

# #WOMEN ON WALLS

Women on Walls is a campaign by Accenture in partnership with the Royal Irish Academy that seeks to make women leaders visible through a series of commissioned portraits that will create a lasting cultural legacy for Ireland in 2016.



Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann  
Royal Irish Academy

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## FIRST FEMALE MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY

### **Sheila Tinney (1918 – 2010)**

A pioneering academic in mathematical physics, Sheila Tinney was described by Nobel Laureate Erwin Schrödinger as 'among the best equipped and most successful of the younger generation of physicists in this country'. Born in 1918, Tinney was just one of 8 girls among 126 boys to sit an honours mathematics paper in the Irish Leaving Certificate. It is believed she was the first Irish woman to receive a PhD in the field of mathematics.

She published papers on a range of topics such as crystal lattices and wave mechanics, working alone, or alongside great scientific figures such as Yukawa, Schrödinger, and Heitler. After time spent at Princeton University in 1948, where Einstein was still teaching and Openheimer was Director, she returned to Ireland where she became Associate Professor of mathematical physics at University College Dublin, in 1966. It was here she gained a reputation as a strong role model for young female academics. She died on 27 March 2010.

### **Françoise Henry (1934 – 1982)**

Françoise Henry was one of the most important twentieth-century historians of Irish art. She trained at the École du Louvre and the Sorbonne, establishing herself as an expert on very early forms of sculptural decoration, particularly in Early Christian Irish Art.

A visit to Ireland in 1926 inspired her doctoral thesis and subsequent life's work. Her significant legacy to the history of Irish illumination is embodied in her final study of the Book of Kells (1974), which became her most acclaimed work. She died on 10 February 1982.

### **Phyllis Clinch (1901 – 1984)**

Award winning scientist Phyllis Clinch, was one of the greatest female inventors of her generation and world renowned for her innovative research into plant viruses. Graduating first in her class in chemistry and botany in 1923 from University College Dublin, she won a postgraduate scholarship and completed her Ph.D. whilst working with Alexandre Guillemond at the Sorbonne.

In the 1930s she gained international fame for revealing complex viruses in the potato. In 1943, she was awarded a DSc on the strength of her published body of work, the highest degree a scientist can be awarded. On March 30 1961, she was the first woman to be awarded the Boyle medal by the Royal Dublin Society in recognition of her scientific achievements. She died on 19 October 1984.

### **Eleanor Knott (1886-1975)**

Eleanor Knott was a "pathbreaking" researcher of classical Irish literature. Having taught herself to read modern Irish, she went on to study old Irish at the School of Irish Learning in Dublin and won a scholarship to continue her studies in 1907.

Joining the staff of the Royal Irish Academy in 1911, she published many scholarly articles and was joint editor of *Ériu*, a leading academic journal of Irish language studies. In 1928, she accepted a position to lecture in Celtic languages at Trinity College Dublin and was appointed Chair of early Irish in 1939. A year earlier she was awarded a D.Litt. honoris causa by the National University of Ireland. She died on 4 January 1975

## WOMEN LEADERS IN STEM

### **Professor Sarah McCormack (TCD)**

Professor McCormack's research explores photovoltaic panels which convert solar energy into direct current electricity. Applying these panels to buildings is important in achieving 20 percent renewable energy targets by 2020. This disruptive photovoltaic technology would ensure dramatically reduced costs and increases in efficiency, helping to define and promote the EU and Global solar agenda.

### **Professor Aoife McLysaght (TCD)**

Professor McLysaght is one of Ireland's leading geneticists and was on the team that analysed the initial sequence of the human genome in 2001. She was also involved in a major discovery about how genes are formed.

### **Associate Professor Aoife Gowen (UCD)**

Associate Professor Gowen is an expert in Hyperspectral imaging. Her research is multidisciplinary, involving applications of hyperspectral imaging to biological systems, including foods, microbes and biomaterials. Her ERC project Biowater, aims to uncover new knowledge on the interactions between water and biomaterials in order to understand processes involved in biocompatibility, biofouling and biodegradation.

### **Professor Lydia Lynch (TCD and Harvard Medical School)**

Professor Lynch's research has found that a type of anti-tumour immune cell protects against obesity and the metabolic syndrome that leads to diabetes. Results showing that immune cells known to be protective against malignancy called invariant natural killer T-cells (iNKT), that are lost when humans become obese, can be restored through weight loss. Her work has also shown that therapies that activate iNKT cells could help manage obesity, diabetes, and metabolic disease.

### **Professor Debra Laefer (UCD)**

Professor Laefer's research aims to prevent damage to buildings above tunnel excavation, by developing a 3D modelling system that can predict what buildings are most likely to sustain damage during tunnelling.

### **Professor Emma Teeling (UCD)**

Professor Teeling is a world authority on bat genetics. She studies bats for insights into human diseases such as blindness and deafness as well as aging.

### **Dr Maria McNamara (UCC)**

Dr McNamara and her team of researchers, have made a landmark dinosaur discovery: the first example of a plant-eating dinosaur that had both scales and feathers. The team found remains of the plant-eating dinosaur, designated "Kulindadromeus zabaikalicus", the first example found of a herbivore dinosaur to have both feathers and scales, and adds credence to the theory that all dinosaurs may have been feathered.

### **Professor Catriona Lally (TCD)**

Professor Lally is the principal investigator on a project focusing on developing a means of early diagnosis of degenerative cardiovascular diseases. These studies are highly relevant to stroke patients and those with vascular disease.