

**Speech by President Catherine Connolly
Official Opening
of No. 11 Parnell Square**

11:30am, Thursday 7th May 2026

A Chairde Uaisle, a fhilí agus scríbhneoirí, a Chlann Heaney, a Mhéara BÁC Ray McAdam, a Airí James Browne agus Patrick O'Donovan, is cúis áthais dom a bheith i bhur gcomhlúadar inniu don ócáid speisialta seo.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le Ger Aherne agus le John O'Donnell as ucht an chuiridh agus tréaslú libhse ar fad ó Iontaobhas Oidhreachta na hÉireann agus Éigse Éireann a bhí rannpháirteach sa togra tábhachtach athchóirithe seo agus le heagrú na hócáide inniu.

Tá ómós do shaol cultúrtha agus oidhreachta na tíre, stair an cheantair áitiúil agus aitheantas don cháil domhanda atá bainte amach ag an oiread sin d'ár gcuid scríbhneoirí filíochta agus litríochta le mothú go láidir san athchóiriú seo.

We are here to celebrate something very special – a permanent home for poetry and heritage in Ireland. I believe that the decision to locate Poetry Ireland and the Irish Heritage Trust in this Georgian building – imbued with centuries of history and located in the centre of Dublin city – is very significant, placing as it does, poetry and heritage at the heart of our Republic. The renovation and repurposing of this space will give new life to a building that has accommodated a diversity of tenants.

Having hosted the National Club - a debating and social club which counted Maud Gonne among its members – to serving as headquarters for Dublin County Council, these rooms have no doubt been witness to heated discussions and the sharing of ideas. Building on this history, the new iteration of Number 11 will mark the first time that Ireland has a centre dedicated to poetry, and this is a gift to all of us.

At the core of this building will be the Seamus Heaney Poetry Library, encompassing the late Laureate's private poetry library, generously bequeathed by his family to Poetry Ireland.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas ó chroí a ghabháil le Marie, baintreach Seamus, agus lena chlann Chris, Mick agus Catherine as a bhflaithiúlacht agus bailiúchán filíochta Seamus á bhronnadh acu ar Éigse Eireann.

Bhí bua ar leith ag Seamus agus é i mbun pinn agus é ábalta mothúcháin agus tuiscint níos doimhne ar ár dtír, ár gcultúr, ár stair agus ár n-oidhreacht a mhúscailt ionainn.

Poetry, of course, invites us into the world of imagination, a world where language is pared down to its essence. It is an artform that transcends time, boundaries and generations. This transcendence was brought into acute focus for me recently on hearing about a funeral about a former English teacher....

Oliver Goldsmith – 1770 – The Deserted Village - “Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain, Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain”

Michael Hartnett – “poets with progress make no peace or pact, the act of poetry is a rebel act.”

Seamus Heaney – *The Redress of Poetry* – Oxford Lectures, published in 1995. “Poetry cannot afford to lose its fundamentally self-delighting inventiveness, its joy in being a process of language as well as a representation of things in the world.”

From the Republic of Conscience –
“At their inauguration, public leaders
must swear to uphold unwritten law and weep
to atone for their presumption to hold office
and to affirm their faith that all life sprang
from salt in tears which the sky-god wept
after he dreamt his solitude was endless.”

Mary O’Malley – “good poetry has the power to refresh language and give us back our faith in it.”

Theo Dorgan – “I have always been drawn to the tension of poetry and politics.”

Yehuda Amichai – The Place Where We Are Right –

“From the place where we are right
flowers will never grow
in the spring.
The place where we are right
is hard and trampled
like a yard.”

Is aoibhinn liom go mbeidh an spás fáilteach seo ar fáil ní amháin mar ionad acmhainne, oideachais do phobail an cheantair ach mar spás cruthaitheach dóibh siúd ar fad atá i mbun ealaíon na filíochta agus na litríochta.

As a public, accessible, creative space, Number 11 will have performance venues as well as an Education Space open to all ages to encourage lifelong participation in poetry. The creation of new cultural space is so welcome, particularly at a time when it is under severe pressure. Moreover, the opening of this centre is particularly significant for Dublin and the north inner city, and further establishes this part of town as Dublin’s de facto literary quarter.

Ba mhaith liom aitheantas faoi leith a thabhairt do Tristan Rosenstock, ball de Bhord Éigse Éireann, agus dá athair, Gabriel Rosenstock a cailleadh le déanaí. Bhí Gabriel mar Chathaoirleach Éigse Éireann tráth agus ina mholtóir ar Chomórtas Duais Bashō Haiku a thug deis do dhaltai meánscoile haiku a chumadh i nGaeilge nó i mBéarla. Tá oidhreacht saibhir agus spreagúil scríbhneoireachta fágtha ag d’athair dúinn ar fad, Tristan.

I would like to conclude by congratulating everyone involved with this important conservation project – all those in Poetry Ireland and the Irish Heritage Trust, the building and design team including architect Valerie Mulvin of McCullough Mulvin Architects, as well as those in Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council who have helped to make this a reality.

I wish everyone involved in Poetry Ireland and the Irish Heritage Trust my best wishes for the future in their beautiful new home.

Guím gach rath ar chuile dhuine a bheidh i mbun pinn anseo.

Go maire bhur gcruthaitheacht ag saibhriú ár spiorad agus ár gcroíthe.

Go raibh maith agaibh.