

# THE IRISH TIMES

## Minister announces €2 million for Irish arts in the US

Heather Humphreys says €1m will go towards new Irish Arts Centre in Manhattan

Fri, Jan 13, 2017, 14:00 Updated: Fri, Jan 13, 2017, 16:42

Orla O'Sullivan



Minister for the Arts Heather Humphreys and Garry Hynes of Druid Theatre outside the Brooklyn Academy of Music this week. Photograph: Amanda Gentile

The Government is to give €1 million to help to renovate a leading Irish arts centre in New York, and another €1m to showcase Irish artists in the US this year. The funding was announced by Minister for the Arts [Heather Humphreys](#) on a visit to New York.

Speaking at the Irish Arts Center (IAC) in Manhattan, where a major renovation is about to begin, she also detailed elements of the Government's five-year Creative Ireland arts and culture programme to an international audience.

The [IAC](#), already arguably the most important Irish cultural centre in the US, soon hopes to double its audience to about 120,000 people a year and to take some of its programmes nationwide.

Of the €1m in funding the department has allocated for promoting Irish arts in the US, the IAC will receive €200,000.

One of the productions that will receive support is Enda Walsh's immersive theatre installation *Rooms*. It will take place in a garage around the corner from the IAC that will later be demolished to make way for the IAC's expansion. Fittingly, the garage was built in 1916.

The installation was first seen in Ireland at the Galway International Arts Festival between 2014 and 2016.

The Minister said the Creative Ireland programme grew out of the huge public engagement generated by the commemorations of the founding of the State. "Now we are in the reimagine stage," she said. "I think it's great you can connect your new centre to this centre, which is so full of history."

Since 1972, the IAC has hosted artists and actors, from [Liam Neeson](#) to Riverdance composer [Bill Whelan](#), in a former tenement building with one auditorium that seats fewer than 100 people.

The \$60m (€56m) redevelopment includes a theatre twice that size, a music café, and studio space for the many classes the IAC provides.

[Loretta Brennan](#) Glucksman, a prominent Irish American philanthropist, told the Minister: "You are welcome here to New York any time. You don't have to bring a million, but it would be lovely."

[Barbara Jones](#), the Consul General of Ireland in New York, described the IAC as "a convening space for a pure expression of Irishness." She described how, earlier in her life, she worked as a history teacher in France and found that the best way to connect foreign students to Irish history was by showing them a film of Brian Friel's play, *Philadelphia, Here I Come*.

The Minister announced her department would fund Irish visual artists exhibiting in Portland and Los Angeles, and bands performing at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas.

"For many, this is their first experience of Irish culture. It's a taste of Ireland that most likely brings them to Ireland at some later date."