



# Best Independent History Publishing Company - Dublin

Established over a decade ago, the publishing platform, 21st Century Renaissance has been endorsed as Dublin's Best Independent History Publishing Company. Launched by Alison Hackett in 2012, 21st Century Renaissance places the highest value on the imagination and skills of its writers, illustrators, and designers, all of whom are based in Ireland.

21st Century Renaissance was founded by Alison Hackett in 2012. The company is an expanding publishing house positioning itself as a respectful disruptor in a busy and often traditional marketplace. A commitment to a design-led process with close cooperative editorial input results in high quality publications. Now just 10 years old, the company was recently recognised as Dublin's Best Independent History Publishing Company in Dublin.

Alison Hackett was born in Cork in 1961 and spent most of her years in education in Dublin, graduating from Trinity College Dublin in 1982 with a joint degree in Mathematics and Economics and a Higher Diploma in Education in 1983, after which she worked in the education sector in Ireland and the UK. A career change in 2000 led to her becoming the Irish Representative for the Institute of Physics where she attended the first-of-its-kind Physics on Stage teachers conference in CERN that same year. From this her idea



was born — a project to explore the complex interaction of human endeavours in a time line of scientific, social, artistic, historic and political events which eventually became The Visual Time Traveller, the founding publication of the 21st Century Renaissance publishing house (2013).

The Visual Time Traveller is a bespoke, design-led, whistle-stop tour of recent world history, running from the Renaissance to modern times. The book encapsulates the values of the 21st Century Renaissance brand — careful editorial curation of interdisciplinary content, the highest standards in design and production, and equitable partnership between the different creative agencies involved. Lavishly produced as an art book with the unique feature of an exposed spine displaying the thread stitching, it was printed and bound by the fine art printer in the Netherlands: MMArtbook printing & repro which facilitates top designers, artists, galleries and curators in Europe.

The project has been extended as an exhibition with an accompanying lecture exploring the vertical and horizontal linkages described in each five-year time period. The Visual Time Traveller has been presented at prestigious venues including Dublin Castle, University Hospital Waterford and The Royal Dublin Society (RDS). Alison launched it with a short speaking tour in Connecticut, U.S. in the Fall of 2019.

In 2016, The Visual Time Traveller was selected by an international jury from a competitive field to be part of the Global Irish Design Challenge exhibitions organised by the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland.

Since then, 21st Century Renaissance has published several poetry books, an opinion piece collection and a children's illustrated book. Soon to be launched is a volume of poetry by Chris Fitzpatrick, a doctor who wrote a collection of poems on his mobile phone during the recent pandemic. His cultural references, his fear, grief, laughter and joy, are a form of self-healing. Chris remarks, "Poetry was an oasis for me during the pandemic. Working with a poet/editor (Alison Hackett) felt like being with T.S. Eliot in Faber and Faber." Alison responds, "The emotional range is vast: Chris's feelings, while sitting two metres from his brother who is dying; imagining his way into Thomas Cromwell's thoughts as he walks by the Dodder; comparing his hospital mask with Yeats's symbolic mask of poetry. This collection is one of the great legacies to come out of the pandemic."

Such commentary showcases the dedication and spirit of 21st Century Renaissance and the impression Alison makes on her writers, "21st Century Renaissance signs contracts with writers and illustrators who want to develop their work under its unique interdisciplinary and editorial oversight." This remarkable achievement will undoubtedly be notable for both Chris and other writers in the 21st Century Renaissance team. This publishing house has created a cross-disciplinary ethic where an aesthetic timbre meets an underlying intellectual force. In Alison Hackett's words, the Visual Time Traveller does this by serving up "eye candy and brain food".

21st Century Renaissance sells to individuals online, at launches, in popup gallery/shops



providing a museum-like tourist experience, and in regular bookshops (independent and chains). The company sells rights internationally at book fairs (London and Frankfurt) where it is at the Irish stand along with other Irish publishers.

While the company is based in Ireland, a small country of 5 million, according to Alison, "Being in the EU matters as we have access to a large well-regulated marketplace and a strong relationship with the US with access to the Irish diaspora. Moreover, Ireland has a powerful literary heritage, with historic connections to the UK, EU and US cultural environs." Its titles have recently been added to the collections of prestigious US institutions such as Notre Dame and Harvard Universities and the Library of Congress. New connections have opened up by the publication of American, Arnie Yasinski's poetry collections: Arnie writes an informal sonnet about swimming in Ireland at the Forty Foot where James Joyce swam when he first imagined Ulysses, a book that shaped modern fiction; Arnie reflecting on being a nineteen-year-old, one of the young men in the US draft lottery for Vietnam; Arnie inspired by a

workshop he attended at the Irish Writers' Centre in Dublin which kick-started his writing.

What for the future? In the short term 21st Century Renaissance is developing the brand's visual identity across all its publishing platforms. In the pipeline, a coming-of-age graphic novel by Nick Geoghegan, based on a story about the Japanese mafia, presented in his signature style inspired by the Manga books he read as a child; another children's picture book in the Knot of Toads series with the title "Parliament of Owls" (think owls debating in Westminster) to be launched for the Christmas market. A medium term plan is for The Visual Time Traveller gallery/shop to have a retail footprint in spaces like Dublin airport.

Longer term developments include a new book, talk and exhibition in The Visual Time Traveller series based around medicine with the working title: From Dark Art to Enlightened Science.

On a grander scheme, the publishing house wishes to be invited to bring The Visual Time Traveller full exhibition of the 100 artworks to MOMA in New York and to present a copy of

this legacy Irish-imagined visualization of world history since the Renaissance to President Joseph Biden when he visits Ireland.

Nothing is as it seems with 21st Century Renaissance. The publishing house produces the wondrous, the beautiful and the compelling and does it all with dignity, professionalism, innovation, and a passion that guides the overall direction of the business. With hopes of greater expansion and international success, recognition will not be far behind as the Best Independent History Publishing Company in Dublin, 21st Century Renaissance, becomes a name known around the globe.



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