

THE C R O S S I N G - DOWNPATRICK HEAD, COUNTY MAYO, IRELAND



Dún Briste

TO THE MEMORY OF THE PEOPLE OF
KIDDERAUN AND KILLEEN WHO LOST
THEIR LIVES HERE IN POLL NA
SEANTOINE IN THE AFTERMATH OF
THE REBELLION OF 1916

À LA MÉMOIRE DES CENS DE
KIDDERAUN ET KILLEEN QUI SONT
MORTS ICI À POLL NA SEANTOINE
DANS LES SÉVRES DE LA
RÉBELLION DE 1916

**Downpatrick
Head**

Father Henry O'Kane

The Crossing, Downpatrick Head, County Mayo, Ireland

The Crossing is a student design/build project at Downpatrick Head, County Mayo, Ireland, built in summer 2014 in an astonishing 9 days. The installation commemorates the natural power and richly-layered sacred meaning and cultural lore of its site, a large natural “blowhole” chasm in the rocky headland of Ireland’s rugged west coast. The landscape holds striations of cultural and sacred significance, including Stone Age ring forts and burial cairns. It also has strong links to St. Patrick, attributed with creation of these natural features in battle with a Druid chieftain, Crum Duff. The blowhole was a hideout to Irish rebels of the 1798 Uprising, and the headland served as a coastal defense site in WWII. Recent years have seen tragic accidents and deaths at the blowhole requiring an enclosure for safety to include a view of the majestic natural features and mysterious light emanating from the sea tunnels.

The project provides a ‘fence’ of fluted stainless steel around the blowhole including a sheltered space from the rough winds and weather. The installation consisting of a grassy bermed ring that blends with the surrounding landscape and Stone Age features an interpretive space to tell the many layered sacred stories of this landscape while viewing the blowhole through large glass panels.

The Crossing was designed in a spring 2014 design course, and built in summer 2014 by architecture students with community residents, Mayo County Council, Irish Tourism Board, archaeologists from the nearby 5000 year old **Céide Fields**, and advice from the National Geographic Society. It was dedicated on July 4th 2014 as the first ‘signature discovery point’ along the *Wild Atlantic Way*, a 2500 mile natural and cultural trail along Ireland’s west coast.

The elective course included undergraduate and graduate students. Following detailed site visits for site selection, research, planning and consultation with community residents, students were immersed in the sacred and folk tales, history, and ecology of place, in order to design an evocative space to tell the layered stories of the unique site. The students created their own poetic and sculptural interpretations. Then as a design team, worked together to refine these into detailed architectural models and working construction drawings.

The impact on the students is invaluable and life-changing as an innovative methodology blending design education and practice. The program teaches emerging architects to design architecture that responds poetically to the specifics of culture, ecology and the ‘spirit of place’.







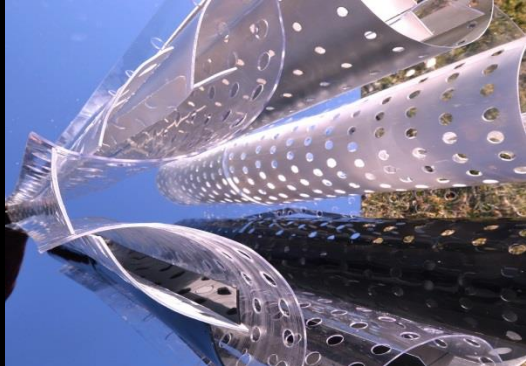
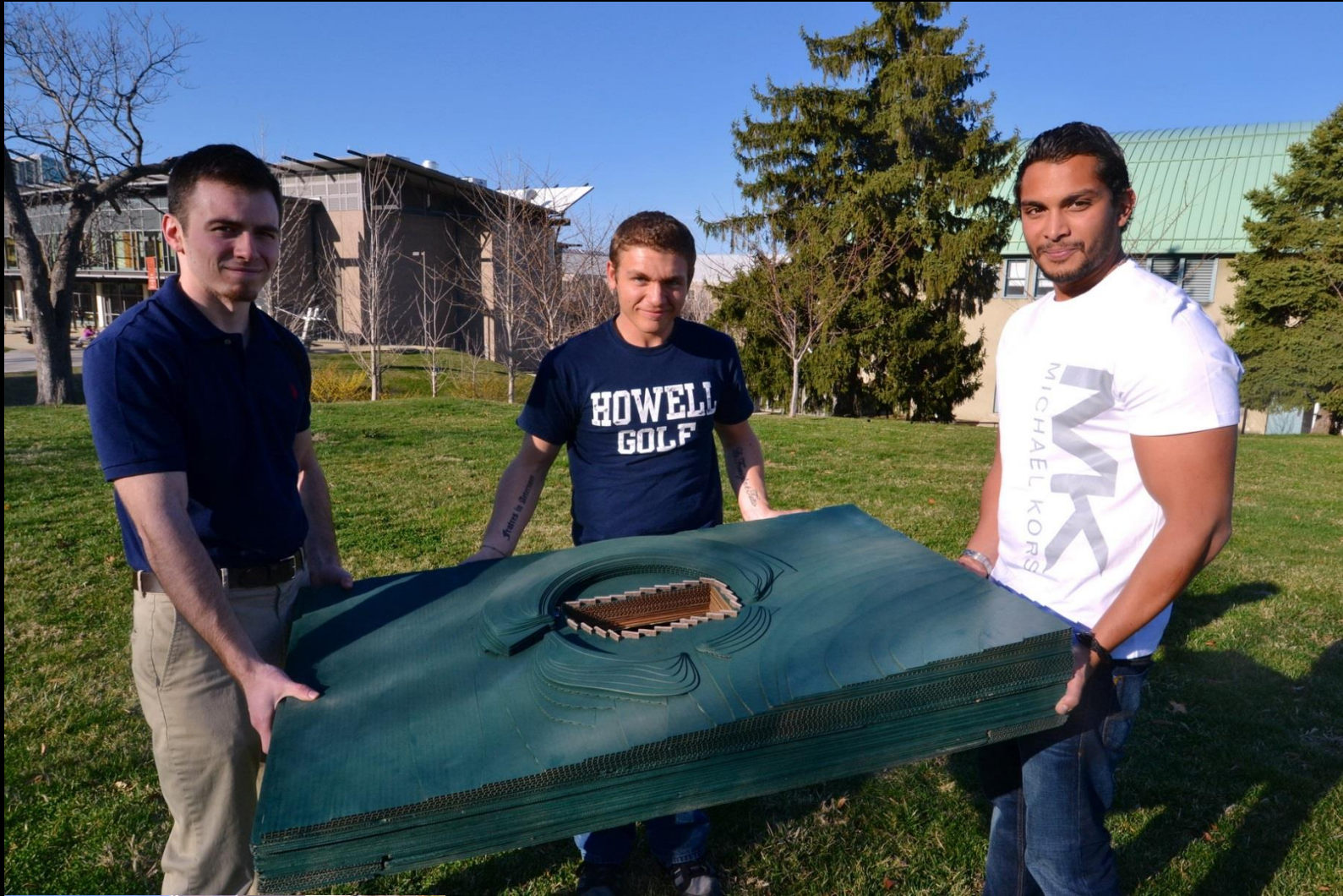




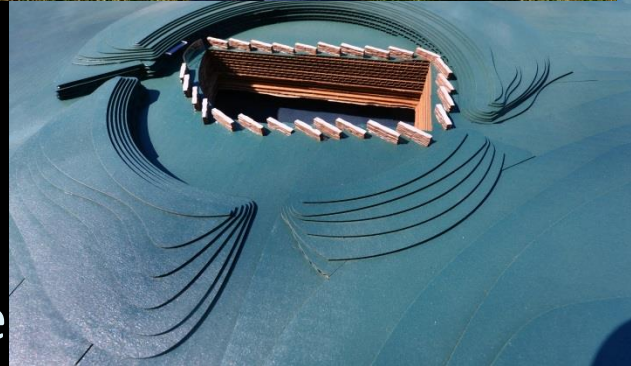
THE C R O S S I N G -
the site

Blighted Before by Fences



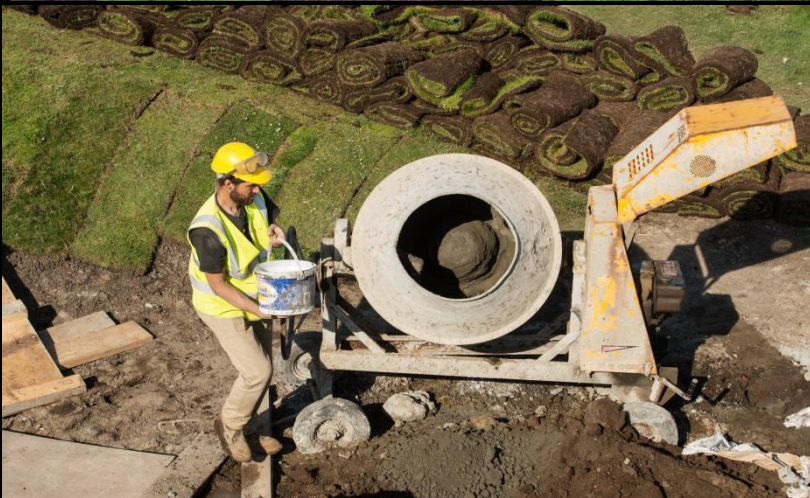


The Poetic,
The Sculpture,
The Architecture





11 Full Days of Construction



52,000 Cubic Yds. of Moved Earth and Sodded with Stone Benches,



All sod from site





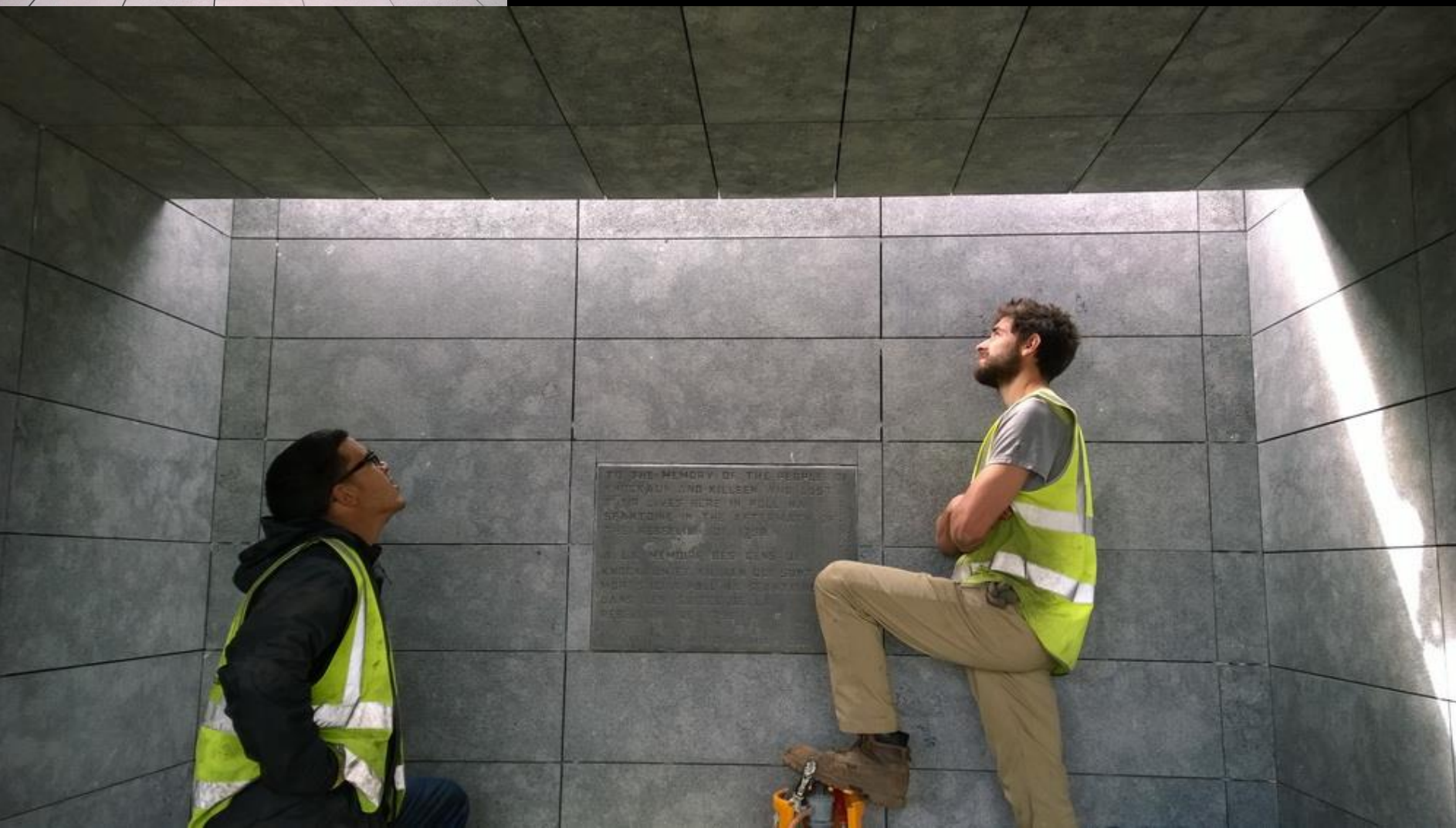
528 Stainless Steel Pipes in Triangular Formation Whistling the Wind and Gathering the Foam of the Crossing.





Kilkenny Peened Limestone Sanctuary and Glass Rails







Druids, French Freedom Fighters, St Patrick, and American-Irish Dance til the Craic of Dawn.....

