

Light and Life at the Backstage Theatre

Solus 's Saol, an exhibition by mother and daughter, Frances and Órla Kelleher, will take place at the Backstage Theatre, Longford on Thursday, April 3 at 8pm.

Frances studied art informally, completing courses in studio, en plein air, life drawing, stained glass and pottery. She also spent time studying at the Art Students League of New York. Órla has completed her BA in Fine Art Painting, H.Dip in Art and Design Education and MA in Interactive media.

Both mother and daughter also teach art. Frances has taught adults and children for many years, and has three groups currently set up in Ballymahon, Co Longford, while Órla works for an art school, teaching art to adults and children around Dublin, while also taking on some graphic design and website updating amongst other tasks.

“I had loved drawing as a child and later on became very interested in art, when I resigned from working in the bank” Frances explained. In her artist’s statement, the Galway native explains that “Art has become the focus of and gives rich meaning to my life, calling me to observe and enjoy the wonder of all that is around me, that before I had taken for granted”. It is these wonders that inspire Frances to draw, paint and “also to teach art and share that magic!”

A lover of art from a young age, Órla explains, “I was very fortunate to have parents so supportive of and involved in the arts” she says, adding that creativity was always encouraged and that she had many happy childhood memories of taking a picnic to sketch with her mother.

“One day we were set up in the countryside looking out over beautiful fields with horses” Órla recalls. “I remember making quick charcoal sketches of the horses before I ventured to the nearby graveyard to draw headstones!” The exhibition itself, a mixture of land and seascape, still life and life drawing, will reflect the title of Solus 's Saol, or Light and Life.

“Currently, I am painting abstract mixed media paintings of the Irish landscape” Órla says, adding that it’s a departure from work solely based on the human figure for over a decade. Explaining how this interest in landscape came about, Órla says it was “initially sparked by an Autumn trip to Poland in 2012, followed a few months later by a holiday in Connemara with Mam and my soon-to-be 96 year old Gran.”

Struck by what she saw, Órla began to experiment with the subject. “This is the first time I have worked exclusively on landscape” she admits.

Frances and Órla have exhibited together many times, and though it can be stressful to try and balance art, work and life, the Kelleher women are very much looking forward to the Backstage exhibition.

