During the 1950s, the level of mental hospital usage in Ireland was the highest internationally, with a rate of 710 beds per 100,000. These institutions provided ‘care’ to those categorised as ‘insane’, ‘mentally ill’, or having ‘mental health problems’, as it is now described. However, they also developed into locations of substantive social and economic importance to the communities in which they were situated.

This paper will demonstrate that the spectacular growth of Irish mental hospitals during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had little to do with the mental state of the individuals who were institutionalised. As such there was no epidemic of ‘mental illness’ in Ireland. Rather, this institutional confinement occurred in response to social forces (such as legislation, systems of admission and discharge, diagnostic criteria, social deprivation and family dynamics), along with the actions of the individuals, families and professional groups who directly carried out the act of committal.

This paper also considers the trajectory of institutional use, with particular reference to the closure of Grangegorman mental hospital and the opening of the new DIT Grangegorman Campus. Dr. Brennan’s personal and professional experience of Grangegorman mental hospital will be used as a lens to consider how the use and human encounter of a physical space can change over time.

Dr. Brennan trained and worked as a psychiatric nurse at Grangegorman and other mental hospitals in Dublin. He later worked as a Nurse Tutor in the Central School of Nursing Grangegorman. Dr. Brennan undertook his PhD at the Department of Sociology Trinity College Dublin, which detailed and critiqued mental hospital use in Ireland. He is Assistant Professor at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin where his teaching and research are focused on the Sociology of Health and Illness, particularly Mental Health. His recent publication Irish Insanity 1800-2000 (Routledge 2014) proposes that there was no epidemic of mental illness in Ireland. Rather, asylum/mental hospital institutional confinement occurred in response to social forces. He argues that we must move beyond the legacy and professional structures of the old mental hospitals to ensure the achievement of quality Mental Health Services that are fit for purpose for contemporary Irish society.
All are welcome to this free public event. To secure your place, please book at the following address:
http://www.eventbrite.ie/o/gradcam-graduate-school-of-creative-arts-and-media-5637765025?s=30214993

**in|discussion The Construction of Madness | Knowledge**

The Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM), the School of Art, Design and Printing and the School of Languages, Law and Social Sciences, together recognise the importance of the history of the new site in Grangegorman and are organising a series of public interventions to prompt reflection and discussion.

In recent times many public buildings have been re-purposed from the austere institutions they once were. The new Art School in Limerick, for instance, was a Magdalene Laundry and the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology was once a Reform School. These public buildings reflect the disciplinary and carceral regimes of a near past that has been air-brushed by generations of reform. The new Grangegorman Campus is one such venture that seeks to transform, repurpose and regenerate the local area.

The Grangegorman site is, therefore, more than a resolution to accommodation problems. We would like to take the opportunity to mark the move and transformations in a way that draws attention to the site itself: the setting, the history, the architecture, and the institution that continues to operate there. It offers a moment to reflect on the deeply-embedded social and psychic meanings, memories and materialised practices, many of which may have been obscured by the design and architectural interventions in the renovation conducted on the site. As an educational institution, the developments seek to turn an inward-looking enclosed site to face the city and the immediate community that will render its previous purpose to history. But this history also needs to be opened out rather than closed off. Further, the aim is to frame and address history as a significant feature of our all too recent collective experience which continues to resonate in the everyday lives of the wider community.

The first of these interventions will hear from a number of invited scholars and public figures who can speak to the site, the institution, its practices, the architecture, its histories, its significance and meaning in the development of the State and the communities within and outside Grangegorman. We are also conscious that this needs to be a public exchange and debate not least to inform but also to stimulate further discussion around institutions, policies and general mental health issues and wellbeing.