wing, and a range of TV stands and coffee tables. The Roddy McCorley Society Museum has a rocking chair, whilst there are many examples of tables with intricate marquetry inlay work in a private Loyalist collection.

Testimony and artefact courtesy of Alice Harper, 50+ Group.

Materials: Brass hinges, carved mahogany, coloured photographs, Polaroid photograph, and velvet.
Essays
One is faced with a dilemma when writing about Long Kesh/Maze prison: how do we accurately represent the contemporary meaning of a place with a loaded and highly contentious past, one that closed nearly twenty years ago but remains largely inaccessible to the public in the present? Long Kesh/Maze was associated with some of the most public and controversial events of the low-level internecine conflict in Northern Ireland colloquially known as the “Troubles” (c.1968–c.1998).\(^1\) In particular, the aerial images of the H-Blocks of Long Kesh/Maze were highly mediatized to represent the high-profile protests ongoing inside it in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The H-Blocks became the representation of a time when ten men slowly died inside the prison while on hunger strike in 1981, and when buses were burnt in protest on the streets of Northern Ireland. Simultaneous to this high public profile, the prison has always been a physically inaccessible place apart. It is a site few people have had access to without being assigned the status of prisoner, employee, or visitor. Long Kesh/Maze was categorized as a high-security site when it opened to hold internees in 1971, and even after its closure as a functional

prison in 2000—despite creeping demolition ever since—it still retains that categorization. Despite its enduring physical inaccessibility, Long Kesh/Maze has been an integral part of Northern Irish society; depictions of the prison, its interiors, and many of its inmates have acted as visual backdrops for working-class communities in the form of monumental wall murals. The “distributed self” of the prison in the form of prisoner handicrafts and artworks, commonly known as “prison art,” have been relocated in significant quantities beyond its walls and continue to circulate in wider society. These artefacts continue to present the absence of Long Kesh/Maze in people’s homes and community-run (often ex-prisoner-managed) museums. These various forms of prison art—as material memory, enduring relics, touchstones of history, and inspiration for a different future—are the focus of this volume.

An Abridged Biography of Long Kesh/Maze Prison

No “short” history of Long Kesh/Maze can truly reveal all the complex meanings, relationships, or associations of the place with the conflict in Northern Ireland, but there is a need to provide some context as to why an architecturally unremarkable and long-derelict prison continues to be important. First, its biography as a place of imprisonment both mirrors and is implicated in the course and longevity of the society that produced its inmates. The Troubles took place between roughly 1968 and 1998, while the prison was active from 1971 to 2000. It was opened in direct response to the conflict, and it held male prisoners who were primarily interned, remanded, or convicted for their involvement. Long Kesh/Maze closed in direct response to the signing of the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement (hereafter “GFA,” see Glossary), specifically the clause that detailed the mechanism for releasing “qualifying” prisoners who were held due to Troubles-related offences and whose affiliated organization maintained “a complete and unequivocal ceasefire.”

Long Kesh Internment Camp (later renamed “Her Majesty’s Prison, the Maze”) opened as an emergency measure with the expectation of a short, functional life—a short-term solution to what was hoped would be a limited emergency situation. Until this time, the province’s ageing and strained prison infrastructure was having difficulties dealing with the large influx of prisoners associated with the recent escalation of civil unrest. The decision to separate newly arrived prisoners by both status and affiliation into “Compounds”—which had fenced perimeters filled with makeshift, open-plan Nissen huts—meant that the prison structure was utilised to contain, rather than control, groups of prisoners. As a pragmatic fix, the internment camp was meant to maintain prisoners in their paramilitary groupings while separating them from wider society. Initially, the majority of prisoners were interned or remanded; since they had not yet been convicted of any offence, there was no intention to reform or rehabilitate them. The material form of imprisonment was not initially considered and this oversight had major repercussions for how it developed and functioned over the long term, especially in terms of power struggles between communalised prisoner groups and staff.

The introduction of “Special Category” status in 1972, which recognised prisoners’ political status and provided more relaxed conditions and enhanced rights than ODCs (“ordinary decent criminals”) experienced, was swiftly revoked in 1973. Thereafter the desire for a return to Special Category status became the focus of protests and demands by prisoners who considered themselves political rather than criminal. The removal of political status was particularly significant for Republican prisoners, as Irish nationalists had a deep history of political imprisonment by the British state, dating back to at least the 1790s. This meant they had long-standing precedents for denying the criminal categorisation of their actions, utilising established practices to articulate and perform their political status (including collective actions such as hunger strikes), and they enjoyed general support from their wider community. Pre-Troubles Northern Ireland had a prison population of 727, one of the lowest per-capita incarcerated populations in Europe.

However, by 1973 an increasing number of interned, remanded, and convicted prisoners, pushed the prison population to over 4,000. Clearly, there was a need for new, secure accommodation.

Provisional IRA prisoners rioted and burnt the majority of the Compounds in 1974, their actions revealing how little control over these structures the authorities truly held. This resulted in a damning report by Lord Gardiner in 1975, which revealed the inadequacies of the structures for holding a communalised and non-complying prisoner body, and recommended the construction of new, cellular accommodation on the wider site. Within a year, a series of concrete, one-storey H-Blocks were built to hold new prisoners (although existing prisoners continued to reside in the remaining Compounds until they were released or chose to transfer, until closure in 1988). In total, eight H-Blocks were built over three phases, and they were all fully operational by 1978. The introduction of prisoners to this new form of imprisonment coincided with a changed government policy from the inaction of containment associated with the Compounds to the attempted criminalisation and separation of prisoners within a cellular system. The prisoners were aware that this change of structures meant another change of status, and so many responded by initiating highly public, communally organised protests on their arrival. The protests in the H-Blocks are primarily associated with Republican prisoners from 1976 to 1981, but various other paramilitary groups within the prison also participated. They were used strategically, with prisoners often going “on” and “off” protest in order to share information and take respite from the conditions.

The protests in the H-Blocks climaxed with a series of mass hunger strikes in 1980 and 1981, famously resulting in IRA prisoner Bobby Sands being elected as an MP to the UK parliament before being the first of the hunger strikers to die, on 5 May 1981. Nine other prisoners starved to death before the protest was called off with a pyrrhic victory for the British government in early October 1981. Although the prisoners’ claims for reinstatement of the central tenets of political status—the so-called Five Demands—were not granted, in reality the British government had been badly affected by the disruption and instability the hunger strikes had provoked in wider society. Thereafter, policies again reverted to a more conciliatory and compromising stance. The prison was the site of the largest mass jail break in UK penal history, with the escape of thirty-eight Republican men in 1983, but it remained relatively calm afterwards. The prison regime eventually stopped trying to enforce criminalisation status, which resulted in the structures no longer being used to enforce policies and prisoners enjoying a more communal and self-regulated existence. However, the significance of prisoners in relation to the ebbs and flows of the Troubles outside the prison did not end in 1981 or 1983. Their continued role in the conflict (and its cessation) was confirmed when British Secretary of State Marjorie “Mo” Mowlan openly visited paramilitary leaders in the prison to negotiate ceasefires in 1994. As a condition of the GFA, the majority of paramilitary prisoners were released over a two-year period, and Long Kesh/Maze became obsolete, eventually closing in September 2000.

**The Enduring Material World of Long Kesh/Maze**

As an archaeologist from Northern Ireland who is especially interested in the material culture of the contemporary and recent past, I was greatly interested in Long Kesh/Maze after its closure. Initially, this interest was focused on how we could analyse the different prison buildings to uncover if (and how) they impacted on the ability of prisoners to communalise their resistance to imprisonment. However, it quickly became apparent that any study of the prison had to engage with the fact that its material remains were still active agents, both on the site and in wider society. I have argued elsewhere that the many physical remains of Long Kesh/Maze—be they inaccessible but in situ on the prison site or distributed into wider communities—remain important. They are the “material memory” of the functional site. Since

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2000 the derelict prison quickly transitioned from being a functional institution to an “icon” of the Troubles, and so its material world has become increasingly significant. It is my belief that the material culture of Long Kesh/Maze provides the most obvious example of how enduring physical remains represent a critique of official attempts to bypass “dealing with the past” at a societal level. One of the enduring deficits of the GFA has been its lack of engagement with the key issues of what happened during the Troubles, where fault should be apportioned, and how (or if) we define victim and perpetrator. All of these unresolved issues are central to understanding the enduring significance of Long Kesh/Maze. Perhaps understandably, as the conflict was coming to an end in 1998, it was decided at a political level that trying to understand what the Troubles was, how it happened, and whether to apportion blame was too contentious and too difficult at that time. Due to expediency, there was no codification in the GFA as to how society could move on in the long term. In 1998 it was simply enough to be cautiously relieved that the conflict was over, optimistic about the future, and largely ignore the past. As we have reached the twentieth anniversary of the GFA it is clear that this mindset is no longer viable.

The past in Northern Ireland is not containable and it cannot be deliberately forgotten at a societal level; this is especially clear when so many remnants of conflict continue to persist and new materials are being created to remember the conflict. Despite the decisions of politicians to move on without exploring or fully understanding the conflict, at the grassroots level the past has been actively remembered. The “memory” of the Troubles has been a major preoccupation of segregated communities, and this has been especially noticeable in the proliferation of grassroots community memorials, predominantly to dead paramilitaries, in those areas most impacted by conflict. When we have accepted that, as a society, we can no longer ignore the past, then material culture has a potentially important role to play in moving beyond the skewed perspectives of political and military men memorialized in monuments (to themselves) and the partial, one-sided claims of official documents in government archives. This is why Long Kesh/Maze continues to be important: in a still-transitional post-conflict society, the remnants of conflict retain the potential to provide insights into the conflict. At a basic level they are evidence that it happened, provide a look at the material forms of the past, as there are only so many ways materials can be manipulated. Indeed, if handled sensitively, I believe remnants of conflict such as Long Kesh/Maze can enable society to safely engage with forgotten or sidelined aspects of the past. This, in turn, can ensure a more authentic means of moving on to a more stable future.

Long Kesh/Maze holds a seminal place in contemporary Northern Ireland due to its entangled history, extensive legacies, and potential to fulfil a positive role in the long post-conflict transition. At the most basic level, it is important now because it was important then. At a more nuanced level, it is significant because it retains the ability to facilitate ethical remembering based on more than documentation, opinion, and hearsay. The substantial material remains associated with the prison reference very diverse groups of actors, and they have the potential to illustrate, illuminate, and connect to many different aspects and narratives of the conflict. A report by the Northern Ireland Strategic Investment Board asserted that there are “about 33” different narrative strands identified at Long Kesh/Maze. Without analysing the specificity of this number, the site evidently contains a wide range of potential narratives for a large number of individuals and groups. This means that while it has some material form, it retains the possibility to facilitate remembering the past in ways that are meaningful to a substantial number of people. The material culture of Long Kesh/Maze truly encompasses the complexities of the conflict, as it was—by necessity—a shared site that was active for almost the entire Troubles. A range of material

6 McAtackney, An Archaeology of the Troubles.
7 Laurent Olivier, The Dark Abyss of Time: Archaeology and Memory (AltaMira Press, 2011).
culture associated with Republican, Loyalist, and criminal prisoners, security forces, and prison officers, as well as prison families and employees/contractors, continues to exist. It allows for different perspectives to be revealed and highlights the difficulties with definitively assigning static labels such as “victim” and “perpetrator”; the narratives connected to the prison will thus continue to evolve in meaning because they connect to multiple, different, and even contradictory perspectives. Despite the intentions of its enduring closure and partial demolition, Long Kesh/Maze continues to exist; it has not been forgotten, it has not been contained, and its meaning has continued to evolve.

**Dialogic Art and the “Distributed Self” of Long Kesh/Maze**

In the early years of the peace process, Long Kesh/Maze was elevated by all sides as the seminal site of the conflict. This was not always a positive attribute. Initially, widespread recognition of its significance was viewed with suspicion, if not disdain. Its high profile meant that it was viewed as either imperative to retain and remember (especially for Republican ex-prisoners) or essential to demolish and forget (for mainstream Unionist communities). Brian Graham and Sara McDowell argued over ten years ago it was a “zero-sum heritage site”: whatever happened to it would be considered a victory for one side and simultaneously a defeat for the other. Their reading of the site’s future was bleak, and based on the idea that Unionists would never accept it as meaningful to them because it was perceived as being meaningful to Nationalists. I believe that due to the passage of time this stark dichotomy is no longer the case. While completing an archaeological study of Long Kesh/Maze from 2004 to 2008, I spoke to a variety of ex-prisoners, prison officers, and people from communities most impacted by the Troubles. The overarching reaction to my many questions was a recognition that Long Kesh/Maze was an important place, that it held many memories—both happy and sad—and that it did not belong to any one group. This was especially notable across the spectrum of ex-prisoners; there seemed to be a cautious openness to engage with the site as significant for everyone, even if there was some apprehension about what that meant in terms of sharing ownership of the prison as a place. Despite their confident connections to Long Kesh/Maze, some Republican ex-prisoners would state in private that they were concerned about a lack of measured reflection on the sad and tragic events that unfolded there, especially for those who spent many years in the prison separated from their families or the comrades they had lost. For Loyalist ex-prisoners, there was often a reticence to publicly acknowledge any emotional connection to the site due to its association with Republicans, but many were also interested in talking about the unexpected realities of living in such a place, as well as a desire to ensure that their interpretations were included in any official designation of the prison as a heritage site.

While my research has moved on to other places and times since 2008, I have kept an interest in the debates surrounding the prison, and especially in how the meaning of Long Kesh/Maze has continued to evolve. During these years I have never lost the sense that the prison was defying attempts to silence it—or suppress its place in public memory—and I remain optimistic that it has the potential to be involved in the post-conflict transition. Therefore, it was an honour to be invited to revisit my previous research on Long Kesh/Maze by artists Martin Krenn and Aisling O’Beirn. They have been working on the EU-funded TRACES: Transforming Long Kesh/Maze project since 2016, and I have been involved in the capacity of an anthropological observer and sometimes facilitator on their sub-project. We have tried to understand the enduring, if sporadic, issues of engaging individuals and communities in creative work related to the conflict during times of political uncertainty—and we have seen progressive plans for the project altered, move ahead, and hit barriers many times. This is the reality of doing post-conflict work with communities in Northern Ireland that are still damaged and fractured. We have had long discussions about their artistic approaches to creating art through dialogue and collaboration, which although very different to my work as an archaeologist, seamlessly connects

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to my desire for a wide range of people to be engaged and involved in the process and outputs of research.

The Transforming Long Kesh/Maze project has been a revelation in terms of illustrating that the legacies of the Troubles continue to evolve and in many ways, at the community level, diverge from those of official agreements, civil service proposals, and academic analyses. Clearly, Long Kesh/Maze is still meaningful, despite the attempts to control its material world. It continues to provoke very personal and emotional responses from those who have a connection to it, and it still resonates with wider communities. Following Krenn and O’Beirn, and their commitment to creating dialogic art, this project has revealed to me how much their practice is about processes and communication, not simply outputs. They have taken a variety of approaches to engaging with people and their relationships with prison art as a situated reality, form, inspiration, and concept. This has been shaped by necessity—for example, the political climate proved too unstable to gain enthusiasm from participants to be involved in cross-community creative projects, and many participants talked about their pre-existing prison art but would not commit to creating their own responses—but is also innovative, in being able to react to the interests of the participants. One starting point was examining and photographing prison art held in a number of community museums, many of which have ex-prisoner involvement and/or management. This was an important step in exploring the range of the genre in terms of its subject matter, materials, and form. It also contradicted preconceived ideas that the creation of prison art was predominantly an occupation of Republican prisoners. Participants who had prison art in their homes were interviewed, and the art was photographed and then used in a variety of ways, including as a starting point for stories, a conduit for further conversations, a prompt to remember, and an inspiration to create something new.

Long-term engagement with some groups—including the 50+ Group in West Belfast—resulted in significant outputs with unique art pieces being created and exhibited. This final step of creating something new—using the past to inspire new creations—has been particularly interesting to me as an archaeologist. Generally, in our discipline we are concerned with understanding things that already exist, but how much do we reify and sustain the past by not looking forward? Thinking about how we can use the past to reflect on where we are in the present and create something new for the future should be a central focus of more researchers working on the Northern Ireland conflict.

Discussion

Contemporary archaeology explicitly engages with how and why the materiality of the past is retained and evolves—in both form and meaning—in the present. Archaeologists are often constrained by the idea of the integrity and authenticity of the existing material world, and so we do not often move beyond lamenting destruction and trying to interpret what those materials meant. However, working with Krenn and O’Beirn has revealed to me how artists and archaeologists can have complementary roles. We can engage with these materials in ways that connect to what they were, while also facilitating the participants in creating a space to remember, to share experiences, and to move forward. Acknowledging that materials associated with the Troubles retain meaning in the post-conflict context is important. It means that we can use them to articulate different narratives of what happened in the past and how they continue to be meaningful in the present. However, it is important to think about what they can inspire moving forward and how they can be part of a creative, dialogic process. Material culture can be a touchstone for the past and inspire memories of particular places, times, and people, but it is what we do with this moving forward that is most important. The material memory of Long Kesh/Maze has been depleted, and public engagement with the site has been significantly curtailed, but it retains a potentially important role in terms of post-conflict heritage in contemporary Northern Ireland.
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Dialogical and Participatory Methods in Artistic Research: The Reciprocal Relations Between Subjects, Objects, Images, and Stories in Transforming Long Kesh/Maze

Suzana Milevska

The artists involved in Transforming Long Kesh/Maze dedicate their project entirely to the eponymous prison that operated from 1971 until 2000, now abandoned, where most of the political prisoners from Northern Ireland’s “Troubles” were held. The project—developed by artists Martin Krenn and Aisling O’Beirn, primarily in Belfast between 2016 and 2018—is conceptualised as a collaborative social sculpture.¹ Their art-based research, as well as various project presentations in the form of exhibitions, public conferences, lecture performances, and other related events, motivated me to look more closely at the reciprocal relations and emerging micro-narratives brought forth during the project.² Specifically, this engages the complex networks of social interactions that the artists established through the unique grid of participatory strategies, research methods, intertwined structures, and contentious relations between the subjects, objects, and images involved in their art practice. Moreover, the emergence and intersection of certain microhistories enables and reveals

¹ Transforming Long Kesh/Maze was developed as an integral part of the three-year cross-disciplinary project Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts: From Intervention to Co-Production (TRACES), for the EU Programme Horizon 2020.
² This essay was written in the context of my position as Principal Investigator in the TRACES project and as a result of a research trip to Belfast (2–6 September 2017), direct communication with the artists (that continued via Skype and e-mail), and my presence during some of the work sessions and the Belfast Mural Tour with Belfast Black Cab Tours (8 September 2017).
direct and indirect intersubjective and dialogical relations through proximity, in the context of the current sensitive political conditions in Northern Ireland.³

The project was initially informed by publically announced local government plans (which have since failed) to transform the abandoned and dysfunctional building. These attempts mainly aimed to mollify memories of the troubled years preceding the Good Friday Agreement of 10 April 1998 (the basis for the current devolved system of government in Northern Ireland), such as the negative recollections of the victims of armed conflicts, the “hunger strikes” of 1981, and other events that were collectively nicknamed “The Troubles.”⁴ Gradually the project shifted its focus towards the art produced by former inmates from Long Kesh/Maze.⁵ After the closure of the prison, the last of these objects were gradually dispersed around Belfast and other places as the last of the eligible prisoners were released in 2000. The destiny of these objects, and the research of archaeologist Laura McAtackney on the material culture of Long Kesh/Maze more directly, motivated the artists to conceive a complex project structure that went far beyond the fate of the prison’s architectural remains.⁶ Various artistic strategies, research methods, media, and materials of production and presentation (photography, postcards, posters, installations, collages), as well as

³ The reference to “microhistory” stems from the difference between “macrohistory” and “microhistory” proposed in the 1970s in the works of the Italian historians Giovanni Levi, Carlo Ginzburg, and Simona Cerutti. According to this intervention in the historical methodology, the discipline was in crisis because while “macrohistory”—traditional history—was entirely dedicated only to generalised accounts of significant events and personalities from the past, to mega narratives, microhistory calls for a reverse perspective: for intensive and profound investigations focused on smaller, seemingly insignificant, units of research (shorter local events, smaller villages, everyday-life case studies, diaries, personal written testimonies, and oral histories).

⁴ For more information about the public discussions surrounding the prison’s future during the period when Krenn and O’Beirn conceptualised their project, see George Legg, “Redeveloping the Long Kesh/Maze Prison: Profiting from the Hunger Strikes?” Irish Times, 5 May 2016, irishtimes.com/culture/books/redeveloping-the-long-kesh-maze-prison-profiting-from-the-hunger-strikes-1.2636134.

⁵ The use of the term “prison art” is relative because in this context it encompasses found objects that were part of the prison infrastructure (such as the telephone in “Emergency Only, Early 1980s”), together with the hand-made objects that during the functioning years of the prison were produced by the now-former prisoners. However, the strict terminology is not relevant here because the project Transforming Long Kesh/Maze, to a large extent, relativises the distinction between professional and non-professional artists.
discursive events, were employed to enable the development and completion of the project. However, the research and production process depended above all on the readiness of local communities to take to memory lane and work towards interweaving the many different layers of the project.

The research into the historical and political context, the everyday life conditions in the prison, the materiality of the objects produced in the prison, the interaction among the members of different smaller communities and individuals in the present, eventually resulted in the production of original images of existing or new objects based on acquired knowledge about the materials used, and low-key, bricolage techniques—all assembled in a time-based social sculpture.

How can one, then, situate and contextualise the newly composed relations in the framework of ongoing theoretical, philosophical, and artistic discussions regarding representation and participation, and extrapolate the artistic research means and strategies employed by the artists to explore their ambitious vision and realise their goals. Some of my concrete queries pertinent to this context derive from the debate surrounding the complex relations between art and contemporary social reality, as well as questions surrounding the power and potential of art to transform existing societal and systemic structures. These questions move from a simple enquiry about the general conditional context towards a more intricate deliberation on the possibility of fulfilling the project’s promise to engage with the unexpected (either positive or negative) implications of the dismantled border between art and society.

**Contentious Memories and Spaces**

*Transforming Long Kesh/Maze* is a bold and optimistic move from the outset, in both artistic and political terms. Although its title already confirms the artists’ belief in the possibility of effecting certain change, it also ironically resonates with the attempts of local government and communities to turn the abandoned remnants of the former prison’s buildings into something functional, even lucrative.

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At first sight, the project’s attempts “to avoid negatively dwelling on the past or the reiteration of previously rehearsed and ideologically overdetermined narratives” seem very optimistic, almost impossible. This is particularly so when taking into account the long history of armed and political conflict between the two major, radically polarised political positions of the divided local communities (Republican/ Nationalist and Loyalist/Unionist). Furthermore, the differences between the major political opponents, and the many different implicated smaller parties, subgroups, and individual citizens—combined with ongoing tensions in contemporary divided communities and the gloomy prospect of Brexit—add ever more uncertainty to the political and cultural horizon of Belfast, and Northern Ireland as a whole. This context highlights the importance of art’s critical potential and agency to offer successful strategies for social intervention within existing relations.

Subject-Object-Image-Context
The complex subject-object relation has never been adequately resolved in philosophy or theory. It is even more complicated when, in this context, one not only needs to address the issue of how objects are perceived but also how they are represented as images. Philosophers and theorists have long been puzzled by the inevitable conundrums instigated by such complex issues as visual perception, representation, and the reification of such relations. They have conceptualised or subscribed to various cognitive systems to understand subjects’ relations to the material world, and in relation to particular objects or images (e.g. idealism, realism, conceptualism, subjectivism, or speculative realism), but they have never reached agreement on any one of these relations.8

There has never been a consensus on one single and unified theoretical “recipe” to encompass all the potentialities

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8 Martin Krenn and Aisling O’Beirn, during an informal discussion, PS/ Belfast, September 2017. Recently, Declan Long extensively analysed the complexity of contemporary art production that was informed and heavily influenced by the long-term conflicts and tensions in Northern Ireland (e.g. various projects by Willie Doherty and Aisling O’Beirn). See Declan Long, Ghost-Haunted Land: Contemporary Art and Post-Troubles Northern Ireland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
of the relations between subjects, objects, and images, though they all agree on the extreme relevance of these relations and representation in the construction of subjectivity (feminist theories are almost entirely based on such critique). According to Hegel, the “master” (subject) exemplifies “consciousness” that defines itself only in mutual relation to the slave’s consciousness—a process of mediated relation and reciprocal interdependence. Self-consciousness (and thus subjectivity) is not independent but dependent.⁸ In other words, both master and slave in Hegel’s pair understand their own existence only in relation to recognition or reconciliation of the other.¹⁰

To put it in the terms of Hegel’s “master/slave” dialectical relation, the slave works positively with the objects, puts a specific form to them, so that while working on them he/she becomes aware of his/her independence. Self-consciousness is achieved when the slaves realise that they are not things, not objects, but subjects who can transform material nature.¹¹ In a similar vein, Homi Bhabha has discussed the master-slave dialectic in the context of Fanon’s postcolonial critique of cultural hegemony and domination.¹² I am far from suggesting that the prisoners’ art is linked to the Northern Ireland political struggle to the same extent that the Haitian revolution operated for Hegel (instrumental for the development of the “master-slave” dialectic), the African-American struggles for Fanon, or the struggle for Indian independence for Bhabha;

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⁸ Some examples include: the Hegelian master-slave dialectic prompted by the access and cognisance of the means of production, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 119; George Berkeley’s subjective idealism (with which he denied the existence of any object beyond the field of perception); the Marxist theory of fetishisation of objects and his differentiation between the means, and technical and social relations of production; and Badiou’s “objectless subject,” in Alain Badiou, “On a Finally Objectless Subject,” in *Who Comes After the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 24–33.

⁹ “He is, therefore, not certain of existence-for-self as the truth of himself; on the contrary, his truth is in reality the inessential consciousness and the inessential action of the latter [the slave].” Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 117.

¹⁰ Hegel furthermore asserts that “self-consciousness exists in and for itself inasmuch, and only inasmuch as it exists in and for itself for another, i.e. inasmuch as it is acknowledged, only through the recognition by the other self-consciousness.” Ibid., 111.

however, some of the objects featured in *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze* could undeniably be interpreted in the light of postcolonial critique. The colonial relation in the background of the British-Irish conflict could also be interpreted through production, ownership, representation, and other aspects of prison art as a contentious cultural heritage.

**The Art Object: Its Production and Representation**

For many centuries objects remained largely unquestioned in the realm of artistic practice, as well as in aesthetics and art theory. The production and representation of objects were assumed, by default, to be the very requirements for calling any activity “fine art.” Moreover, the production of objects was predominantly accompanied by the production of images as the result of the perception and representation that obscured the relations between subjects and objects. Accordingly, the evaluation of the look and craftsmanship of objects and images was at the core of most definitions of art.

Walter Benjamin’s assumption in his celebrated essay “The Author as Producer” (1934) that the role of the author as a member of a society is to address class struggle—and must thus be rethought because s/he is part of an industry defined by modes of production—is indirectly linked with the shift from art-object production towards the incorporation of more “subjects” in contemporary art practices, as well as participants not trained or involved in arts in the long-run.\(^\text{13}\) Perhaps Benjamin is the main “culprit” behind the ever-more-invigorated discussions about aesthetics and political engagement because according to him artistic quality and politics are inextricably linked and should not be separated.\(^\text{14}\)

Guy Debord’s critique that ours is “a society where human relations are no longer directly experienced” gets an update in Nicolas Bourriaud’s more recent critique of representation and
its mediation of the world, what he called “Relational Aesthetics.” Bourriaud’s question of whether it is “still possible to generate relationships with the world, in a practical field of art-history traditionally earmarked for their ‘representation’” is a rhetorical one. For him, the answer lies precisely in the direct relations that artists can establish through their creative activities as “social interstices.” Perhaps Bourriaud’s interpretation of works of art in Marxist terms, as well as his use of the term “interstices” as social spaces of human relations suggesting alternative “possibilities than those in effect within this system”—best explains the basis for his relational aesthetics. However, it does not explain very well the potentials of these relational and participatory art practices to eventually change overall societal and systemic structures.

As such, we can specifically turn towards the dialogical and reciprocal relations that Martin Krenn and Aisling O’Beirn have induced between them, creating a pair of collaborators (rather than working individually); we can also attend to the relations amongst the artists and involved participants, amongst all active participants, and between them and the objects, images, and narratives that either pre-dated the project, or were created in the context of the research, exhibitions, and other related events. While the former were objects created by inmates of Long Kesh/Maze prison, the latter were made either by the artists or in collaboration with project participants (some of them also former inmates).

Indeed, the artistic intervention created new relations and also changed the dynamic of existing relations. This, however, could be fruitfully challenged by the much more deterministic understanding of objects offered by the Austrian cultural theorist Nora Sternfeld, a conceptualisation of the obstacles towards a more relational understanding of the potential in the de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of objects:

The histories of violence and their corresponding

16 Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, 9.
17 Ibid., 16.
conflicts have left traces—not only because they could not simply be eradicated, but mostly because the magic of the aura and of the fetish would be of no value whatsoever, if it were not valorised by rendering the traces of violence harmless. Following this theory, the things carry within themselves the conflicts in which they are embroiled, and through which they emerged. They are part of their sediment; they are petrified within the object.¹⁸

This is not the same as saying that Sternfeld’s “object-effect” and the reference to speculative theory (closely linked to Bruno Latour’s concept of “factish”) had no value.¹⁹ However, by denying any possibility for change to the petrified memory contained within objects, one becomes trapped in a vicious circle where the past determines both the present and future, something that Krenn and O’Beirn do not want to settle with, and which they have attempted to overcome from the very outset of their collaboration by contesting existing narratives and instigating contacts where previously there were none. In her well-known article “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Mary Louise Pratt defines “contact zones” as “[s]ocial spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.”²⁰ At this point it is also worth referring to the work of James Clifford, who extended Pratt’s concept of contact zones to contexts of conflict, as well as artistic and museological contexts. In his view, “When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull.”²¹ Moreover, not only should one consider contact zones as completely open, public, and cultural spaces, but they can also include organisations and

¹⁹ Ibid., 4.
institutions with more defined profiles and structures.

Map of Relations

Relation, Artist with Artist

The long-term involvement of the artists in *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze* was a pre-requisite for the expected involvement of local participants. Arza Churchman has defined participation as "a process, not a one-time event." Moreover, in her introduction to a themed issue of the *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, dedicated entirely to participation, she writes about long-term involvement as a prerequisite to participation, or "decision-making by unelected, non-appointed citizens, or the incorporation of community members in planning and design. Without that decision-making element in participation, or if decisions are made by elected or appointed representatives, Churchman will not even call it 'participation' but rather 'involvement'."

For *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*, this is extremely relevant because of the time and continuous effort that participatory projects require on the part of the artists who initiate them. Needless to say, this is necessary for gaining the interest, trust, and dedication of participants who for the most part are not art professionals. Accordingly, the artists had the advantage that whilst O’Beirn is an Irish artist living and working in Belfast, Krenn is from Austria, having spent a lot of time in Belfast during the completion of his Ph.D at Ulster University before his collaboration with O’Beirn. This unique amalgamation of different cultural and national backgrounds enabled them to establish and maintain continuous contact with different local communities and gain profound knowledge of the history and current status of existing socio-political, economic, and professional art conditions, whilst affording a kind of distance through a more neutral and international perspective where necessary.

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23 Ibid.
Relations Between the Artists and Pre-existing Objects Made by the Former Long Kesh/Maze Prisoners

The participants who voluntarily consented to be involved in various capacities and thus to contribute to the project’s development and its eventual presentations—for example by providing relevant historical information about certain objects’ trajectories, by showing the artists existing objects that they owned or kept, or by telling some more personal stories—in the course of the project became researchers on their own. Intrigued by the project’s challenge they activated their personal and collective memories and thus created unique micronarrative units, which later became captions for the photographed images of the objects. Thus, artistic research became an instigator of participatory research and the reactivation of their memories, as well as the memories of the eventual audience members who may have had similar or different recollections of the same objects, positive or negative, clear or fuzzy (such as “Cat’s Whisker, Early 1980s,” a photograph of the home-made radio that served to secretly relay news to the prison wings, or “Emergency, Early 80s,” which depicts the internal prison telephone.)

Relations Between the Participants and the Newly Produced Objects

Not all participants were directly involved in the production of new objects, images, and names/titles for the captions of exhibited photographs. Those who engage in the co-production or reproduction of long-lost or still-existing objects, or of creating entirely new ones, take their involvement in a different direction which goes beyond repetition, re-iteration, and re-staging. The emphasis placed on co-production did not necessitate any artistic training, so as to skip any hierarchisation. The focus, on the contrary, was on collaborative and participatory research (executed both by artists and participants on an equal basis), as well as the material conditions, narratives, and affects that enabled the production of the objects made in the prison.
Relations Between the Artists and the Participants, on all Sides of The Troubles

The project began with a long process of establishing connections amongst different communities and organisations, as well as gaining the trust of various individuals who gradually showed their interest in participation (mainly after the *Transforming Maze/Long Kesh* conference that took place at the Metropolitan Arts Centre in Belfast on 25 April 2017). Perhaps at the beginning, the involvement and engagement of the activist organisations, community museums, and some independent citizens unconnected to either side of the conflict in a direct political way was somehow facilitated through the subtle and academic (read: more neutral) appeal of the project run by the artist duo, and because of the support of highly respected institutions, such as Ulster University and the EC Horizon 2020 Programme.

Relations of Re-staging, Re-appropriating, and Re-telling

The relations between subjects, objects, and images were established through artistic research methods and media such as audio interviews, photography, and caption naming. The artists refer to three specific methods: *re-staging*, *re-appropriation*, and *re-telling*. The selection of objects, the formulation of short accompanying statements, and finally naming the objects and producing the captions were all joint efforts, executed in the ad-hoc mobile photographic studio that was “re-built” for each session and venue.

The photographic *re-staging* of prison objects took place at several community museums, a community centre in Belfast, and O’Beirn’s studio (at PS²), with the participants present (who either made, owned, or just took care of the photographed objects). The “naming process” was particularly important and creative: participants were asked to give a title and date to each artefact that they offered or consented to be photographed. The label was always made on site and in their presence, with a small portable labelling machine, then placed on the same background as the object before being photographed, so that the title became integral to the final image.

To return briefly to the theoretical discussion in relation to this, it is interesting that Pratt, to a large extent, relied on variationist sociolinguistics and William Labov’s theory of “referential indeterminacy.” These theories explore different ways in which people name things in their everyday life and various ordinary settings that resonate with the complex artistic concept of dialogical naming—and thus the co-production of the labels.

*Re-appropriation* refers to the project’s phase that relates to the ephemeral nature of prison objects—many of them have been lost, destroyed, or damaged. The lost objects remained only as mental images in the participants’ memory that was re-staged by re-appropriation. For example, in the process of re-making of the vanished objects and images, traditional materials and methods from the prison were mainly applied, following participants’ testimonies and instructions.

The artists’ collaboration with the 50+ Group and their host organisation Tar Anall (dedicated to the welfare of the former Republican prisoners and their families) resulted in yet another strategy: *re-telling*. Most importantly, various micronarratives and micro-relations were produced while the women members of the 50+ Group were making objects and simultaneously constructing a kind of meticulously embroidered network of relations.

The community museums that own or store objects created by former Long Kesh/Maze prisoners, which were approached by Krenn and O’Beirn, are somewhere between being completely open urban public spaces and conventional museums. In fact, these spaces are perhaps close to what Clifford had in mind as contact zones (opposed to both conventional anthropological, ethnographic, historical, and other professional museums, as well as public spaces with conflicted histories) due to their accessibility and hospitality; yet in some ways even they are confined by politically contentious relations and tensions inherited from the past.

Future Relations Between the Objects and Audience Members, and Relations Among Involved Subjects Mediated Through the Objects

Although the Transforming Long Kesh/Maze project is still ongoing, it already far exceeds many pre-existing troubled narratives from the past, attempting to overcome them through various research methods and strategies. However, many of the questions that emerged during the research process and various presentations remain unresolved. Before this project began, the objects, subjects, and mental images of them that existed were isolated, separate, and confined to the small premises of community museums or private homes, which according to McAtackney's work on the material culture of Long Kesh/Maze (the initial, instrumental impetus for the artists), ultimately led to the idea of Belfast (and beyond) becoming a dispersed “museum” of the prison. With Transforming Long Kesh/Maze, the exhibitions of images of objects, postcards and posters (though not necessarily the objects themselves) serve as a temporary and mobile museum that does not aim for any form of monumentalisation.

In embracing the dispersed nature of the prison, the artists have produced an “interstice”—a social space where it’s possible to overcome attachments to negative memories, a place that prompts discursive and social change in an indirect but efficient way. Their subtle, long-term societal critique and attempts to disentangle and dismantle internalised power relations have unleashed the potential of such a project. This has been made possible through “excavating” and producing various oral microhistories related to new objects, as well as existing ones (that although having been made during confinement were not immersed only in negative and burdening narratives). As well, and moreover, this is a function of participation, collaboration, and co-production during both the research and production phases, which resulted in the

creation of self-standing social networks somewhat unburdened by contentious and troubled historic memories.

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*Dispersed Presence*

PS² Spencer House, Belfast
14 September – 6 October 2018

*Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*

Edition of 64 postcards
Peace and Beyond Arts Fringe
Riddel's Warehouse, Ann Street, Belfast
10 – 13 April 2018
Previous pages:
Krenn & O’Beirn, Dispersed Presence
installation shot, PS2 Gallery, Spencer
House, Belfast, 14 September to
6 October 2018.

All photos Simon Mills unless
otherwise stated.

Right:
Detail of Message 1981?
Booklet of testimonies.
Detail of Suffering.
Detail of Happy Campers (foreground) and Bully Bully Bus (background) both made with The 50+ Group.
Installation shot of 64 postcards in Peace and Beyond Arts Fringe, an event to coincide with the Peace and Beyond International Conference, organised by the British Council to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

All photos Simon Mills.
The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland is a centrist party seeking a shared political future. It was founded in 1970 and supports remaining in the EU.

An rang is the Irish term for “the class.” Many Republican prisoners learned Irish from other prisoners whilst in jail. The person teaching would shout the lesson down the wing of the \*H-Block* so other prisoners in their cells could hear. The shout of “an rang” signalled the start of a lesson.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is an accord between the British and Irish governments giving the Irish government a consultative role in Northern Ireland’s affairs. It was signed by Irish Taoiseach Garrett FitzGerald and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on 15 November 1985, and was met with huge opposition from \*Loyalists*.

The Armed Struggle is one of several terms used to describe the period of political strife in Northern Ireland. This term is used mainly in Republican circles and refers to the period of armed conflict. Depending on who you speak to, the period in question can also be referred to as \*The Conflict* or the more neutral \*Troubles*.

The British Irish Intergovernmental Council (BIIGC) is a proviso built into the \*Good Friday Agreement* that enables the British and Irish governments to run affairs in Northern Ireland should devolution fail. It met in early 2007 before the return of devolution later that year and then again in July 2018.

The Blanket Protest was a form of protest used by prisoners seeking political status. On 14 September 1976, Kieran Nugent (IRA), the first prisoner to be charged after the 1976 withdrawal of Special Category status (a form of political status), refused to wear prison-issue clothes, instead wearing a prison-issue blanket in protest at being denied political status.

Brexit came about as a result of the British referendum on Britain’s membership of the EU. On 23 June 2016, fifty-two percent voted to leave, and forty-eight percent voted to remain in the EU. Voters in Northern Ireland and Scotland voted to remain by fifty-six percent and sixty-five percent, respectively, but will have to leave the EU regardless as a result of the overall referendum result. As a consequence of Brexit, the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland will become an international EU frontier. Many of the complex implications of Brexit are yet to be understood.

The Cages is a nickname used by prisoners for Long Kesh Internment Camp, which consisted of a series of \*Nissen Huts* in fenced-off compounds.

The majority of people in Northern Ireland declare themselves as Christian. In the 2011 census, forty-five percent of the population declared as Catholic, forty-eight percent declared as Protestant, whilst the remaining seven percent declared other religions or none. However, to describe the protagonists in the conflict as divided along religious lines over-simplifies the situation by confounding political ideologies with religious belief.

The Conflict is one of several terms used to describe the recent period of political strife in Northern Ireland. Depending on who you speak to, the period in question can be referred to as \*The Troubles*, or less neutral terms, sometimes used in Republican circles, like \*The Struggle* or \*The Armed Struggle*.

The Compound is a term referring to the open-air arrangement of \*Nissen Huts* in fenced-off areas that constituted the early Long Kesh Internment Camp days of the prison.

The Coup is a nickname for Crumlin Road Gaol where prisoners were held on remand in Belfast prior to trial in the Criminal Court, which was across the road. In operation from 1845 to 1996, the jail is now a tourist attraction.

Direct Rule is the term used, in relation to Northern Ireland, to describe rule from a Westminster government. In the case of an agreement on the restoration of local government not being found, Direct Rule can be imposed.

The Dirty Protest was a form of prison protest that evolved from the blanket protest in the spring of 1978, where prisoners refused to leave their cells to wash and slop out due to the fear of beatings on the way to washrooms. The protest escalated into prisoners spreading their excrement on the cell walls. The protest was also termed \*The No-Wash protest*.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) is a conservative, pro-union, pro-Brexit, political party founded in 1971 by the Rev. Ian Paisley. It is the largest party in Northern Ireland by a thin margin. The DUP fields candidates in Northern Ireland and Westminster. At time of writing they have a controversial supply-and-demand deal with the Tory party in Westminster.

The Easter Rising, or Easter Rebellion, of 1916 (Irish: Éirí Amach na Cásca) saw the proclamation of an Irish Republic by Republican groups seeking an end to British rule in Ireland. The insurgents, made up of members of \*The Irish Volunteers*, \*The Irish Republican Brotherhood*, \*The Irish Citizens Army* and \*Cumann na mBan* (trans. The Women’s Council) took over various key buildings in Dublin, including the General Post Office. The Rising and its aftermath eventually led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922 and the founding of twenty-six-county Irish Free State, now officially called the Republic of Ireland.

In seeking political status, protesting prisoners issued Five Demands: 1. The right not to wear a prison uniform; 2. The right not to do prison work; 3. The right of free association with other prisoners; 4. The right to organise their own educational and recreational facilities; 5. The right to one visit, one letter, and one parcel per week.

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA), also known as The Belfast Agreement, is a legally binding agreement between the British and Irish governments and most of the main political parties in Northern Ireland, detailing how Northern Ireland should be governed. The GFA is considered as a major political step in the Northern Ireland peace process of the 1990s. The DUP was the only major party to oppose the GFA. The agreement was signed on 10 April 1998, and the electorate on both sides of the Irish border ratified it in a referendum on 22 May 1998. The agreement came into force on 2 December 1999.

The term H-Block denotes the H-shaped structure used to accommodate new prisoners in LongKesh/Maze. There were eight H-Blocks in the new prison.

There is a history of Irish Republican prisoners using hunger strikes as a form of political action, where prisoners refuse all food as a form of protest. The 1980 Hunger Strike was the first in the prisoners’ campaign for political status in Long Kesh/Maze. On 27 October 1981, seven Republican prisoners embarked on a hunger strike, and three Republican women prisoners in Armagh Women’s Prison joined on
1 December. The strike was then joined by twenty-three more Republican prisoners on 9–10 August 1971. Mass arrests saw 342 people arrested and detained without being charged on the first night, and held without the prospect of a trial. During the period of internment nearly 2,000 people were detained, mostly from a Catholic background. The policy met with major civil unrest.

Operation Motorman, carried out by the British Army, took place on 31 January 1972, when the army sought to regain control of so-called no-go areas in Belfast, Derry, and other areas. The no-go areas were under the control of local residents.

The Petition of Concern is a proviso built into the Good Friday Agreement which allows a party to halt legislation going through the Assembly if there is no cross-party support. It has been a cause of much controversy, and used to block legislation on social policy issues such as marriage equality for all citizens.

Paramilitary organisation is a term used to denote an armed group organised along military lines and structures, and which is not part of a state’s official armed forces. PIRA is an acronym for The Provisional Irish Republican Army, also known as the Irish Republican Army or Óglaigh na hÉireann in Irish. It is a proscribed paramilitary organisation that fought for a united Ireland. They were the largest and most active Republican armed group operating from 1969 until the 1994 ceasefire, and took their seats at Westminster.

The Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) is a centrist party that supports a united Ireland via common consent. They were founded in 1970 and support remaining in the EU. The SDLP field candidates in Northern Ireland and for Westminster, and they take their seats at Westminster.

Sinn Féin ("Ourselves Alone") is an Irish Republican political party who supported the Provisional organisation declared illegal by the British Home Secretary under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Organisations such as the IRA, INLA, IPLO, RHC, UVF were all proscribed under this legislation.

Protestantism is a post-reformulation branch of Christianity. The majority of people in Northern Ireland declare themselves as Christian. In the 2011 census, forty-five percent of the population declared as Catholic and forty-eight percent as Protestant, whilst the remaining seven percent declared other religions or none. However, to describe the protagonists in the conflict as divided along religious lines oversimplifies the situation by conflating political ideologies with religious belief.

The Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) is a small Loyalist political party. In the Irish context, Republicanism seeks an independent and united Ireland. Irish Republicanism has its roots in the 1798 Rebellion, which was partly informed by French revolutionary politics of the time.

The Red Hand Commandos (RHC) was a small, proscribed paramilitary organisation who fought to combat Irish Republicanism. The RHC, which was active from 1972 until disbanding in 2009, was linked to the UVF, which was a paramilitary organisation. An application was made in 2017 to have the RHC removed as a proscribed organisation.

A Statute of Limitation is a piece of legislation that imposes a limit on a right to judicial action after a prescribed period of time after an event has taken place.

Screw is a slang word in common usage amongst ex-prisoners for a prison officer. The term comes from officers having to squat or "screw up their eyes" in order to see through the slit on the door of a prisoner's cell.
the ✒ IRA. The party was originally founded in 1905, and became active in its current form in 1970. Sinn Féin field candidates in elections on both sides of the Irish border, and has an abstentionist policy regarding taking seats at Westminster. At the time of writing it was the second largest party in Northern Ireland. They support remaining in the EU.

Shinner is a slang word for a ✒ Sinn Féin member or supporter.

Slopping Out is a slang prison term for the manual disposal of human waste where prisoners have to use a pot which they then empty into a toilet.

Special Category Status was given in 1972 to prisoners imprisoned during the period of ✒ internment without Trial, in recognition of the political nature of their imprisonment. The subsequent removal of Special Category Status in 1976 essentially criminalised prisoners and lead to the series of protests that culminated in the ✒ 1981 hunger Strikes where protesting prisoners issued their ✒ Five Demands in an endeavour to restore political status.

Stick or Stickie are slang terms for a member or supporter of the ✒ Official IRA or ✒ The Workers Party, and refers to their using “stick-on” ✒ Easter Lilies when commemorating the ✒ Easter Rising.

Stormont is a name in common usage for Northern Ireland’s Parliament Buildings, taken from their location on the Stormont Estate on the outskirts of East Belfast. The term is also used to refer to the ✒ Stormont Executive.

The Stormont Executive is a power-sharing executive set up in accordance with the framework agreed upon in the ✒ Good Friday Agreement.

The Struggle, also “The Armed Struggle,” is one of many terms in common usage to describe the recent period of political strife in Northern Ireland. This term is mainly used in Republican circles and refers specifically to the period of armed conflict. Depending on who you speak to, the period in question is also referred to as ✒ The Conflict or the more neutral ✒ Troubles.

The Sunningdale Accord was a power-sharing agreement arrived at in 1973 which sought to set up a power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland and a cross-border Council of Ireland. The agreement collapsed amidst ✒ Unionist and ✒ Loyalist resistance with the ✒ Loyalist Ulster Workers’ Strike protests of May 1974.

The Great Escape is a slang term used by Republicans to describe the escape from Long Kesh/Maze which took place on 25 September 1983, in which thirty-eight IRA prisoners escaped from H7.

The Troubles is one of several terms in common usage to describe the recent period of political strife in Northern Ireland. Depending on who you speak to, the period in question can be referred to as ✒ The Conflict or the less neutral ✒ The Struggle, referring to the period of armed conflict which is more commonly used in ✒ Republican circles.

The Ulster Defence Association (UDA) is a proscribed ✒ Loyalist paramilitary organisation that fought against a united Ireland and to retain the union with Britain. They were founded in 1971 and were later proscribed in 1992.

The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) was also referred to as the ✒ Official Unionist Party or OUP, a pro-union, centre-right political party. Formed in 1905, they were a founding party of the Northern Irish state, and governed from 1921 until 1972. They were a dominant and important political force within ✒ Unionism and Northern Irish politics up until the ✒ GFA. They were electorally overtaken by the ✒ DUP in 2003.

Unionism in the modern Northern Irish and British context is an ideology that espouses Northern Ireland retaining their union with Britain. Unionists are opposed to being part of a united Ireland and any break-up of the United Kingdom as it stands now. The ideology stems from the 1800 Act of Union which created the United Kingdom and Ireland. Since the partition of Ireland, their focus has been on Northern Ireland, but Scotland also has Scottish Unionists who oppose an independent Scotland.

University of Long Kesh is a nickname used by many ex-prisoners to refer to the large number of prisoners who used their time in prison to obtain degrees whilst in prison.

The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) is a proscribed ✒ Loyalist paramilitary organisation that fought against a united Ireland and to retain the union with Britain. The first iteration of the organisation formed in 1913 to attempt to block Home Rule, an issue that was overshadowed by the onset of WWI. Many members of the original UVF joined the 36th Ulster Division British Army during WWI. The UVF became active in their modern form in 1960s.

The Ulster Workers’ Council (UWC) was a ✒ Unionist and ✒ Loyalist effort to organise opposition and protests against the ✒ Sunningdale Accord, which would have brought about power-sharing and a cross-border council. ✒ The Ulster Workers’ Strike was a general strike organised as part of the campaign. It lasted fourteen days and brought down Sunningdale, resulting in a return to direct rule.

The Ulster Workers’ Strike was a general strike organised by the ✒ Ulster Workers’ Council (UWC) in opposition to the ✒ Sunningdale Accord. It was widely supported by Unionists and Loyalists opposed to power-sharing and lasted fourteen days, from 15–28 May 1974. It brought down Sunningdale, the power-sharing executive, resulting in direct rule.

The Workers’ Party is a small, secular political party seeking a socialist Irish republic. Founded in 1905, its lineage stems from ✒ Sinn Féin, but it split from them in 1970 to become Official Sinn Féin. It changed its name to Sinn Féin–The Workers’ Party in 1977 and then to the Workers’ Party in 1982. Historically, it has had associations with the Official IRA.
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Restaging the Object: A Participatory Exploration of Long Kesh/Maze Prison.
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Martin Krenn and Aisling O’Beirn explore untold and lesser-known narratives about the recent conflict in Northern Ireland through an artistic engagement with the legacies of the former Northern Irish high security prison Long Kesh/Maze. The artists initiated a collaborative social sculpture by working with a broad range of people who were affected by the prison in different ways. This work is accompanied by contributions from Laura McAtackney, Suzana Milevska, and Peter Mutschler.