

## Sophister Module Description Template 2025-26

**Full Name:** 'Erica Van Horn: an American book artist in rural Tipperary'

**Short Name:** 'The book artist Erica Van Horn'

**Lecturer Name and Email Address:** Dr Julie Bates [batesju@tcd.ie](mailto:batesju@tcd.ie)

**ECTS Weighting:** 10

**Semester Taught MT/HT:** MT

**Year JS/SS:** SS

### Module Content:

Erica Van Horn (born 1954) is an American artist and writer who has been living outside the village of Ballybeg in Tipperary since 1996. She runs Coracle Press with the poet Simon Cutts (born 1944) from this remote location. Coracle is a small press with roots in modernist publishing, concrete poetry, and conceptual art. Coracle publishes Van Horn and Cutts's own work, alongside a network of fellow artists and writers. The visual and material qualities of these publications are as important as any text they might contain.

Van Horn often takes as her subject her immediate environment and personal interactions. For the past three decades her writing and artworks have documented the estrangements and satisfactions of life in rural Ireland. Her 'Living Locally' series of book and cards published by Coracle from 2002 to 2019 present her creative responses in text and image to the daily rhythms of her life in Tipperary, and often cast a new light on seemingly banal encounters and conversations.

In this module, we will look at the 'Living Locally' printed series, alongside Van Horn's online journal '[some words for living locally](#)', which she has maintained since 2007, and her book *Living Locally* (Uniformpress, 2014), which collects some of the entries in her online journal. We will also look at the books and artworks made by Van Horn in France and Italy in the 1980s and 1990s, before moving to Ireland.

Trinity's Early Printed Books has acquired the complete published works of Coracle Press, which will be made available to students. The first assignment will take the form of a response to a workshop with Coracle materials. The second assignment will be an essay.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Assess the work of Erica Van Horn and Coracle Press through private research, class discussion, and direct engagement with the Library's collection of Coracle publications.
- Develop a sophisticated method of close reading that is attentive to the materiality of the work under study, and the relationship between image and text.
- Gain understanding of the practical activities and networks of small press publishing.

### Learning Aims:

- To study a selection of highly acclaimed works of recent literature and art.
- To examine the ways in which these works explore the dynamic between creative practice and place.
- To assess how works by Coracle Press and Erica Van Horn illustrate or complicate ideas within Irish Studies.

### Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 2
- Name/Type of Component(s): Creative response to workshop with artists' books in Trinity's Early Printed Books library and Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): Creative response to workshop: 1,500 words; Essay: 3,500 words
- Percentage Value of Component(s): Response to workshop: 40%; Essay: 60%

### Preliminary Reading List:

Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn, *A Table of Books in Ballybeg* (Coracle, 2023)

Erica Van Horn, *Living Locally* (Uniformbooks, 2014, 2019)

Erica Van Horn, *Living Locally* series (Coracle, 2002–2019)

- No.1-8 Some Words For Living Locally, 2002;
- No.9 Chaynie, 2005;
- No.10 against mice burn sage, 2007;
- No.11 Gifts from the Government, 2007;
- No.12 Small Houses: The Buildings of Tom Browne, 2007;
- No.13 Eight Old Irish Apples, 2008;
- No.14 Rosemary, 2008;
- No.15 Weather Forecast, 2008;
- No.16 Rain, 2009;
- No.17 Eight Old Irish Potatoes, 2011;
- No.18 Some More Words For Living Locally, 2011;
- No.19 A Hot Drop, 2012;
- No.20 Elderflower, 2012;
- No.21 Born in Clonmel, 2012;
- No.22 The Shop in Grange, 2013;
- No.23 The Salute, 2013;
- No.24 Signpost, 2013;
- No.25 TEA, 2013;
- No.26 Raft Race, 2013;
- No.27 Blow-in, 2014;
- No.28 springs, pins & spirals, blades, hinges & nails, spikes & staples, 2014;
- No.29 BUS, 2014;
- No.30 The Cock's Step, 2015;
- No.31 I always have an audience 1, 2015;
- No.32 Abroad, 2015;
- No.33 Natural Cheese, 2015;
- No.34 Printing Shed, 2015;

- No.35 ABOVE, 2016;
- No.36 A Misplacement of Lichen, 2016;
- No.37 The Fermoy Pencil, 2017;
- No.38 I always have an audience 2, 2019;
- No.39 Distemper Brush, 2019;
- No.40 Knocklofty Bridge, 2019.

Please note:

- **Curricular information is subject to change.**
- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**