

Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine

A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD, OFFALY AND WESTMEATH
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MidlandsArts
and Culture Magazine
A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD, OFFALY AND WESTMEATH WINTER 2016 16

MidlandsArts
and Culture Magazine
A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD, OFFALY AND WESTMEATH WINTER 2016 18

MidlandsArts
and Culture Magazine

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and Culture Magazine

MidlandsArts
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MidlandsArts
and Culture Magazine

**Laos teens
explore life
through a lens**
page 8

**Kilbeggan
gallery set
in stone**
page 17

**Offaly composer
celebrated for
international
success**
page 4

**Longford girl
pursues
ballet dream**
page 31

Celebrating 10 years of Midlands Arts

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A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD, OFFALY AND WESTMEATH WINTER 2013 20

converscapes

conversations overheard on a daily amble

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Contents • 10th anniversary	Page 2
LS 17 Studios	
Gary Dunne • Siege of Jadotville.....	Page 3
Longford schools of photography	Page 4
Origami wonderland	
Leaves Lit Festival • Army Band	Page 5
Then & Now Eva Burke • Tomás Skelly	Page 6
The Art of Blogging.....	Page 7
High Achiever Awards • Top of the Rock	Page 8
Pat Boran – When it comes to making art	Page 9
Street Theatre • I'm Your Vinyl	Page 10
Abbey Road Artists.....	Page 11
Sink: Sync: Surface.....	Page 12
4 Degrees West • Orange Door.....	Page 13
Halloween Howls • Dáire O'Muiri	Page 14
Archaeology of Cinema	Page 15
Emerging Artist • Music Network.....	Page 16
Stripes at Script • Bernice Harrington	Page 17
Manchán Magan looks back at ten	Page 18/19
years of the arts in the Midlands	
Patrick Graham	Page 20
One family, many visions	Page 21
Music Generation Laois	
Observing Offaly.....	Page 22
Daniel O'Brien • Peter Doran	Page 23
Culture Night Westmeath • Hullabaloo	Page 24
Laois Art House.....	Page 25
Culture Night Laois • Poetic Note	Page 26
Angela Tuite & Mary Grey Expo	Page 27
Singfest 2017	
Fr John O'Brien book	Page 28
Photographer Media Awards	
Dan Edwards book.....	Page 29
100 years, 100 faces • TR Dallas	Page 30
Street Art Cruthu	Page 31
Foundation Arts • People of Longford Expo	Page 32
Dunamaise events.....	Page 33
Trench Award • Plot Ceapach.....	Page 34
John Ennis • Artist in Residency	Page 35
Paul Moore's year	Page 36



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A Word from the Editor

This year has been a remarkable one in so many ways – there were the 1916 commemorations and I use that word deliberately, rather than celebrations, because so many facets of that troubled time were horrific.

The purpose of art is to shine a light on all aspects of life. Culture, like history is not simply black and white. There are many nuances and shades that deserve to be highlighted.

In the midlands the arts offices in counties Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath offered an impressive variety of cultural events to mark the centenary.

Every artistic medium was utilised to convey the stories of heroes and heroines of national and local fame. It was particularly gratifying to see the 'children of the Rising' remembered. This year also marks the tenth anniversary of Midlands Arts & Culture magazine, as Manchán Magan tells us in his two articles on pages 18 and 19 there is much to celebrate but there is also much to be done.

The late John F Kennedy said:

"If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him."

It is incumbent upon us to support art and artists in whatever way we can. In this the centenary of the new Ireland what better way than to encourage local art practitioners in every way we can and to welcome other from farther afield so we might learn from them.

Vivienne Clarke of Acumen Media, Editor

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A PROFILE gary dunne

by Caroline Allen

Growing up in Portlaoise, immersed in the arts, a creative career was always on the cards for Gary Dunne. While he followed in his father, John's footsteps, and trained as a teacher initially, he soon found himself craving all things cultural for the day job.

"I taught for a few years in Dublin while doing music on the side before moving to London in 2002," he recalls. "For the next six to seven years, I was a full-time artist, touring, recording, and giving workshops."

In the late noughties, he got involved with Irish community organisations in London, and began a journey from volunteer to freelancer and then Cultural Officer to Director of Arts at the London Irish Centre, an appointment he took up in 2012. "Through that whole period, my working life has been a mix of culture, creativity and community," he reflects.

Currently concentrating on the autumn/winter schedule and the festival programme for London's 2017 St Patrick's Day Festival, he outlines that the main festival event will be in Trafalgar Square and the parade and wider umbrella festival will be at a whole mix of London venues.

Then there's programming the Irish Arts Festival 2017, a multidisciplinary Irish arts event that will be held in London next June. A new Irish showcase with Dermot O'Leary, patron of the London Irish Centre, is being organised. That's in addition to the events, courses and exhibitions held at the London Irish centre in Camden.

"The Irish arts scene in London is buzzing. In the time that I've been programming and presenting Irish cultural events in London, we've seen more than five new festivals, scores of new events and the creation of vibrant new cultural networks," he says.

He divides his time between London and Dublin – an arrangement that generated some controversy when it was announced. However, anyone with any concerns about it only needs to look at the output of the team in recent years, he counters. "Our programme has almost doubled; our partnerships work has blossomed and the arts team has grown significantly," he outlines. "We have also opened a library; secured Dermot O'Leary as charity patron and increased our main arts funding sources. It has undoubtedly been a positive move for the artistic work."

"We have also just carried out a large scale consultation with the Irish community in London, including all major stakeholders which has reported hugely positive support for the arts programme," he explains.

"No organisation; artistic director or programme can please everyone, and it would be fruitless to even try. We run a very mixed, diverse and high quality programme to meet the diverse tastes of our primary audience, the Irish in London."

"We continue to listen to what our audiences want, and at the moment all indicators are sending a strong and clear message that our programme is hitting the right notes in terms of content, production and visitor experience," he says.

The flexibility on location allows him to stay connected to and be inspired by the very latest Irish cultural talent, making strategic connections with the venues, festivals and agents he works with in London, he contends. "My work has always straddled the two environments." The commuting doesn't faze him. "For someone with a background as a touring musician, a 50-minute flight is a walk in the park."

Programming Irish events in London is challenging, as the Irish community there is no longer based in one fixed area, he says. "It's also very diverse in its interests, tastes and expectations. When confronted with tired stereotypes about the Irish in London, I always say that the Irish in London are at least as diverse as the Irish in Ireland."

The key guiding principles to his programming are quality, practice and production, community/social focus and accessibility. "I'm also conscious of how we tell the Irish story in a global capital of culture."

Songwriting is a passion and he is just about to release a new single 'All My life'. "I'm always writing, but am releasing and performing a little bit less than I used to," says Dunne who launched the single at the Electric Picnic in Stradbally in early September. He also took part in the inaugural 'Talks at Google' Spark Session at the Cloud 9 innovation space in August. There, complete with his loop pedal, he shared his creative journey with the gathering which deconstructed and reconstructed a piece of music.

Mindfulness is another interest. "It's all about the personal practice at the moment. I do occasional teaching, consultancy and volunteering, but it's on the backburner as my music and arts work warm up."

Every week, he observes, is different. "The one constant is making. Whether it's a festival, a song or an event programme, creativity is a constant in my life," he enthuses. "I run a lot; I meditate a lot; I consume lots of culture. I travel; I communicate with artists and arts organisations all over the world. I always have notebooks; a phone; and a laptop nearby, for capturing and sharing ideas."

All this happens against the backdrop of busy family life in Raheny with his Swedish wife Linnea, a writer and editor, and sons Eddie (3) and Kalle (1). His parents, John and Denise, and siblings, have a long and close relationship with Dunamais Arts

Centre and Theatre, Portlaoise, and the wider local arts scene. His sister is a TV producer in London and his younger brother is a visual artist in Canada while his older brother lectures in Trinity College.

"I'm in Laois every six weeks or so. I have a lot of friends there, many of whom are involved in bands, gigs and festivals, so there's very often music and general craic," he says.

Management of time, people and projects is, he admits, a constant challenge. "Creativity, ideas and vision are my lifeblood and have always come naturally to me, but I had to teach myself how to manage. Ideas without execution go nowhere. It's an ongoing journey."

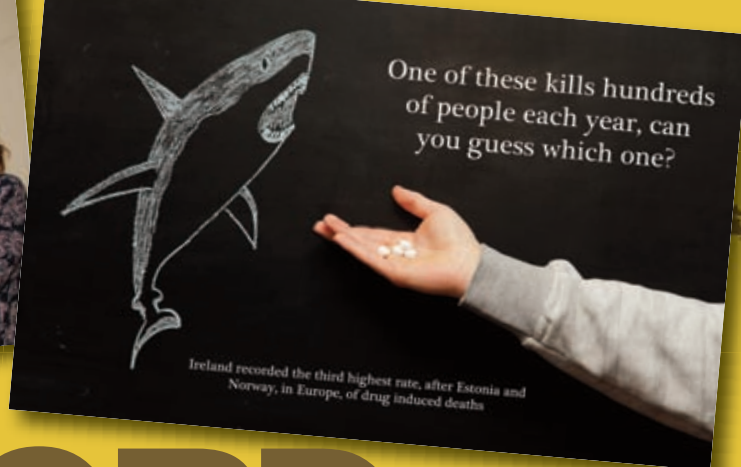
The Irish arts scene is vibrant, despite the challenges of recent recession and related funding challenges, he maintains. "People and organisations seem very open to innovation and new ways of doing things. Meaningful partnership work also appears to be of growing importance," he says. "We partner with scores of Irish artists and arts organisations every year, from theatre companies to music agencies, galleries to state agencies. Almost all are doing great work for their audiences and communities in challenging times."

Working in the arts is exciting, challenging, and hugely rewarding, says the St Mary's CBS past pupil. So what advice does he have for those interested in forging a career in the area? "It's also a sector in which job descriptions can flow and change, so anyone contemplating working it in should be ready to move comfortably from helping with a get-in to talking strategy with a creative team," he counsels.

You also need to love the buzz and energy of live events and unpredictable creative work to thrive in the area, he says. "The goal posts, creative vision and funding position can change in days, so be flexible and versatile in your thinking and behavior."

"The best way to get a feel for it is to roll up your sleeves and get involved in a small event in your area. You'll quickly get a feel for whether creative, artistic work suits your personality and skills. If you do decide it's for you, and start out on a career in the arts, work art, be kind and trust yourself. The circles are small – do good work with good people."





LONGFORD

leads the way for new national youth media awards category

Longford's budding photographers, led by Shelley Corcoran, have paved the way for their peers in a national anti-drink and drugs competition, after impressing the judges with their artistic efforts.

Photographer Shelley works with students from seven of the county's secondary schools for the photography programme, which is facilitated by Longford Arts Office, and last year, they decided to enter the Drugs.ie and 'Let's Talk About Drugs' National Youth Media Awards 2016.

Two Transition Year students – Pedro Navarro and Oscar Lopez – from Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon were named second in their poster category out of 950 entries. More impressive still is the competition organisers' decision to create a photography category next year based on the Longford entries.

Following on from their success, Shelley and the students were delighted to welcome Nicki Killeen from Drugs.ie to the annual Longford Schools

Photography Exhibition and Awards in May, where she gave an informative and educational talk on the subject of alcohol and drugs, which has been on Shelley's photography curriculum for a number of years.

While many would argue that Transition Year students are too young to get a grasp of such a heavy issue, Shelley begs to differ, pointing out that the six TY classes and the PLC class all handled the topic with great interest and maturity.

"The course is art-based and art is a comment on society," she explained. "It's very relevant to all age groups and it's really relevant in our society. Photography is not just about the aesthetics of the photos, it's also about the concept behind it and the message you're trying to send to people."

"I find that there's such a mature understanding of that issue of drink and drugs among the students and I think with the TY age group, it's easy to say 'they wouldn't understand' but in today's society, it's everywhere and I think they understand it a lot more than we give them credit for."

Art and photography are great ways in which to approach the subject too, according to Shelley, who added that it gets the students involved in an interactive, hands on way.

Further describing the students' works as 'conceptual and thought-provoking,' Shelley concluded by saying: "It gets them to think about it a lot more; about how, if they're not already dealing with the issue, they would deal with the issue in the future."

AN ORIGAMI WONDERLAND

Following one of the highlight events of last year's Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival, Offaly artist George Dempsey Flanagan, the 'Maker of Magic' behind Mojo Creations in Birr returns with the second title in his Origami Wonderland series of children's storybooks. George's new book "The Adventures of Swimsy the Goldfish in Origami Wonderland" launched this summer is described as "beautifully illustrated rhyming stories with a tale that will inspire young minds."

The 'Maker of Magic', George's true passion is creating and teaching Origami, combining his skills and training as an artist and graphic designer with the Art of Japanese Paper Folding. Working in this medium for the past five years, he has previously designed a collection of handcrafted products along with large installations featuring Origami forms in a setting that allows the viewer to gain a new perspective on this enchanting and ancient craft. Through his work with local events, primary and secondary school projects and festivals across Offaly and Westmeath he has become very passionate about sharing the magic of making something with your own hands and inspiring the same joy in others.

As the second in a series of children's storybooks, each one involving a new main character and their adventures, this book focuses on 'Swimsy' who wakes one night from a dreamy sleep and discovers a new and exciting nighttime world and makes new friends, the Swishly Bobs who collect clam shells and bubbles, along the way. Another cheerfully playful character Swimsy the

Goldfish loves making a splash and can bring out your playful side and spark your imagination.

Each story also contains a message, in this instance it is the value of believing in yourself and your dreams.

With these books George has designed a specially created Origami paper craft pack for children to learn how to make pieces that appear in the story and in turn experience the joy in making their very own little world of paper magic! As George describes them "in a world made of paper, filled with wonderful things, adventure and magic is what these stories bring!!"

The book is available now, to find out more about George and Mojo Creations visit www.mojocreations.ie



LEAVES LITERARY FESTIVAL

9th to the 13th November

The 2016 Laois Leaves Festival celebrates the diverse rich talent in today's literary, film and music scene.

An intimate evening of readings and music at the recently opened *Library of Civilisation* in Roundwood House, Mountrath features Peter Fallon and Vona Groarke of Gallery Press, joined by former Laois-Writer-in-Residence, Eoin McNamee and Musician, Colm Mac an Iomaire. This event will be chaired by Seamus Hosey.

The Dunamais Arts Centre is the venue for Saturday's events. Mary Ó Donnell conducts a Poetry Workshop. Arthur Broomfield's collection of poetry, *"Cold Coffee at Emo Court"* will be launched, followed by an Open Mic Event. A one week's residency at the Laois Arthouse apartment will be awarded to the most compelling presentation at the Open Mic event.

The crime fiction night at the Dunamais Arts Centre is much anticipated and features writers Louise Phillips, Niamh O Connor, Andrea Carter

and visiting Norwegian, Thomas Enger. Music is by Rachel Clancy and the evening is chaired by Sean Rocks presenter of *Arena, Radio 1*.

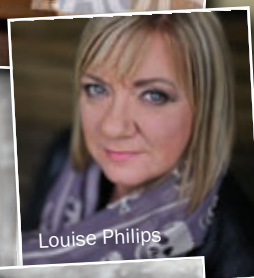
Children and young people's events include a visit by Oisín McGann and Dave Rudden. The scheduled film is *In the Heart of the Sea* which is inspired by Melville's great novel *Moby Dick*. Theatre includes a family love story, called, "Minding Frankie", by Maeve Binchy and a classical music concert in the Church of Ireland, Portlaoise featuring Anneleen Lenearts (Harp) and Dionysis Grammenos (Clarinet).

Welcome to the Laois Leaves Festival and we look forward to sharing some of the magic that is in store.

Booking Box Office: 056 8663355 or online at www.dunamais.ie



Colm Mac an Iomaire



Louise Phillips



Andrew Carter

BAND2BRIGADE Providing a cultural soundtrack in Westmeath and beyond

While their title and line-up has changed over the past eighty years, one thing has remained the same in the Band 2 Brigade, and that's the music.

The Army No 4 Band was formed in 1936 and has been located at Custume Barracks, Athlone since then.

"The band's numerical title was later changed to a territorial style," explained Band Conductor, Captain Thomas Kelly. "Thus the Army No 4 Band became The Band of the Western Command, then Band of 4 Western Brigade (1997) and, following the most recent Defence Forces reorganisation, becoming Band 2 Brigade. "The band supports the military ceremonial of 2 Brigade serving the upper half of the country ranging from Wicklow as far north as Donegal." The band has formed an integral part of the midlands and west cultural scene and according to Captain Kelly has a unique distinction among Irish military bands, of having served a six-month tour with a United Nations Mission - UNFICYP (Cyprus) in 1966.

During this time, the band played at over one hundred events for Greek and Turkish communities on the island. Band 2 Brigade was also the first Defence Force's band to perform in the United

Kingdom. More recently, the band's visits abroad included performances at festivals, parades and tattoos in France, Lebanon and Belgium. Their primary role, however, is to play at all military and state engagements, many of which may not be seen by the public, such as playing at the Passing Out Parade of a recruit platoon, playing at a Ministerial Review before troops go overseas or playing in Áras an Uachtaráin as new and incoming ambassadors present their Credentials to the President. The band also has a very significant role to play in primary and secondary schools, which Captain Kelly proudly explained; "We go to schools and introduce the students to each instrument in our band. The band plays a wide range of music for these school concerts. "These concerts always manage to bring a huge smile to the faces of each student and their teachers. The band really love playing for the students too!"

Recitals in public form a major part of the band's schedule, no more so than this year, when Band 2 Brigade were "proud and honoured" to be involved in numerous 1916 centenary commemorations.



Furthermore, aside from festivals and events all around the country, Band 2 Brigade host two hugely popular Gala concerts each year; one in City Hall, Co. Cork around February, and the second in the National Concert Hall in Dublin around October.

The band seems to be growing and strengthening as the years go by, with many new entrants who are thoroughly enjoying life as military musicians. According to Captain Kelly; "At the moment, almost 20% of our personnel are female. This is opposed to 6% female across the Defence Forces, which means that the band has the highest percentage of females compared to other Defence Forces units."

Recently appointed Conductor, Captain Kelly's enthusiasm for the group is infectious. "I feel honoured and privileged to work with such an amazingly talented group of musicians on a daily basis," he said. "I look forward to the bright future ahead with Band 2 Brigade."

"I eat, sleep and breathe music"

From opening for well-known Irish band The Academic and playing at the Grand Social in Dublin to performing a solo slot in front of some 3,000 teenagers at the Hype Youth Festival, Tomás Skelly has an incredible CV - particularly when you consider the fact that he is just eighteen years old.

Born in Boston, Tomás and his family moved to Longford when he was two, and despite being persuaded to take lessons by his parents, music was low on his hobby list. It's a long way from his current, self-confessed obsession.

Starting out at the age of six with the tin whistle and later trying his hand with the piano and guitar, the Leaving Certificate student gave up on music for a while around the age of ten, and only picked it up again aged 14 when his peers took more of an interest in the subject.

"After that, I picked up the guitar and I learned one song - 'Let Her Go' by Passenger - and from there it just became an addiction. I became obsessed," he said. His success didn't come about immediately - and not because of his level of talent, but because, he was a "bedroom musician".

It wasn't until he jammed with a friend at the Gaeltacht and entered the course's talent competition that his love for performing took hold. "I just thought 'this is it, I love this, I love this feeling of nervousness'," Tomás recalled. "We got a standing ovation and from there I was hooked."

Tomás and his friend went on to win the

competition outright, after facing other friends in the final. His winning streak continued when, as a Transition Year student in early 2015, he topped the competition at the Longford Youth Factor, securing a spot on the Hype Youth Festival stage that summer.

"The year that followed the Youth Factor was crazy," Tomás smiled. "I had my first gig with Brave Giant a month later, they were Poroma at the time, in John Browne's. That was my first ever gig." He went on to support the Longford five-piece again when they played their debut headline gig at a sold-out Backstage Theatre later in the year, where the then 17-year-old attracted a lot of attention for his easygoing banter with the audience and skills way beyond his years.

While working hard at practicing and performing - to make amends for giving up music when he was younger, he said - Tomás has also been busy writing his own original songs which, he admitted, is not always an easy task. "I probably have about a hundred demos on my phone of songs that I'll never finish," he revealed. Part of this is possibly due to his ever-evolving style that can't be pinned down to just one label or genre.

Watching the young man in action, it's not difficult to see why he has attracted such success. While playing, Tomás is completely engaged in his work, using the guitar as a percussion instrument and even impressively finger picking as he powerfully delivers a mix of mature, original songs and beloved covers - though more of the former than the latter.

Now, facing into the Leaving Cert exams, Tomás still hasn't lost sight of his musical aims, in fact, they're probably clearer now than ever. "I think it's good to keep up the music," he reasoned. "You need something else other than your Leaving Cert. 'I love it and it's a hobby and a passion. It's never an effort for me so I'll definitely keep it up - I can't not! It's about finding a good mix. It [the Leaving Cert] is not going to have an impact on me or hold me back, musically."

While studying for his exams, Tomás hopes to record an EP and perhaps look for a slot at some of Ireland's music festivals. Looking further into the future, he hopes to pursue a course at BIMM, the renowned Dublin music school. While he cites Ed Sheeran, Passenger, John Martin and particularly Ben Howard ("I'd marry him in a heartbeat," he laughed) as inspirations, Tomás was also heavily

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Looking at some of those featured in the 2006 Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine, Westmeath Arts Officer Miriam Mulrennan tracks down Kilbeggan native Eva Burke, who, at 17 was featured in the mag, having secured a writing scholarship.

Eva, 10 years ago the Midlands Arts and Culture magazine was first published. In it, we printed an excerpt of your writing, as you had just won a writing scholarship? What can you remember of that Workshop in Kerry?

Yes, I was very excited at the time! The Workshop took place in a beautiful house in Dingle, Kerry, and we worked with writer Aubrey Flegg for the weekend. It was a wonderful opportunity and it was a great experience to meet other young writers from around the country. We all got feedback on our work and it was very encouraging.

What have you been doing since then and has writing been a continuing thread in your work?

Since 2006 I have been to college in Carlow for my undergraduate degree in Humanities, with a focus on literature in particular. I went on to do my Masters at Trinity College Dublin and I'm doing a PhD at the School of English there at the minute.

I have continued writing, and I won a few prizes in college for my poetry and prose! These days most of the writing I do is academic, and I've had a few journal articles published. I will be contributing a chapter to a book on domestic noir crime fiction next year too, it will be published by Palgrave Macmillan, so I'm very excited about that.

Have you continued to write creatively or in other contexts since then?

Writing is still a huge part of my life, I took a creative writing class as part of my undergraduate degree and it was a great asset to me. I'm writing a doctoral thesis at the minute so most of my days are preoccupied with that! I do still enjoy writing creatively, and it is something I will continue to do in my spare time - I might even look to get some fiction published again in the future.

What would you say to young writers now applying for workshops - as you did in 2006,

in order to try and progress their craft?

I would say to them that they should grab every opportunity that comes their way and keep pushing on with it, it's a world of hard work and a lot of rejection but when you have true passion for it you won't be deterred by that. A workshop is a great constructive space and it is always fun to spend time around other creative people and get feedback on your work. The experience is invaluable, even if they don't intend to pursue writing as a career; these skills can be beneficial in so many creative and professional fields.





influenced by his ever-supportive parents, both musicians themselves, who encouraged him to follow his heart when it came to choosing a career path. "Music is very unpredictable. You could spend a long time at it and never 'make it'.

"I wasn't going to do music in college, I wanted to do Economics," he pointed out. "But my mother is very musical, she wanted to study music but went down the teaching route. "It's good to have her support and my dad's support," Tomás continued, revealing that his father used to be a jazz musician. "I'm so lucky to have Mam making me follow music, because I wouldn't do it otherwise."

Speaking to Tomás, it's easy to tell that music is his life from his enthusiastic anecdotes about gigs played, friends made and artists admired. It's even easier to predict that we'll be hearing plenty more from him if his talent and drive are anything to go by. "It's a passion for me - I can't explain how much I adore music, it's always been what I've wanted to do," he concluded. "I eat, sleep and breathe music."

the art of blogging art

by Ian Keaveny

One of the first things they taught me at college in the late 80's was record your work, I didn't bother then (wish I had) but now it's easy, have digital camera will record.

But once you have your work recorded and filed in those little digital spaces what do you do with it? I'm assuming you want to get your work seen? Maybe, maybe not - I know; let's get a website and put my work on there, bound to be loads of people drawn to it, I could advertise it on *Facebook*, you know, share it amongst my friends and watch the clicks build up, fame and fortune awaits. Then again, maybe not.

I don't think it's enough anymore (if it ever was) just to place your work in front of people on the web, it's not enough to write technical details about what you are doing. You have to get people interested in the story behind what you do. People want to know more than just the circumstances of individual paintings, they want to know the background - where were you living, what was influencing you, did you have a relationship at the time, and were you happy/sad. Indeed what you make reflects the circumstances in which you made it. The work becomes the starting point of engaging the audience to explain the circumstances, to show the work. There aren't enough exhibition opportunities or galleries out there to show your work in, therefore you become responsible for making your work known.

One of the problems of any sort of website is how do you engage your audience, "who is my audience, where are they, what do they want from me?" I started thinking about my work and how little I'd explained it in the past, or at least given a context as to why I make the work I do (which is varied and changeable depending on mood and interests).

So without a website for four years I eventually came to blogger, the blog platform created by Google. Just to put the blog versus website argument in perspective, I started the blog <http://paintingsarestories.blogspot.ie/> in August of 2015 and to date I've had more hits (2000 plus and counting) than I did in six years of my website. I hit upon the idea of writing a blog which gave the background to the work I had made, "paintings are stories". It would be easy just to present a sequence of paintings and works created from my teenage years to the present day, but that doesn't tell the audience about me, the work, or why I make it. I decided to try and construct the story of me and my paintings.

I make work and want to get it seen and I also want to know who's looking at it and from where - feedback. For example take your friend list on Facebook and expand that into groups; 'New Irish art', 'glitch artists collective', 'collage of the world', 'Asemic writing, the new post literate', (these are all

groups I'm part of but within Facebook itself you can also have a separate artist page - I do, I would advise it). A blog ties it all together; you can write your post, share it amongst friends, on your artist's page, amongst the appropriate groups. Your blog becomes the lynchpin of your work on the web (though I still can't work out why I have such a big audience in Russia, or even Portugal!)

Note; you have to keep on doing it, it's not enough to just write a post every so often, do it at least once a week, better if it's twice a week, you might not be making anything, but you can talk about that also. I chose blogger because it has Google's handy analytics backing it up, so you can see not only the number of hits you're getting, but also which page they look at, from which search engine, on mobile or desktop, and down to which country - even hour by hour. I posted a new entry on my blog an hour or so ago and already see I have five new visits to the blog, they are from Ireland and two of them looked at the new post.

A blog seeks engagement and conversation, a website just sits like a lonely island in the endless chatter and distraction of the web.

Ian Keaveny -
<http://paintingsarestories.blogspot.ie/>

Top of the Rock

By Ciara Kelly

Darragh O'Toole is a busy man; a lead character in TV3's *Red Rock*, star of FilmOffaly's 2016 campaign and promoting roles in two recently released films, the young actor talks to Ciara Kelly about working on his home turf and beyond.

This summer saw FilmOffaly's ad campaign go into production with a myriad of scenes shot around the county. From the bog lands to castles, adorned in costumes and special effects, the final product saw Darragh playing six very different roles in a one minute clip. While shooting, the actor mentions how impressed he was with the landscapes of his home county, coming away with a newfound appreciation he notes Croghan Hill in particular. "It's just outside Tullamore but I had actually never been there before, I remember that day well, trying to take in the scenery and get the shot but we were also rushing to make the Galway Film Fleadh." At the Fleadh Darragh was promoting 'South' a film by Gerard Walsh, about a young man struggling with the recent death of his father.

Haste is a very suitable word when talking about Darragh's career, the projects he lists are all happening while he plays series regular 'Conor' - a troubled teen on *Red Rock*. The show was recently promoted to a new slot of 9:30pm on TV3 and extended from 30 minutes to an hour. Darragh hints at his hopes for the storyline to become grittier, post watershed. Since our conversation the new series has aired, aptly reflecting his wish with the character of Conor being wrongly arrested for murder.

In speaking to the actor, his desire for a good script comes up a few times. It was after reading 'Kubrick by Candlelight' (FilmOffaly/FilmBase 2016 Bursary Winner) Darragh secured a return to filming in Offaly later this year. Written by David O'Reilly, the short is a behind the scenes story of 'Barry Lyndon' the 1975 Stanley Kubrick classic. Having begun the process of scouting for locations locally with the director of photography, Darragh is markedly excited to begin.

On the Irish film industry Darragh mentions that things have a 'grass roots' way of working. He has kept a network open with many of those he met while at college and subsequently while living in Dublin. When the actor is asked if he wants to remain in front of the camera, he is not ruling out the production side of things mentioning the development of a collaborative web series in which he hopes to profile industry people in Ireland.

In the immediate future, Darragh's most recent role is in 'A Date for Mad Mary' directed by Darren Thornton, the film is on limited release in Ireland, with rave reviews.

FilmOffaly's 2016 campaign, starring Darragh can be viewed on the newly re-launched website at www.filmoffaly.ie



Selected from over 45,000 entrants nationwide, **Moate musicians hit the right notes**

Two talented Moate musicians are set to be honoured this November as the Royal Irish Academy of Music hosts its regional Gala concert. Lauren Watson and Cian Brady were each chosen out of more than 45,000 music students nationwide to receive a prestigious High Achiever Award from the Royal Irish Academy of Music examining board.

According to the academy, the awards were established in 2000 "to celebrate the educational value and priceless experience of live public performance in the community". Lauren sat her

Leaving Certificate exams at Moate Community School earlier this year and she was a member of their 'All-Island School Choir' winning choir. She will receive her award for her Grade 7 singing exam.

11-year-old Cian, meanwhile, will receive his award for his Grade 5 piano exam. Cian is a sixth class pupil at St Oliver Plunkett Boy's NS in Moate. Both Lauren and Cian will receive their awards at the Leinster Concert and Award Ceremony at Visual, Co Carlow on Sunday, November 20.





when making art... By Pat Boran

When it comes to making art, there are no guaranteed lucky places – inspiration can strike anywhere, or fail to strike. But there are some in which the presence, generation after generation, of writers, artists and musicians has so permeated the landscape that it's impossible to spend time in them and not be moved.

Paris is one of such place, a city of echoes and resonances, of endless museums and exhibits (some 1200 every day!) But there are also the bustling markets, the hyper-confident fashion world, and a virtual obsession with fitness, well-being and sport. The past is everywhere — by times hypnotic — but the future is ever in sight.

For centuries the home of the Irish clergy, the Centre Culturel Irlandais in the 5th *arrondissement* is a unique institution (a Franco-Irish coopération), its mission to promote Irish culture in Paris and to provide Irish artists with the chance to live and work here.

As the first recipient of a new bursary from the combined Midlands Arts Offices, I am extremely grateful for this simple but visionary gesture of support. Making new work, in whatever genre, takes time — often significantly more than an audience, or artist, might estimate. To have an extended period in such a fantastic setting is not just a luxury but a kind of provocation to the muse. For many, like myself, it's also an opportunity to explore a larger canvas.

I came to Paris to work on a novel (begun and set in French-speaking Switzerland) with which I've been wrestling for the past year or so. The opportunity to revisit it in its own linguistic *environs* was one of the attractions of Paris and has, I think, helped bridge the gap between real and imagined worlds. Despite the common stereotype of the poet, I consider myself a serious, head-down type (when I've got a big job on my hands, at least), and most days I work 10 or more hours, making the best of the courtyard or the background buzz and hum of the nearby boulevard cafés. Other residents spend more time at shows and galleries,

absorbing things that may, in the longer term, surface in their work.

For all it has afforded me in terms of uninterrupted concentration, one of the reasons I feel so honoured to be here has to do with the horrors of the past 12 months. The attack on the Bataclan Theatre last November, the slaughter of dozens of innocents in Nice in July of this year (we'd been there on holiday a couple of months before), then of a priest, in front of his congregation, in Rouen only days later: these were not just attacks on France or the French but on the ideals of the (French) Republic: on *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, by whatever name. It is not too great a claim to say that they were attacks on the ideal and ideas of art.

Even if one does not make what can be thought of as overtly political art, there is a direct relationship between the freedoms afforded artists and writers (in France, in Ireland, in The West) and the barbarities threatened by those who would consign us all to the Middle Ages. In a propaganda war, the symbols of things — art, architecture, music, dance — are the real targets.

Paris is in shock. Behind the smiles and glamour, behind the confidence of the Sorbonne students down the road, flooding the fabled Latin Quarter with their grace and *chic* and style, there is tension in the air, comparable to what was felt in Northern Ireland at the high point of The Troubles, but on a dramatically larger scale. Parisians know the problem will get worse. Even without further atrocities (and always there are rumours, rumblings) the battle lines are drawn. There are soldiers on the streets, youngsters inevitably. They guard the citizens but, even more so, they guard the city's history, its architecture, its art ... Beauty can no longer be taken for granted.

Let's be clear, France has made terrible mistakes on the international stage. It argued, courageously I thought, against the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but it was already elbow-deep in a series of botched overseas 'interventions', and it had long ignored the growing disquiet of a generation of North African

and Middle Eastern immigrants in its infamous *banlieues*. The problems of post-colonialism were never going to fix themselves; ignoring them only made them worse. And the French experience is hardly unique in Europe.

So what can art and artists do?

Think of our own country in recent years, the flowering of interest in literature and music and visual art; the appointment of local government arts officers; the establishment of regional centres and a variety of touring schemes; the informal assembly of painting and playing and writing workshops that exist now from coast to coast. Are these mere distractions from the more worthy issues of our time — Gross Domestic Product, International Corporate Taxation, and on and on? Or isn't it, in truth, the other way around?

The fact is that culture is what not what we do in our spare time; it is the definition of what and who we are. It's not an optional form of entertainment, as some (temporarily) given hold of the purse strings of State might have us believe. Neither is art the enemy of our health service: though they operate in very different time frames, and with different levels of urgency, their ambition is broadly the same. Think about how we feel when we dance, or draw or sing, when we express ourselves. Art is not what we should aim for *after* we've budgeted for everything else; it is what we start out from, and with, the measure of everything.

In the Luxembourg Gardens, under the canopy of elm trees, a small group of pensioners performs Tai Chi. Some art students are sketching the statue of Baudelaire. Tennis balls go *tok, tok, tok*, and, somewhere, a brass band plays. And, all the while, the joggers go endlessly round. I've been lost in a paragraph for hours, changing the characters, changing them back... When I look up, though it is getting late, I see dozens of other strangers also reading with their heads down — *philosophie, mathématiques, la poésie*... The Park as Library. And, off in the distance, overlooking it all, the inverted metal flower that is the Eiffel Tower: all that astonishing structure to sustain a single sweeping light.



CREATIVE AND INTERESTED MINDS sought for street theatre project

Seamstresses, carpenters, art enthusiasts, in fact, adults from all walks of life, were called on by Longford Arts Office this autumn to take part in an initiative to bring street theatre to Longford.

One of the most exciting, colourful and exuberant forms of public expression, the proposed street theatre group will add greatly to celebrations all around the county; from St Patrick's Day and Easter parades to Halloween celebrations.

To gauge interest in the project, a series of public meetings were held throughout the county, with approximately 20 people expressing interest in this exciting venture.

"It was better than expected," admitted co-organiser Shane Crossan. "We had nine people in Longford that night and a couple of people who couldn't make it. There were three people in Ballymahon - all from Granard - and there were about five people in Lanesboro."

Looking forward to a follow-up meeting, Shane was keen to stress that the group was not just for artists. Any adults who are interested in any aspect of street theatre, from performing arts, to costume and prop making, are more than welcome to get involved.

While the plan is to develop a long-term, sustainable group that will grow and develop as the years pass, the short-term goal is to have a presence at the upcoming Dead of Night parade in Longford town and Fright Fest in Ardagh.

"It's probably the first county-wide initiative of its type for a long time," Shane added. Those still interested in signing up can do so by contacting Longford Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy on 086 8517595 or at fkennedy@longfordcoco.ie

I'm your Vinyl



Rebecca Kelly interviews Dana Donnelly originally from Birr and one half of pop group 'I'm Your Vinyl.' Their latest single "Erase It" being used in the soundtrack to Irish film 'A Date for Mad Mary.'

Dana remembers her first foray into singing "I was given a tape recorder when I was about seven or eight and I would record myself singing different melodies and lyrics. Then, I would play back and write harmonies over it. I would pick up different instruments in our house and teach myself how to get sounds and chords out of them. It was always a kind of release for me. So I suppose I was working toward something from then on without really knowing it!"

On the inception of 'I'm Your Vinyl' it seems that it was a natural occurrence. "We (Dana and Ken McHugh) were playing around with songs in studio, then the songs grew into their own and started to sound and feel like we were a band, so we became a band, it really was that simple." 2015 was a fruitful year for the group, "A highlight of the year was writing and releasing our last single Erase It and collaborating with Irish designer Sophie Wallace by bringing her costumes into our video and artwork. Another memorable moment was performing in the *The Iveagh Gardens* supporting Birdy."

Not immune to stage fright as the lead singer Dana adds "I get quite nervous before going on stage, once I'm up there it's a totally different thing and I tap into a totally different frame of mind. But right before it and sometimes for days before I'm sick with nerves. I've picked up some good advice along the way, things

like, "Don't forget to breathe" and "They're on your side" she adds; "That first one being extremely important!"

As a notoriously hard business with many potential pitfalls along the way, Davis offers some sage advice, especially for those starting out. "Stay humble, stay focused on your vision. Use the negative and the positive feedback to keep you motivated. Be supportive and respectful to your peers, we're all trying to walk the same path. Work hard and enjoy every second! Go for it!"

Creativity seems ingrained in Dana even when discussing an alternate life not involving music "If I wasn't singing I'd be making or designing something, clothes or maybe even houses!? Or else I'd like to fly planes. I might still do one of those. Who says we can't do it all?"

So what does 2016 and beyond bring? "It's looking good! Our last single was just used in the Irish Film 'A Date for Mad Mary' which was great! The plan is to look forward...always."

To stay posted on upcoming gigs and releases visit I'm Your Vinyl's website at www.imyourvinyl.com/

Three Perspectives

New opportunities lead to an exciting show as three Abbey Road artists come together

Many artists describe the solitary nature of their work of artists as challenging and at times lonely, but a cluster of studio spaces can offer the opportunity for peer support and unexpected collaborations. The three artists currently residing at the Abbey Road Studios (Lelia Henry, Tina Hayes and Catherine Kelly Desmond) came together to host an exhibition entitled *Three Perspectives*.

Lelia Henry is a professional artist living and working in Athlone. She studied art at IADT and NCAD before travelling to Florence to study Old Master drawing techniques at the Florence Academy and Charles Cecil Studios. She has continued to hone her skills with regular workshops at the RHA, and in 2015, spent one month studying figure drawing in Paris. Her practice is drawing based and works mainly in charcoal and graphite. The process involves building up tones gradually, using a combination of charcoal and carbon.

Lelia says, 'Having the studio gives the best of both worlds, and I have found I am much more productive. 24hr access means I can come and go whenever I need to. Being an artist tends to be a very solitary practice, and having contact with other artists and art professionals through the studios provides vital support and encouragement. It also gave me the opportunity to exhibit some of my work at the Boardwalk Gallery at the Luan Gallery. This is a great opportunity for any artist in terms of promotion, exposure and publicity. It was a great experience, and I received lots of really positive feedback from it'.

Tina Hayes obtained her education in the visual arts at The Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork and the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dublin respectively. She also underwent further postgraduate studies in Art Therapy following her degree in fine art. Her work is interdisciplinary and encompasses elements ranging from art, design, participatory processes and music. She has shown her work both nationally and internationally and has

pieces in both private and public collections, including Colaiste Stiofain Naofa, Cork and the O.P.W.

Tina says, 'Making art requires a certain amount of time and space, both mental and physical. So, for me personally, to have a studio and to be able to engage with the creative process again with the kind of solitude and space that a studio affords has been wonderful. On a practical level, now that I have a young family, it has also been great to have a space to go to in order to do my work away from home. Having 24/7 access with a key means that I can go there at all kinds of irregular hours which suits me'.

Catherine Kelly Desmond is an artist resident in Abbey Road Studios. Her paintings were shown in the exhibition *Three Perspectives* with work by Tina Hayes and Lelia Henry. Ten portraits of children from the troubled Ardoyne area of Belfast (tempera on board) were exhibited. Prior to making the work Catherine made several trips to Belfast to do background research and obtain permission from parents. The children had taken part in a 'buddy up' scheme which paired Catholic and Protestant boys and girls encouraging them to play together.

In June 2015 the artist was invited to show her work at Government Buildings, Stormont at the formal launch of the 'buddy' scheme which was extended to many schools in Northern Ireland. The portraits were selected for the RDS Student Art Awards exhibition in 2015.

Abbey Road artists' studios opened in September 2011, and have been fully occupied since their opening. They are operated under the umbrella organisation 'Athlone Arts and Heritage' and details can be found via the Luan Gallery in Athlone.



Art by Catherine Kelly Desmond



Art by Leila Henry and Tina Hayes



Sink-Sync-Surface

Agnes de Vlin grew up in the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains in Northern Ireland and now lives by the Slieve Blooms in the midlands. Locally peatlands exist in both these areas, in parts they are in a near natural state and echoes of the linear characteristics of this unique habitat are apparent in her work.

The Bog of Allen is a source of local heritage, history and memory – its many strata containing a geological inventory of the land. De Vlin's recent solo exhibition *Sink-Sync-Surface* in the Dunamais Arts Centre, Portlaoise celebrates the heritage of the Irish peatlands through a series of printed works using archival media. Her drawing process incorporates the articulation of various topographies. The use of tonal gradations are suggestive of the increasingly dark values found on the surface of the peatlands from modification both by hand and machine. *Sink-Sync-Surface* embodies the topographical diversity of the peatlands and the concept of convergence when its surface is breached by time, water and colour. Time, water and colour have an un-nerving equilibrium that can nurture, protect and promote well-being, yet as external forces they can be consuming and unpromising.

De Vlin's ongoing investigation into the concept of convergence aligns with her work process. She adeptly uses both hand rendered and digital media in forging her aesthetic. De Vlin approaches her digital workflow openly as a means of constructing large format patterns and abstract configurations. It is about developing a process that can incorporate numerous generations and revisions, which allows for a range of variability within a given set of works. In this way her compositions are reciprocal yet they claim autonomy. This workflow enables compositions and patterns to be scaled and engineered without compromising the quality of line in the process.

Through line drawing de Vlin creates sympathies and tensions to find a balance that subdivides the surface into complex figure-ground relationships.

Her recent compositions express the energy and restraint of pattern as an immersive series of overlapping dynamic moments. The changefulness of pattern and the transient effect of repeated forms are recurring themes explored by de Vlin. There is a purposeful shift away from the familiarity of pattern as configured and constrained, towards pattern as an interaction of multiple local effects. Underpinning these themes is the development of rhythmic units from close observation and detailed drawings of the structuring of shipyard cranes, coastal geography and the linear characteristics of the peatlands. Through a process of revision de Vlin extracts shapes, forms and voids and then redefines them to construct new patterns.

'Mire Expanse' (2016) pictured here in the Dunamais Arts Centre, is a large topographical composition suggestive of a rake angle across a rolling landscape. This work engenders a sense of visual gravity as the eye traverses a multitude of successive and differentiating lines as they move from straight to curved, then breakaway and merge to create the sense of a receding and enveloping ground. Through a stream of visual pathways the eye travels through numerous stimulus points. 'Mire Expanse' reveals a correlation between scale of observation and proximity, giving the perception of sinking, rising and permeating. De Vlin's inquiry into the dexterity of the drawn line to represent movement through a space is ongoing and 'Mire Expanse' approaches the capacity that line has to describe such an experience.

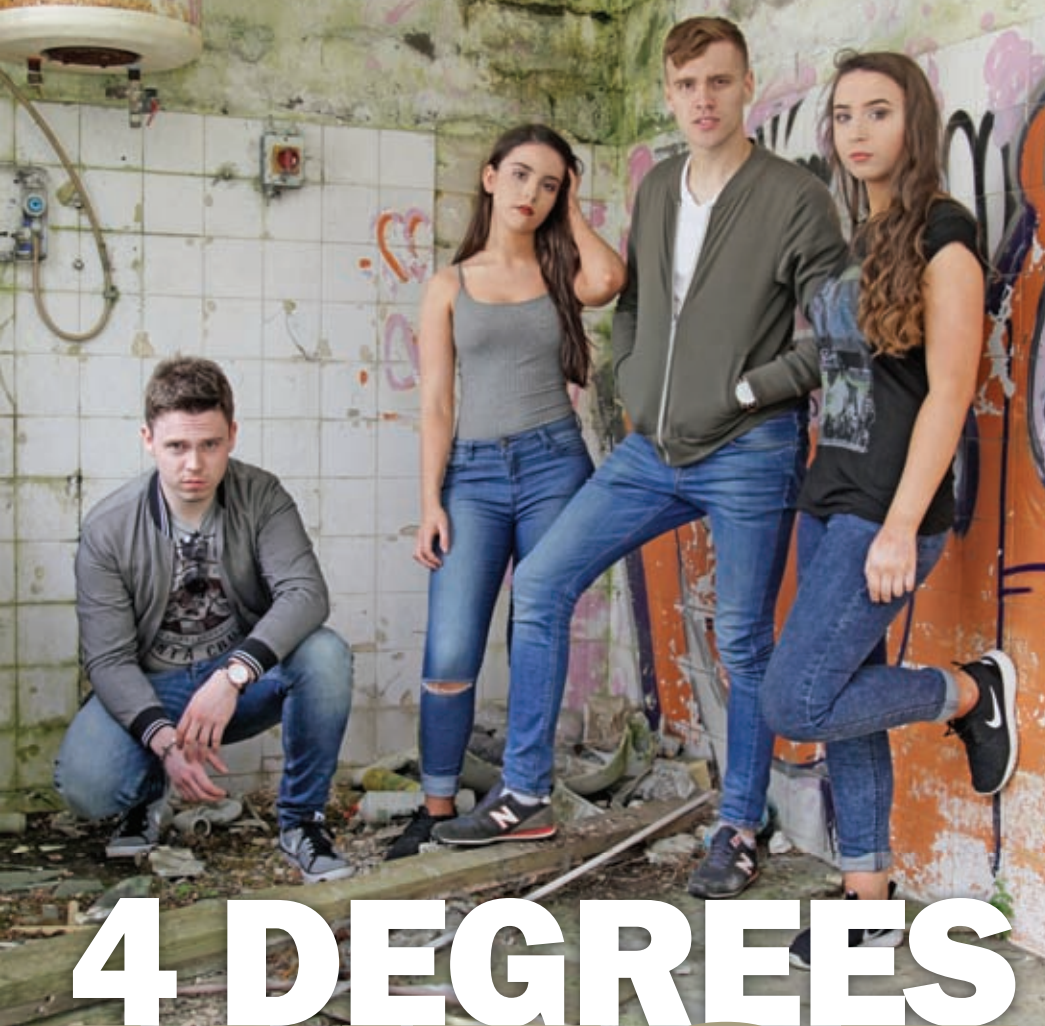
Within de Vlin's practice, the ambiguity of scale and its ability to simultaneously create distance and detail is an important point of interest. In a recent

exhibition at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery Dublin, de Vlin created a number of site specific installations which explored the spatial framework within a two-dimensional unbounded pattern. This corresponds to her long term interest in perceptual 'figure-ground' relationships as a vital stage of the visual process whereby objects can be deciphered. 'Figure-ground' constitutes the perceptual organisation that occurs as we process the infinite information in our surroundings and how this vision is expressed on a two dimensional plane.

There are numerous stages of evolution in each project created by de Vlin and within her practice as a whole. Her titles suggest a root, an incubation and an aspiration. De Vlin frequently chooses titles that express a durational development, connecting previous works with current and future projects. Other projects include *Grey-White-Klee* and *Cargo-MC-Cott*, which feature similar compositions of precise linear configurations that are rich in colour and tone creating a sense of unity and synchronicity.

Sink-Sync-Surface (2016) presents Agnes de Vlin's work as a new and fluid conversation that defines her most recent suite of compositions in the context of an explorative and productive career between art and design.

Agnes de Vlin studied print and fine art sculpture at Bath Academy of Art and Crawford school of Art, Cork. In 2009 she returned to the University Falmouth and graduated with a first class honours degree in digital technologies for surface design.



4 DEGREES WEST

Young musicians combine the best of country, folk and trad

A band hailing from counties Longford and Cavan are taking the music world by storm with their addictive mix of country, folk and trad music.

4 Degrees West is made up of Cavan native and lead singer Bart Nannery, who joins the line-up alongside Edgeworthstown siblings and Fleadh Cheoil regulars Colm (guitar/mandolin/bouzouki), Aishling (fiddle and backing vocals) and Emma O'Reilly (whistles and percussion). Both Colm and Aishling have won titles at the Fleadh in their respective instruments.

"Myself and Colm, we went to school together, we did the Leaving Cert together," 22-year-old Bart told Midlands Arts and Culture. "On the last day of school we played a song together, 'High Hopes' by Kodakline."

From that performance, which marked the first time Bart had ever sang in front of an audience, the duo continued to play and sing together for a number of years, before being joined in 2015 for a busking competition by Colm's younger sisters Aishling and Emma. The rest, as they say, is history, and the four-piece have been performing together ever since.

"We went and bought a set of gear - we had to stick at it then," Bart laughed.

Summer-time is always busy for the group, who have played at festivals and venues throughout Longford, Cavan, Westmeath and Roscommon and alongside artists such as Lisa McHugh, The Hot House Flowers, Cliona Hagan, Patrick Feeney, Aine Cahill, Marty Mone and country superstar Nathan Carter.

Things have quietened down for the moment as Bart and 21-year-old Colm return to college in Limerick and Castlebar respectively, while 18-year-old Emma tackles the Leaving Cert and 16-year-old Aishling settles into Transition Year, but the group continue to gig around the midlands, with their setlist of firm fan favourites and original songs.

When asked if 4 Degrees West were considering a stint in-studio to record their work, Bart concluded; "Definitely. Hopefully in the near future!"

For more information on 4 Degrees West, to find out where they're playing next or to get in touch, call 085 1602587 or search for 4Degrees West on Facebook.

ORANGE DOOR

Athlone's 'Orange Door' project supported by the Broadcast Authority of Ireland reaches local audiences with stories of their own local artists

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) have given a new voice to Westmeath artists and musicians over the past number of months.

In the summer of 2016 'The Orange Door' project launched with a lively panel discussion in the Luan Gallery. The 11-week-long radio documentary series created focused on artists living and working in Athlone. Produced by Erica Follows Smith, the documentary was produced with funding secured through the BAI Sound & Vision stream. Listeners tuned in each Wednesday to hear artists speak on the 'For Arts Sake' programme on Athlone Community Radio 88.4fm. The community radio station was also key in the creation of 'Soul Sessions II', launched in August, which celebrates the work of local musicians.

The Soul Session II album, which precluded the radio show, was launched on August 26 at the Malt House, and featured the original music of fifteen local acts and musicians of varying genres. Each weekly episode in the series was dedicated to one of the featured acts, which included the following: Kayleigh Wade, Martin Kelleher, Warren Francis, Bianca Fachel, Jay Boland, Liz Fletcher, Bluebird Youth, Colin Fahy, RETRO, Trish Nolan, Thom O'Neill, Gypsy Davy, Angela Bannon, Yasmin Chaudhry and Rob Irwin.

Similarly to The Orange Door, Soul Sessions II was funded by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland with the television Licence Fee and the fifteen-part radio series can be heard on www.athlonecommunityradio.ie.



Daire O'Muiri

Budding Longford actor stars in IFTA-nominated show



It's been an 'Eipic' year for 17-year-old Daire O'Muiri.

A talented actor, who hails from Tarmonbarry, Co Roscommon, Daire was cast in the acclaimed Irish-language comedy musical drama 'Eipic', which aired early this year.

"It was fantastic, it nearly exceeded expectations," Daire smiled, when asked about seeing the finished product on screen. "I really enjoyed seeing the whole story come to life."

In a nod to the 1916 Centenary, the six-part series follows five teenagers who take over the local Post Office to start a musical revolution. Daire played the role of Aodh in the series, which called on his talents as an actor, a musician and a gaeilgeoir.

'Eipic' received an extremely positive reaction, and has since gone on to be nominated for three Irish Film and Television Academy (IFTA) awards for Irish Language programme; Director - Soap and Comedy; and Children's and Young People's programme. It equalled the number of nominations received by the ever-popular Mrs Brown's boys.

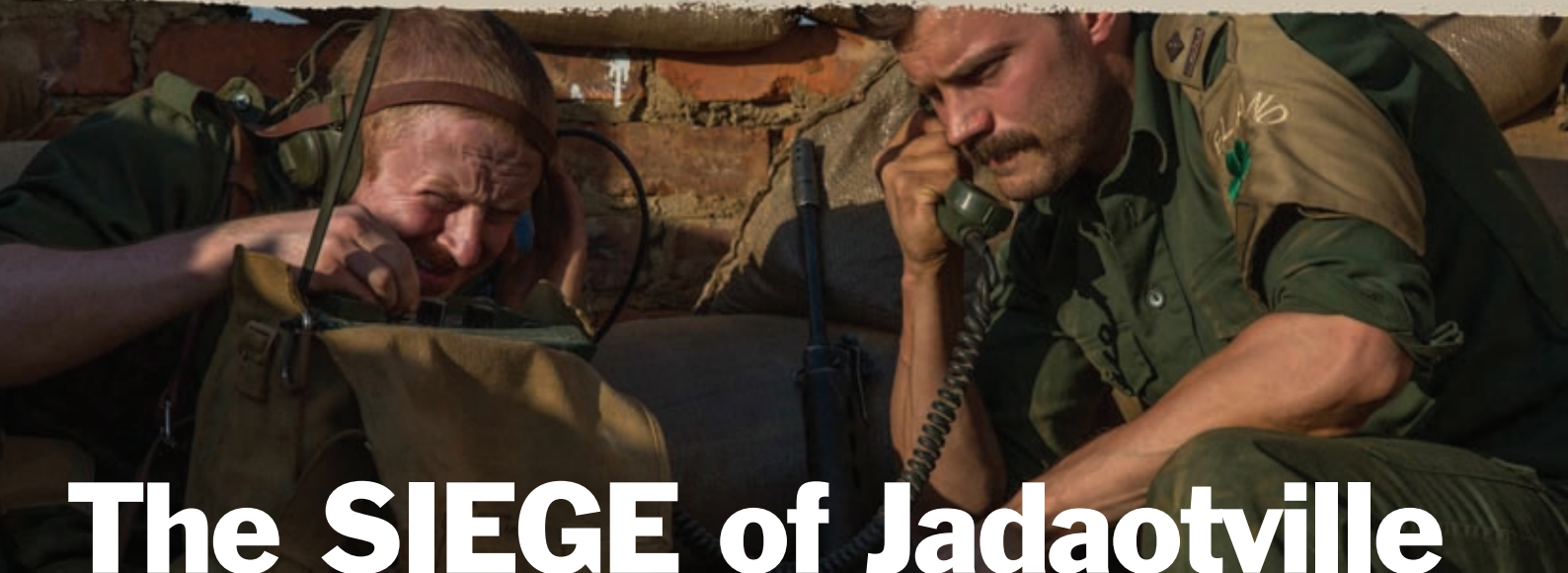
"I heard that the nominations were coming out on the Wednesday, so I was keeping an eye," he admitted. "Just seeing 'Eipic' written was a bit weird."

Daire has been keeping himself busy for the rest of the year, balancing auditions and school with a performance with Backstage Youth Theatre, of which he is a member. He took on the role of

Padraig Pearse in the youth group's engaging and moving 1916 production: '2016 - A Coming of Age'.

For now, however, Daire's acting is taking a back seat as the St Mel's College, Longford student prepares to undertake his Leaving Certificate exams. However, it's definitely not the last we've heard of Daire, and he confirmed that he is keen to pursue other stage and screen projects, though maybe not immediately.

"I might not go straight into an acting course. At the moment I'm planning to do Primary School teaching and see where it goes from there," he concluded.



The SIEGE of Jadotville

Mullingar author's compelling story of how 150 Irish soldiers were forced to stand against an army of 3,000 in Congo is adapted for the big screen

Contrary to their treatment after coming home from the Congo conflict more than five decades ago, the soldiers who fought at the Siege of Jadotville, including 23 Westmeath men, have finally been honoured for their efforts over the past year.

This is thanks, mostly, to the work of former soldier and Mullingar man, Declan Power, whose book 'The Siege of Jadotville' has spawned a film of the same name.

Following Irish Commandant Pat Quinlan, as he leads a stand-off with troops against French and Belgian Mercenaries in the Congo in the early 1960s, the film, starring Jamie Dornan, has met with great praise, and so too have the soldiers who are the focus of the film.

In September, a ceremony was held at Custume Barracks Athlone to honour these men, with the award of a Presidential Unit Citation presented to 'A' Company, in recognition of the achievement of the

150 soldiers, most of whom came from the 6th Infantry Battalion, who fought against an estimated 3,000 enemies.

Having been premiered at Dublin's Savoy theatre in September, 'The Siege of Jadotville' can now be watched on Netflix. This is the debut feature from music video director Richie Smyth, based on Declan Power's 2005 book, and adapted for screen by Kevin Brodbin.

Working with moving image, photography and installation, my work explores the relationship between cinema, technology and museology through an archive of historical film props. Questioning the relationship between humans and objects (both virtual and physical) my practice reflects upon the way in which cinematic images are indelibly embedded in our perception of history.

Film props are objects in a constant state of levitation, objects of fiction held in suspension. They seamlessly slip between roles, functions, times, narratives and contexts. They have a physical lightness (often constructed from expanded polystyrene) and also a symbolic lightness freed from the gravity and weight of words such as “history” and “originality”. Set free from this burden, these physical and virtual props can operate in multiple registers of meaning without fixed identity. Their weightlessness allows for fictions to become part of our understanding of history.

My most recent research is structured around questions of how digital technology is influencing our relationship history. With major museums now responding to technological shifts and undertaking the process of digitising large volumes of their collections through 3D scanning, never before has human history been more accessible and yet more detached and distanced. Parallel to this, cinema, the dominant medium for the dissemination of historical representations, is shifting from using physical film props towards embracing digital 3D CGI artefacts, often composites of these readily available museum 3D models. I am interested in thinking about how both physical film props and 3D models can present a challenge to the hierarchy of authentic or auratic ‘original’ artefacts, in many cases superseding them in collective unconscious of the everyday film consumer. Rather than privileging an ‘original’ object, my work suggests a re-direction for image making, one in which reproductions, copies and props are elevated to the status of important cultural artefacts in an age of digital production.

Most recently I have been working on a new film commissioned for the Jerwood Film and Video Umbrella Awards 2017. The film is inspired by a recent archaeological excavation near Santa Maria, California, where a series of plaster Egyptian sphinxes used in Cecil B. DeMille’s 1923 production of the Ten Commandments have been uncovered. Conserved and exhibited in the local Nipomo-Guadalupe Dunes Centre, these artefacts are a fragment of a vast set which still remains buried. Taking the form of a three part single channel film merging CGI animation, laser scanning and live action footage the film will explore how, through the archaeology of a representation, a simulated fictional history can gain its own historical reality.

The central sequence of the film will see one of the plaster sphinxes resurrected through CGI (Computer Generated Imagery). The camera follows it as it reconstructs itself from fragments above the Santa Maria sand dunes, drifts through an American desert town and arrives at a museum exhibit to be confronted with the ruins of its own physical being. An internal monologue is heard during the sequence in which it tries to come to terms with its own immateriality and object-hood as a resurrected, reconstructed virtual entity. The film is due to be completed for March 2017 when it will be exhibited at the Jerwood Gallery in London as part of the FVU Awards touring exhibition.

An Archaeology of Cinema

by Patrick Hough

Patrick Hough is a visual artist based in London with roots in Banagher. Some of his most recent work entitled ‘Object Interviews’ has been exhibited as part of ‘Hyperconnected’ in the Moscow Museum of Modern Art.



Anneleen Lenaerts and Dionysis Grammenos

Music Network presents Anneleen Lenaerts, Principal Harpist of the Vienna Philharmonic and Dionysis Grammenos “the new prince of the clarinet” at St. Peter’s Church of Ireland, Portlaoise, on 13th November

Expect passion, technical aplomb and an exceptional chemistry between two dazzling virtuosos as Anneleen Lenaerts, Principal Harpist of the Vienna Philharmonic performs with Dionysis Grammenos, recently dubbed by one critic as “the new prince of the clarinet” at St. Peter’s Church of Ireland, Portlaoise, on Sunday 13th November at 7pm. The duo will perform a programme that includes the premiere of a new Music Network commission by Irish composer Anne-Marie O’Farrell, as well as works from the Romantic era by Schumann, Schubert, Smetana and Verdi. Music Network tours are funded by the Arts Council and are presented in association with RTÉ lyric fm. Tour details at www.musicnetwork.ie.

Acclaimed for wonderfully nuanced playing and idiomatic arrangements, Lenaerts has garnered an astonishing 23 international awards as a solo player, most notably at the Grand Prix International Lily Laskine – the world’s most highly-regarded harp award – as well as performing with many of Europe’s leading orchestras, while Greek clarinettist Grammenos is widely recognized as one of the most charismatic and inspiring artists of his

generation. His international breakthrough occurred in 2008, when Grammenos won the Grand Prix d’Eurovision and the title of the European Young Musician of the Year. The 25-year-old virtuoso regularly performs at some of the world’s most prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall in New York, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw and London’s Barbican Centre. The duo’s much anticipated debut CD is due to be released by Warner Classics in October 2016.

Not to be missed: this is chamber music-making of the highest order!

- Robert Schumann, Drei Romanzen, Op. 94
- Franz Schubert, Schwanengesang D. 957
- Franz Schubert, Sonata in A minor for Arpeggione and Piano, D. 821
- Robert Schumann, Fantasiestücke Op.73
- Anne-Marie O’Farrell, Klaria (Music Network Commission)
- Bed ich Smetana, Mä Vlast, II. Vltava (Moldau), Op.43, Arr. Trne ek
- Giuseppe Verdi, “La Traviata” – Fantasia di concerto di Donato Lovreglio

Sunday 13th November

St. Peter’s Church of Ireland, Portlaoise

7pm, Tickets €15 / €12

Booking Tel. 057 8663355 / www.dunamais.ie

Promoted by Laois Co. Council Arts Office

Full touring information at www.musicnetwork.ie



EMLYN Boyle

Crossing effortlessly between forms Westmeath-based artist Emlyn Boyle talks to Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine

Like his paintings, the future is bright and colourful for Westmeath-based artist Emlyn Boyle. A native of north Dublin, Emlyn now lives just outside Mullingar, and recently hosted his first solo show, exhibiting at the Atrium of Westmeath Co Council. “I exhibited at the Atrium for two working weeks. And to be honest, was a bit terrified at having a first solo show – despite my setting it up,” Emlyn told Midlands Arts and Culture. “But once the launch evening kicked in, I was fine, and had great feedback/support from friends, family and other artists. And I sold almost half the twenty pieces that first night – which was thrilling.”

Thanking Arts Officer Miriam Mulrennan for her support, the artist also paid tribute to Don Mortell for a “wonderful Doctor Who-peppered opening speech”, which was apt, as Emlyn’s work focuses on the strange, bizarre and odder side of life through various styles and techniques, though he finds his influences everywhere. Emlyn’s creativity has been apparent from a very young age. He was always encouraged to draw and attended local and after-school classes before settling into Art class in secondary school. From there, Emlyn attended Ballyfermot Senior college studying animation, learning about stop motion, traditional and

computer animation – the latter of which was fairly new at the time. He also undertook weekly life drawing classes. Ultimately settling on computer animation, Emlyn graduated with a Diploma in Computer Graphics and Multimedia.

“I went on to be a graphic designer/animator in various companies, but always continued to draw traditionally,” Emlyn continued. “A staff painting competition was held in one company, which I entered for fun and won – and that kickstarted me into taking painting more seriously.”

As far as painting goes, Emlyn works mostly with acrylics, but has started to branch into other media, such as oils, ink, gouache and even crayons!

Of his recent decision to start using watercolours for the first time, Emlyn added; “There’s just something about them that is a real challenge, yet also very clean and simple that intrigues me. “I am also a serious photographer, digital artist, and have created short films,” he revealed. “My first animated short ‘One Winter’s Night’ has a cult following on Youtube, and surprisingly seems to be very popular in schools.”

Emlyn’s second animated short ‘Waiting’, meanwhile, was chosen to play in the short film category at the 2013 Belfast Film Festival. He has



also created a few experimental live action pieces. Though he’s packed up (and sold off) much of his Mullingar works, Emlyn’s confidence was boosted by the experience and he’s already looking forward to future projects, including another short film, and exhibitions. Eager to exhibit in his home county of Dublin, Emlyn expressed his wish to return to the Atrium.

“I hope to have another Atrium show sometime next year,” he confided. “Perhaps a Halloween themed show, or a Dracula show (based on Stoker’s original novel), or something based around Irish mythology – watch this space! “I also hope to have a third short animated film – based on another poem I wrote – finished in time for January 2017,” he added, concluding; “Oh, and I’m also working on a children’s picture book idea. “So my creative future looks both busy and exciting!”

LONGFORD AUTHOR'S DEBUT a turn up for the books

A thrilling page-turner which keeps the reader guessing from beginning to end, Bernice Barrington's debut novel 'Sisters and Lies', published by Penguin Ireland, was released in March of this year, to great acclaim.



The story centres on two sisters, Rachel and Evie, the latter of whom is in a coma following a car crash. Everyone, including the police, believes that the crash was either an accident or a suicide attempt, but Rachel isn't convinced, particularly when she discovers that Evie has been living with her childhood bully and has been concealing her identity from him. The book is written as a dual narrative, as Rachel searches for answers and Evie desperately tries to remember what happened and communicate with her sister, and is set between London, Dublin and Leitrim.

It has received rave reviews from fans and fellow writers alike – including Marian Keyes, who dubbed it “head and shoulders above the rest” – and Bernice is thrilled with the reaction. “Obviously, getting the quote from Marian was amazing, and by and large the reviews on Amazon and Goodreads have been very positive,” she stated, admitting; “I was dreading the inevitable one-star ratings but there have been mercifully few of those”. Beyond the great reviews, the book has also re-connected Bernice with many old friends and acquaintances, and she has received many Facebook photos showing the book being read on sun loungers around the world. “Basically the whole experience has been overwhelmingly positive and I'm still trying to process all the good will and positivity that has been directed my way,” Bernice continued. “The other amazing thing is that it has given me a feeling of legitimacy about my writing. Making any kind of creative work can be so lonely and difficult – but the reaction has made me feel the hard work was worthwhile.”

A native of Aughnaclyffe, north Longford, Bernice (née Mulligan) cut her writing teeth at the Longford Leader, where she worked as a journalist for almost two

years. She then went on to work as sub-editor and editor at a magazine publishing company before taking on the role of Media Project Manager at Zahra Media Group. Based in Dublin, where she lives with her husband Brian and their beautiful daughter Lily, who was born mere months after the release of ‘Sisters and Lies’, Bernice has certainly had a busy year. “I was on the TV3 show Middyay as a panellist promoting the book in June,” Bernice revealed. “I also wrote the article in the Irish Independent about the Leaving Cert and did the follow up interview with Kathryn Thomas on the Ray D’Arcy show.”

Just a month after publication, ‘Sisters and Lies’ was part of the Eason/Pat Kenny Book Club for the month of April, and Bernice is due to feature in the Sunday Times for an article about writers and their writing desks. In terms of writing desks, Bernice's has changed slightly since welcoming baby Lily this summer. “I am in the very early stages of a new idea,” she revealed, “in between nappy changes and feeds! “Needless to say, we are beyond smitten and (touching every piece of wood possible) she has been a wonderful baby – sleeping well and generally being an absolute treasure. I know it's going to be challenging combining writing and motherhood, but I'm (optimistically/naively) hoping it will all work out!”

For more information on ‘Sisters and Lies’, which is now available as an audiobook through Bolinda, or to contact Bernice, see: Facebook.com/bernicebarringtonauthor; Twitter @beebarrington or visit www.bernicebarrington.com.

‘Sisters and Lies’ will also be coming out in the UK in Spring 2017.

Earning Stripes at Scripts

by Imelda Carroll

Ireland's Playwriting Festival takes place each summer in Birr with the aim of developing 7 plays in 7 days! Imelda Carroll, this year's winner, talks about the challenges and rewards of developing and nurturing her play 'Tiger' from idea to stage.

I wrote short stories for many years and was short listed for the William Trevor Short Story Competition in 2008. I became interested in playwriting after attending a workshop given by well known Wexford playwright Billy Roche in the summer of 2012. In spring 2013 Newline Theatre Group ran a competition and a play of mine was chosen, with three others, to be performed in Wexford Art Centre. I then became a member of Wordplay, an actors and writers group, run by Newline Theatre Group.

Scripts appeared around the same time. I've entered it every year. This year I sent it off my 15 minute piece and was thrilled that my play was chosen to be in the final. Third time lucky! As part of the prize, I, along with the two other finalists, Martin Keaveney and Shannon O'Reilly, went to Birr for a full week to work on our scripts with acclaimed Offaly playwright Eugene O'Brien. Everyone involved was friendly and welcoming. We began work on Monday the 4th of July. It was a marvellous opportunity for me to have so much time and guidance given to my writing. Time is often an issue with me as I work full time. Advice and direction from professionals is something most writers simply don't receive. You work alone at your computer editing and hoping against hope

that you are being objective! Eugene was a great mentor. It was hard at times but enjoyable too. We discussed our scripts every day and rewrote at night. Eugene was always respectful of our writing while using his experience to help draw out our best. He pushed us to really get to the core of what we wanted to say. It was surprising how gradually different characters and elements of the plays came to the fore while others, that had seemed important initially, faded away. Even the name of my play changed during the week! Eugene's mantra 'write to rewrite' is just one piece of advice that will stay with me as I continue writing in the future.

I've been on a high since winning with my script *Tiger*! As part of my prize I've attended a workshop with the Abbey Theatre in Galway. In August I met with Jessica Traynor, Literary Manager at the Abbey Theatre, who gave me great advice on where to go from here. I have a place on a playwriting course in The Irish Writers Centre to look forward to in the spring. Meanwhile I have a full length play almost ready to send out there! I am also working on extending 'Tiger' into a longer piece. I was delighted to be approached by the Women's Refuge in Wexford to write and direct a short play to be performed during the *16 Days of*

Action Against Domestic Violence between 25th November and the 10th December.

I would advise any writer to keep their eyes peeled for the announcement of the next Scripts Festival. I would like to thank all involved for such a fantastic and rewarding experience!

A rehearsed reading of Imelda's winning play 'Tiger' was performed in Birr Castle on Culture Night featuring Darragh O'Toole (Red Rock). For more information please visit www.scriptsireland.com



Midlands **Arts** and **Culture** Magazine



the first 10 Years

by Manchán Magan

With the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine celebrating its 10th Anniversary it's worth looking back at what has been achieved over the last decade... while also thinking ahead to what we might like to see in the future.

No one could have guessed that the year of its birth, 2006, would in retrospect turn out to be such a pivotal year in the history of Ireland – the very peak of the Celtic Tiger, with our government awash with money and an economy that was growing on average 6% every year from 1996 to 2006. Funds were on hand to support the vision of the Arts Council and the budgets of county arts offices. This era marked the end of a decade that brought arts offices to counties that had never had them, such as Longford, and additional resources, staff and expenditure to the arts offices of other counties. New arts facilities and infrastructure were built, such as the Dunamase Arts Centre in Portlaoise (1999) and Backstage Theatre, Longford (1995). Westmeath got a raft of modern, resource-rich libraries in Mullingar, Athlone, Castlepollard and Kilbeggan. Perhaps the single most impactful legacy was the Per Cent for Art Scheme of 1997, which allowed 1% of the budget of major capital projects (public buildings, roads, etc) be allocated to the arts. The major public art pieces and innovative small-scale community art initiatives that were financed from this fund are still today the most visible legacy of Midlands arts in the last two decades.

Alas, two years after this magazine was born came the Economic Crash of 2008 and with it a drastic curtailment of funding, as Ireland began to suffer the world's

largest budget deficit by percentage of GDP. It had a devastating effect on the provision of arts facilities and yet contrary to all expectations one area of arts practise managed to show significant growth over the period and that is what I'd like to focus on here.....Arts residencies. For some reason they have become a significant feature of our Midlands arts infrastructure in Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford and ultimately could offer a way of defining this region on the international stage. Let me first list the residencies that have developed here over the last decade, and then in a following article, I'll suggest how and why this could be expanded upon.

2011 was the pivotal year of Midlands art residencies, with the launch of Arthouse Studios and Library in Stradbally, Co Laois, and Abbey Road Artists' Studios in Athlone. Arthouse opened four artists' studios with living accommodation, an exhibition gallery, a community library, a kiln room and fully-equipped digital studio in a converted Georgian courthouse. The Abbey Road also offered four studios with a large performance/exhibition space, though no living accommodation. The Athlone studios are housed in the old workhouse and fire station and have strong links to the Luan Gallery, a spectacularly situated exhibition space jutting out over the Shannon. In both

cases artists are invited to apply for residencies that can last up to a year.

During the same period private arts residencies were also developed. The stables of the idyllic 18th century watermill Belmont Mill in Co Offaly, were converted into five art studios in 2002 which offered a creative space to live and work to over 30 artists until 2012. Multifarnham in Co Westmeath also had residential arts studios in the old Franciscan Friary for a period beginning in 2008 when the Friars attempted to establish an ecological artistic centre devoted to “the care of creation”. The popularity and dynamism of these ventures showed the enormous appetite there was from both Irish and international artists to work and live in the Midlands.

This fact was further demonstrated by the Good Hatchery arts residency, also in Offaly. This wonderfully vibrant communal arts studio and living space was created at minimal cost from recycled and salvaged material in a 19th century hayloft and thrived as a genuinely experimental art initiative for nine years until this Spring. It was the type of visionary space one might find in Berlin or Amsterdam, and as such was never envisioned as something permanent. Over the lifespan of this magazine it served a valuable purpose in inspiring many and setting a precedent for how, in the words of one of its founders, Ruth Lyons, “a residential arts centre can spread provocative art tactics and practice beyond major cities and give young contemporary artists the space and time to establish themselves.”

Longford too during this last decade has become an internationally recognised pioneer of residencies for dancers, musicians and film makers through the work of Shawbrook, a centre for ballet and contemporary dance which has in recent years shifted focus from providing classes to offering residential arts space for creative individuals and groups from Ireland and abroad. Their accommodation in converted barns and their two large dance studios enveloped by oak forest, with a range of interior and exterior performance spaces, have attracted the interest of many foreign dance companies. Longford town too is becoming known as a venue for creative development, with the An Teach Damhsa dance theatre company moving its entire international corps of dancers and technical staff to Longford to rehearse in the old Connolly Barracks for their new show, Swan Lake/Loch na hEala, which performed this Autumn in the Dublin Theatre Festival and Sadlers Wells in London before touring internationally.

Space curtails me from listing the other residencies, such as the Hilltown Studio Theatre’s residency for classical and new music composers/performers in a castle keep near Castlepollard, but what should be evident is that the Midlands have found an important niche, something we excel at and can be easily developed further. If we wish it we have the potential to transform our region into an internationally-lauded sanctuary for creative development, a launch-pad for artistic excellence. This idea is developed further in the following article.

Midlands

a world centre for arts residencies?

As has been explored in previous editions of this magazine, the Midlands occupy a truly potent stretch of land that maintains a sacred and energetic resonance that has sadly been lost elsewhere. The old Druidic and early Christian sites have managed to survive remarkably intact. Our peatland, though endangered, still boasts stretches of near wilderness that can no longer be found elsewhere. As locals, it can be hard for us to appreciate its allure, and yet it’s worth bearing in mind the fact that both Michael Jackson and the band REM chose this region as the one place on earth to settle for a prolonged period to create new work. Both of them moved to Grouse Lodge Studios near Moate for what they acknowledged were amazingly productive and enjoyable periods of creative work. Michael Jackson, it appears, had even decided to settle here permanently before his untimely death.

We are fortunate to inhabit a last rare bastion of ecological purity – a unique biosphere that inspires creative minds – and as such we should be willing to share it with others if we can find a sustainable and productive way of doing so. This article proposes a grand network of interconnected Midlands Arts Residencies, places in which artists and creative individuals of all persuasions can spend time. Some will be privately owned and others state-run. They can vary from simple yurts in the bog to grand turrets in old castles, from shepherd huts in the Slieve Blooms to canal lock houses and island cabins on the Shannon, from stables and granaries to modern apartment blocks and housing estates in Mullingar and Portlaoise.

The international media attention, allied with the recognition and support from creative institutes, colleges and universities around the world should make this quite an affordable proposition. The wonderful thing about residencies is that the cost of establishing and running them is negligible compared to building and running a major arts centre or arts school, yet their impact can often be greater. The studios and living spaces tend to be built in disused buildings – converted hay barn, hospitals, stables or schools. Facilities are purposefully minimal – a bare room to work, with simple sleeping quarters and a shared kitchen and eating area. The artists normally cook and clean up for themselves. In terms of manpower all that is absolutely necessary is a manager/facilitator to look after bookings and arrivals, with a building supervisor to oversee the rest.

The potential cultural and economic benefits for the Midlands are hard to overestimate – most significantly perhaps from the repercussions of attracting the finest global creative individuals and entrepreneurs to the area, not to mention affluent, artistically-minded tourists and educational institutions and faculties keen to visit and stay here. We can be reasonably confident of these positive results, as

similar effects were noticed in other areas that provided low-cost or free arts studios or residential space in beautiful locations near major cities – such as Saltspring Island, British Columbia, Brandenburg outside Berlin, Detroit City and South Island, New Zealand.

Let’s pause a moment to look more closely at the 1,500 art residencies that already exist in the world and which offer creative space and freedom to at least 30,000 artists a year. These hallowed spaces have represented sanctuaries of creativity to the likes of Sylvia Plath, Bob Dylan, John Cage, John Lennon and Truman Capote. While each is entirely unique, most tend to welcome artists from different disciplines as this can lead to surprising synchronisms and cross-fertilisations. 60% of residencies are in rural areas and small towns, and the overall majority (at least 90%) have some form of public programme that interacts with and engages the local community. Thus, these are not elitist, isolated eyries for the chosen few to hide; the best of them are thoroughly interconnected with their locality and community, offering a balance of both solitary creative time and periods of socialisation that ensures a dynamic, relevant, outward focused residency.

I’ve crassly focused on the economic side thus far, but the true potency of residencies are their proven ability to spark creativity in artists. We all recognise that artists are living under more strain than ever: 80% of Irish visual artists now earn less than €10,000 from their work. They need support from society. Almost every artist, writer or performer can tell you of the impact a well-timed, aptly-situated residency had on their creative process. A change of scenery, a different perspective, or a moment alone is often the key catalyst that sparks a new departure or that rejuvenates the creative flame. In a world of turmoil and confusion, we need our artists to be stronger, more independent and visionary than ever before.

The time to act is now, art residencies are becoming ever more popular and gaining ever more attention. While previously they were mostly associated with august institutions, currently everything is in a state of flux. There are now arts residencies in airports in Brisbane, in recycling centres in San Francisco and even in shipping containers sailing the high seas.

How proud would we be of the Midlands if it became known as a prime area in the world where artists could come to recharge their batteries – the one place on earth with an expansive interconnected network of free or low cost arts residencies? Let’s be bold and brave and begin working to make our region a propagation bed for nurturing creativity; an alembic chamber of epiphanies and a hatchery of vibrant art. Let’s start creating the nests and retreats where those most visionary and expansive souls in our society can dream bigger and create better.



patrick graham

Celebrated Mullingar artist exhibits at the Luan Gallery

Frequently described as an artist who changed the face of Irish art in the 1980s, the incomparable Patrick Graham has attracted crowds from far and wide to his exhibition - entitled, 'Lullaby' - at the Luan Gallery, Athlone.

A native of Mullingar, Co Westmeath, Graham's work has had a significant influence on the Irish art scene, and his current exhibition, presented in association with Hillsboro Fine Art, features some pieces on loan as well as some new works.

A member of Aosdána, Graham's work, spanning more than forty years, has seen all corners of the earth, with solo exhibitions in countries including Ireland, Germany, Iraq, America and England. His works feature in public and private collections in Ireland and abroad and just this year, Graham was the subject of a major exhibition in the US, curated by the well known art historian, Peter Selz.

One of the country's most important and celebrated contemporary artists, Graham's exhibition is one not to be missed. 'Lullaby' is programmed in the Luan Gallery until late Autumn in a show that has been lauded as a landmark exhibition for the municipal gallery.

The Luan Gallery opens from Tuesday to Saturday from 11am to 5pm and on Sundays from 12pm - 5pm. The Gallery is closed on Mondays.



Pic 3(a) Carmel Duffy,
Patrick Graham, Artist
and Simon Daly at
Lullaby Launch.tif

Irish Songs We Learned at School

Music Generation Laois, through the Laois 2016 Centenary fund, have initiated an 'Irish Songs We Learned at School' project with the legendary Irish Singer-Songwriter John Spillane.

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National Schools across Laois, who participate in the Music Generation Laois Singing Programme, will receive monthly visits from the well-known musician from Cork, learning many of the Irish Songs We Learned at School that John Spillane recorded on the album of the same name in 2008. In addition some of the songs associated with the 1916 Rising, including 'Grace' and the 'Foggy Dew' will be included in the songs covered in this schools project.

The project will run from September to November 2016 and culminate with a large scale concert on the 24 of November in Portlaoise, where John Spillane, Music Generation Laois Singing Tutor Lorna McLaughlin, and all the participating schools will perform, along with a live band.

Music Generation Laois provides access to high quality performance music education to children and young people in their own area, and is funded nationally by the Department of Education and Skills through Music Generation and locally by Laois County Council (lead partner), Laois Offaly Education and Training Board and Laois Partnership Company. For further information on the Music Generation Laois programmes, see musicgenerationlaois.ie or call 057 8664176 / email musicgenerationlaois@laoiscoco.ie



ONE FAMILY: MANY VISIONS by Ciara Kelly

Renowned as the Offaly man who raised the 'Irish Republic' flag on the GPO during the 1916 Rising, Eamonn Bulfin's relatives and descendants have created a legacy of their own through visual art. Art that spans generations and now, a centenary.

Eamonn Bulfin was born in Argentina but moved back to Derrinlough in Birr with his family in the early 1900s. He subsequently attended Padraig Pearse's St Enda's Boys School with both Bulfin and Padraig Pearse becoming members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Following his participation in the Rising, saved by his Argentine passport, he was exiled to Buenos Aires. During his exile; he was elected the first Cathaoirleach of the newly named Offaly County Council in 1921, and the tri colour was draped across his empty chair in his absence.

Curated by renowned sculptor Michael Bulfin (Eamonn's son), *One Family: Many Visions* culminated in an exhibition of artworks by eleven relatives. Displayed in Aras an Chontae, Tullamore were early twentieth century still life and landscape

paintings by Eamonn's wife Nora Brick and Mary his sister, as well as modern pewter and bronze animal casts by Blonaid his daughter, all of whom have passed away. A combination of paintings and sculptures by Michael formed part of the collection, appropriately entitled 'Derrinlough' his work was described as having "mythologised and abstracted the lands about his home as seen from a birds-eye view." Husband of Noreen Bulfin, Paradazi Havatitye, originally from Zimbabwe, set up a business carving wood sculptures, with his work described as a fusion of Afro-Celtic cultures. Grand-daughters Danna and Nessa contribute to the legacy with very different style, the latter's work almost blueprint like in its intricate presentation; contrast this with Danna's landscape paintings using oil on linen in which colour and texture blur together. Jane Bulfin, also a grand-daughter of Eamonn employs

the use of mixed media with subjects having a basis in her interest in Archaeology and historical events. Winner of the Texaco Children's Art Competition at age 17, portraiture is often a feature of Lucy Carragher's art, while Nancy-Jane Carragher uses art as a means to express her interest in various cultures.

Fittingly a bronze plaque, commissioned by Offaly County Council for 2016, was created by Siobhan Bulfin a granddaughter of Eamonn and was unveiled at the launch of *One Family Many Visions*. It is now on permanent display in Aras an Chontae, Tullamore.

For more information see www.offaly.ie/2016





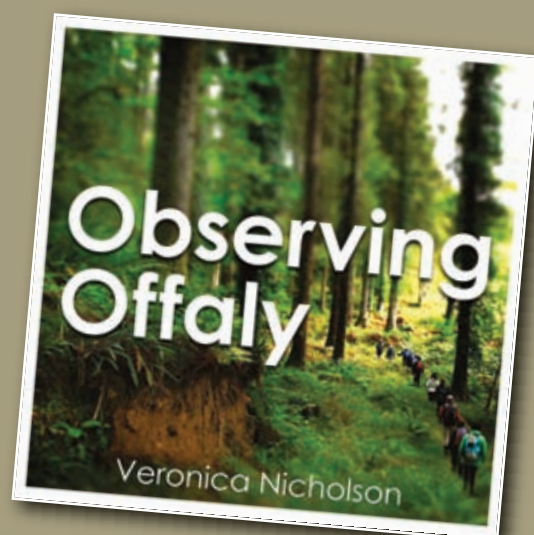
OBSERVING *Offaly* PUBLISHED!

The culmination of a year spent travelling and observing the everyday life of her adopted county, photographer Veronica Nicholson has sent *Observing Offaly* to print. Commissioned under the percent for arts by Offaly County Council, there are layers of stories in almost every photo, from domestic or agricultural images, to the national events that impacted on Offaly during the past year.

Veronica grew up in Dublin, spending her childhood summers on her grandparent's farm near Rhode in Offaly. She bought a camera in 1984 and has been taking photographs ever since. She has a Diploma in Professional Photography from Dublin Institute of Technology and a Masters of Digital Arts from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. She has exhibited widely at home and in Europe, Asia, USA and Australia, and has been teaching photography for over twenty years. She moved to Offaly in 2010.

In his introductory essay, acclaimed photographer David H. Davison writes, "Opening this book for the first time it is clear that *Veronica Nicholson* was the ideal choice for this commission; the pictures she has created are not to be hurriedly flicked by—each of them demands a level of careful attention as the basis for contemplation, while repeated viewing will reveal further meaning."

Observing Offaly is being launched at the end of the year along with an exhibition of twenty of the images in Áras an Chontae, Tullamore. The book is a hardback, 25x25cm, 128 pages full colour and is published by Offaly County Council. It can be purchased through the Arts Office by ringing 057 935 7400, or purchased online through www.offalyhistory.com www.vnicholson108.wordpress.com





'At Large' in Edinburgh

A Longford man was 'At Large' in Edinburgh last month, as a Dublin-based theatre group brought three plays to the prestigious Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

30-year-old Daniel O'Brien, a native of Newtownforbes, is a member of At Large Theatre, who presented three original shows over two weeks.

From a passing interest in drama as a child, O'Brien joined the drama society when he enrolled in Trinity College to study History and Economics, but, as he laughed; "College just got in the way."

It wasn't until he had left college and completed his accountancy exams thereafter that he was convinced by a friend to join No Drama Theatre in Dublin, where he developed his acting, writing and directing skills.

"I went along with him and I enjoyed it. They did a weekly workshop every Tuesday and I'd go to those," Daniel explained, before laughing, "my friend dropped out after a few weeks."

After working with At Large Theatre's Artistic Director, Gráinne Curistan, he joined the group and went on to write one of the three plays they presented in Edinburgh.

According to Daniel, 'Nowhere Now' centred on "internal trade agreements and capitalism and working life".

"It's mostly just about the language people use to talk about them."

Daniel also appeared in the Gráinne Curistan written and directed 'The Meeting' a comedy set in an office. The third show was the deeply personal, character-driven 'Beryl'.

Speaking on his return from the festival, Daniel said; "Edinburgh was great. We got settled into it pretty quickly; the routine of flyering, dealing with the time slot pressure that you get at festivals... which was great. I was a bit nervous beforehand

about how we'd react to that but everyone handled it very well.

"It is a very competitive environment and we had to learn very quickly how best to sell the different shows."

They did an excellent job, if the results were anything to go by, with Daniel reporting some great audiences as well as some sell-outs.

"I think it was a very positive experience overall," he concluded, "we got some very positive audience reactions, we saw a lot of great shows and talked to a lot of interesting people, and everyone made it back physically safe and mentally sane, which is a good result on its own!" For more on At Large Theatre, visit www.atlargetheatre.com or follow them on Facebook.

10 year Anniversary of debut album of Mullingar singer/songwriter

"While even some of our better songwriters only shine in introspective acoustic settings, and their guitar playing is often there merely to provide an underbelly for the vocal, Mullingar-based musician Peter Doran can vary both mood and tempo and is an ace guitar player to boot."

The words of Jackie Hayden, Hotpress, as she reviewed Doran's debut album 'Wood', which this year, celebrated its tenth anniversary.

The singer-songwriter's musical life started well before that, however, over twenty years ago with electric guitars, distortion pedals and Marshall amps. Encountering the likes of Glen Hansard, Damien Rice and Emmett Tinley when they performed at 'The Stables', Mullingar, took Doran's music in a completely different, totally unplanned, direction.

Since then, Peter has released four albums to great acclaim, and has played headline shows in Ireland and other countries including Holland, Germany and the US. He has also opened up for renowned artists such as Mick Flannery, Declan O'Rourke, Duke Special and Fionn Regan.

As it played such a major role in his musical reinvention, it was fitting, perhaps, that The Stables, which is located just ten minutes' walk from Peter's home, should play host to the celebration of Peter's album 'Wood', the first of his releases.

To mark the milestone in late 2016, Peter - along with other musicians who played on the album, bring the songs to life on stage for the first time in many years, while also performing some of his latest tracks.



Culture Night 16

Culture Night in Westmeath

Westmeath offers a bountiful night of art, culture ... and a good deal more as over 50 events take place all across the county.

A colourful, and occasionally curious Culture Night took place in town and villages all across County Westmeath this September 16th. Culture Night Coordinator Elizabeth Kerrigan said "the sheer quantity and wealth of art exhibitions, music, performances, historic talks and artistic workshops, that took place all over Westmeath – meant that there was definitely something for everyone to see and do."

History was brought to life with lively guided tours of Belvedere and Uisneach. Art exhibitions popped up in a variety of setting – 'Portraits of Pollard People' by Ursula Meehan appearing in Castlepollard Library, and various visual art spaces in Athlone kept their doors open late, including Luan Gallery, Bastion Gallery, Orange Door Studio and Abbey Road Artists' Studios. There were musical performances in Athlone Castle by Athlone Army Band and Athlone's Pipe Band. Athlone School's Orchestra performed in the Civic Buildings, Athlone.

The quirky German Electronic Orchestra performed mischievously at Athlone Train Station

platform and inside the station itself, bringing their own unique site specific improvised musicality to the slightly bewildered, but charmed commuters – between 5.40 and 6.20 p.m.

The market square in Mullingar was a hive of artistic activities, with performances from Mullingar Town Band and Energy Plus Studio Dancers. Mullingar Student Players performed 'Grapes of Wrath' in Mullingar Arts Centre and Aras an Mhuilinn held an evening of traditional music, song, dance and storytelling. A similar celebration of music, song and storytelling took place in Moate and Ballynacarrigy, while visual art was the main focus in Tyrrellspass, with storytelling and cartoon workshops on offer all evening in Fore.

As Westmeath continues to deliver a high quality and diverse programme of activities on Culture Night, Arts Officer Miriam Mulrennan says "thanks is due really to the practitioners and the arts professionals in the venues and facilities all across the county. And crucially to the audiences who attend. A great programme is only as strong and the audience who embrace it."

Culture Night in Offaly



Phone Box, Birr



Energy Plus Dance Performance



Martina Coyle Seeing Voices Exhibition



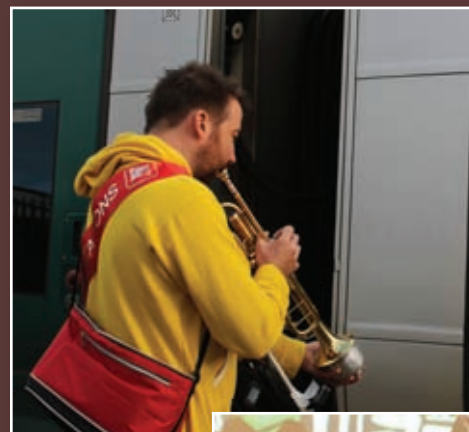
Grapes of Wrath Student Players



Athlone Pipe Band

Patsy Preston

Athlone Civic Offices



St. Philomena School Choir



Culture Night in Laois

Culture Night in Laois was a great success with a variety of events happening in the county on Friday 16th September.

The highlight of the night was a Concert and Craft Fair at the Malthouse, Stradbally. Music Generation Laois, in conjunction with the Laois Arts Office, joined counties and cities across Ireland in celebrating Culture Night 2016. New Road, a traditional Irish band with Americana influences based in Sligo, with special guests Cathy Jordan (Dervish) and Leonard Podolak (The Duhks), performed in the beautiful surroundings of The Malthouse in Stradbally.

Leading up to the concert a craft fair was held in the courtyard area of the venue with an array of beautiful ceramics, pottery, art, woodwork and jewellery on display and on sale to the public.

Speaking after the concert, Rosa Flannery, Coordinator of Music Generation Laois, said that The Malthouse, which is privately owned 'is a stunning location for a concert, brimming with individuality and quirkiness, which combined with the wonderful musicians performing on the night, made for a brilliant evening's entertainment.' A group of young musicians, who are part of over 3000 young people in the County who participate in weekly Music Generation Laois programmes, took part in a workshop earlier in the evening with New Road and Cathy Jordan. These young musicians then joined the band for an encore on stage in The Malthouse that night, much to the delight of the audience.

Music Generation Laois also held bi-lingual bodhrán workshops with Dale McKay, in Portlaoise Youth Education Centre in Railway Street. Another highlight event was a **Showcase Dance Performance** called *RE-Connecting* by Laois Youth Dance Ensemble at the Plaza, County buildings, Portlaoise. In the open air and under the direction of dance teacher Erica Borges the talented group of young dancers presented very moving contemporary dance performances highlighting the best of their repertoire with some solo performances by two visiting male dancers from Dublin.

Artist Jock Nichol conducted a wonderful "An Plein Air" workshop for landscape artists in the wonderful surroundings of Emo Court Domain and the OPW kindly opened late to give a series of free tours of the house.

The Dunamais Arts Centre had a great turn out for Culture Night, that gave a taste of the magic that happens there throughout the year. Activities included an exhibition of James Fintan Lalor memorabilia by Brendon Deacy, an art workshop and cafe exhibition opening by students of Caroline Keane, short film screenings in the cinema thanks to the Irish Film Board, visits to the studios of Dunamais resident artists Rebecca Deegan and Chloe Young and the official opening of an exhibition by students of Midlands Prison Education Centre.

Events in Portlaoise Library, Lyster Square included a drumming workshop with David Day and a reading by renowned author Anna McPartlin. At An Sean Chistin, in Ballyfin people enjoyed a cultural evening of traditional music, céili dancing, set dancing, sean-nós dancing, poetry in English & Irish, seanachai ag rá scéalta, whistling and liling hosted by Maureen Culleton.

And in Spink visitors enjoyed an evening of traditional Irish music, singing, storytelling, and dancing in the beautiful community hall, home of the regular Comhaltas music classes down through the years. A late entry to the programme was a cultural evening at the O'Dempseys GAA Centre – an evening of traditional music dance and song for families.

Culture Night offers access to cultural institutions and cultural events free of charge, and is an opportunity to celebrate culture, creativity and the arts throughout Ireland.

For more info contact the Arts Office, Laois County Council 057 8664033 or email: artsoff@laoiscoco.

Info on Music Generation Laois, see musicgenerationlaois.ie or email musicgenerationlaois@laoiscoco.ie



Caroline Conway's Zootrope



Banagher's Military
Manoeuvres by
Patricia Hurl



Rochus Aust,
German Orchestra,
Clara





Michael McLoughlin

NEW RESIDENCY AT LAOIS ARTHOUSE

Artist Michael McLoughlin takes up residency at the Laois Arthouse Studios, Stradbally in October for a seven month residency. He talks about his residency and his art practice.

A recurring consideration in the work over the last 20 years has been a focus on what brings groups of people together, what is the connection that drives them, where does the balance between personal relationships, friendships, ideas, ideals or common goals lie? What is the actual common bond? These are ideas I hope to explore while in Stradbally.

From the beginning of October, I take up residency in the Arthouse, in Stradbally. I'm really looking forward to being based in Laois Arthouse and starting to develop new work and particularly exploring the wonderful networks of clubs, groups and associations in the town. The work I hope to make is people centered, specific to Stradbally and celebrates community.

I make drawings, sculptural objects, video and sound installations. The work often examines the value placed on the feelings of ownership, belonging and connection experienced by both the individual and the collective. I describe what I do as audio-cartography. It's a process of mapping the space that

conversations occupy and recording them so they can be recreated during an exhibition, in five years time, or in 20 years time. It's almost like a reverse archeology; preparing fragments of the present to be reconstructed in the future. And while resident in Stradbally, I hope to make new work relating to the town.

This may take the form of recordings made with groups, or communities of interest from the town, or making a site-specific soundwork relating to Stradbally. It might involve recording where people/groups meet up, or documenting social activity locally?

I would be delighted if I can make this new artwork with associations, clubs, even groups of friends in Stradbally itself. The artwork I make often aims to acknowledge and celebrate the role communities of interest play in defining a town. It celebrates the importance of people, of friendships and of camaraderie.

But before the recording starts, I hope to get to know the town and the people in it. I would like to

invite you to an informal talk about the work I make, in the Library, Laois Arthouse, on *Wednesday 23rd October at 6.30pm* and all are welcome to come along and a cup of tea/coffee will be available.

This year he has made site specific audio work in Limerick (*Cumann: An Audio Map of Limerick*, Limerick City Gallery of Art), Drogheda (*Cumann*, Droichead Art Centre, & as part of *Beyond the Pale*, Highlanes) and in Dublin (*Rest Here*, UCD Sutherland School of Law & *Ocean Wonder Resort Revelations*, Portrane). His artists book of drawings, *I am here because I know you will be too* was published by Dublin City Council in 2014. Michael McLoughlin has exhibited widely in Ireland and internationally. Previous work includes: *It's nice to see our friends once in a while*, The LAB 2010; *I only come here cos it's free*, Limerick City Gallery of Art 2008. *Welcome Back*, Breaking Ground, Ballymun 2006-2007; *Audience (1) Waltzers* with Mary Nunan, various venues 2007-2008; *Bypass/Shared Designs* Limerick City Gallery of Art, 2003.

WHEN ART FORMS COLLIDE

the poetic note

As the conversation rolls on about where art meets emerging technologies, and the volume increases on the notion that it is imperative for all art forms to interact with technology, services, environments and gadgets – Westmeath duo 'The Poetic Note' have a refreshing approach to merging art forms in an 'old school' manner. Quite simply – music meets poetry.

Poetry and Music are the foundation stones of the Martin O'Hara and Anne Gaffney's performance, Martin brings the music – Anne the words. 'The poetic Note' performed recently in Athlone's Methodist Church, and for anyone who missed their

performance, their unique style is available to experience on their website. The duo also create bespoke commissioned pieces, which make an interesting proposition for significant events.

Google's *Jacquard Project* may make it possible for us to create textiles that have interactivity woven into their fabric, apparently we'll be 'wearing our platforms', and not the 'shoe variety'... but sometimes creative crossovers can be much more pared back than this. 'The poetic Note' is an exemplar of the unlaboured crossover.



Longford artists join forces for NOVEMBER EXHIBITION

Wednesday, November 9 is a date for the diary of any art enthusiast in the midlands, as Longford artists Mary Gray and Angela Tuite open their joint exhibition.

Mary Gray has spent most of her life painting and has worked on various mediums, including oils, watercolours and acrylics, as well as pottery and other crafts through her studies in Art and Design in Sligo IT. The mediums with which she works at present, however, are acrylic and watercolour. Mary has exhibited her paintings throughout the midlands, Cavan and the west of Ireland and has a collection of prints from her paintings, which will be on display at the exhibition.

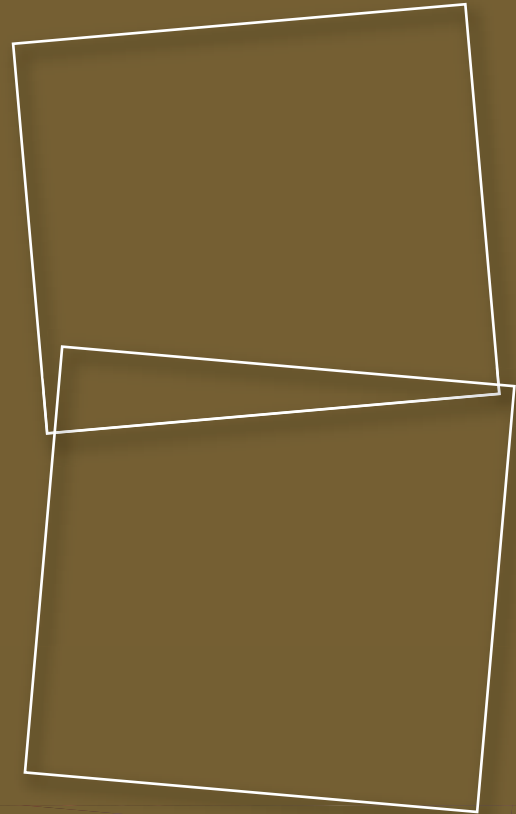
Meanwhile, Angela is a renowned artist who has exhibited widely in Ireland and her work is held in many public and private collections throughout the world.

Her artistic talents have grown over the years and, influenced by the impressionists, Angela works mostly on silk, canvas and slate.

While the majority of her work deals with natural-based themes such as landscapes and treescapes, still life and abstract. She also explores the magical, mythological essence of nature with her vibrant paintings and her ideas, emotions and visual experience are expressed through her love of colour, texture and fabric.

Mary's latest collection, which will be on display at the exhibition is a mixture of contemporary acrylic and watercolour scenes including landscapes, seascapes and wildflower meadow. Featuring vibrant and expressive colours, the scenes depict a mood of fantasy which aims to bring you to a new place.

Angela's work, dramatic silk and oil paintings, is also a celebration of the wonderful native landscapes. The flora and fauna are brought alive through her vibrant use of colours and textures, resulting in a timeless collection of original works of art.



by Ciara Kelly

SINGFEST A SHOWSTOPPER

After its hugely successful debut in Athlone Institute of Technology over the summer, *Singfest* will return for 2017. A project of Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath (MGOW) and the Association of Irish Choirs, Singfest brings the expertise of the Irish Youth Choir right into the heart of the midlands.

In 2016 *Singfest* involved more than 3,500 children and young people attending MGOW partner schools. This unique choral residency concluded in a three day festival of singing. Days one and two brought together 900 young singers who experienced a communal choral event fondly known as the Big Sing, where singers were both the audience and performer! The Gala Concert held on day three showcased the achievements of three new choirs who over monthly rehearsals learnt a wide variety of music and were accompanied by a host of professional musicians.

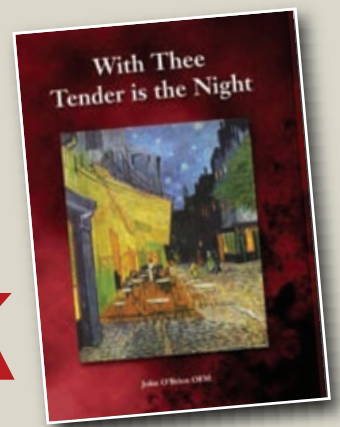
Greg Beardsell explained "over the day long rehearsals we worked on things like body percussion and beat-boxing as well as singing in different styles and genres and exploring their voices. It's been fantastic."

MGOW Development Officer Margaret Broome added "we were able to get children to think about the music that they were making and to focus on the way they sing, and learn a bit more about how to sing well."

Singfest 2017 is building on the success of last year by introducing additional rehearsals for their festival choirs and planning an exciting repertoire for MGOW participating schools. Festival Choir rehearsals begin this Autumn in Athlone IT where 'Singfesters' will begin their journey of building musical skills as they develop a lifelong love of music.

Singfest is a project of Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath in partnership with the Association of Irish Choirs funded under the Arts Council/ Music Generation partnership. Music Generation Offaly Westmeath is a music education service for children and young people, it is part of Music Generation - Ireland's National Music Education Programme a Music Network initiative, co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, The Department of Education & Skills and Local Music Education Partnerships. For more information please see www.offaly.ie/Music-Generation/

Franciscan priest Fr John O'Brien's Book gets the thumbs up from Rome



'With Thee Tender is the Night' was launched in Athlone's Shamrock Lodge Hotel at the beginning of July and is published by Amazon. With a title inspired by the John Keats poem, 'Ode to a Nightingale', Fr John O'Brien OFM's latest publication, launched in July of this year, has been well received by its readers.

Speaking from Jezi, Italy, where he is now based, after spending twenty years in the Friary in Athlone until 2014, the Franciscan priest and Galway native explained that the book was written for a lady he knows in the area. "I wrote it for her, showing the features of God in the Bible and in the lives of spiritual people through the ages," Fr O'Brien explained, adding that a copy had been sent to Pope Francis and he had received a letter of appreciation in return.

Fr O'Brien joined the Franciscan Order in 1975 and has been an ordained priest since 1985. He has studied in Rome and has worked as a teacher, chaplain and advisor throughout Ireland.

His writing began during a time spent in Co Cork, when he wrote a short book for the Third Order on depression and its success led to further requests for books on various other topics.

"I had all the thoughts running around my head and people asked me would I put them onto paper," Fr O'Brien continued.

Aside from writing, Fr O'Brien is involved in several other groups and initiatives, including the Pope John Paul II facility in Loreto. "They're very open to helping young Irish people who are struggling with mental illness," Fr O'Brien explained, but later pointed out that they need further support from Ireland to help the initiative go ahead. Young people would have access to psychiatrists, psychologists and other professionals who work with young people in particular, but on arriving home, the youths would have no support group or follow-up care. "We're trying to build up a network," Fr O'Brien said. As he works towards that network, ideas for his next publication are already forming, as he admitted; "They're only beginning to take shape".

Copies of Fr John's book can be purchased from Amazon, Veritas or from the Sisters of Adoration.

Dahl and a Decade: HULLABALOO HEADLINERS

Taking place from 2nd - 5th November, young audiences are in for a treat. It's been 10 years since Offaly's Children's Arts Festival Hullabaloo first began. Reaching around 1500 children in three of Offaly's towns (Birr, Clara and Edenderry) over four days, the festival features creative workshops by professional artists and shows by nationally touring theatre companies.

Hullabaloo is celebrating this decade in conjunction with another major milestone, Roald Dahl's 100th Birthday. The famed author's tales have reached children across the globe with the name Dahl synonymous with kid's literature and film. Children are being advised to look out for golden tickets in programmes granting them free admission to a show of their choice.

Many of the festival's workshops will incorporate Dahl themes from animation to film adaptation's soundtracks. A Giant Peach, namesake of one of Dahl's most famous books, will even occupy Birr Town!

As for shows *Little Bigtop* is a theatre company based in North Tipperary, which engages with young and pre-school children. Their 'Sunflower Show' is a quirky piece of street theatre using suitcase puppetry. "A gardener opens the lid of her wheelbarrow to reveal a world where seeds grow into the most extraordinary plants and battle with slugs and other mischievous garden pests for survival. Hands on elements actively involve the young audience ... flower pots become stacking cups, have a go at watering a seed in a pot ... will it grow?"

New to this year's line-up is Punch Lion Kids' Comedy Club; "a family friendly stand-up comedy experience featuring comedians with the silly jokes, sketches and songs for kids, big people and friends."

Returning to Hullabaloo this year are the Fanzini Brothers with 'Ronaldo Fanzini King of Mayhem,' "Be afraid, be very afraid, Ronaldo has escaped from the clutches of his brother Guido and is ready to entertain all and sun-dried! He has a mini bike, knives, a unicycle and suitcase loads of mayhem; an interactive show with comedy at its heart and sprinklings of circus skills on the top."

For more information on Hullabaloo! Offaly's Children's Arts Festival see www.hullabaloo festival.ie





dan EDWARDS

Dan Edwards, blacksmith, craftsman and artist is a man with a huge depth of artistic creativity. He is a quiet scholar of history, literature, legend and mythology, with a strong connection to Clonmacnoise its landscape and its people. These values are clearly demonstrated in the mastery of his art.

Dan was born in Carrowkeel, Clonfanlough, near Clonmacnoise in County Offaly where he has spent all of his 91 years. This book documenting his work and experiences over nine decades was written by Declan Ryan with Dan Edwards and it is the result of many evenings spent together with Declan recording the stories and experiences Dan related.

'His quiet self-effacing humility belies his huge depth of artistic creativity, his knowledge of history and literature and intense spiritual connection with his local landscape and those who have peopled it from the dawn of time... Over the years, so many people have come to listen and learn and seek advice at the door of his forge' Michael Donnegan

The range of Dan's work is extraordinary – the ability to make replica iron age Axe heads from a description given by archaeologist Aiden O'Sullivan of UCD, the study and making of the Medieval Bell for Cáin Adamnán 1300th

Anniversary Celebrations for Birr Historical Society to the sculpture of Lords and Ladies and the Clonfanlough stone, inspired by the landscape around him.

Dan has all the experience and knowledge from working in a traditional forge alongside his father but he could not wait for the electric welder to come along and he had one purchased in anticipation before the electricity came to Clonfanlough. Of note is his comment that he believes that he did some of his best work in his seventies.

***Dan Edwards, the Life and Times of a Craftsman and Artist* By Declan Ryan with Dan Edwards is published by Offaly County Council and is available for sale locally in throughout West Offaly and from selected shops in Tullamore.**



**The Life and Times of
a Craftsman and Artist**
by Amanda Pedlow





100 Years 100 Faces

100 Years 100 Faces is a collection of artworks from the art facilitators and participants of Anam Beo; Offaly's Arts, Health and Wellbeing Programme. Aisling Brennan, Rowena Keaveny, Jackie Lynch and Julie Spollen facilitated and curated this exhibition of portraits, quilts, collage, lilted and reflections for the 2016 centenary year.

All of the artwork is based upon individuals within the community. It is an accumulation of portraits of faces, old and new, from Anam Beo participants. Rowena Keaveny and Julie Spollen together worked these faces into a colourful grid showing a diversity of talent and styles in the participants and facilitators' approach to portraiture.

At Ofalia House in Edenderry, Aisling Brennan facilitated *Music and Reminiscence* workshops, involving songs chosen by individuals to represent people from the last 100 years. Singing sessions and stories were shared and reflected upon. Peter Kane, a member of Comhaltas for over 35 years demonstrated his voice as his instrument. Aisling recorded Peter in "Lilted" for the exhibition.

Jackie Lynch's interest in Arpillera quilts (Argentina) came to the fore with her process led

workshops at Birr Community and Nursing Unit. As part of her 2016 programme Jackie explored with participants their family memories and stories of 1916 and the years following. Residents were invited to translate these into colourful textile art. Mounted on burlap these vivid quilts tell tales of everyday life during this eventful time in Irish history.

The Irish Wheelchair Association and Riada House contribution consisted of individual portraits and group collages, which were produced during sessions with Julie Spollen. For the exhibition Julie produced a short clip 'An old pedestal and a new song' using the portraits with a voice recording and music from the 1950's – a time of positivity and light, portraying an energy being felt with the younger generation of that time.

Clara Day Care, the IWA and Birr Mental Health Centre also enjoyed the art and recording sessions with Rowena Keaveny, creating a diverse range of artwork and a short clip with a conversation about times that were.

100 Years, 100 Faces had its launch in Tullamore Community Arts Centre (formerly Kilroys) with many of Anam Beo's participants in attendance. Open to the public the exhibition was also attended as a workshop by a local school.

Supported by Offaly County Council Arts Office and the Offaly County Council 2016 Centenary Fund, the Dublin Mid-Leinster HSE, ANAM BEO the Arts Council. To find out more please visit www.anambeo.wordpress.com

Moate star swaps stage for screen

Well known for his musical prowess, country star and former Westmeath County Councillor TR Dallas - otherwise known as Tom Allen - swapped the stage for the screen this year, presenting a new country music television show.

'Keltic Country Legends with TR Dallas', which was broadcast over ten weeks on the Showbiz TV channel, featured some of the biggest names in country music.

Recorded in May and June of this year, the show, produced by Claddagh Productions, welcomed guests such as Big Tom, Philomena Begley and Ray Lynam, and it is hoped that the show will be followed up with

a second, similar series which will aim to entice younger people from across a variety of interests and topics to take part.

TR has also kept himself busy off screen, with tours in Ireland and overseas throughout the year, ranging from gigs in his native Moate to UK and US tours.





Making a mark on the streets of Longford

The third annual Cruthú Arts Festival had a lasting effect on Longford, thanks to six, stunning, evocative pieces of art which have been forever etched on walls throughout the town.

"It started off when we had a smaller bit last year. We had a cube on the square and I invited a friend down from Dublin and he recruited a couple of artists," explained Phil Atkinson, the Dromod-based artist and Cruthú committee member who co-ordinated the street art element of this year's festival.

Last year's festival also saw James Quinn (otherwise known as Cern) paint a colourful mural at the back of the Market Square over the course of the weekend, drawing admiration and interest from visitors and passers-by.

Driven on by that success, the committee, with the help of Longford Tidy Towns and local publican and county councillor John Browne, sourced six walls which were to become a canvas for six very talented and very different visual artists.

"The artists themselves had free reign," Phil continued. "The only stipulation we had was when John Browne gave me his wall. He asked if I could keep some pub theme so I painted a Toucan with a pint of Guinness."

The piece was inspired by rainforests, but also tied in with Phil's popular 'Birds with Beats' series of paintings, which depict birds wearing 'Beats' headphones.

"That's the biggest piece I've done," said Phil, whose freehand work is located in Mollaghan's carpark at the side of John Browne's bar on the Market Square. "I'd done a mural in the library over a long period of time – it took me four or five weeks to paint.

"I was a bit nervous at the start [of Cruthú] that I wouldn't have it done on time." His nerves were thankfully unfounded and Phil's creation was a hit with Cllr Browne and with passing locals. Next to Phil's painting is that of ILJIN, who was inspired by the Irish countryside to paint a woman with her cow. This drew a lot of attention, with many making a comparison to the story of 'Táin Bó Cualigne' or 'The Brown Bull of Cooley'.

Just around the corner, on Ballymahon Street, Kathrina Rupit's (KINMX) huge, colourful mural, depicting contemplation, catches the eye and continues to garner great praise, even months after the festival, while Kevin Bohan's inspirational artwork gives those passing by the junction of Killashee Street and Harbour row plenty of food for thought. "It's all to do with people being able to change the path that they're on," Phil revealed. "You should never feel that you're stuck on the wrong path."

On Chapel Street, just down from the Cathedral and facing Geraldine Terrace which backs onto Longford Shopping Centre, Emma Blake (ESTR) has painted a striking, black and white piece of two men, facing towards a lighthouse. Their beards intertwine as waves in the sea as they meet in the middle, and this has impressed Longford children in particular, many of whom have claimed it to be their grandfather!

Finally, James Quinn (Cern) returned again this year, and has left his mark on the town, more specifically in 'Kelly's Lane' beside Longford Courthouse, just off Main Street. Looking down the lane, locals are met with the realistic stare of a huge barn owl, with its wings spread out as if in flight. "Even while we were painting we seemed to get a great response," Phil smiled. "It seemed to have a positive effect and I still hear people chit-chatting about them now."

Aside from providing a talking point, the newest editions to Longford town's landscape have made art more accessible to a wider audience and have changed people's opinions on visual art. It's something Phil is keen to continue, as he added; "It would be nice to continue with it as long as the people of Longford are happy to have it."

Celebrating the people of LONGFORD

There will be many familiar faces around the Backstage Theatre on Thursday, December 1.

They won't be attending a show, however. Rather, they will be adorning the walls, as Dromod-based artist Phil Atkinson presents his first major solo exhibition, inspired by the people of Longford. A self-taught artist, Phil completed a PLC course in Fine Art at Templemichael College, Longford, and is a key committee member in the annual Cruthú Arts Festival. He works almost exclusively through the medium of air-brushed acrylics, and over the next couple of months, he will be painting the portraits of well known individuals.

"It's based on Longford people, ordinary people that put in a shift, that do a lot for Longford that often don't get recognition or even look for recognition," Phil told Midlands Arts and Culture, before revealing that his girlfriend, Anna Delaney, was also playing a role in the exhibition, as a writer. At the moment, the plan is to feature ten local faces in the exhibition. Each

subject will be interviewed, and as they speak, Phil will take photographs. The paintings will be multi-layered, according to Phil, and will capture the essence of the interview, while Anna will use pieces of the interviews and weave them with her own words to accompany the paintings. It's also hoped that the two will produce a small book containing their works.

"I've got the first one done and I'm quite happy with it," Phil continued, revealing that the completed painting features 'Fireside Tales' author Jude Flynn. "It's an appreciation for the people we've chosen. Some you would know well. For example, one woman works in a coffee shop and she's the heart and soul of the coffee shop." Phil has already enhanced Longford town with his art over the past few years, so this exhibition, launching at 8pm on December 1, is not to be missed.

Foundation's RENAISSANCE

Foundation 13, 14 and 15 was a festival in Tullamore centred on the visual arts with a multidisciplinary programme of gigs, theatre, spoken word and workshops. The festival, curated by Brendan Fox and his team and supported by the Arts Office of Offaly County Council aimed to set out what an arts centre programme and engagement would feel like for the people of Tullamore.

Over the last three years Foundation Arts Festival, engaged with schools, local businesses, and community and arts groups to reach as broad an audience as possible. In 2016, it was decided that Foundation would evolve to support the local community via the arts to create a series of projects or 'happenings' around Tullamore.

Earlier in the summer an invitation to collaborate was put out, with the guideline that a professional artist would engage with an organisation (community group, school, business etc) in Tullamore leading towards a tangible outcome and/or public event of some description.

A total of four projects were chosen including visual art, spoken word, theatre and choreography. Dublin based multidisciplinary artist Fergus Byrne will work with dancers and local participants in creating a kinetic sculpture of people and 'choreosculptures' at various locations around Tullamore, this will involve the use of wooden frames and the dancer's surroundings.

Currently in the development stage, it is hoped that this approach will support and animate local arts practice, so that when the centre opens its doors, the local creative community will be well placed to be part of the centre's programme and community engagement.

To find out more about Foundation and Offaly's Arts programme please visit www.offaly.ie/arts





Dunamais Arts Centre Professional Development Workshops for Artists

Each Season, Dunamais Arts centre welcomes established, emerging and hobby artists, not just for exhibitions, but for classes and seminars, offering opportunities for professional and skills development. Establishing areas of interest through discussion with artists, curators, Laois Arts Office, art teachers and Visual Artists Ireland, Dunamais has hosted workshops on photography of artworks and proposal writing skills as well as a range of Artist Talks on various subjects.

This season Dunamais continues its weekly **Art Workshops for All Ages with Artist Caroline Keane**, who has encouraged many lapsed adult painters and dabblers to take back up the brush and reconnect with their love of art through friendly and closely guided art classes. Children, toddlers and their parents also have the chance to explore various materials and learn skills through fun weekly sessions.

Past guest-curator, artist Eamon Colman, returns for a series of highly acclaimed **Life Drawing Classes**, rarely available in the Midlands. This is a wonderful opportunity to enhance fine art skills of drawing a live model, under Eamon's knowledgeable and encouraging guidance.

Visual Artists Ireland and Laois Arts Office, together with Dunamais will present an **Art and Ecology seminar** titled 'Sites of Tension / Sites of Collaboration' on Saturday 19 November.

The seminar brings together artists and environmentalists for discussion on arts practices with interdisciplinary approaches to working around the issue of local and global land-use and ecology. Speakers include artists Monica De Bath and Gareth Kennedy; Academic Deirdre O'Mahony and Ecologist Dr. Catherine Farrell, chaired by Paddy Woodworth. Invited case study speakers include Abbeyleix Bog Group and artist Lisa Fingelton. Places are limited and can be booked through

monica@visualartists.ie or call 01-6729488. Details on www.visualartists.ie. As a highlight of this day, artist Monica de Bath and her current exhibition at Dunamais, *PLOT / CEAPACH*, will be celebrated with a reception at 5pm, with guest speaker, Laois Arts Officer, Muireann Ni Chonaill. All are welcome.

Artists, curators and educators are always welcome to suggest future subjects of art classes, workshops and seminars at Dunamais. Contact Michelle de Forge, Venue Director on michelle@dunamais.ie or 057-8663355. Details on all art classes and exhibitions are on www.dunamais.ie and in our season brochure.

Dunamais Arts Centre Bringing the Arts to Life in Laois

While the new season is just beginning to appear on the trees, autumn at Dunamais Arts Centre is well underway, with a jam packed entertainment offering of award-winning and highly acclaimed events on offer.

Music lovers can look forward to a wide variety of performers on the Dunamais stage including the classical Vanbrugh Quartet; the cream of Irish country with Shawn Cuddy, Richie Kavanagh and Kathy Durkan; Portlaoise singer-songwriter James O'Connor; the inimitable Red Hurley. High notes from Magical Mozart by Candlelight and Portlaoise favourites 65 Kitchen Choir will lead us into the Christmas season. We welcome back national treasure Jack Lukeman with his brand new knock out show and we finish before Santa's arrival with Kevin Morrin, back by popular demand following his recent sold out show.

Critically acclaimed productions by Irish theatre heavy weights John B. Keane's (*The Matchmaker*) and Tom Murphy (*Bailegangaire*) opened the season. Upcoming touring theatre includes the heart-warming *The God Box*, with proceeds towards the Irish Hospice Foundation; the blistering and hilarious *Fred & Alice* and the first ever stage adaption of Maeve Binchy's *Minding Frankie*, as part of Leaves Literary Festival.

Children, whether with schools or families, have lots to enjoy at Dunamais. Go along on *Humpty's Big Egg Venture*, enjoy livelier classical music than you've ever experienced before in the company of *Graffiti Classics* with their 16 strings, 8 dancing feet and 4

voices! We see the seasons through with spooky magic from *Jackula* and film fun of *Goosebumps* for Halloween. *Frosty the Snowman* will take to the stage for schools and families performances as well as the hugely popular sing-a-long film screening of *Frozen*.

Dunamais Cinema's superb selection of morning and evening screenings includes Irish documentaries, award winning European films and American classics, as well as educational screenings presented with the Irish Film Institute. Q&As with filmmakers are often programmed as an added attraction!

Upcoming Gallery Exhibition *Plot/Ceapach* by Monica de Bath explores tensions between making a living and ecological land use, and will include a related seminar on Art and Ecology. The annual Dunamais Open Exhibition invites artists from all over Ireland to submit work for the final show of the year.

Hands on experiences of the arts are highly encouraged at Dunamais. Toddlers, children and adults alike, at all skill levels, can join artist Caroline Keane for weekly art classes. Or why not try a once-off Origami class, a relaxing way to discover your inner artist! Dunamais is also delighted to welcome back artist Eamon Colman for another series of Life

Drawing Classes for Adults, which is rarely available in the Midlands.

Following a highly successful 4th Annual James Fintan Lalor Autumn School, Dunamais once again collaborates with Laois County Council Arts Office and Library services as host venue for Leaves Literary Festival events. Cinema and theatre adaptations of well known books are programmed alongside music, poetry workshops and author readings by top crime-fiction writers include Andrea Carter, Thomas Enger, Niamh O'Connor and Louise Philips. Don't miss this opportunity to meet top Irish and international writers over a cosy November weekend!

Season highlights also include a return visit by the one of Ireland's most distinctive writers, Michael Harding, Portlaoise Musical Society's production of *Hello Dolly* and nothing evokes the magic of Christmas quite like *The Nutcracker*, brought to the Dunamais stage by Ballet Ireland.

For further details on Dunamais Arts Centre's events call in to the Box Office at Church Street Portlaoise, call the Box Office on 057 8663355, see www.dunamais.ie or pick up a copy of the season brochure, widely available in libraries and businesses across Laois.

PLOT/CEAPACH

Exhibition at Dunamais Arts Centre

22 October - 27 November

PLOT / CEAPACH was seeded during a temporary residency in one of Bord na Mona's peat production sites, where mountains of peat lay drying before being ferried to a power plant. PLOT selects sites of tension related to Land Use. The work does not privilege the narrative of expert knowledge over that of lived experience, but instead attempts to reveal the many distinct voices around PLOT, echoing the "contrapuntal thinking" of Edward Said.

Plot 1 entered the discourse on potential futures for cut away at a time when Bord na Móna's ecology team were preparing their first 5 year biodiversity strategy. Describing the nature of the site, a land manager spoke of how *'it is underlain by a white shell marl that grew in the water for many years – a marl that is even older than the twelve thousand year old bog'*. This perspective of thinking in terms of millennia not lifetimes, is now central to my art practice.

Over time, people who worked at, and managed the site, visited my temporary studio and we spoke about our respective work practices. In turn, I visited their workshops and work sites. A disused ganger's hut, in the middle of shifting bog land, became my daytime studio for a while. This triangular hut was in full view of the peat harvesting and seemed to beg the question, 'What would happen to the cutaway?'^{vi}

Workers spoke of how they had grown potatoes, carrots and onions. Someone spoke about an abandoned blueberry project on Bord na Mona lands. I began developing a series of paintings that re-imagined that hut and its observations. One thing

led to another and I was given access to a piece of partially cut away bog land to develop as a site action. With support from workers, the site was selected, cleared and planted with mature blueberry bushes sourced from the abandoned project.

Plot 2 focuses on sphagnum moss trials in the first mined peatlands in Ireland. My entry point into exploring acts of land rehabilitation was conversations and site visits with ecologists and remaining workers at Oweninny Works. The return of miniscule plants... Palustre, Subnitens, Squarrosus ... to a vast area of mined peatland was the lens through which I thought / painted and conversed with this fragile space in the West of Ireland.

Plot 3 explores seaweeds in Gaeltacht areas on the Atlantic Coast (Irl) & PLOT 4 investigates fossil and biofuels in a power plant on the Bog of Allen. Samples of Sphagnum moss^{vii}, seaweed and biofuels will inhabit the Dunamais Arts Centre – along with Paintings, Conversation notebooks and short films.



Hannah Arendt's ideas on how the "space of appearance" comes into being wherever men are together "in the manner of speech and action"^{iv} – are echoed in the intent behind PLOT of creating a poetic space for deeper dialogue around land use.

I wish to thank Denise Reddy, Curator, Dunamais Arts Centre, VAI, Laois Arts Office, Kildare Arts Office, Bord na Móna, Seminar Presenters, Abbeylax Bog Group, for their support.
Monica De Bath

Saturday, 19th November – Seminar, 'Sites of Tension / Sites of Collaboration' from 10.00 – 4.30 and Exhibition reception at 5pm.

THE TRENCH AWARD 2016

The Midlands' opera stars of the future shone brightly at The 2016 Trench Award Gala at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre recently as Mullingar Soprano Sarah Brady claimed top classical prize.

by Rebecca Kelly

Now in its third year, the Trench Award is a bursary which aims to assist young singers and musicians who are pursuing a career in professional performance in the field of classical music.

After wowing the judges with a thrilling performance, Mullingar's Sarah Brady (soprano) took home the top bursary valued at €2,500 thanks to an impressive programme that included pieces from Handel, Mozart and Donizetti. Sarah recently completed her BA in Performance at the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM). She sang a number of operatic roles at the RIAM and recently performed at the Wigmore Hall, London as part of the 1916 Commemorations.

Rachel Goode, a soprano from Ballinasloe, achieved the second award of €1500. A performer of extensive experience, she is now training at The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWC). The evening also featured performances from Emma Kenrick, Clonmel (flute), Lucia MacPartlin,

Killaloe (violin), Nicole Robinson, Banagher (soprano) and Philip Keegan, Tullamore (tenor) all displaying a high level of accomplishment in their chosen repertoire.

The selection panel of Nicholas Chalmers (Director Northern Ireland Opera/Neville Holt Opera) and John Molloy (international bass baritone) were greatly impressed with the overall calibre of each performer. Mr Chalmers praised each individual performer, commenting on their choice of music and interpretation. Under the Musical Futures bursary, Mollie Wrafter a young violinist from Geashill Co. Offaly performed two pieces demonstrating her as a worthy recipient of scholarship support. She is currently studying at the Royal Northern College of Music Manchester.

Co-ordinator of The Trench Award Maureen de Forge said: "It is greatly encouraging to see so many musicians and singers from the Midland

Region go on to devote themselves to a career in classical music."^{viii} "Playing and singing from an early age, years spent traveling to music lessons, to full time music college in Dublin, Cork and abroad is a costly business. It is a great pleasure to those of us involved in both funding and organising The Trench Award to be able support outstanding young artists such as Sarah, Rachel and Mollie. We know we will be hearing them on the concert and opera stage in the future."



John ENNIS

As Ireland draws to a close on its commemorative events for 2016/1916 John Ennis writes in his own words on his latest publication: *With the Elliott Sisters*

Earlier this year, I'd the great pleasure to launch my book *Eurydice 29* at Glasson, Athlone, on 16th March, the eve of the national day of celebration. The book, too, was a celebration, – a celebration of brave women – most of them Irish. The title of the book had been with me some fifteen years: I remember hearing the story of a young female musician, who strove against the odds to make a life for herself in music. Much earlier, I'd written the long poem *Orpheus* – referred to by US critic and academic Robert Hogan as the “most exciting poem since Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*”. But it was high time to balance the genders. In *Eurydice 29* the Eurydice of the title poem is the gifted young musician; Orpheus hasn't a note in his head. Eurydice is not the shadowy figure of myth, disappearing back into Hades, instead she is vibrant, –forever young, claiming her just limelight, never a day older than twenty-nine.

In the same way, our Irish heroines remain at heart forever young. kicks off with an epigraph spoken by Maev of *Táin* fame, whose place was at Crúachan in Roscommon. A woman fated to be defeated: her fate lay in the literal hands of the monastery scribes and is summed up in a final flourish (for fear you hadn't copped it already in the) “this is what happens when you put a mare at the head of an army”, and, by extension, a woman in charge of any enterprise. A scenario that's with us still, if one is to judge from the gender inequality, the plain misogyny of certain churches and persuasions. But *sin scéal eile*.

Eurydice 29 proper commences with a long poem to two young local heroines, sisters Eilís and Emily Elliott of Glasson, who were in the thick of

the 1916 Insurrection in Dublin; one sister no less brave than the other. Eilís herself was among the last group to surrender. With a change of clothing, and a hold all of revolvers, and hidden overnight in a vestry, she walked out with the mass goes next morning. In the days that followed, she aided the widows of dead revolutionaries. Emily survived too, but like her sister had a tough time of it in the ensuing War of Independence. Emily's business and that of her husband was continually ransacked by crown forces. Both sisters by trade were master confectioners. Standing alongside the sisters in the book are other brave women , among them La Pasionaria and Kalida Jarrar.

As a tribute to the many, unknown women – the unknown soldiers – activists during our revolutionary period, I had a persona of one, the sub-postmistress of Ballinalee, speak a poem of the same title. While most others had fled the town (it was next for torching by Tans, RIC and Regulars after Granard and Longford), she held her ground with McKeon and his fighters, winning the distinction of being the only Irish town, Ballinalee in Co. Longford, to successfully repel crown forces.

Along with that memorable night in Glasson, Goldsmith's “Village of the Roses”, when I launched *Eurydice 29* in the presence of the extended generations of the families of Eilís and Emily, an equally memorable night occurred at Áras an Mhuilinn in Mullingar later last March when young composer, Enda Seery, performed and directed his own tribute to the Elliott sisters. Enda used some of the phrases of my poem as headers for the movements of his work. If you haven't heard Enda's beautiful tribute, seek it out on Youtube.

Tóla

Not a lot to go on out in Dealbhna, only the local Disert Tóla,
Where the surrounding kids today are taught to “cipher
And to sing” – each a clash of camáns and skint knees –
The same Tóla he took a dander off down to Disert O'Dea,

Built our tallest round tower to house the scriptorium manuscripts,
Had his sanctuary blasted anyway by the numbskull roundheads of Cromwell,
Dame Julian's vernacular in their arse pockets, “All Will Be Well”.
Ages before that, Tóla, you'd walked back home – forsook the Aughties –

To your own calm hills, truly no paps, to wander over, the male breasts
Of Killulagh. Back to being a cool solitary hermit, if you could manage it.
Your luck ran out, didn't it, Tóla, for some squinting little shit, he stirred the shit,
Killed fair Coirten as he crossed the moon-lit threshold to your space,

Which would not be remembered were he not Lord of Dealbhna.
Already gifted locals were carving a stony Golgotha for you, Tóla,
Whose east face weathers on a stylised tree, one of our magnificent
Tall ones. Grandson of Ernin, your face radiant in the sun, a saint.

Horseleap, and Beyond

And then you asked me if I really was from out Horseleap,
For you'd asked the same of some know all on the stairs,
“Aye, your man up there with the black curls, he's from Horseleap
Surely.” I said that would be a long ways to cycle in to St. Mary's,

But Rocks, he cycles the two-way journey daily from Ballinacarrigy.
For me, the reality more hum drum, no, out by Coralstown,
Or Knockaville, for the names on the home place they kept
Changing all the time, , and, for an older brother,

Killucan came emblazoned on love letters from Clare Gaynor –
Before that, for our people, others on the road, Griffinstown –
Where they'd go under the clay, hopefully of a fine day.
I said there a fellow here that cycles in from Streete
And back. Just an ordinary conversation, tête-à-tête.

We'd broken the ice that September day waiting for first class,
And on Pegasus we rode off on bareback, who stopped for us.

Paul Moore

The year 2016 has been a very busy and exciting one for part time Tullamore photographer Paul Moore. Accountant by day and enthusiastic photographer the rest of the time, Paul's work has featured in many publications and locations and even graced the cover of Midlands Arts & Culture magazine this time last year.

Among the highlights of the year for him were the opportunity to cover the Electric Picnic as an official photographer, some of his images subsequently appeared on the 2FM website.

He started lecturing for the Dublin Photography School and held workshops for Facebook and Instagram. He was invited to attend this year's MojoCon Conference in the Aviva Stadium to photograph it and join a photowalk. "It is a conference that is hosted by RTE to highlight the latest developments in the fledgling world of the use of mobile devices in the world of Journalism," he explained.

"I was signed up by a stock photo company called Arcangel Images in 2015. They are based between London, New York, Paris and Malaga and they specialise in providing images for the book publishing industry. I had over 1,000 images accepted by them and I got four book covers with them so far this year."

Paul also did two photo shoots in Charleville Castle – one with the Ryan Tubridy show and the other with Conor O'Brien from the Irish band Villagers, an image from which appeared in Hot Press. During the year he also photographed his first wedding and completed his first christening photo shoot.

A photo shoot with Irish band Glimmermen (two of its members are from Tullamore) had special significance for the Moore family. Paul's image was used for the new album Breaking Out. "Coincidentally the front cover of their sophomore album was a shot of a me as a 12 year old jumping from an old shed which was taken by my father."

During the year Paul set up an album of photos on Facebook to showcase the Midlands as a tourist destination "as I feel that it is an area of the country that is often overlooked. It went to be shared well over 1,000 times. It brought the Midlands to a wider audience. And had the bonus of increasing my profile as a photographer."

Paul had a number of photos included in an exhibition in Idaho showcasing mobile photography and one of his photos was chosen for the Top Oil calendar for 2017. One of his images was shortlisted for the MIRA Mobile Prize this year and was exhibited at a show in Portugal while another image was shortlisted for the Irish Examiner Amateur Photographer of the year.

During the year he upgraded to a full professional camera kit and he recently reactivated the Paul Moore Photography page on Facebook and will be using this to showcase the best of his photos and is hoping to have a calendar out before Christmas concentrating on Tullamore.



MidlandsArts andCultureMagazine

A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD
OFFALY AND WESTMEATH

