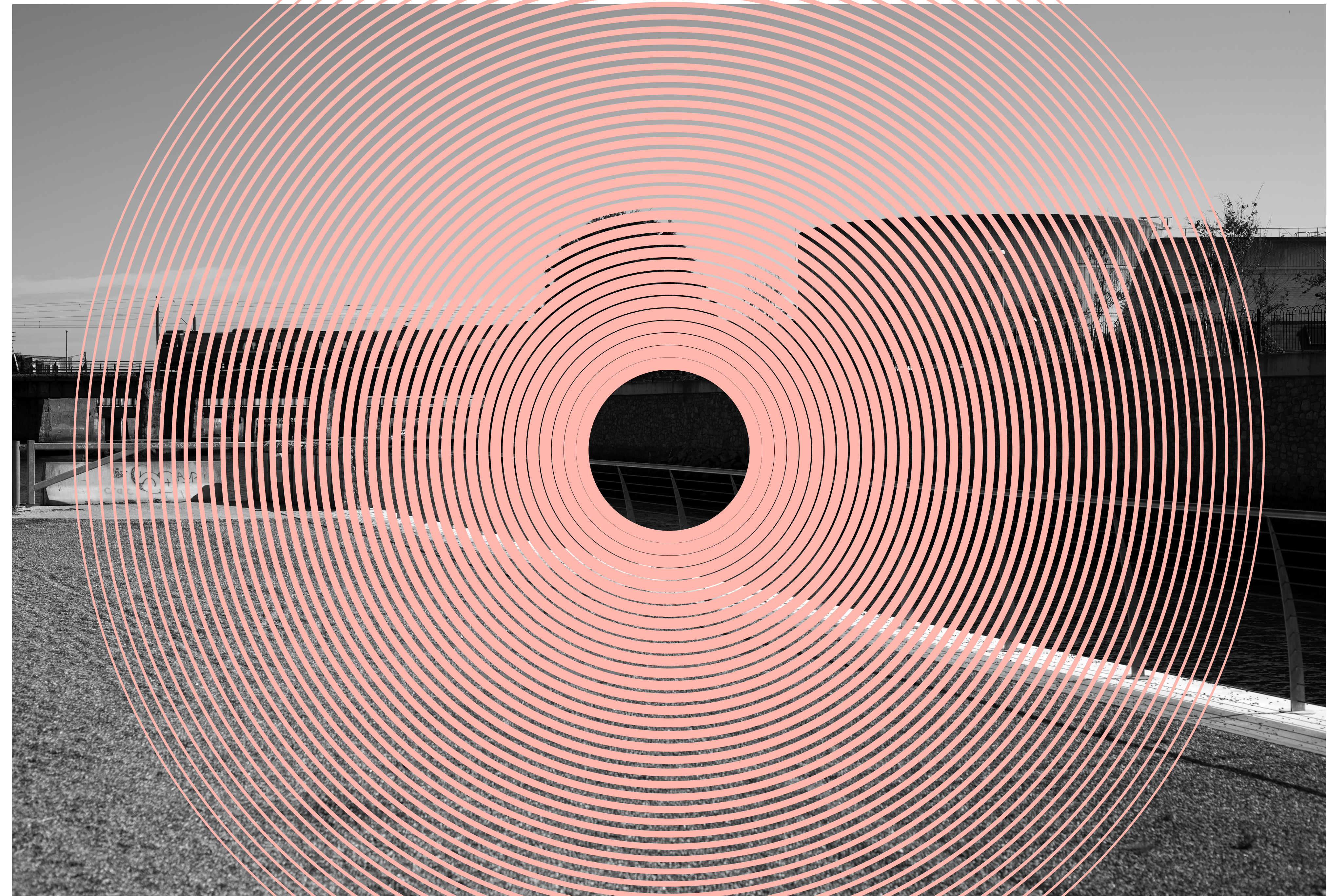


David Beattie



This has been printed to mark the commissioning of a public artwork by artist David Beattie in Bray, County Wicklow. Commissioned by the Arts Office of Wicklow County Council and funded by the OPW through the Per Cent for Art Scheme. The selection process was managed by curators Ellis Lavelle and Jennie Guy on behalf of the Arts Office of Wicklow County Council.

Concept

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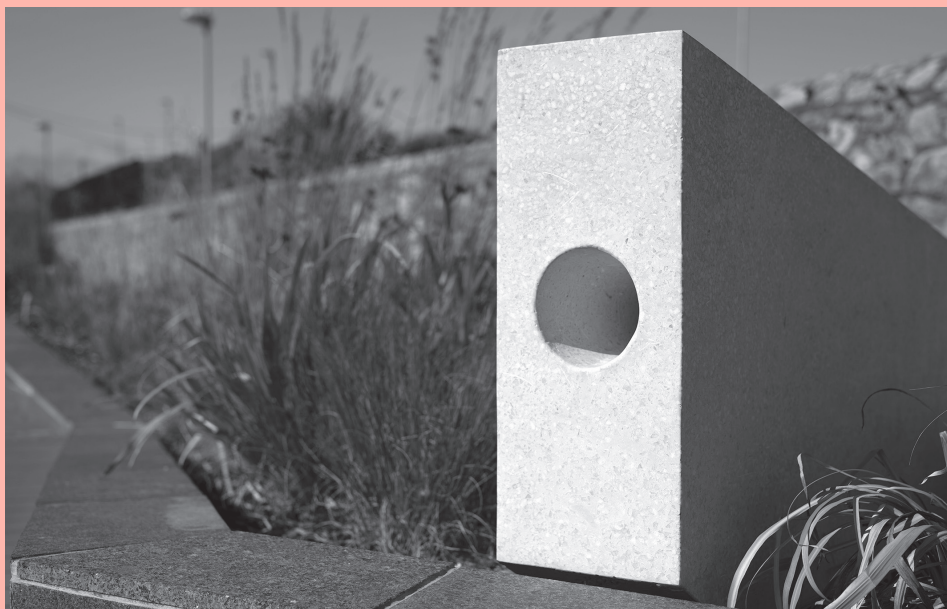
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Print

Colorman Ireland

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Reflectors

Reflectors is a permanent Public Artwork created by Dublin based artist David Beattie. The work consists of four individually engineered and cast terrazzo sculptures of varying sizes and forms situated adjacent to the River Dargle in Bray, County Wicklow.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone involved in the making of this artwork, curators Jennie Guy & Ellis Lavelle, Colm & Kris at PJ Ryan Terrazzo, David Coyne & James O'Donovan at Oikos Furniture, Martin Gargan, Ray McGrath, Louis Haugh, Sven Anderson, and Jenny Sherwin, Liam Bourke & Dominic Gillan at Wicklow County Council. And thanks to Anne, Hugo and Luke for listening!

Natural Frequency



Incidental Music

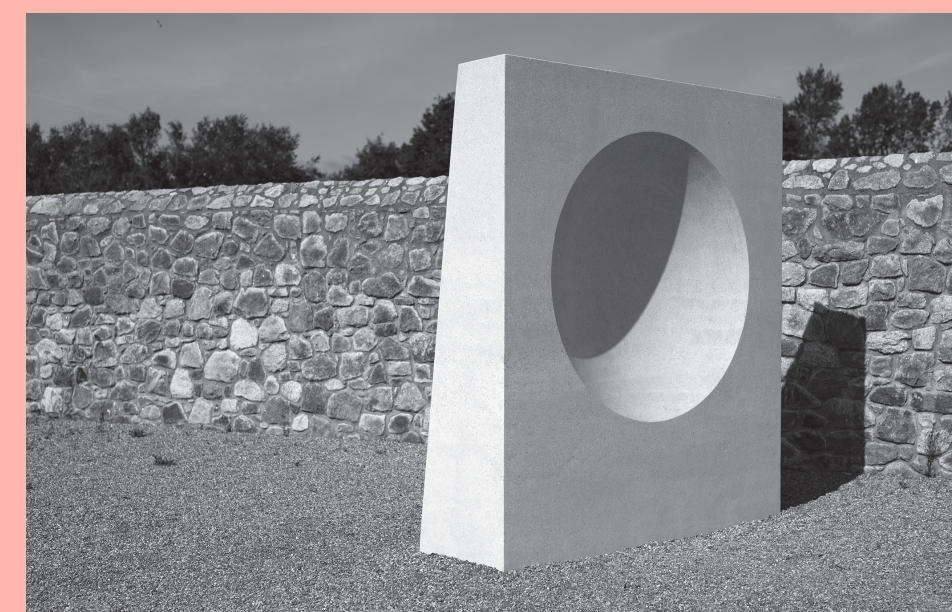
You can come across David Beattie's *Reflectors* in a number of ways. You might glimpse the largest element settled towards the end of the riverwalk as you roll into Bray on the DART from Dublin. Or you might discover the smallest piece set discreetly in the stone wall as you turn along the river for your morning walk. Either way, you will find yourself questioning these objects, as their forms suggest functions that extend beyond their visual appearance.

David describes these objects as *listening points*. As you engage with these four sculptures, you will hear a variety of things. The sounds of the river passing by. The sounds of cars driving in and out of Bray. The distant sounds of the glass recycling shattering as it is emptied into a truck. The nearby conversations of the birds as they congregate around you. You will notice that the familiar tones of your friends' voices sound different within these spaces. There is something special about the way that these solid forms collect sound: There is a sense of resonance, filtering, and reflection. Within these intimate configurations, every sound takes on a new life.

But listen closer: You might hear other things as well. Perch next to the pink aggregate sculptures and look out along the trajectories that they declare. You will find that these perspectives are oriented inwards, instead of outwards. They lead you back into Bray, back towards the relationships that emerge between this locale and the act of listening. It's not the big events that come to mind – the music festivals and the like. Instead, you recall the more incidental sounds. The horn speakers along Main Street, linked back to Dickers Electrical shop. The pulse of trains rumbling overhead when you walk under the Albert Avenue underpass. The timeless mechanics of the Bray Seafront Funfair. The hum of the espresso machine in your favourite café. The crush of pebbles under your bare feet as you walk along the beach.

This instinct to activate a space between object, environment, and listener is a cornerstone of David's practice. Whether they are placed in the close quarters of a gallery space or within an expansive public landscape, David's works suggest relationships that are performative and inclusive, that help you sense things that you might not have otherwise seen or heard (even though they were always right there around you). There is physics at work here: Tensions, thresholds, limits, and a fine degree of precision. But there is also an open invitation for you to imagine what lies beyond this sense of accuracy. You can tune in or tune out – and somewhere in between you might find a natural

Reflectors



frequency, a certain signal that makes everything around you resonate and spring to life.

Between Centres

We might agree that Bray is formed of a series of decentred centres. The seafront, Main Street, Old Bray, Bray Head. The new Bray Town Centre scheduled to open in 2020 will be another chapter in this story, and we imagine a new orbit, a new centre to gravitate towards. But as we circulate, we are aware of lines as well: The north-south vector of the DART, and the flow of the Dargle tracing from east to west. They can build as many centres as they like, but we know that the origin of these axes is more than a casual intersection. We're always drawn here, down by the river.

It takes time to understand this place. We could start with anything. Looking around, we find a few textual cues. With our backs to David's largest work, we read the bold letters *KEZM KENS* tagged on the wall alongside the DART tracks. We find *ESB Networks CN273* on the electricity pylon closest to the sculpture poised along the river edge. And then there's the more itinerant *Energy Boost* logo on two blue-and-silver cans left on the gravel near the bench-based piece.

Reflectors seems to possess a friendly affinity for these different items, and for the processes that brought them to coexist here, in this location. We imagine the network technicians servicing the infrastructure overhead, as the kids who left their cans behind disappear into that concrete step structure further down along the riverwalk. Somehow, we coax ourselves to believe that we can still hear traces of their voices as they laugh and dream; a resonant echo set deep within each of David's sculptures.

We're always oscillating between these centres, us and them; a little out of sync, kind of aware of each other, kind of not. At this stage we all recognise each other, and there is a comfort knowing they go down there along the river at night when we're fast asleep. They're listening, then, too, just like we're listening now. It's nice to think about all of our ears together, on these surfaces; now, and then, and in the future.

The Pairing of Two Items

This is the second entry I find when I search for a definition of the word coupling on my phone.

It's a word that persists in my mind as I move between the four pieces that form *Reflectors*. Every time I press into the aperture of one of the three smaller sculptures to listen, I feel a heightened sense of the shape of my own ear,

as I work to couple my head with the stone. Each shape possesses its own geometry, which requires me to shift my body – to engage in a performance of sorts. I find myself closer to the ground, looking out at the river from an angle, that I did not expect. After fielding the intimate proxemics of these pieces, David's largest sculpture liberates me from its surface, as I work to activate it with my voice in order to navigate an invisible acoustic threshold.

But maybe this idea of coupling – of a relationship formed between two items – is too limiting. Maybe *Reflectors* points towards something more multiple and diverse. Everything becomes implicated as an active item in this new, more inclusive relationship. My ear includes David's sculptures, but it also includes the stone wall across the river, as well as the swans as they become more curious about the stillness of my presence. *Reflectors* helps me understand these plural relationships. The solid physical mass of these pieces is deceptive: They do not speak of place as a static entity. Instead they tell a story about how things are connected by air and by vibration, as part of an unfolding process that is transitory and itinerant.

As I move between these four sculptures, I become increasingly aware that I am uncertain about how *things* work. The terrain, the architecture, the flow of people – these all seem involved, but simultaneously they become more and more unresolved. Strangely, I feel a sense of comfort as I inhabit this new perspective. This is a safe space, where listening is everything.

Sven Anderson — 09/09/19

