



## **Locating Loss: Histories of Infertility in Landscapes and Spaces**

### **Locating Loss project conference**

**27 May 2026**

**Co-Lab space, first floor, Glucksman Library, University of Limerick.**

#### **Programme**

10am: Welcome to the conference: **Professor Christina Morin**, Assistant Dean, Research, Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, University of Limerick.  
Introduction to the conference: **Dr. Niamh NicGhabhann Coleman** (Locating Loss PI)

#### **10.15: Keynote 1**

**Dr. Jennifer Evans: “affrighted at the extraordinary Thunder and Lightning’: Locating Pregnancy Loss in the Weather**

Dr. Jennifer Evans is a Reader in Early Modern History at the University of Hertfordshire. She has published widely on reproductive health including two monographs, *Aphrodisiacs, Fertility and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Boydell & Brewer, 2014) and *Men’s Sexual Health in Early Modern England* (Amsterdam University Press, 2023). She is currently working on a project exploring miscarriage and stillbirth and has published several articles on this topic.

Chair: Dr Kelly Fitzgerald, University College Dublin.

11.15 – 11.45: Tea, coffee, cake.

#### **11.45 – 12.45: Panel 1.**

**Locating objects and practices of protection and hope.**

**Dr Lisa Smith, ‘Title TBC’**

Dr Lisa Smith is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophical, Historical, and Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Essex. Her long-standing interests are on gender, health, the household, and the body--particularly, pain, illness experience, reproduction/infertility and domestic medicine. In addition to writing a book based on a BA-funded project on *European Cuisine and British Identity in an Age of Nationalism* (with Rachel Rich at Leeds Beckett, Adam Crymble at UCL, and Sarah Fox at Edge Hill), she is developing an online database of Sir Hans Sloane's correspondence (c. 1685-1750) and am a co-investigator on a crowd-sourcing recipes transcription project (Early Modern Recipes Online Collective).

**Cindy Sissokho, 'Expecting: Birth, Belief & Protection'**

Cindy Sissokho (b. 1992, France) is an independent curator, cultural producer, art consultant, and writer whose practice focuses on anticolonial, social and political perspectives in contemporary art and culture. She is the Associate Program Director (Africa & Europe) at KADIST. She was the co-Curator of the French Pavilion at the 60th edition of the Venice Biennale in 2024 working with artist Julien Creuzet and curator Céline Kopp. She recently worked as a Curator at the Wellcome Collection in London, where she curated the major exhibition *Hard Graft: Work, Health & Rights* (Sep 24-Apr25) and *Expecting: Birth, Belief & Protection* (24 October 2025 - 19 April 2026).

Chair: Dr Niamh NicGhabhann Coleman, UL.

**12.45 – 14.00 Lunch break (provided at the Pavilion restaurant).**

**14.00 – 14.50: Keynote 2**

**Professor Laura Kelly, “‘It’s a really empty feeling’: women’s narratives of pregnancy loss and infertility in late twentieth-century Ireland’.**

Laura Kelly is professor of modern Irish history at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. Her most recent book, *Contraception and Modern Ireland: a social history, c. 1922-92* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2023. Her next monograph, to be published by Oxford University Press, is a history of the anti-abortion movement in Ireland from the 1970s to the 1990s. She currently holds a British Academy/Leverhulme Trust small grant for a project on the history of pro-choice/abortion rights activism in Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s.

Chair: Dr Sophie Cooper, Queen’s University Belfast.

14.50 - 15.00: comfort break.

**15.00 - 16.00 – panel 2**

**Making space for loss through creative practice.**

### **Imogen Holmes-Roe, 'Still Parents: creativity as care after baby loss'**

Imogen Holmes-Roe is Curator (Historic Art) at the Whitworth, where she is responsible for the research, development and display of the gallery's historic art collection. Since joining the Whitworth in 2019, she has contributed new published research and acted as lead curator on the gallery's most recent major historic art exhibitions; *Albrecht Dürer's material world (2023–24)*, *Turner: In Light and Shade (2025)* and *Beneath the Great Wave: Hokusai and Hiroshige (2026)*. Alongside this new research, she has developed a practice in co-curation with the multi-award-winning *Still Parents, Life After Baby Loss (2021–22)* which was awarded the Museums Association Best Museums Change Lives Project (2022), *(Un)Defining Queer (2023)* and the forthcoming *Still Care* exhibitions (2026). Recent published essays and books include 'The Thomas D. Barlow collection: A fait accompli' published in *Albrecht Dürer's material world* (Manchester University Press, 2023), *(Un)Defining Queer: Queering the Constituent Museum* (the Whitworth, 2023), 'Still Parents: Exploring Baby Loss Through Art & Creativity' published in *Welcoming Museum Visitors with Unapparent Disabilities* (American Alliance of Museums, 2024) and *Turner: In Light and Shade* (the Whitworth, 2025).

### **Professor Des Fitzgerald: 'Birth Weight: reflections on writing infertility memoir.'**

Professor Des Fitzgerald is Co-Director of the Radical Humanities Laboratory at UCC. His research interests are broadly in the historical sociology of the brain and mind sciences. His most recent books are *The City of Today is a Dying Thing* (Faber & Faber, 2025) and *The Urban Brian* (with Nikolas Rose. Princeton, 2023).

Chair: Dr Sylvia Murphy Tighe, University of Limerick.

16.00 - 16.15 – Coffee, tea, and cake.

### **16.15 – 17.00pm – closing roundtable**

Participants:

**Dr Beth Wilson** (Lecturer in American History at Cardiff University), **Professor Kathryn Hurlock** (Professor of Religious and Military History at Manchester Metropolitan University), **Éabha Gallagher** (Researcher, Trinity College Dublin), and **Dr Deirdre Foley**, (PI of the Pregnancy and Giving Birth in Ireland, 1950-2020 project at Trinity College Dublin).

Chair: **Dr Niamh NicGhabhann Coleman**, University of Limerick.

The **Locating Loss** project has been supported by Research Ireland through the New Foundations funding scheme (in collaboration with the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland).

This conference is also produced as a collaboration between the MCHRI (Material Culture and Heritages of Religion in Ireland) network and the HEBE (History of Emotions in the Built Environment) research group.

For information or queries, please contact the project PI, Dr Niamh NicGhabhann Coleman at [niamh \[dot\] nicghabhann \[at\] ul.ie](mailto:niamh [dot] nicghabhann [at] ul.ie).  
Please note that the programme is subject to change.

All are most welcome to attend but numbers are limited – please book your place by filling in the below form:

[Locating Loss conference booking form – Fill in form](#)

Further information about the Locating Loss project:

The aim of the Locating Loss project is to explore the spaces and places associated with infertility. Like all human experiences, this is one which has a spatial dimension. This might be public or private – the space of the home, a pilgrimage destination, or a medical waiting room. These sites and spaces are often associated with specific landscapes and landmarks, which may be shared through time. This project will bring together researchers from a wide range of backgrounds and practices in order to share their expertise, and to build a bigger, more connected picture of the spatial dimensions of infertility. It is a project which aims to draw on expertise from fields such as archaeology, prayer studies, religious history, arts practice research, health humanities, psychology, reproductive healthcare and medicine, nursing and midwifery, folklore, history (including history of emotions, oral history, and history of the family), and many more. While infertility can be a very private and personal experience, it is one that has been shared by communities of individuals across the world. Ultimately, the Locating Loss project aims to highlight aspects of this shared history through its emphasis on landscapes, spaces, and sites, and to make this research available to the public in an accessible way.

Image: 'rag tree' at the Lough Avalla farm, Co. Clare.