

Shane Hynan

**Beneath
Beofhód**



SCHOOLS RESOURCE



Funded by
**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council**

Photographer Shane Hynan has spent almost a decade exploring the boglands of the Irish Midlands and the people connected to them.

The Irish word *Beofhód* means “life beneath the sod.” The exhibition explores what lies beneath the surface of these landscapes: memory, labour, tradition, ecology, and change.

Bogs are places with many meanings. They are habitats for plants and wildlife, places shaped by generations of turf cutting, and important sites in conversations about climate and sustainability today.

Through photography, Hynan asks us to think about our relationship with the environment and what landscapes can tell us about who we are.



“What would the bog say?”

- Shane Hynan



PRIMARY

This section of the resources is for primary school students, their parents & guardians and their teachers.

LOOK • THINK • IMAGINE

Look Closely

Choose one photograph and spend one minute looking carefully.



Think about

What do you notice first?

What colours and textures can you see?

Does the landscape feel calm, harsh, empty, busy, ancient, or changing?

What signs of people can you find?

Imagine

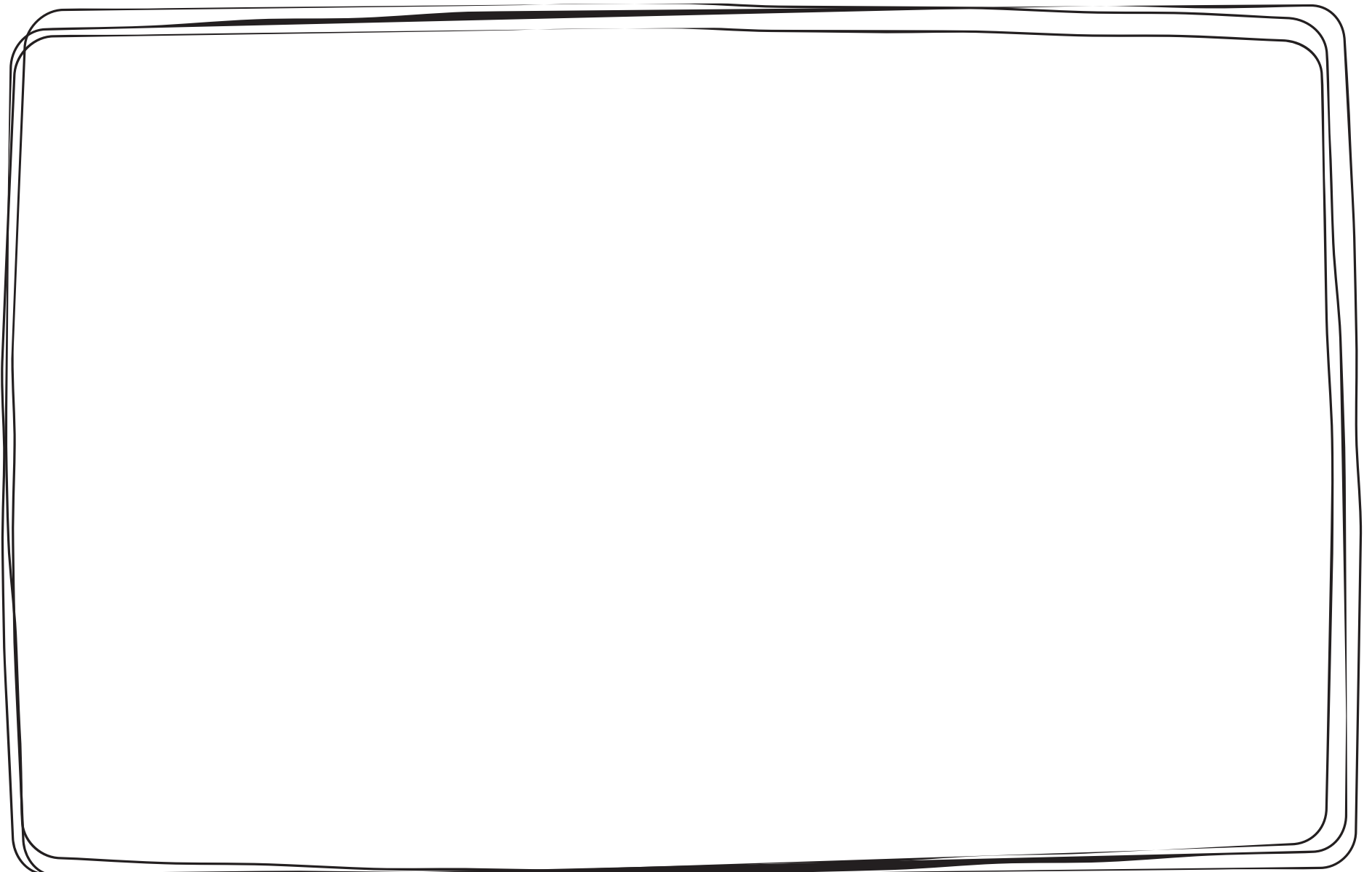
“What would the bog say?”

What stories would it tell?

What has it seen over time?

What would it say about humans?

Draw or write your response.



Look closely

Many of Shane Hynan's photographs show traces of human activity in the landscape.

Can you spot:

tracks

machines

stacks of turf

pathways

water

plants growing back

Make

Take a photograph or draw a place near your home or school.

Think about

What stories does this place hold?

How do people use it?

How has it changed over time?



**“...the future lies not only in
the ground, but in those who
walk on it...”**

-Luke Gibbons, writer



POST- PRIMARY

This section invites post-primary students to explore themes of landscape, environmental change, cultural heritage, and photography through discussion and creative response.

LOOK • THINK • DISCUSS

For generations, bogs in Ireland provided fuel, work, and a strong sense of community. Turf cutting often involved families and neighbours working together.

Today, these landscapes are changing. Large-scale industrial peat extraction has ended, while conversations continue around conservation, renewable energy, climate change, and land use. Rather than offering simple answers, Shane Hynan's photographs hold different perspectives together. The work asks us to think about how people shape landscapes - and how landscapes shape people in return.





THINK & DISCUSS

How do landscapes shape people's lives and identities?

What traces of work, history, or memory can you find in the photographs?

Can environmental protection and cultural tradition coexist?

How does photography influence the way we think about the environment?

Do these photographs feel hopeful, uncertain, quiet, or reflective?

RESPOND

Many of Hynan's photographs show traces of environmental and industrial change:

machinery

railway tracks

cut peat

flooded land

returning vegetation

wind turbines

Writer Luke Gibbons describes that "Bogland not only retains memory: it also stores carbon to an even greater degree than rain forests, and thus is a vital resource in protecting the planet."

Make Your Own Response

Respond to a landscape near your home, school, or community through:

photography

drawing

writing

sound

collage

video

Think about:

memory

change

community

progress

human impact

Find Out More About the Artist

Shane Hynan is an Irish photographer and visual artist whose work explores landscape, ecology, rural identity, architecture, and environmental change. His long-term photographic projects focus on the Irish Midlands and the relationship between people and place.

Website

www.shanehynan.ie

Instagram

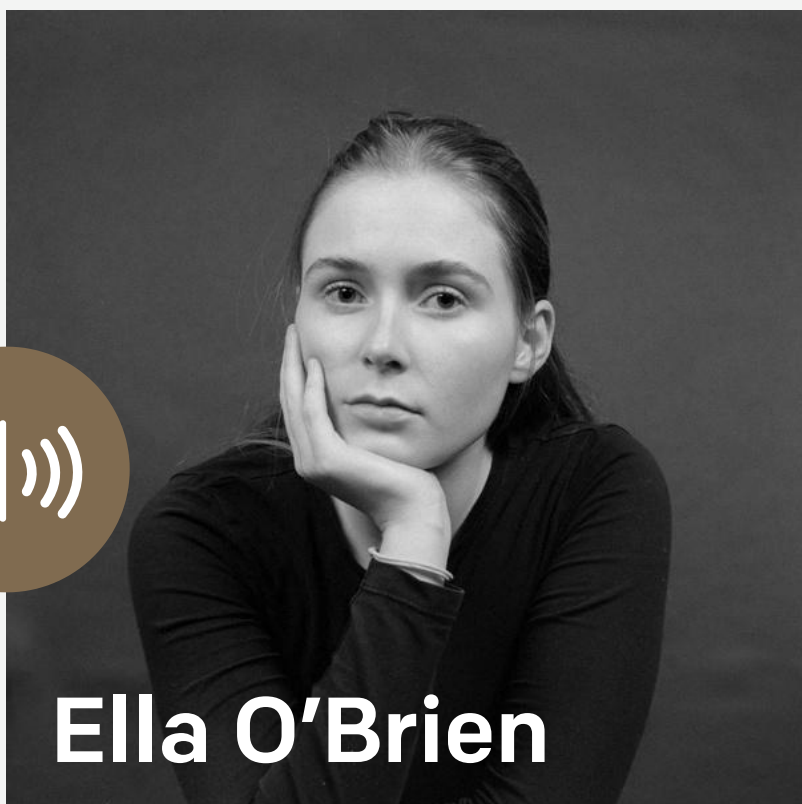
[@shanehynan](https://www.instagram.com/shanehynan)

Ask the Artist

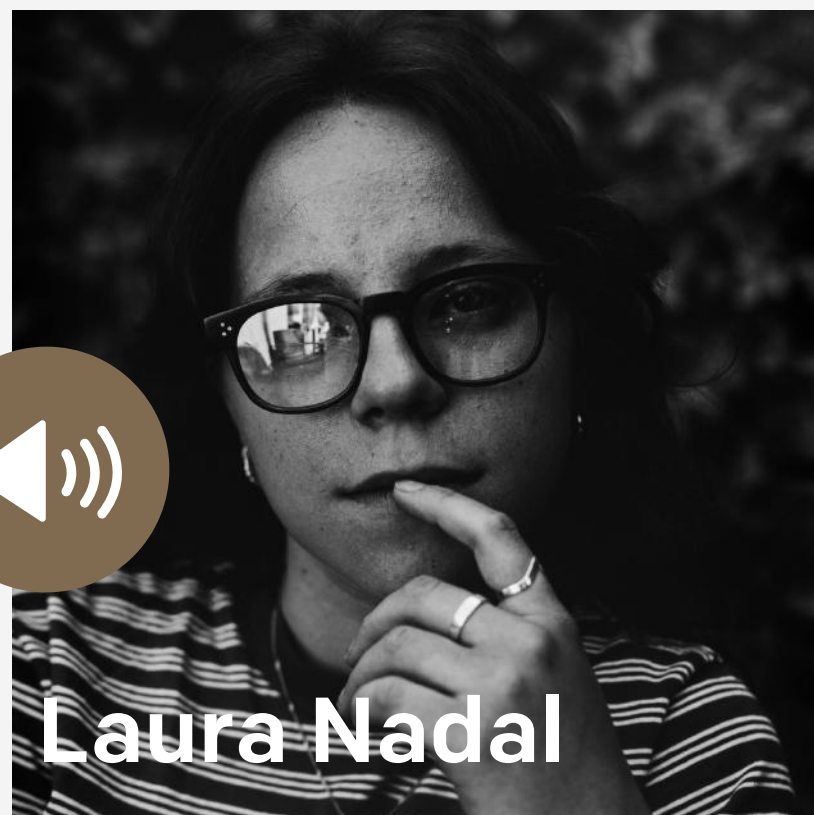
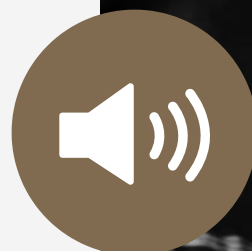
Shane Hynan



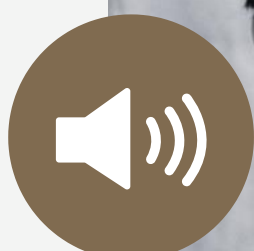
In this section, members of the [Photo Museum Ireland Youth Panel](#) ask artist Shane Hynan questions inspired by the exhibition *Beneath | Beofhód*.



Ella O'Brien



Laura Nadal



Jim Xi Johnson



Genevieve Eyzat



Themes & Connections

This resource supports discussion and learning connected to:

Leaving Certificate Visual Art

Artist as social commentator
Identity and place
Landscape in Irish art
Photography as documentation and interpretation
Research and critical reflection

Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development

Human relationships with the environment
Sustainability and environmental change
Biodiversity and peatland ecosystems
Climate action and land use
Community perspectives and environmental responsibility

Leaving Certificate Geography

Human interaction with landscapes
Natural resources and land use
Environmental change
Rural communities and economic transition
Physical and cultural geography

“Reclamation of the bog has been a feature of twentieth-century Irish art... In photography, Rachel Giese Brown, Tina Claffey, and Amelia Stein have in recent years broken ground, in more ways than one, with the lens.”

- Luke Gibbons

Further Research

Explore artists, writers, organisations, and projects connected to boglands, landscape, ecology, and environmental change.

Organisations & Projects

[Tóchar Midland Wetlands Restoration](#)

[Community Wetlands Forum](#)

[Tóch | Dig Project](#)

[Bog Bothy Project](#)

Exhibitions & Media

[Bogskin Exhibition](#)

[Peat's Sake \(RTÉ Documentary\)](#)

Artists & Writers Exploring Boglands

Amelia Stein

Joseph Beuys

Brian O'Doherty

Nigel Rolfe

Seamus Heaney

Tim Robinson

Manchán Magan

Paul Henry

Simon Burch



Youth Panel

Behind the Scenes

What happens before an exhibition opens? Join Youth Panel members Ella O'Brien and Henry James as they go behind the scenes at Photo Museum Ireland to see how *Beneath | Beofhód* came together - from preparing the gallery space to hanging the photographs and exploring the concepts in Shane Hynan's work.

Visual Studies connection:

Watch Ella and Henry from the Photo Museum Ireland Youth Panel as they explore how Shane Hynan's *Beneath | Beofhód* comes together behind the scenes.

Think about:

- How is the gallery space prepared for an exhibition?
 - Trish Lambe & Darren Campion are the curators of *Beneath | Beofhód* - what is the role of the curator through this process? Along with curators and the artist who is involved in the making of an exhibition?
 - What choices are made when displaying photographs?
 - How do scale, sequence, lighting, and spacing affect how we experience an artwork?

How does *Beneath | Beofhód* act as a form of social commentary on landscape, ecology, memory, and environmental change?

Creative response:

Choose one photograph from the exhibition and write a short curatorial note explaining where you would place it, what you would display beside it, and what you would like viewers to think about when they encounter it.

IMAGE INDEX



John and Josh footing turf for domestic use, Knockirr Bog, County Kildare, 2019.



Turf and rutted bog, Knockirr Bog, County Kildare, 2019.



Drain on bog harvested for milled peat for horticulture use, near Carbury, County Kildare, 2021



Disused Bord na Móna tea hut #1, Mount Dillon Bog Group, County Longford, 2025.



Derrinlough briquette factory, County Offaly, 2023.



Barrel footings, Knockirr Bog, County Kildare, 2018.



Large sod peat for horticulture use, Ballydermot bog group, near Kildare Offaly border, 2021.



Family footing turf for domestic use, Ticknevin, County Kildare, 2020.



Bunding used for bog restoration, Timahoe South, County Kildare, 2024.



Light industrial railway, Gilltown Bog, County Kildare 2022.

Written and designed by Vita Ryan, Education and Audience Development Officer and Youth Panel Facilitator, Photo Museum Ireland. Developed in collaboration with the Photo Museum Ireland Youth Panel. This work is supported by the Heritage Council of Ireland and the Arts Council of Ireland.

If you would like to get in touch with our Education department please contact Education@photomuseumireland.ie



This exhibition premiere is the first show in a Photo Museum Ireland National Tour, organised in partnership with Source Arts Centre, Thurles, Roscommon Arts Centre, the Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny, and Galway International Arts Festival, supported by Arts Council Touring & Project Awards.

Beneath | Beofhód is supported by the Arts Council of Ireland, Kildare Arts Service, Roscommon Arts Centre, and the Photo Museum Ireland Artist Development Residency.

