



THE MUSEUM  
OF ENGLISH  
RURAL LIFE



University of  
Reading

# LIVESTOCK ARTIST RESIDENCIES

In summer 2017 The MERL hosted two artist residences as part of our Wellcome Trust funded project Nutrition, Health and Rural England.

Artists Christine Mackey and Deirdre O'Mahony explored health, food and farming in creative, open and exciting ways. Christine and Deirdre have drawn on The MERL's artworks, artefacts and archives to inspire and support their work to explore the overarching theme of 'Livestock'.

'We are delighted to be welcoming Deirdre and Christine to take up these artist residencies and look forward to experiencing new insights and interpretation of the Museum's collections through their work. Supported by the Wellcome Trust, this is a great opportunity to explore the potential of the MERL to inspire creativity that will engage audiences in new and exciting ways.'

Kate Arnold-Forster, Director of the MERL

# Christine Mackey

Christine's research-based practice attempted a radical re-notation on the idea of the garden as a living herbarium that relates current investigations of the historical, political and biodynamical ecologies of plant life through the subject of the seed.

Christine's residency at The MERL used our extensive resources relating to poultry and their geo-biological transformations, including both historical and contemporary contexts from farmers to scientists to breeders. Her work reviewed historical habitat structures, providing inspiration for a new sculptural work that has a dual-purpose both as an art installation and as an actual functioning hen house.

Visit Christine's exhibition [Home Grown Housing](#) to see the results of her residency.

[Visit Christine's website to find out more](#), and follow her [on Twitter](#).

# Deirdre O'Mahony

Deirdre is based in the west of Ireland, and her practice-based research focuses on the relationship between politics, ecology and activism within the rural public sphere.

She has worked extensively in public and private spaces, including museums and galleries, and communicates her work through installation, film, painting and writing. She has received numerous awards and international fellowships.

Deirdre's residency at The MERL reflected upon forgotten moments of innovation and creativity, when farmers adapted to changing economic and climatic conditions. She has engaged with scientists, local farmers and museum archives to test and propose the idea of carbon-neutral beef. The museum collection was trawled for objects and references to Sainfoin use, and visits made to the University research centres and farms in the area.

Deirdre's film installation [Speculative Optimism](#) ran at the museum from October 27th 2017 until December 22nd 2017.

[Visit Deirdre's website to find out more](#), and follow her on [Twitter](#).

