

## About Michael Fortune -

Michael Fortune has been a pioneer in the area of socially engaged work within Ireland over the past twenty years and his practice has widened the conversations regarding the intersection of traditional and contemporary cultures. Fortune continues to produce project work throughout the country and works as a part-time Associate Lecturer at Limerick School of Art and Design (Master of Education and Digital Media). He also conducts work as a Visiting Lecturer in many colleges and universities Ireland and is currently an External Examiner on Limerick School of Art and Design's MA programme. His life, interests and practice are an intertwined and inseparable mix of the ancient, the contemporary, the private, the public and the intangible.



Video stills from 'JFK's Secret Landing', short film, 2013, commissioned by Wexford County Council

Michael grew up in a family immersed in story, superstition and folk belief in an area known as 'The Macamores', an old Gaelic stronghold stretching along the east coast of Wexford. He completed his BA in Fine Art, specialising in video and performance, at Limerick School of Art in 1999 and his MA in Screenwriting at DLIADT in 2003.

Working predominantly in film and photography, much of his practice revolves around the collection of material – material which he generates out of the relationships and experiences he develops with the people he encounters. The intimate nature of the relationships with the people and circumstances he encounters, and the subsequent reflective treatment of the material at hand, is a key feature of Fortune's work. Much of Fortune's work borrows from the popular conventions of film, home video, snap photography and the printed media and his work can be seen as growing out of a tradition of social documentary and anthropological film.

Speaking at 'The Michael Fortune Folklore Collection ' in October 2016 in The National Library, Manchán Magan said:

*"There have only been a few people - guardians, sacred recorders - who have collected and documented this material and Michael is one of them. Michael Fortune in years to come is going to be Ireland's Alan Lomax."*

Growing up in an environment steeped in folklore has awarded Michael a natural understanding of the crossover between traditional and contemporary beliefs and customs, and the fluid borders where fact and fiction meet. As a result he has been commissioned to undertake multiple folklore collections on film throughout Ireland over the past fifteen years, in rural and urban communities, with young and old. At the core of Michael's recordings are people and his genuine connection and engagement results in uniquely rich and personal material.



DVD covers from a selection of folklore collections. (More info at [www.folklore](http://www.folklore))

He has produced an extensive portfolio of collaborative project work which has been developed in partnerships with national organisations such as the National Library of Ireland and the Irish Traditional Music Archive to smaller communities of interest including traditional singing groups, local historic societies and a wide range of individuals and community groups.



Images from Ballygarrett in North Wexford and Puckawn in North Tipperary from the Dresser Project. ([www.thedresserproject.ie](http://www.thedresserproject.ie))

In recent years Michael and his partner Aileen Lambert have developed a practice of devising and facilitating traditional song projects with a wealth of fine traditional singers from across the country on pioneering song projects including Songs for Our Children, The Wild Bees Nest, At The Foot of Mount Leinster, As I Roved Out, The Bird Song Project, The Wexford Song Project, Man, Woman and Child and The 1916 Song Project. Their efforts have generated renewed interest in the narrative ballad, revived many old songs, resulted in the composition of many new songs in the traditional style and most importantly have supported the development of singers and reaching new audiences.



Backroad's to Rising and singers from The 1916 Song Project. Projects supported by Wexford County Council. (Backroads Image by M.Duggan)

He has been the recipient of numerous awards and bursaries for his work, which he presents extensively nationally and internationally in a variety of contexts, ranging from gallery exhibitions and online presentations through to single screen presentations in film and video art festivals. In his home county of Wexford, he has spearheaded a resurgent interest and confidence in local customs and beliefs and in particular those around the month of May and Hallowe'en, as well as traditions surrounding Christmas and Easter Mummars. He is also highly proficient in the use of digital technology and he combines these skills to explore how we express ourselves and how as communities we connect and disconnect with the places in which we live. His life, interests and practice are an intertwined and inseparable mix of the ancient, the contemporary, the private, the public and the intangible and continues to live in his native Wexford, at the foot of Mount Leinster, with his partner Aileen Lambert and their three young children in an environment where traditional song, story and customs are part of the everyday fabric of his family life.