Cork-born artist DOROTHY CROSS uses sculpture, video and installation to explore themes of nature, identity and memory. Her work has caused controversy for its sexual and political content. Now based on the west coast of Ireland, a new book, Connenama, reflects on her past decade of output.

You studied at Crawford College of Art and Design, Leicester Polytechnic and San Francisco Art Institute. Which had the biggest impact on your art? They all did in their own way. But in San Francisco, we’d go look at Rembrandts in the De Young Museum one week, and go off in wrecked cars to the desert at the weekends. That’s a good mixture of art and nature.

Why come home?

Politically, I didn’t want to be in America. It was the Reagan era and it was very disillusioning.

You trained as a jeweller initially.

I did, and it gave me an attention to detail. The work started getting so sculptural you could hardly wear it. You had a studio in Poolbeg Power Station when you returned. What was that like?

I worked there for four years, in an old pump house by the water. It’s a fantastic building, very sculptural. It’s a shame it’s been left to rack and ruin.

Do you have an opinion on the plans to redevelop it?

They’ve left it too late. It’s gotten to the point where they think it was so hostile it became bland. She was right.

When I was very young, after I had done a lot of work by art, and this collection delivers.

BEDSIDE TABLE

Elizabeth Dutton left her native California for Scotland, where she achieved a place on the University of Glasgow’s prestigious creative writing Masters programme. Now based in the rural Deep South of America, Dutton’s first novel Driftwood (out November 20) explores the (mis)fortunes of Clem Jasper, whose rock star father unexpectedly dies playing ping-pong.

Following a mysterious set of instructions left in her father’s will, Jasper takes to the open road and discovers the redemptive powers of the Californian landscape. Skyhorse Publishing, €19.50.

What is ELIZABETH DUTTON reading?

ELIZABETH DUTTON

COOL GRAY CITY OF LOVE

by Gary Kamiya

San Francisco draws visitors from all over the world, and enchanted tourists pass through in a never-ending blur. Tony Bennett sings of leaving his heart there, but I feel at times my soul resides there, too. It’s not easy being so far from my hometown. When I get homesick, I can vicariously visit through Kamiya’s 49 tales of various locations and points in time throughout San Francisco. His writing is honest, engaging, humorous and poignant in this one-of-a-kind look at a treasure of a city. Bloomsbury, €15.75.

THE WRECKING LIGHT

by Robin Robertson

Robertson’s fourth poetry collection is a master work filled with contemplations on nature, memory, place and mythology. He tackles topics that leave readers shocked, inspired, uncomfortable, wistful, and any other emotion one can think of in the grand spectrum. I am particularly fond of At Roane Head, an examination and reworking of the selkie myth. There is something incredibly earthy and real in the details of this mystical tale, a juxtaposition I really appreciate. I love to be challenged by art, and this collection delivers. Picador, €14.50.

BE HERE NOW

by Ram Dass

I always keep this book close at hand; it has been a source of knowledge and solace for me as long as I can remember. The illustrations are fantastically out there and I adore the roughness of the natural paper upon which it is printed. A favourite page of mine is the one that discusses that the one that cannot force the snake to shed its skin – everything must happen in its own time. As a terribly impatient person, I need this reminder frequently. Lama Foundation, €28.99.