

Little did they know

Curated by **Merve Elveren**

Limerick City Gallery of Art:

Yane Calovski
Eirene Efstathiou
Melanie Jackson
and Esther Leslie

Hunt Museum:

Michele Horrigan

Sailor's Home:

Michele Horrigan
Women Artists Action Group
 (from the archive of Pauline Cummins)
Driant Zeneli

Online:

It's not for you we did it

Today's world produces and relies on uncertainty. This was the case even before the pandemic upended our lives. Uncertainty was already ubiquitous in the realm of politics, economics, justice, security, education, and public health. In this state of constantly feeling anxious or insecure, the only thing we can manage is to focus on small things within our immediate environments, over which we believe we have power.

The phrase "little did they know," serving as the title of the Guest Programme of the 39th EVA International, refers to critical moments in life, suggesting the unpredictable personal or social consequences that follow. Signalling a state of uncertainty, the phrase carries contradictory undertones: a potential failure, loss, or disaster, but also the advent of transformations that might pave the way for a new future imaginary. The title aims to capture the shifting positions of individuals or groups, who are *reacting to* and *moving away from* fear and incapacitation; connected together with a shared vision across different geographies and proximities.

Last year, researcher A. T. Kingsmith wrote about the profound impact of the ongoing epidemic and argued: "The shared realization that 'you are not alone in this dead-end job, this bottomless debt, this paralyzing depression' can establish new propositions about the

root causes of our anxieties, which can help stimulate people's capacities for working together to build a more permanent and collective means of addressing this condition beyond the individuating and often highly inaccessible offerings of a burgeoning anxiety economy." The more a sense of collectivity and togetherness emerges across precarious communities, the more anxiety the new world order tries to instil in them to keep the status quo intact; in other words, uncertainty is highly politicised. The inability to define, predict, or control the progression of current conditions leads to the premature evacuation of collective care and alternative visions for the future.

Little did they know traces often fragmented and mostly overlooked stories from a broad range of individual or collective actions from the recent past, which challenged—and in some cases, transformed—the existing conditions of the time. The artistic responses and research-based projects have, at their core, an ambition to mobilize issues of ecology, self-representation, gender roles, and social justice. While *Little did they know* does not introduce a guideline for surviving uncertain times nor offer a grand proposal for the future, it does propose itself as an exercising ground of ideas that might help us navigate our present day.

– **Merve Elveren**