

A Window to Ireland

Burren College of Art: Artist Residency

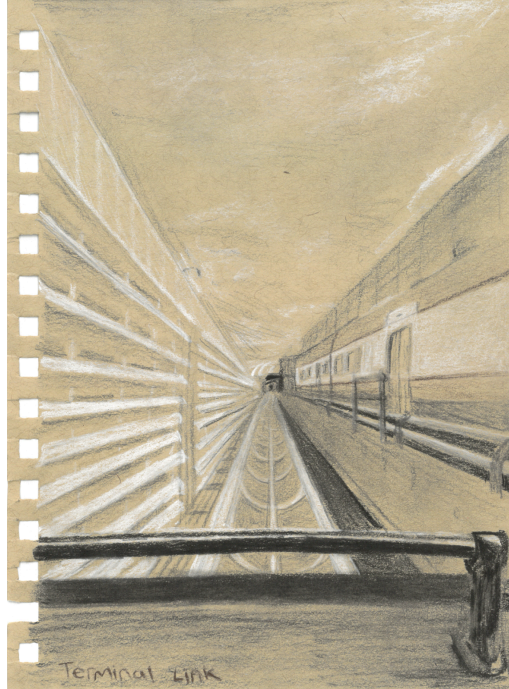
January 2025

Kimberly Ager

A Window to Ireland is a series of paintings I created to immerse the viewer in the various aspects of the Irish countryside. The landscapes of Ireland, with their rugged cliffs, rolling green fields, and magnificent ruins, serve as both inspiration and subject matter. My goal was to capture not just the visual essence but the emotional atmosphere of these landscapes—the feeling of clouds looming overhead, the solitude of a crumbling castle, the vibrancy of rolling green hills broken up by stone fences.

I created this series during my time as an artist in residence at the Burren College of Art in Ireland. The experience of living and creating in a foreign country for a month was transformative, deepening my appreciation for the landscape's history and the stories it holds.

My paintings function as a visual diary, recording my encounters with the land, my evolving techniques, and the emotions that accompanied this journey of artistic exploration. Each piece serves as a window, inviting the viewer to step into a moment of Irish history and natural beauty.

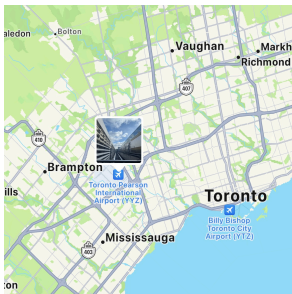


Terminal Link Sketch

Kimberly Ager

Charcoal Pencils on Paper

8.5" x 5.5"



With a five hour layover in Toronto on January 4th 2025, I decided to start my artistic journey a bit early to utilize the extra time. As we took the Terminal Link train to a different terminal in the airport, I found the tracks and modern scene incredible and felt it would be a huge contrast to the scenery I would be seeing in Ireland. I haven't worked with charcoal in years, so it was especially fun rediscovering this medium.

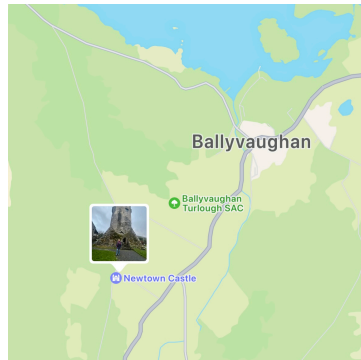
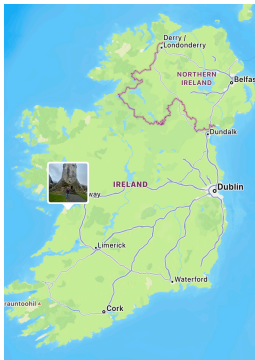


Newtown Castle Sketch

Kimberly Ager

Charcoal Pencils on Paper

8.5" x 5.5"



On our first morning in Ireland (January 6th 2025) we were given an orientation and tour of the school. Afterwards, we were assigned studios and able to get settled and unpacked. Despite being exhausted, I decided to start off with a sketch of Newtown Castle, the landmark the school is built around.

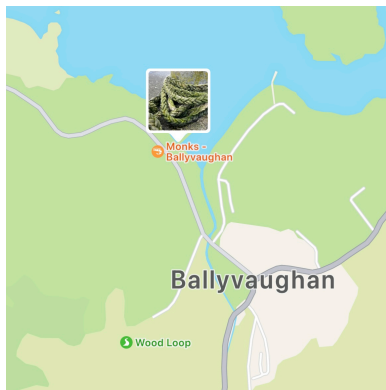


Ballyvaughan Pier Rope

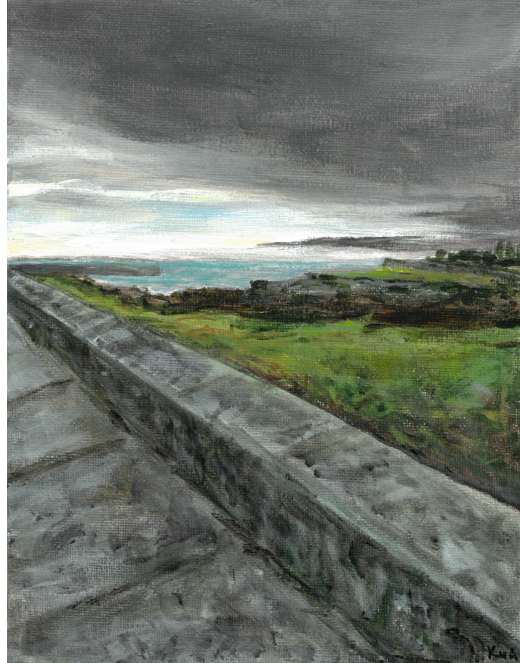
Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



Without a car, we were fairly limited in our radius of exploration during the first portion of our trip. One spot I found particularly inspiring was the Ballyvaughan Pier which we first visited on January 6th 2025. The stones, concrete and ropes were all tinged shades of green which is where I drew inspiration for this painting. I really enjoyed experimenting with the colours and attempting to create a more realistic texture for the rope. It was quite challenging despite being a fairly small painting.



Ballyvaughan Pier

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

7" x 9"



At the Pier I was struck by the gloomy yet beautiful environment. The deep greens and blues of the scene felt almost otherworldly, and I wanted to capture the way the dark clouds loomed overhead despite the sunshine and hint of blue sky in the distance. This painting is a reflection of that quiet moment by the water, where the vastness of the sea met the ruggedness of the shore and the walkway.



Overlooking Newtown Castle

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



Behind the college campus there is a hill which provides several hiking trails. While exploring one of these trails we ended up in the perfect spot to watch the sunset. The landscape is distinctly Irish, with the rolling green fields divided by stone fences, plus the incredible rocks of the Burren surrounding us. We facetimed my sister from up here to show her what a magical view it was. I will always treasure this trail and how vast and beautiful the land felt as it turned golden from the sunset and all the shadows sprawled across the fields.

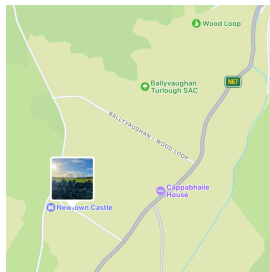


Stone Wall Near Newtown Castle

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



One very distinct feature of the Irish countryside is their magnificent stone walls. All around the campus (and throughout the country) the roads have walls on each side, with incredibly narrow lanes that sometimes two cars can't fit down. Since the fields and roads are lined with these walls, they create a patchwork of land and pathways with some of them being ancient and crumbling, while others remain sturdy and tall. I was drawn to their texture and many of my paintings, including this one, feature them.

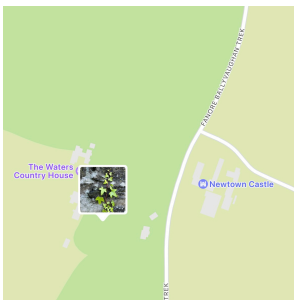


Newtown Castle Trail

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

3" x 3"



The roads and trails surrounding Newtown Castle became a regular source of inspiration for me. This particular trail led up a hill and offered glimpses of old stone structures, rolling fields, and many green leaves. This Ivy wound around a beautiful stone ruin and I was compelled to capture its hardiness and tenacity as it made its way up the wall.

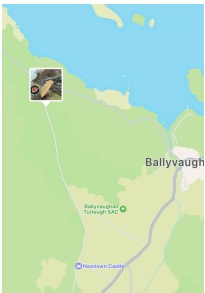


Fanore Ballyvaughan Trek Wheelbarrow

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



Along one of our walks around Ballyvaughan, we came across an old wheelbarrow leaning against a stone wall. It was weathered from years of use, its rusted metal blending beautifully with the greens and greys of the Burren landscape. Something about this simple, forgotten object told a story—of labor, time, and life in the countryside. I felt compelled to paint it, capturing its quiet presence amid the wild beauty of Ireland.

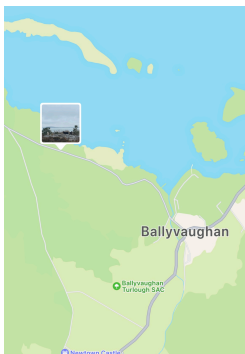


Donkeys of Ballyvaughan

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

8" x 6"



We would often see Donkeys patrolling the rocky Irish fields and we were told that they help protect the herds. This group of animals was unexpected for us as it was so close to the ocean and the field itself was covered in rocky terrain, but they were calm as the maneuvered around.

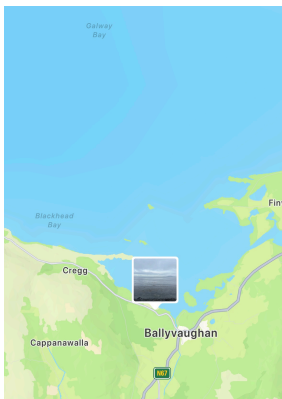


Galway Bay

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



Standing at the edge of Galway Bay, this was our first real glimpse of the water. We were struck by how similar it felt (and smelled) to beaches in New Brunswick, the place my father's family lives and a place George and I visited a few years ago together. I was mesmerized by the vast expanse of water stretching toward the horizon and the blues and greys of the sea. I wanted this piece to capture the movement of the waves, the cool sea air, and the feeling of standing at the meeting point between land and water.

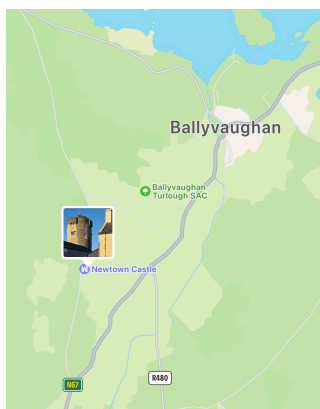


Newtown Castle & The Burren College of Art

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

12" x 9"



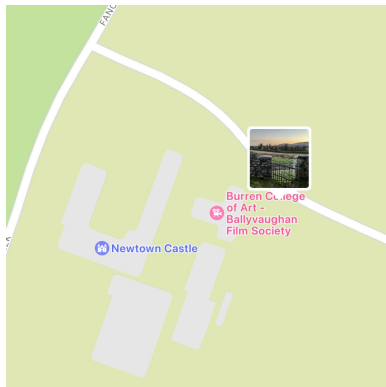
Newtown Castle and the Burren College of Art became my home for a month, and I wanted to create a piece that captured this view as I often saw it three or more times a day as I exited my studio space. I loved seeing the way the sky and shadows would change this view, but found the deep blue of the sky as the sun began setting as the most enticing to paint. The building closest to the viewer is Newtown House, the accommodation for our stay which we shared with several other artists. The building in the midground is the campus cafe, which connects to the faculty offices and the lecture theatre. In the back, stands Newtown Castle.



Newtown House Gate

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel



Newtown House had a gate that caught my attention early on. Weathered and slightly overgrown, it framed the entrance to our home away from home in a way that made it feel like stepping into another era. The textures of the iron and wood, combined with the surrounding greenery, created a compelling contrast that I wanted to explore through paint.

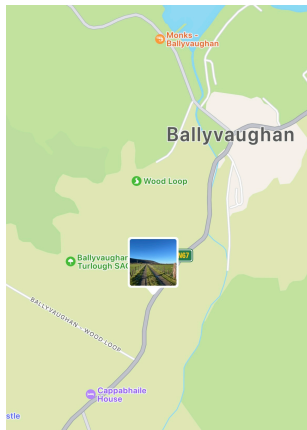


Ballyvaughan Fence

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

7" x 9"



This particular fence in Ballyvaughan stood out to me for its worn wood and the way it seemed to disappear into the fields beyond. This isn't the typical Irish stone fence, but the way the light created shadows along the worn, overgrown dirt road caught my eye. We found this spot on a walk we took to explore the road leading south. Up to this point we had mainly been exploring the road between Newtown Castle and Ballyvaughan town centre.

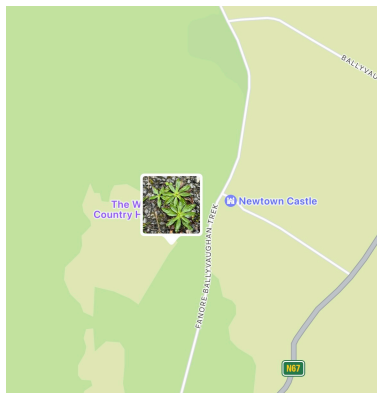


Newtown Plants

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

3" x 3"



On one of our exploratory walks, I came across these cute little plants among the rocks that made up the rural road. Their tiny leaves and vibrant green hues stood out, a testament to their resilience and how life can thrive in unexpected places. After seeing this, my eyes were opened to this type of plant which can be found all around the country.

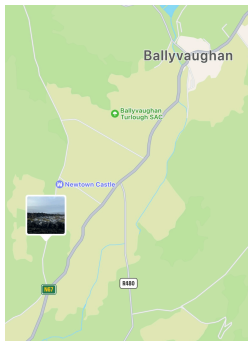


Newtown Walk

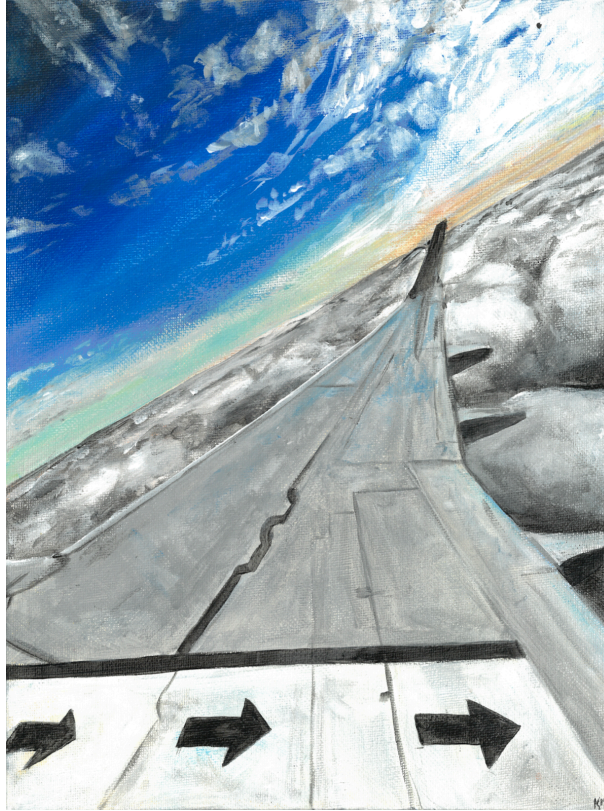
Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



One of my favorite activities during my first week in Ireland was taking daily walks near Newtown Castle. Each day we explored different paths, and when we revisited them, depending on the time of day and weather, they often felt completely new.

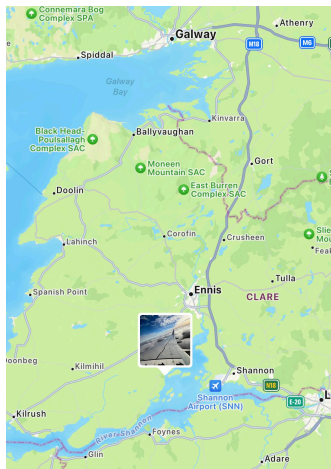


Plane to Scotland Overlooking Ballynacally Ireland

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

12" x 9"



The plane ride from Ireland to Scotland was absolutely beautiful. I was sitting beside the window and my eyes were glued to the scenery the whole time. When we took off from the Shannon Airport, it was fairly gloomy outside, but shortly after take off, we broke through the clouds and were given the most amazing view.

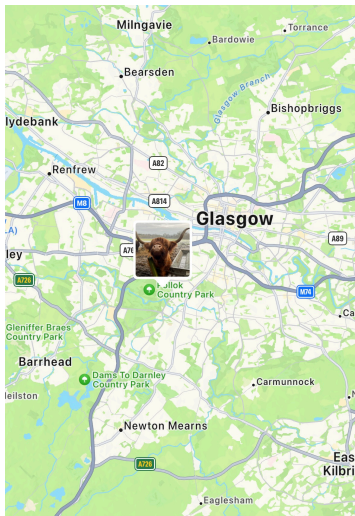


Highland Cow Pollock Park

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



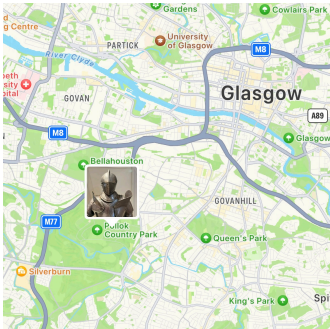
In Glasgow we visited the Highland Cows in Pollock Park with our family friend Alex. He showed us around the park and let us stay at his place for the weekend. The cows were adorable and we fed them carrots which they were super enthusiastic about.



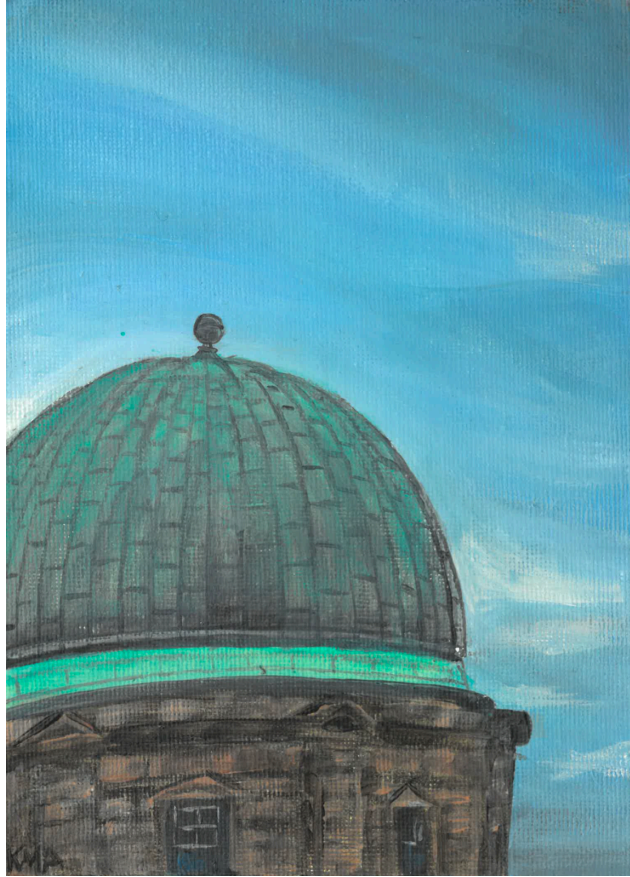
Medieval Body Armour The Burrell Collection Glasgow

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel



In Pollock Park, The Burrell Collection showcases a variety of art and historical artifacts. It was incredibly inspiring, especially the medieval armour which this painting is based off of.

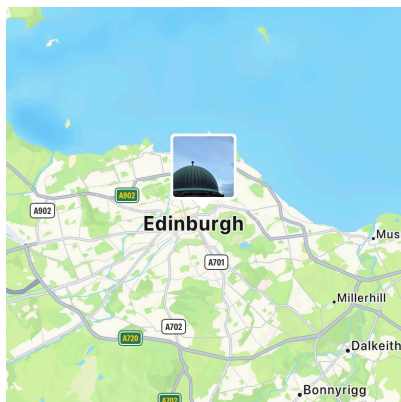


Calton Hill

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

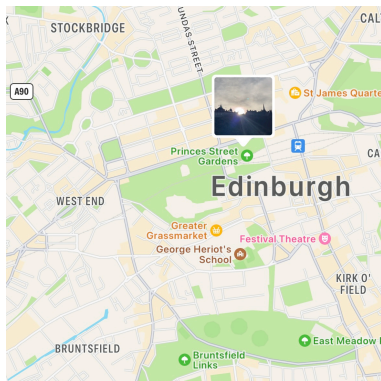
7" x 5"



In Edinburgh we visited Calton Hill which provided a beautiful view of the city in all directions. It was super windy up there, which was a bit unnerving, but meant we were some of the only people up there.



Princes Street Gardens
 Kimberly Ager
 Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel
 5" x 7"



Nestled in the heart of Edinburgh, Princes Street Gardens provided a peaceful spot away from the bustling city. The contrast between the greenery of the gardens and the towering architecture surrounding them was striking. As we wandered through, I was drawn to the way the sunlight filtered through the buildings, which is what inspired this painting.



Dunguaire Castle

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

7" x 9"



Perched on the edge of Galway Bay, Dunguaire Castle is a beautiful sight that transports you to another time. We met a lovely couple from Australia while exploring this site. We also accidentally got to see the Galway Blazers doing a fox hunt in Kinvara (the town this castle is by) which only happens twice a year here.



Bishopsquarter Beach

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel



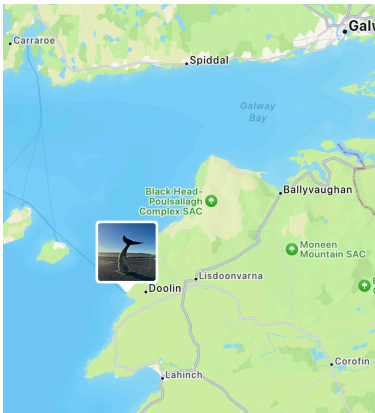
Bishopsquarter beach was very near the college and was a place we decided to stop by after visiting Dunguaire Castle. It was breathtaking with the mist in the distance making the sea and sky feel as though they were melding into one.



Doolin Whale Fluke Sculpture

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel



This was another hidden gem. This sculpture can be found in the ferry parking lot, and at the time we went, there were no Ferry's scheduled, and no one else around. It gave us a great opportunity to see the Cliffs of Moher and the violent crashing waves from a distance as well as time to view this incredible sculpture.

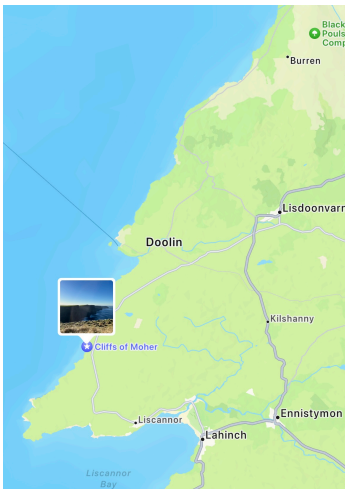


Cliffs of Moher

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



Although the Cliffs were breathtaking, I found the business of this site a drawback. It was amazing looking out over the water, and I wanted to capture the vast open skies and the rugged terrain.

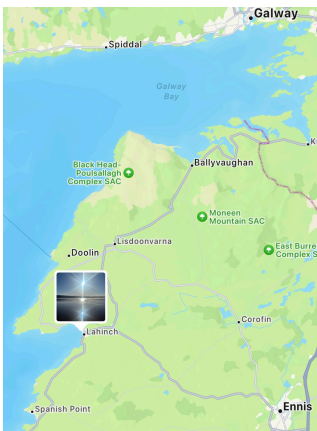


Lahinch Beach

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

7" x 5"



Walking along Lahinch Beach felt like a dream. We were able to walk along the sand with less than an inch of water under our feet for what felt like ages. This meant the reflections along the water were almost mirror-like, and we had a lot of fun playing in the water and soaking in the sun.



Newtown Cows
 Kimberly Ager
 Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel



There are many cows scattered among the fields of Ireland, but this was one of my favourite moments spotting them. While exploring the Rathborne Church Ruins, we looked over the fence and saw a field with cows with their calves. This pair was incredibly close to us and I wanted to capture the calm stillness of the mother and her baby relaxing together in the lush green field.

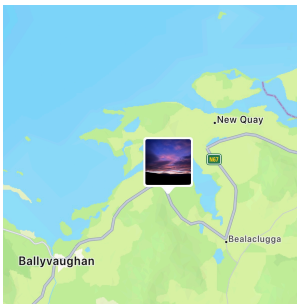


N67

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



The N67 is the road we drove on the most during our trip. The road winds through some of the most beautiful landscapes in Ireland.

Traveling along it, I was struck by how quickly the scenery changed—from coastline to countryside, from open fields to dense greenery.

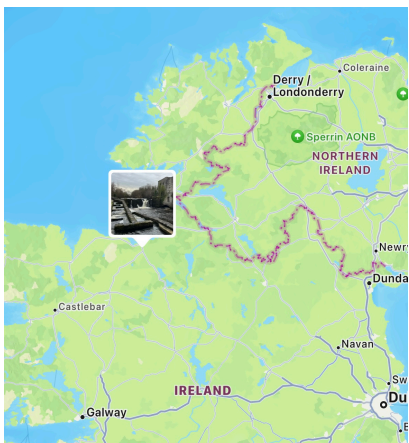


Mill Falls Waterfall

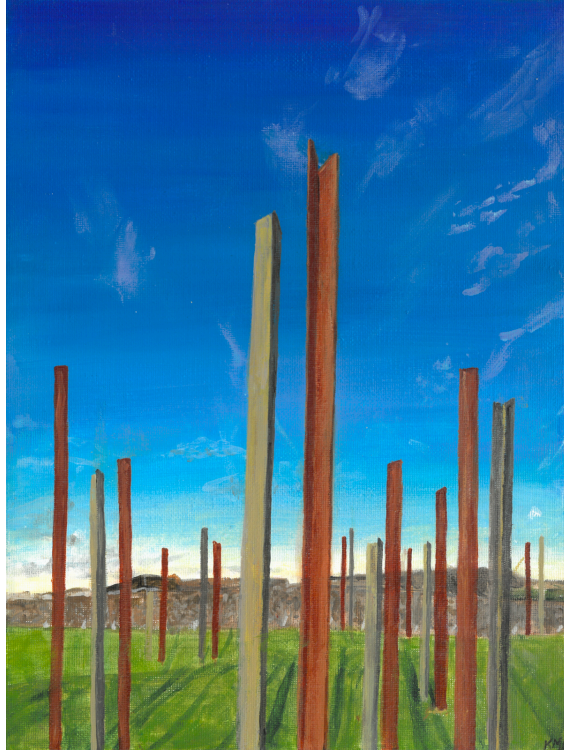
Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

12" x 12"



This was our first stop on our Northern Ireland road trip, partway between Galway and Derry. I was shocked that no other tourists were there as it was absolutely breathtaking. Collooney Mill Falls is a fish-pass for salmon, which is what the strange structure to the left is.

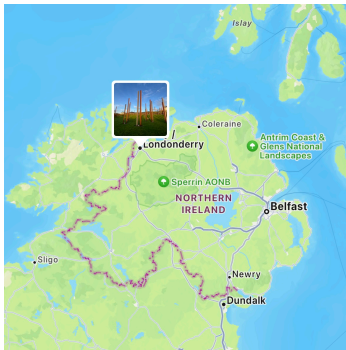


Mute Meadow

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

12" x 9"



Mute Meadow, a contemporary art installation in Derry, Northern Ireland, left a lasting impression on me. It inspired me to explore its shapes, colours and shadows in my own painting. This work demonstrates the quiet elegance of the installation and the way light shines off of the metal during sunset.

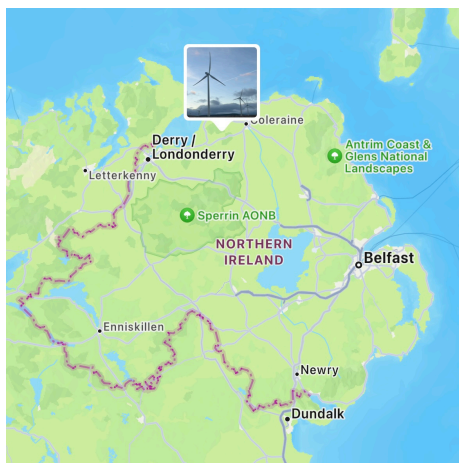


Dunmore Wind Farm

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

12" x 9"



One thing George wanted to see while in Ireland was the wind farms here. Dunmore Wind Farm was something we came across during our Northern Ireland road trip. We spotted it during sunrise, and were both astonished by how beautiful they were. We spent a long time watching them together as the sun rose.



Giant's Causeway Walk

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



We decided to make a stop at the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland and found it incredibly inspiring. This painting captures the untamed beauty of the coastline and one of the trails you can hike along. The classic hexagonal columns of the Causeway aren't in this painting, but the beautiful red soil and vast cliffs were something I felt inspired by and wanted to showcase.



Larrybane Quarry

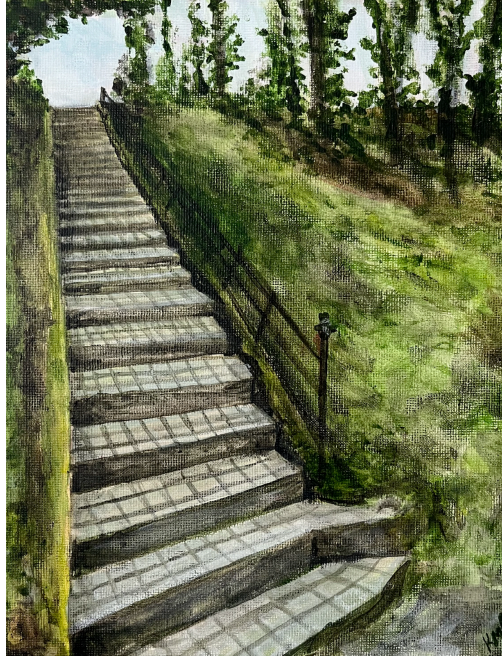
Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



Larrybane Quarry, with its dramatic cliffs and expansive views, felt like a hidden treasure. Most people in the parking lot were there to see the rope bridge nearby, but no one was there for the quarry despite its beauty and proximity.

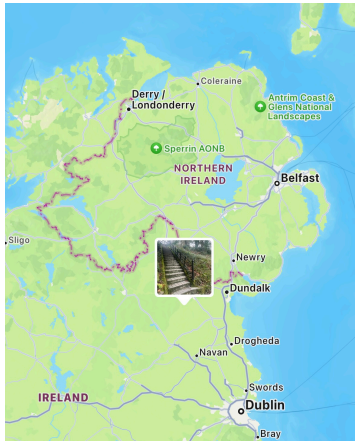


Dun A Ri Forest Park

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 7"



Dun A Ri Forest Park was a beautiful area full of cascading waterfalls and luscious greenery. One place I found particularly beautiful was this set of stairs. George was the one to find this park and add it to our itinerary and it was the perfect place to rest and have some snacks before continuing the drive back to the College.



Moydrum Castle

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

12" x 12"



This was our final stop on our Northern Ireland road trip. You aren't able to get very close to the castle, but we admired it from across a fence. Both George and I agreed this was the most spectacular ruin we had seen so far. The castle itself is very large, and the ivy and plants growing all over it was hauntingly beautiful. I couldn't help trying to picture what it might have once looked like.



Moydrum Truck

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

30cm x 30cm



Near Moydrum Castle, we came across an old, rusted truck that seemed almost forgotten by time. I was drawn to its textures, the way nature had begun to reclaim it, and the unexpected beauty in its decay.



Poul nabrone Portal Tomb

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

7" x 9"



Poul nabrone Portal Tomb is one of Ireland's most iconic archaeological monuments and was something we decided to visit since it was so close to the college. Standing in front of its ancient stones, I was struck by the weight of history surrounding me. The structure, weathered by centuries, holds a quiet power. In this painting, I sought to capture the way it stands resilient against the elements, a connection to Ireland's past.



Ennistymon Cascades

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

9" x 12"



We went to Ennistymon to visit the milk vending machine, and decided to walk around town a bit. We stumbled upon this beautiful waterfall and explored along the shores, despite some light rain. This was one of my favourite spots, made even better by just happening upon it.



Ballyvaughan Rainbow

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



During the first half of our trip, we didn't really see any rainbows, but for the final week we had a bit more rain and therefore a lot more rainbows. This particular one was something we saw on our way to Gregan's Wood, a set of nearby hiking trails



Fanore Beach

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



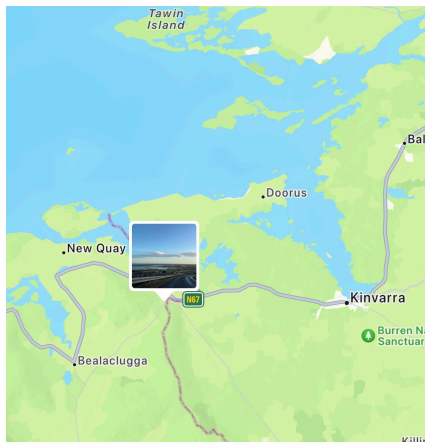
This beach was absolutely gorgeous. The soft orange sand and black rocks scattered around made me feel like I was in an entirely new world. No one else was at the beach, so we spent a long time walking around and searching for seashells. The road between Fanore and Ballyvaughan was unexpectedly closed, so on the way back, we had to backtrack to Lisdoonvarna to get to the College. Our taxi driver from the day we arrived in Ireland had warned us that this happens a lot with the roads, so it was funny seeing it happen before our eyes. I was fine with the detour though as it allowed us extra time to see the rugged Burren around us.



L1014

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel



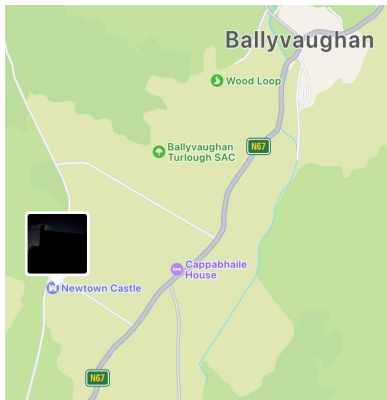
One of the things that stood out to me the most about Ireland was the roads. They are incredibly narrow with extremely high speed limits. This local road was one such road, but it felt worth it to drive on it because of the beautiful views.



Newtown House Power Outage

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel



During our stay at the College, we lost power for a week due to Storm Éowyn, a record breaking wind storm. This was unprecedented, and George and I were the only people to stay on campus for the duration of this time. We even drove up to Galway mid-week to go to Leisureland, a local pool so we could have showers. The campus faculty told us time and time again that this storm really helped us get the ‘full Irish experience’! With no artificial light, the stars shone more brightly than I’ve ever seen, with the big dipper poised right over Newtown House. The experience was both eerie and inspiring.



Gort River

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



On one of our supply run days during the power outage, we decided to drive over to Gort, one of the closest towns that had power. We stocked up on groceries (that didn't require cooking), and then found this lovely walk along Gort River. It sometimes felt a bit weird to be without power when the weather was so lovely and the sky so clear.

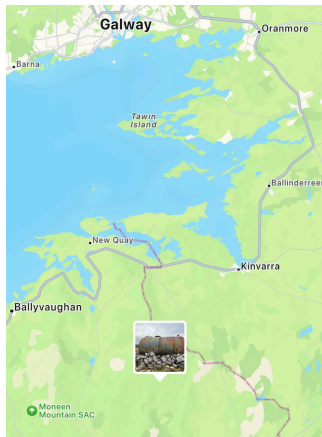


Burren

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

5" x 7"



The Burren is a landscape like no other—rugged, rocky, and full of hidden beauty. One day while exploring this area, we came across what we think was an old, rusty oil drum. I was inspired by its contrast to the environment around it and wanted to try capturing its rusted form.

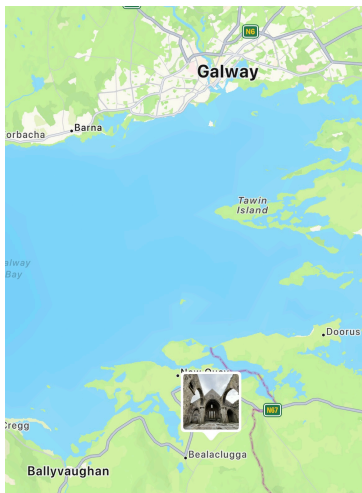


Corcomroe Abbey

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

6" x 8"



Corcomroe Abbey felt like stepping into another time. The towering stone walls and weathered grave markers made the abbey feel eerie, yet important. I enjoyed exploring it and thought it was one of the most impressive ruins from our trip.

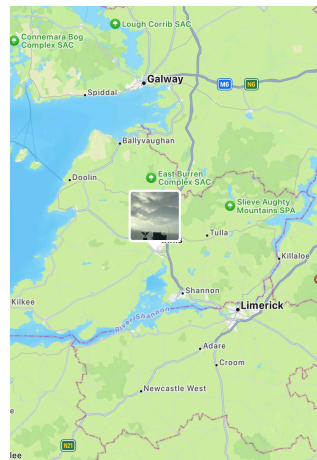


Icarus Ennis

Kimberly Ager

Acrylic Painting on Canvas Panel

7" x 5"



On our way back from Cork, we passed through Ennis, where we came across a sculpture inspired by the myth of Icarus. The figure, reaching upward, seemed both triumphant and tragic, especially with the dramatic sunset behind it. It made me reflect on the fine line between soaring and falling.