

# It's a wrap for Joe Caslin

Tullamore's most distinguished public building – Acre's Hall – was recently wrapped in a poster to celebrate Culture Night and the Foundation 15 Arts Festival. Renowned artist and local school teacher Joe Caslin was assisted by pupils from three secondary schools in the town in pasting the entire two story building with a portrait of a young man. The portrait is one of his ongoing projects called "Our Nations Sons".

Joe, who is an art teacher in Tullamore College, has already received much acclaim and publicity for similar installations across Ireland, most notably his portrait of two men embracing on a building in Georges St., Dublin ahead of the equality referendum last May. He was an Ambassador for Culture Night and the Tullamore 'portrait' was supported by Offaly County Council /Culture Night / Department of Arts and Foundation 15 Arts Festival in Tullamore.

The artwork intended to address the social issue that a generation of young males in Ireland have been pushed to the fringes of society whilst at the same time being left with feelings of neglect and apathy. With emigration, mental health issues, youth unemployment and suicide at the door of most Irish households, the aim of the portrait was to make a statement "that we chose not to live in a country where any young man is left behind," explained Joe.

The purpose of these large-scale portraits is to activate a community into addressing their own participation with the young men of their towns and villages.

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# Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine

A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN LAOIS, LONGFORD, OFFALY AND WESTMEATH  
AUTUMN/WINTER 2015 • ISSUE 24



**MidlandsArts**  
andCultureMagazine



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

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## FRASERBURGH ACADEMY SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO LAOIS

The Fraserburgh Academy, based in Aberdeen in Scotland, recently visited Co Laois, following the Laois School of Music Orchestra's fantastic trip to Aberdeen in March, earlier this year. The group travelled by coach and ferry from Fraserburgh, and stayed in Farran House, Ballacolla from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October.

The young musicians from Aberdeen spent the Sunday rehearsing with the Laois School of Music Orchestra to prepare for a wonderful concert that evening, which raised the roof with a wonderful 60-strong Orchestral sound under the direction of John Davidson (Laois School of Music) and Suzanne Elrick (Fraserburgh Academy).

The Scottish group also visited three schools in Co. Laois to perform for pupils and staff, and received a great welcome in each of the venues. Nuala Kelly, Co-ordinator of Laois School of Music, said 'the links between Laois and Fraserburgh Academy is something we want to further develop over the coming years, this is undoubtedly a fantastic opportunity for our young musicians, to perform alongside their Scottish peers, and of course it opens up opportunities for them to travel to new places, and make new friends.' Laois School of Music offer vocal and instrumental tuition, as well as a range of ensembles including the Laois School of Music Youth Orchestra. For further information see [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie) or call 057 8664127.



## A Word from the Editor

Autumn Winter is always an exciting time in the arts. This year it is even more exciting as 2015 marks the 30th anniversary since the 'creation' of the first Local Authority Arts Officer, a partnership between the Arts Council and Clare County Council in 1985.

The idea behind the initiative was simple – to bring professional arts expertise to the heart of local government. Since then the investment in the arts by local authorities – guided by arts officers – has proven to be one of the most effective means for the strategic development of the arts in Ireland.

The Arts Council will also shortly announce a new ten year plan so this is indeed an interesting time for the arts in the Ireland and in the midlands.

While all leads on nicely to the question posed by Manchán Magan on pages 18 and 19 – is the Midlands the cultural heart of Ireland?

We like to think so. And judging by the wide range of events and activities that were hosted throughout counties Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath on Culture Night 2015 then the Midlands is most certainly the heart of the country when it comes to the arts.

Vivienne Clarke of Acumen Media, Editor

# POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

## Westmeath artist reaches an audience of 59,000 with a little help from National Geographic

In June this year Westmeath based artist Teresa Doyle delivered a series of Art workshops at the Lakelands Area Retreat and Cancer Centre (LARCC). These workshops were supported by Westmeath Co Council's Arts and Community Scheme. The group/participants explored paint and collage and created a series of small postcard size canvases and actual postcards.

The week of the festival photographs of the display were uploaded on Doyle's Twitter account and Facebook page. And from there – the small story of these little postcards from the Heart became a very Big story.

The photo of this work in Claire's window was retweeted by Marilyn Terrell, Chief Researcher with National Geographic Traveller Magazine, Washington DC. Marilyn has 59k followers.

Working on the theme of 'Hi, a message to/from the Heart' each participant posted their postcards to 'Teresa at the Heart Box'.

This work was part of Doyle's Postcard Project (Window Display) supporting the new 'Hi' Festival in Mullingar. The paintings and postcards, along with others from the general public, were displayed in Claire's Handmade Studio window in Mount Street Mullingar.

Doyle is appreciative for all the support she received, for Claire in providing her window, to Westmeath County Council for the Arts funding, and of course the LARCC Centre for their support.



# A bright future ahead for Longford's Sé Chairde

There are few traditional music enthusiasts in Longford and the surrounding areas who have not yet heard the name 'Sé Chairde'.

The group of talented teenagers from the Edgeworthstown area has taken the world of trad by storm in the two years they have been together.

With an average age of less than 14 years old, the popular band consists of Laura Pakenham on whistle and bodhrán; Mikey Doyle on button accordion; Ciarán Mulligan on fiddle; Mary Sheridan on whistle and bodhrán; Lorna Beer on fiddle and Grace Ross on guitar, bodhrán, banjo and sean nós dancing.

Brought together by Pauline Flood to compete in last year's Community Games U14 competition, the group qualified for the All-Ireland. They returned for the U16 competition this year, and won the county competition, scoring a bronze in the All-Ireland Games in August.

Outside of the Community Games, the first, second and third year students have proven to be excellent buskers, topping the Junior category at the inaugural busking competition at the Longford County Fleadh, as well as the Rooskey Heritage Festival.

Talking about their success, a mother of one of the group members, Ann Mulligan said, "It's a testament to two years together and all the practicing they've done."

As their success grows, so too does their popularity, and they have played around the region for various festivals and events. Invited by Eugene Murphy to play for a second time in Tulsk, Sé Chairde have also been named among the line-up for a December fundraiser at St Mary's Church.

With the backing of their supportive parents, the six talented teenagers have been tutored by Elaine Reilly, with the assistance of Maeve Donnelly. Acknowledging the hard work put in by their tutors, the group also wish to thank Frank Kilbride, who provides Sé Chairde with a space to rehearse.

After a hugely successful few months, the teenagers will be busy now as they return to school and keep up group rehearsals. Though the Fleadhs and festivals have finished for another summer, you can guarantee that we'll be hearing plenty more from Sé Chairde in the not-too-distant future.



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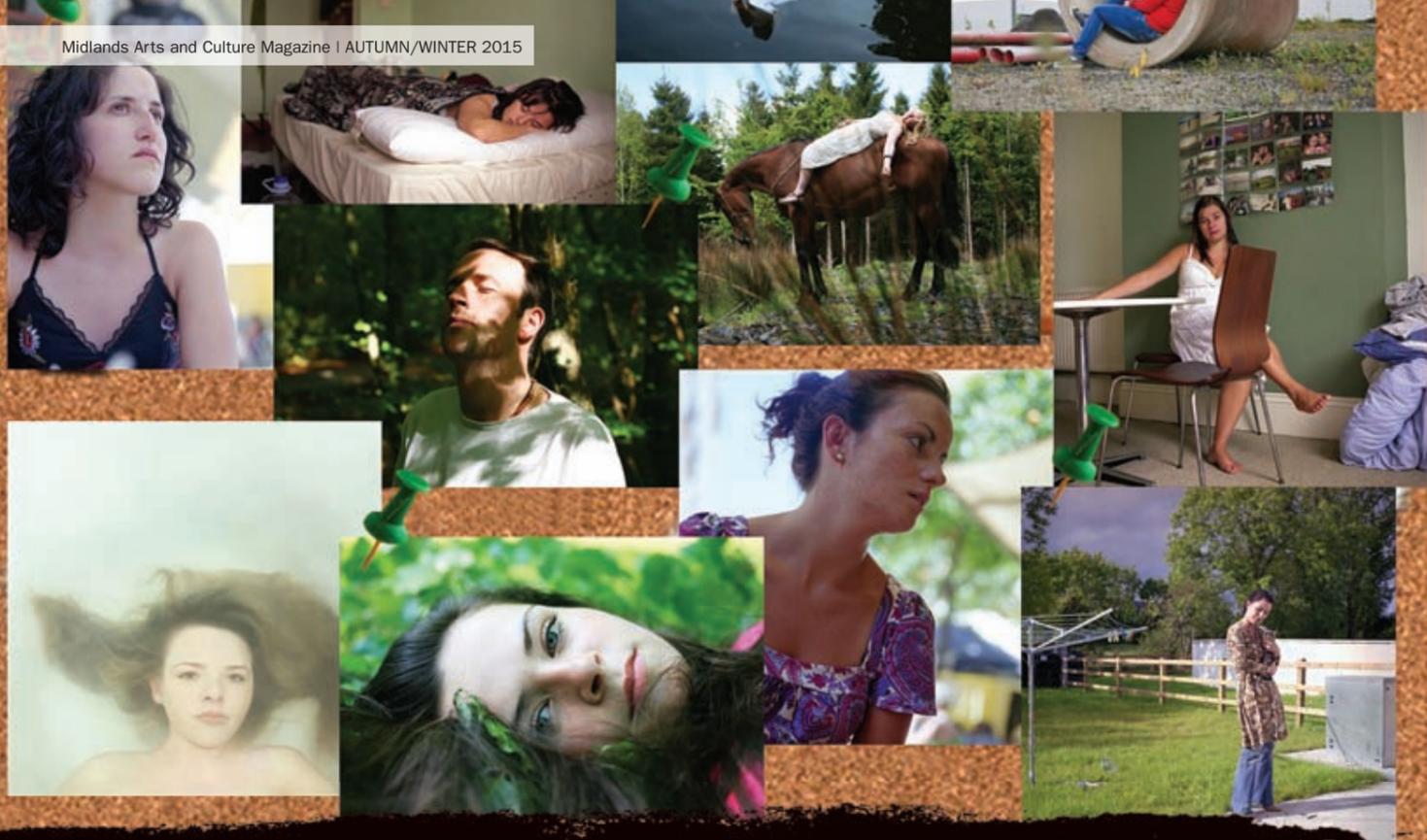
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# LAOIS FOLKTALES LAUNCH A Return to the Crossroads

The new publication *Laois Folk Tales* by Nuala Hayes, with illustrations by acclaimed artist Rita Duffy, was launched at Dunamais Arts Centre in Portlaoise recently.

The evening was a celebration of the rich culture and heritage of County Laois and included local storytellers and musicians along with Nuala, who shared some of the weird and wonderful tales she collected during her time at the Laois Arthouse in Stradbally earlier this year.

spoke warmly of the simplicity and yet the scholarly nature of the writing in the book, and complimented Nuala for her great commitment to the people and stories of Ireland over the years.

performed again at the Dunamais as part of the James Fintan Lalor School on 9th October. Rita Duffy's Artwork was also on display until October.

In 2002, Nuala Hayes was appointed Artist in Residence in County Laois. Her job was to unearth the stories hidden in the landscape and the history of Laois and in particular the Slieve Bloom Mountains. In the process she met with many people who shared stories with her. These voices were recorded for future generation to hear and enjoy, and a successful RTE Radio documentary "Tales at the Crossroads" was made.

An exhibition of the illustrations from the book by artist Rita Duffy also formed part of the event. Duffy is one of Ireland's most critically acclaimed artists, with work ranging from political to personal, and her detailed, intricate and beautiful work greatly enhances the publication.



In 2014, Nuala returned to the Crossroads of Ireland, where in ancient times all roads led to the centre. This time she worked at the Laois Arthouse, Stradbally, to rework some of the stories in book form, to pick up the threads and weave some more tales from the rich fabric of the history and the life lived for thousands of years in the Midlands of Ireland.

The new Laois Folktales book is published by History Press Ireland. It is one in a series of books about the Folktales of Ireland and they were commended during the evening for the contribution they have made to ensuring that the folklore of Ireland is treated seriously and recorded for future generations to understand and enjoy.

The project was supported by the Heritage and Arts Offices of Laois County Council, and Laois Library Service, with the assistance of the Heritage Council.



*Laois Folk Tales* was launched by Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, archivist of the National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin, who

Copies of the book were for sale for a limited time at the Dunamais Arts Centre and are available in all good bookshops, priced at €12.99. Nuala

# EXPRESSIONS will put LONGFORD on the MAP

When organisers of the inaugural Expressions photography competition made the decision to advertise the event online, they could not have predicted the reaction that they went on to receive.

"We decided, for cost reasons and convenience, to run it and promote it online," explained Longford County Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy. "What we overlooked was the global nature of the website." Ireland's largest dedicated arts photography portrait competition and exhibition, Expressions quickly grew legs and soon, entries were coming in from all over the world.

"The reaction was great and we were surprised with not only the amount but the quality of the entries," explained organiser, Shelley Corcoran. "We knew the talent was out there, but being our first year, we were unsure whether they would hear about us."

"Also the fact that we received entries that literally spanned the globe was so exciting, places like Israel, Mexico and the USA, just to mention a few."

19-year-old Adrian Wojtas, a student of Photography in IADT, was one of the Highly Commended photographers. For him, being named among the Highly Commended 'felt great'.

"The only notice that was given was that I'd been selected to be exhibited alongside 49 other artists

for the show in Longford, so when it was announced that I was one of the three Highly Commended finalists it was a total surprise, I felt quite shocked but also very pleased," he said.

Anna Kerslake, a 25-year-old photographer from Dublin was another of the Highly Commended. Also a student at IADT, Anna was previously a finalist for Photographer of the Year at the Smedias and has photographed a number of famous faces. A music lover, her 'kind of angelic but kind of dark' photograph was inspired by and based on the song 'Youth' from her favourite band Daughter's album 'If you leave'.

A native of Newport, Co Mayo, Micheál Quinn, admitted that he "entered for the craic," and was shocked when he was named among the Highly Commended.

"To be honest with you, I honestly entered it just for the sake of entering it." Offering sincere thanks to the organisers, and complimenting his fellow competitors, Micheál pointed out that it's always nice to get an insight into the work of his contemporaries.

For Shelley, focusing on the art aspect of the photographs was important, so the three Highly Commended artists and the winner Horia Manolache, who was at the exhibition in July via video link, stood out for both the quality of their work and the concept behind their pieces.

"All entrants had to supply a description of their work, the concept behind it," Shelley explained. "The winner Horia Manolache, photographed homeless people, how they are today and also what they aspired to be before their life took a downward spiral. This concept just blew us away."

Following the huge success of the inaugural competition, plans are already underway to make next year's event bigger and better. What's more, after next year, organisers are hoping to run Expressions biannually.

Acknowledging the 'huge effort invested' by Shelley, Angelika Sowul and the rest of the organising team, Fergus added that he is extremely excited about the future of the competition, concluding, "It has the capacity to put Longford on the global map."

[www.longforddigitalarts.ie/](http://www.longforddigitalarts.ie/)

# Rosemarie LANGTRY

Abbey Road Studios - Artist Rosemarie Langtry attended the International Encaustic Conference in Massachusetts, here she tells Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine of her experience.

In June I had an amazing opportunity to travel to the 9th International Encaustic Conference in Provincetown, Massachusetts, USA thanks to support from the Westmeath Arts Office. The Conference lasted for four days over the weekend and was followed by a number of workshops on various aspects of encaustic facilitated by internationally renowned artists who specialise in the medium of encaustic. I undertook two workshops to develop my particular areas of interest including the art of Bricolage and idea generation and development.

The Conference itself was a great networking opportunity and I met artists from all over the world who shared their knowledge and passion for this form of artwork. I was fortunate to have a piece of

work selected for the "Minimal/Maximal" exhibition juried by Mike Carroll at the Truro Art Centre Gallery. There was also an opportunity to sell work in the hotel fair and exchange business cards which allowed me to remain in contact. I have connected with the some of the artists to see how their practice develops via social media like Facebook.

The trip to Provincetown provided an invaluable insight into the worldwide profession of artists working in this field. The experience has enabled me to develop, engage and witness at first hand new processes and ideas to expand my own professional practice as a contemporary Irish artist. The trip far exceeded my expectations and unfortunately there are no other such events

nearer to home as very few European artists work with this medium.

I feel that it is important, like any art form, to follow your passion, enjoy, learn and be actively painting and creating.

I have recently completed a showcase of my current work "Nature's Way" in the Boardwalk area of the Luan Art Gallery in Athlone. In October I will be having a solo exhibition entitled "Fragments" in the Birr Theatre & Arts Centre and this will be followed by a joint exhibition in the Market Place, Armagh with two other encaustic artists. So the next few months will be a busy and exciting time and very much influenced by my attendance at the International Encaustic Conference.



# A 'Ticket to Ride' on the John Lennon Bus

The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus is a state-of-the-art audio and HD video recording and production facility made possible by Yoko Ono, staffed by three on-board professional sound engineers who guide young aspiring musicians on how to write, perform and record an original song, and produce and shoot an accompanying broadcast quality music video - all in a single day.



Offaly, Westmeath and Laois musicians in front of the John Lennon bus

There are only two buses in the world, one that tours the US, and the European bus which spent the month of August on an Irish tour visiting counties participating in Music Generation, Ireland's National Music Education Programme. For the Midlands that meant that 25 young people from Music Generation Laois and Music Generation Offaly/ Westmeath were offered the once in a lifetime opportunity of spending a full day on board the bus. For many of the members, this was their first experience of the music industry but you wouldn't have known it when you listen to the songs.  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/johnlennonbus/>

# CYCLING 'BULFIN COUNTRY'

As the Offaly 2016 commemorative year beckons, AMANDA PEDLOW writes of her High Nelly experience in 'Bulfin County' and the legacy of an extraordinary Offaly family.



Irish rain of the summer and autumn is a kind of damp poem, humid in fragrance, stealing into your life in a way that disarms anger,' William Bulfin 'Rambles in Eirinn' 1907; an historic travelogue around Ireland on a High Nelly

At William Bulfin's ancestral house in Derrinlough, outside Birr, people gathered and unloaded their freshly dusted down and pumped up 'high nellies'. Greeted by William's great grandchildren and two of his grandchildren, the posse were set for a two day cycling adventure across Offaly and Laois to one of the many trails from *Rambles in Eirinn*.

William Bulfin's writings on his rambles by bicycle were published as articles back in 1902 and 1903 and such was their popularity that they were compiled into a book which was reprinted on many occasions. William had spent many years in the Argentine and returning to Ireland he headed out on his High Nelly to visit the island on many different dates and routes. His writings discuss landscape, features of interest, people he encounters, the state of the Nation and attitudes to politics. William, who was a strong nationalist, sent his son Eamonn to Pádraig Pearse's school and later took part in the 1916 Rising, raising the Irish Republic flag in the GPO.

Hugh Shepard (founder of the Laois Scarecrow Festival) came up with the idea of cycling in the 'Wheelrims of William Bulfin' having read *Rambles in Eirinn* some years previously. The vast majority of cyclists were in period dress – albeit with cycling hats and the occasional reflector jacket. The very well cast actor Michael Creagh took the role of William and stopped periodically to reenact or read sections selected from the book and local historians met the group along the way.

There are many cycling enthusiasts on our roads, but revisiting or even sampling a High Nelly for the first time is a completely different experience. The cyclist is completely upright and it is all about observing your journey through the country side.

The first leg left Derrinlough, passing the now re-watered bogs which would not even have been harvested in William's day, cutting through the eskers and arriving into Birr. The route from Birr to the Black Bull was the toughest stretch with many red faces, with a better run past Gloster House and into Roscrea, before Ballaghmore Castle and up to Camross.

There was certain trepidation the next morning to see if legs would work, but all remounted and looking

south from the Slieve Blooms across the countryside, we freewheeled the whole way into Mountrath, onto the Fort of Maryborough, the Rock of Dunamais and into Ballyroan and Abbeyleix with Durrow finally looking like being in reach. We paused briefly in Abbeyleix before getting ready for the last stretch into Durrow which seemed like no distance at all. At Bob's Bar Mary Bulfin (great granddaughter) spoke of how she had often read *Rambles in Eirinn* and had thought about doing some of the routes, but she had never envisaged that it would be a journey shared with 30 others.

As Heritage Officer in Offaly, I felt it was a unique opportunity not to be missed, my training was insufficient but persistence got me to Durrow. However, the whole event brings home how an artistic angle on heritage can make a more memorable and meaningful event.

For those who want to be prudent and come better prepared than I was, now is the time to get your High Nelly serviced and start journeying as I hear that planning is afoot for a different Bulfin route in 2016.

For more information on 2016 in Offaly please see [www.offaly.ie/2016](http://www.offaly.ie/2016)



Dora Jordan



Grace O'Malley



Maria Edgeworth



Lady Mary Heath



Maud Gonne McBride

# HerStory. The Second Rising.

By Westmeath Arts Officer Miriam Mulrennan

History has forgotten HerStory. Artists, aviators, astronomers, rebels, pirates, inventors, writers, patriots, warriors, witches, satirists, courtesans, pioneering doctors, mistresses, mavericks, visionaries, saints and sinners.

Together these incredible Irish women charged through the centuries, breaking every rule in the book. Some were rebellious spirits, others had a more subtle nature, but they all had their own ideas on what it meant to be a woman, opinions which often collided with society's expectations of their sex. Perhaps this is why historians chose to ignore their stories, relegating these legends to the shadows. That is until now.

HerStory is a new major collaborative arts project which will bring these women back to life through experimental storytelling. The project is run by the Heart of Ireland (Hi) Festival and fashion designer Andrea Cullen. This is an open call to artists, designers, writers and actors, men and women, of all disciplines to come forward and get involved. HerStory will culminate in a grand exhibition and performances – a mélange of design, fine art, fashion, dance and theatre – at the Heart of Ireland Festival in July 2016. Ever ambitious, we won't stop there. We hope to take the exhibition on tour in Ireland and to Irish Diaspora centres around the World.

"So far we have recruited a fashion designer, playwright, theatre designer, poet, cinematographer, graphic designer, photographer, body-painter and fire-dancer. We are only getting started. Working with local historian Ruth Illingworth, we have

shortlisted 130 fascinating Irish women but the list grows every day. We have our work cut out for us if we are to do these heroines justice. So if HerStory tickles your imagination, please join us! You don't have to pick a lady from the list, you are welcome to tell the story of your ancestor or indeed anyone of your choosing, deceased or living," explains Melanie Lynch, Hi Festival Creative Director. "Before this project, I recognised a handful of names but what strikes me is the fascinating diversity and dramatics of these women's lives. Their life stories are peppered with brilliant anecdotes, insights and achievements. They leave fiction on the shelf."

The AIT final year graphic design students will take HerStory as their live brief this term, transforming historic and contemporary symbols of womanhood and domestic servitude into canvases to challenge perceptions and deconstruct stereotypes. Students will explore the evolution of Irishwomen and their role and representation in the family, media, culture and society. "We want to make taboos the talk around the table, across all generations. However this is not about pointing the finger. HerStory is all about recognition, respect, and brilliant storytelling," says Maria Bourke, Hi Festival founder.

Following on from the success of the Fashion Design through the Ages workshop and exhibition

at the inaugural Hi Festival in July, Andrea Cullen is running a new community workshop series, commencing in October. Andrea will also be working with fashion schools and professional designers to create a series of conceptual fashion garments and illustrative books, that embody each individual's unique character and life story.

HerStory will highlight the women of the 1916 Rising, who were the catalysts for the project, alongside Josephine Hart, the brilliant novelist and poetry evangelist from Mullingar. The Easter Rising was also the Women's Rising. This historic event is synonymous with nationalism, however, it was also a feminist and socialist movement that shook society and generated a renaissance in Irish culture.

Some would say that the Easter Rising remains unfinished business for women. Next year's centenary is an opportunity to look back and learn from our collective past, to explore what we have lost and gained, and stitch HerStory into history.

The HerStory website is under construction at the moment but you can follow developments on [www.heartofireland.ie](http://www.heartofireland.ie) or contact Melanie: [hi@heartofireland.ie](mailto:hi@heartofireland.ie)

# FRANK PIG GOES BACKSTAGE



Niall Cleary

Well known for their hilarious annual pantomimes, Longford's Backstage Youth Theatre (BYT) took on a new challenge earlier this autumn, in conjunction with the Backstage Theatre.

For the two groups, 2015 is a momentous year, as they both celebrate 20 years in existence. To mark the occasion, they joined forces for the theatre's annual in-house production – and what a production it was.

Lead by renowned director Niall Cleary, more than twenty youth theatre members, along with the theatre's backstage team, brought Pat McCabe's 'Frank Pig Says Hello' to life.

A darkly funny, and at times extremely raw piece of theatre, the play, which is based on McCabe's novel, 'The Butcher Boy', was a first for the youth group in their twenty year history, and while there were initial concerns about the suitability of the piece, they were soon assuaged.

"I didn't think it was suitable to do with a youth group because there's some heavy issues in there," Niall explained. "Then I came up and met the group and I said, 'sure I'll bring it up anyway, I'll bring up a section and we'll use it during the workshop'.

"The scene that I brought up, it was a scene that when I read it, I didn't have a notion how to stage it, so I said 'I'll bring it up and I'll see how they

work, I'll see what they can do with it', and they were brilliant!" he continued. "I was really kind of taken aback at how good everyone was and how up for it everyone was."

Niall also added praise for Backstage Theatre's Sean Mulroy, Doug Fox Roberts and Mairtín Kenny who also lent their talents to the production.

While he was surprised at first by the talent contained within BYT, Niall quickly came to expect the same level of professionalism at each rehearsal, and he happily reported that the cast members delivered the goods each and every time. He also revealed that rehearsals were a largely collaborative process, with cast members contributing ideas as they worked through the scenes. "There's some tricky scenes to stage but I stepped back from them myself a lot – I've stepped back from directing more with this group than I've ever done with a group."

It's a method of which General Manager of Backstage, Mona Considine approved, as she added, "It's great to see how involved they were and the input they had into the creative process. "I think it's really key and I think it was a great experience for them. It's really going to stand to them in the future

if they're thinking of a career in theatre."

It's also this process that helped the two local groups choose Niall as a director, as Mona revealed, "There's directors, professional directors out there, but not every director can work with young people."

According to Chairman of BYT Paul Higgins, the play was an unmissable opportunity for the local teenagers, who he claimed got more out of this experience than they did in several years with BYT.

"Doing something like this – I would never have dreamed of it. To get our members to work on a professional basis, it's brilliant. "It could be something that maybe we'd do every few years."

Rated by Mona as a definite highlight of the theatre's season, the show, supported by Longford Arts Office, The Ireland Funds and Flynn & Lynch was performed over three nights at the end of September. With this hugely successful project behind them, the group now turn their full attention and their newfound skills and experiences, back to their self-written Panto, set to take Backstage by storm in January.

## BUTLER YEATS AND TULLAMORE

In the year of Yeats 150, historian Michael Byrne recounts the origin of the name Butler Yeats to Tullamore.



The site of Tullamore Central Library was originally occupied by one of the finest houses in Tullamore and its demolition in 1936 was a significant loss to the architectural integrity of the square which it had dominated for almost 200 years (see photograph) The house was probably built by the Quaker Pim family in the 1740s and was sold in 1770 to Gideon Tabuteau. Tabuteau had come from Southampton and was of French Huguenot extraction and it was in this house that Benjamin Yeats married Mary Butler in 1773, the birth place of the infamous Irish name, Butler Yeats.

Benjamin Yeats was the great-great grandfather of William Butler Yeats. The Yeats' were in the linen trade while Mary Butler may have had Huguenot ancestors. Perhaps Tabuteau was in the linen trade too but we cannot be sure of this. Gideon Tabuteau sold the house in 1788 to Joseph Manly junior, a Tullamore-based Quaker merchant and moved across the square where he had taken a lease of a site in 1786 and presumably had now completed a new house. That fine old house, where the Butler Yeats name was

created, and where the library now stands was demolished in 1936 to provide the site for a vocational school which opened with 140 pupils in the autumn of 1937. After 1974 the building was used for the county council motor tax office, Tullamore UDC, Offaly VEC and from 1977 Offaly County Library. From about 2008 the county library had full occupation of the building and in 2011-12 the 1937 building was substantially redesigned in the modern idiom to facilitate more open access.

The library service was established in 1925 (not without objection from some clerics worried about the evils of literature 'wretched novels and semi-pagan stuff') and operated initially from the courthouse, then county infirmary from 1942 and then to O'Connor Square in 1977. Access and users to the Tullamore library are now the highest in its history and the public is well served. WB Yeats, as a book lover would be pleased with the current use of the site where his ancestors married in 1773. Their hard work and capital would, one hundred-years later, help to fund the poet's painter father who dreamed

good dreams realised by his famous sons and daughters.

Did it all begin in Tullamore Central Library with his great-great grandparents who, being 'in trade', accumulated capital for the succeeding Butler Yeats' generations? Is there a poem of Yeats' which allows us to recall what has gone before in Tullamore's town square and the dreams and schemes of all those who have lived on the library site since the 1740s or have studied there since the 1930s?

### The Cloths of Heaven

Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light;  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

WB Yeats



© Kevin Byrne

# PATHYLAND

Claire O'Brien interviews the Laois based Uilleann Pipe Maker

Ballyfin native Paddy Hyland is one of the country's finest Uilleann Pipe makers, with a client list that counts some of the biggest names in traditional music. His love affair with the pipes began with an extraordinary chance encounter in the unlikelyst of places.

In the late 1980s bagpipes, traditional music and country halls were no thrill for most young people. But sitting on the floor, spell-bound by the hum, the wheeze and the swelling choruses of the award-winning Ballyfin Pipe Band, Paddy Hyland (now 40), wasn't most teenagers.

Now, at his home in the Slieve Blooms, he recalls the early days. "I just had a thing for pipes, and my father took me to the Ballyfin Pipe Band practice on a Thursday night to satisfy my madness for it," says Paddy, settled close to the stove in his workshop. "I was there one night and there was a man who came in. He was sitting down real quiet and he had a case with him. I wasn't paying much attention. And when the whole thing was over and they were all finished and were packing up, one of the guys said: 'Take out your pipes there Paddy and play us an auld tune,' and he was a bit reluctant at first – they're two totally different instruments, the bagpipes and the Uilleann Pipes.

"But he took them out of his case and strapped them on and that sound" – Paddy pauses, shaking his head in wonder as the memory returns – "that sound was totally different and I remember the hairs on the back of my neck standing up. I was only 13 years old – I'll never forget it."

The quiet man was Paddy Moloney of the Chieftains, who'd been visiting his nearby aunt, and it was the moment a hunger for Uilleann Pipes took hold in a small boy who mistakenly called them 'igillen pipes' much to his father's confusion and amusement. In the 1980s the instrument was so under-represented in the trad-music scene that sets were rare and expensive. The only set Joe Hyland could find his son cost the modern equivalent of €4,000 and were in terrible condition. Needless to say, no purchase was made. Instead Joe bought Paddy a guitar and thus began a music career that has taken him from playing all over the world with Laois-based trad bands, to becoming one of the country's foremost pipe-makers.

Paddy was in his late twenties before his summers working in Australia earned him the price of a precious set of his own. Older pipe-makers showed him how to reed up the instrument and after this inspired him to make reeds, he was asked to reed up

chanters for all kinds of pipe-makers. It was a natural progression to making the pipes.

The chanter, which plays the melody, is the hardest part to make and Paddy was so frustrated with what he calls 'bad' instruments that he spent two years prototyping and developing his own chanter design. Each chanter starts out as a block of ebony, fat and square as the leg of a coffee table. But it's carved and bored to its almost flute-like final shape. Getting the notes in tune and the tone just right is "highly complex."

It takes two years at least to make a set of pipes, because the timber needs time at each stage to grow into its sound. Apart from the bag, every single piece of the pipes is handcrafted at Paddy's workshop, and in the last few years he's been working full time, he's made around 60 practice sets, up to forty half sets and another ten or so full sets. He's grateful to Na Piobairí Uilleann for their support, musicians who taught him the sounds of good pipes, and the old, master craftsmen who shared some of their knowledge, but not surprisingly, few of their secrets.

"It's a black art in ways," Paddy says with a laugh, but holds no grudge. "For a lot of people it's a livelihood and they weren't going to give it away too handy. That's been no harm. I've found out a lot more along the way that I might never have discovered otherwise."

He immersed himself in researching and developing his design, arriving home from his construction job to launch himself into long, dark nights of learning. Because he hasn't followed a traditional design, a Hyland pipes is instantly recognizable. He occasionally gets a call from friends and clients to say someone is playing his pipes on TV.

His workshop is a fascinating place, full of neatly arranged tools and machines, as well as chanters, bellows, and sets of pipes all in various stages of production. He is too professional to drop names, but he has made and restored pipes for some of the biggest names in traditional music. It's a particular pleasure when one of his piping heroes visits, takes a seat and begins to play old, sometimes long-forgotten pieces, and the Slieve Bloom air fills with the sounds of other centuries.

On a shelf is a beautiful old set of pipes, clearly well-loved and minded. It's from the 1950s, made by the man known as 'The King of the Pipers,' Dubliner Leo Rowsome. It's so precious, Paddy says, "it would be like a Stradivarius if it was a violin."

“There’s loads of fantastic young pipers and there are huge opportunities now for anyone playing the pipes.”

And times have changed. When Paddy wanted to learn the pipes, there wasn't a single piper in Laois. Now on any Wednesday night in Portlaoise alone, up to 22 young people are getting pipe lessons supported by Na Piobairí Uilleann, Music Generation Laois and the Laois County Arts Office. "There's loads of fantastic young pipers and there are huge opportunities now for anyone playing the pipes," he says, adding that he believes Portlaoise is home to some of the finest up-and-coming pipers in Ireland.

Despite great strides in the last decade, the Uilleann Pipes are under-represented in traditional music, he says. But they're a difficult instrument to play. "There's so much going on – you're concentrating on working the bellows, keeping the bag full, controlling the chanter, keeping the drones steady and trying to work relays with your wrist – which in itself is a hard enough thing to do. And then play reels and jigs!"

He still plays at home every day, but now that he and his Australian wife Michelle – 'an Ozzie rock chick' – have two small children, PJ (3) and Lilyanne (five months), the demands of work and family mean his own musical career has taken a back seat. His creative energies go into making, not playing pipes now. "I don't regret it. I'll never be the piper that I really want to be, but I can do enough to keep myself happy," he says. The rewards are in the process of developing himself to the point of someday being a master craftsman. "There's no room for error. It's a small community and one bad instrument will ruin your reputation, so it has to be 100 percent."

Like a schoolboy he swings back on his chair and sweeps a glance around his creative den. "The day I stop learning is the day I stop making pipes," he concludes.

For more information on uilleann pipe tuition, contact Music Generation Laois on 057 8664176 or see [musicgenerationlaois.ie](http://musicgenerationlaois.ie)



# between A ROCK & A HARD PLACE

Artist Mel French writes for Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine about her first solo show, and Luan Gallery's first all-sculpture show.

**Between a Rock and A Hard Place at Luan Gallery is the first solo exhibition of my career. It is also the first exhibition at Luan Gallery to consist solely of sculptural works.**

This opportunity to show at Luan came at the perfect time in my career. My husband Gerard Leslie and I were near completion of a purpose built studio that we had received Westmeath Community Development funding for and having taken a few years to focus on raising our young family I was now in a position to return to studio work.

I am constantly researching, sketching, thinking of ideas, materials and processes so when I was notified that I had been awarded the solo exhibition at Luan I was in a position to start physically developing ideas immediately. The work evolved during the realisation process and some works that I was very attached to in my sketchbook for months prior to their manifestation got left by the way side as new works took on their own position in what I was creating. It was fantastic after over 20 years of renting studio spaces to have our own studio and to be developing a whole body of new work in the new space literally days after the wall and floor paint had dried.

I get drawn into my work and thrive on the adrenaline from working with various materials,

scales, processes as well as researching the concepts that drive my work. Some of the processes require long, consecutive hours such as mould-making and casting. The clay element of the process can be managed differently but often when I begin working in the clay I find it hard to stop and step-away as I am eager to see the work manifest. I often have several works on the go simultaneously, so that if I am struggling with one piece I can step away but still be working on another. It is often far easier to see a problem more objectively when you have had some distance. Often I make smaller versions of my ideas before committing to a specific scale or composition. I often combine the sculptures I make with found objects. My research varies from the practical to theoretical and I am interested in how humans react to particular situations such as loss, trauma, conflict and grief. Science, anatomy, war and psychology are all constant threads within my research.

Once I am committed to a scale of work I create an armature (a structure that will support the clay in the pose the sculpture will take on). I then apply clay which I sculpt directly and make a mould of the form before casting in the chosen material. Sometimes I sculpt directly in the casting or final material such as *Dwell I* and *Dwell II* which are made of human hair or elements of *Black Dog*, such as the head, which I sculpted directly in plaster or *Fleeting* where I worked directly in wax on an initial cast.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place consists of 12 works. Three of the works *Interjection 2006*, *Relative Distance 2004* and *Permeo 2005* pre-existed the other work exhibited. The remaining nine works within the exhibition were made between June and August 2015 specifically for the *Beuteen a Rock and A Hard Place* show.

The exhibition explores the human form, condition and psychology, including issues around anxiety, depression, nurturing and vulnerability.

The whole process of creating this body of work and the ongoing experience that I am having while the solo show is running at Luan Gallery is extremely positive. Luan Gallery were and continue to be very supportive. There has been good footfall during the show and the recent 'Ask the Artist' session was well attended. When - as an artist you work in a solitary environment, whether practically in the studio or developing ideas in your own head it is a privilege, insightful, and incredibly valuable to be privy to the public's response and feedback to your work.

Thank you to all who attended the exhibition, who asked questions, who made comments, who took the time to talk to me about the work. A particular thanks to Westmeath Arts Office, all at Luan Gallery and to my husband for his invaluable assistance and support during the realisation and installation of the exhibition.

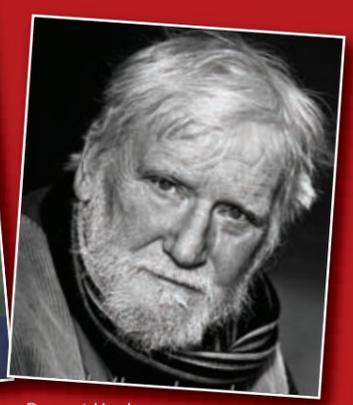
# SPARKS of GENIUS

**Spark of Genius draws on the Bardic tradition - celebrating poetry in Westmeath**

Westmeath is steeped in poetry. The land, the lakes, the light, the locals have all played their part in inspiring poets from the great Bardic families of the O'Daly, O'Coffey and Nugent families to modern poets such as Michael Walsh, the Bard of Fore and Desmond Egan poet and publisher of the Goldsmith Press.

Heritage Week 2015 saw the third year of Westmeath Library Service's *Spark of Genius* project. This project aims to acknowledge some of the people who have contributed to our cultural history whether as artists, writers, scientists, film directors or actors. This exhibition celebrates those who have taken their dreams and put them out into the world at large, in many cases leaving a deep impression. This year, the Library Service added (among others) three poets of considerable distinction to the collection: Dermot Healy, Breda Sullivan and John Ennis.

Healy has been called Patrick Kavanagh's heir by Seamus Heaney but The Irish Times would argue that 'Kavanagh saw the world merely as a reflection of himself; Healy saw himself as a reflection of the world, and embraced its totality'. When Dermot Healy died last year his passing was mourned nationally and in Westmeath we mourned the passing of this most famous son of Finea.



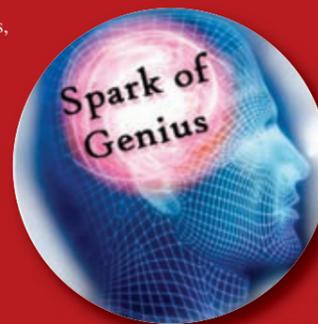
Breda Sullivan Dermot Healy

Athlone born Breda Sullivan brings a unique voice to poetry in the Midlands. She has had three successful collections all published by Salmon Poetry and her work has had the distinction of been included in the Field Day Anthology.

John Ennis a native of Corals town, Kinnegad is probably one of Ireland's most prolific poets, having amassed a body of work over four decades which is respected across the globe.

And so we celebrated three different voices, three different perspectives but three people who put pen to paper, refined their craft and wove another strand into our cultural heritage and were thus very worthy of celebration in their native Westmeath.

Spark of Genius can be found at [www.westmeathcoco.ie/library](http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/library) in Westmeath in the Past.



# ASHES to ART

By Ciara Kelly

**The first in a three part public art series entitled *Secrets of Offaly*; the project "Notes on the microscopical Character of Krakatoa" by Amanda Rice reveals the extraordinary mind of the Offaly scientist John Joly.**

On August 10th 2015, the old schoolhouse in Clonbullogue was the setting for a bespoke art installation with roots as far flung as Indonesia. Mayo based artist Amanda Rice is the creator of this installation which is the culmination of her research project with Trinity College on prolific Offaly scientist John Joly who hailed from Clonbullogue.

Born in 1857, Joly's prolific legacy includes the development of radiotherapy, used in cancer treatment, as well as identification methods used in geology. Rice's research led her to his "notes on the microscopical character of Krakatoa", studies from the infamous volcanic eruption in Krakatoa (in the former Dutch West Indies) in 1883. Joly had obtained samples of the volcanic ash from a Norwegian ship, which had been in the affected area and docked in Dublin some months later.

During her presentation to the community to Clonbullogue, Amanda recounted being particularly drawn to the literary language of John Joly's scientific work. "For me I feel it was the manner of how he articulated these works within his

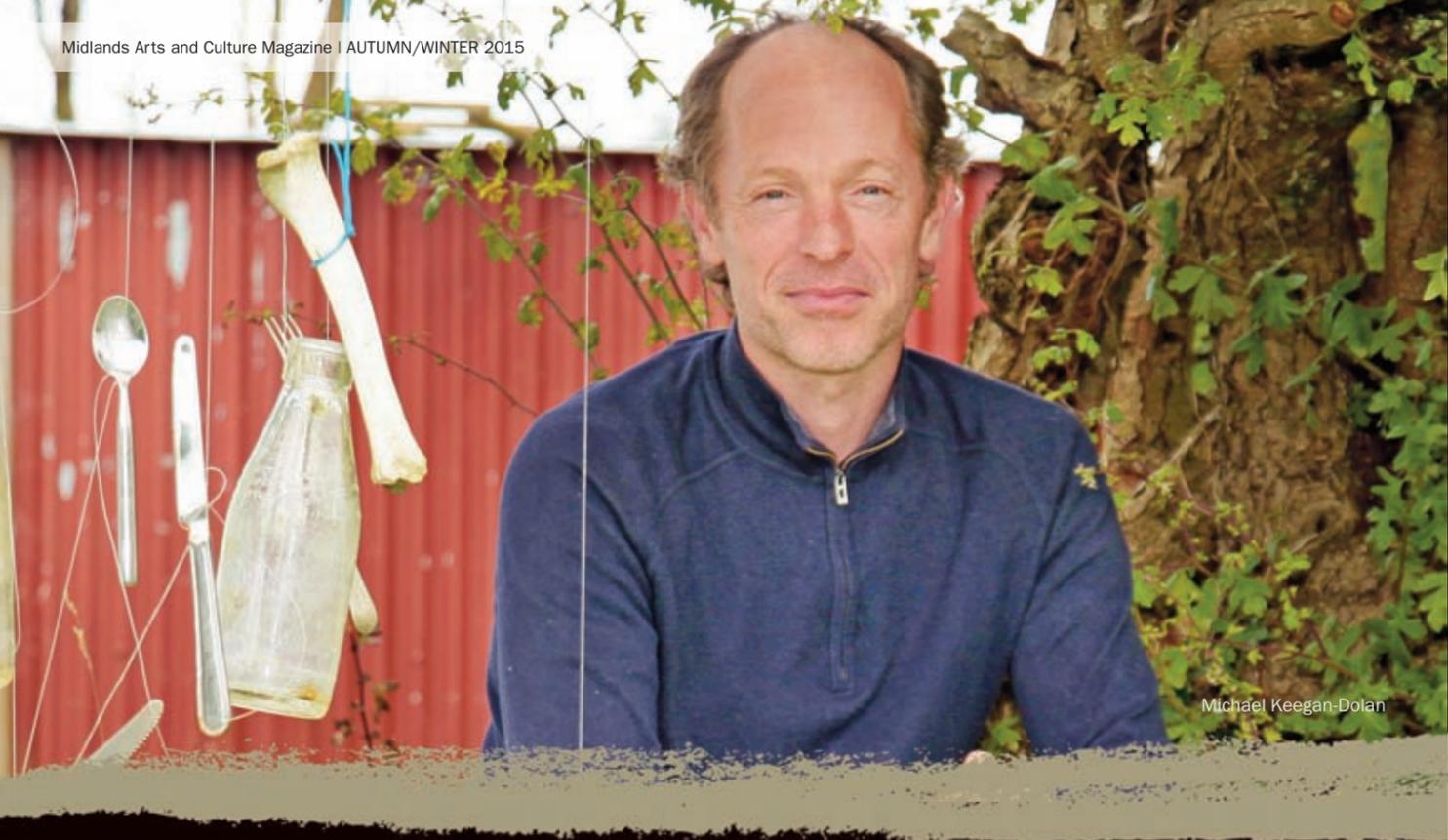


written academic papers that was most interesting" said Rice, "he had an incredibly poetic manner of describing the results of his experiments which I feel lent itself quite well to creating a visual artwork".

Dr Ciarán Reilly from NUI Maynooth, the academic expert on the Joly family, formally launched the installation which consisted of a geometric sculptural object in which the viewer peered inside to mirrored video images of Joly's artefacts and a spoken excerpt from his research papers on Krakatoa. Those who attended from children to adults were intrigued by the spaceship like apparatus, and seemed to lose their tether in reality if only for a minute. Rice's attention to detail was such that the exterior part of the installation was designed to resemble a geological shape in keeping with Joly's work.

The installation will receive a second outing in Offaly County Council when all three 'Secrets of Offaly' projects are complete and brought together.

[www.amandarice.net](http://www.amandarice.net) • [www.jolyarchive.net](http://www.jolyarchive.net)



Michael Keegan-Dolan

# Death of a Fabulous Beast

## breathes new life into Michael Keegan-Dolan

After a magnificent 17-year career, Fabulous Beast dance theatre has shuffled off this mortal coil.

**It was a decision that founder and renowned choreographer Michael Keegan-Dolan says was both challenging, and yet not so.**

“It was because I’d been working under that name I guess for 17/18 years, since 1997,” he explains. Having just enjoyed his first real time off in more than twenty years, Michael appears relaxed, but extremely focused, and carefully ponders his response before going on to say that on the other hand, it wasn’t a difficult decision, as “I was just tired of so many patterns, or habits I guess, had developed around that name and I was really beginning to yearn for a new beginning or a new adventure.”

Likening the end of the Fabulous Beast to the burning of a field after harvest, he admits that wrapping things up took a while, and that he didn’t have any free time until April 2015, when he took an extended, and well-deserved, break.

“That was the first time I’d taken time for myself in... really since I started work,” he nods. “I’ve been self-employed since I was 21 so I don’t think I’ve ever had a summer holiday in my life so that was great to have a break.”

Michael, who is an Associate at Sadler’s Wells theatre in London, took the time to spend with his wife Rachel, who is also a dancer, and their two children, Milo and Ellie. He also had the chance to invest more time into his other love – gardening. In fact, Michael reveals that if he were to give up dancing, he would be working in horticulture. He has a love for the land, he says, recalling with great fondness long walks with his late father.

“We used to walk around the fields,” he smiles. “I’m not from the town, I’m from the country, out beyond Newtownforbes [Co Longford], near Leitrim, and we used to walk around the fields together.

“I’ve always loved the land, the fields, the bog, the birds, going fishing...”

Indeed Longford has always played a big part in Michael’s life and work.

“My father was born here and played for Longford, he went to St Mel’s, and your parents are your inspiration,” he states. Though his father had to leave for Dublin, he returned every single

weekend until the day he died, such was his love for his home. Michael is hoping to incorporate his own love for the county into a new piece he is creating for next year’s Dublin Theatre Festival. “I’m making a new show and it’s really rooted in the midlands, the narrative, and I’m very excited about that.

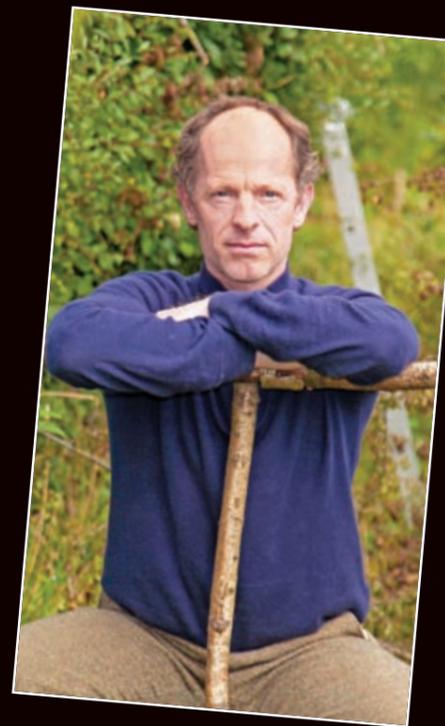
“I’m looking to find a way to truly integrate it into where I’m from. Where I’m from and where I live has always been very important to me and I haven’t ever really found a way yet.”

While he has often rehearsed and created in Longford before, Michael suggests that he would like to create a piece from start to finish in Longford, and possibly preview or premiere it here.

A believer in all things self-sustaining and keeping things indigenous, Michael has great respect for those who keep the arts in the locality, mentioning in particular Gary Robinson and Engage.

“Gary’s from here and he puts on his shows in the shop in Providers and I find that inspiring,” he enthuses. “I think that’s the future because I think the petrol’s going to run out eventually, right?”

“That was the first time I’d taken time for myself in... really since I started work,” he nods. “I’ve been self-employed since I was 21 so I don’t think I’ve ever had a summer holiday in my life so that was great to have a break.”



When asked about the huge, although seemingly quiet, arts culture that exists in Longford, from writers and artists to musicians and dancers, Michael admits that he doesn’t feel connected to this scene. However, he laughs, “If those artists who want to create an uprising want someone to jump into the trenches, man I’m just outside Newtownforbes, email me, give me a call!”

“I’m really good in a fight,” he jokes, quipping, “I grew up in the Northside of Dublin!”

He may just be called up as, on hearing this news, Longford’s Arts Officer expressed his delight in Michael’s love for Longford, and is already looking forward to possible future collaborations with the world-renowned choreographer.

Now that he has shed the skin of the Fabulous Beast, Michael is moving on with his latest project, but without the altar-ego to shelter him. With MKD dance, people will get to know the real Michael Keegan-Dolan.

“If you go into a room if you have this idea of this mythical beast kind of standing behind you with big wings and breathing fire, you know, the fabulous beast, you carry a kind of a threat with you.

“But Michael Keegan-Dolan is just Michael Keegan-Dolan. I’ve got two arms, two legs, two eyes like anybody else, so I miss that a bit but I don’t miss it enough to want to have it back,” he adds.

Hoping to avoid some of the patterns he fell into with Fabulous Beast, and keen to take more control this time around, Michael concedes that it’s an exciting, albeit nervous time for him.

“I’m excited but for me there’s quite a lot at stake,” he reasons, adding, “I’ve been doing this a long time and it’d be lovely if my instincts are proven correct. It’d be not so lovely if I’m proven incorrect but I’ll accept that too.

“It won’t be as much fun,” he laughs.

Along with this, Michael was recently announced as the next guest Artistic Director for the English National Youth Dance Company, a role which he is so far enjoying. It will no doubt be a very educational experience for the teenagers, both in terms of dance and in terms of life lessons, of which Michael has plenty to impart.

“This article, I don’t know why, but I keep thinking how it could be beneficial for young people who want to be artists in the midlands. I don’t know why but it seems important,” he muses.

With that thought clearly in his mind, Michael offers several pieces of advice throughout our chat to young dancers, offering an insight to what he has learned from experience.

While he acknowledges that ambition is a great thing to have, he’s quick to urge youths not to “overextend themselves”.

He later went on to add, “I don’t think you should get too busy showing the world how brilliant you are. I think you should do what you do.

“If young people are reading this article I’d say don’t worry too much about what other people think.”

He also encourages any aspiring dancers to be ‘cautious’ of choosing their training, pointing out that unlike most other students, dancers put their body on the line. Bearing that in mind, bad training can really take its toll over the years. He also advises against being “systematic” about further education, and to ‘take each year as it comes’, before he states; “Trust yourself. It’s hard being young because you kind of have great intuition but you’ve no experience. So if you meet someone smart, hang onto them and listen to them. That’s what I would say to my children.”

# THE SILK ON THE BACK OF THE BUS

**Hazel Greene recounts the moment she won Accessory Designer of the Year and the joy of being on the back of a bus.**

It’s almost six months since I walked into the Radisson Blu Hotel in Galway excited to be a finalist in the Irish Fashion Innovation Awards. The buzz of nervous energy on the night was wonderful, the place full of strikingly dressed people and the catwalk show itself was impressive, planned to perfection and executed with flare. I loved seeing my pieces on the catwalk and loved even more being announced ‘Accessory Designer of the Year’!!! How cool is that? I remember my burst of joy in that moment; I also remember those on my left standing and shouting their’s and those on my right promptly bursting into tears!

These prestigious awards offer an unrivalled opportunity for designers’ work to be shown to a jury of fashion design experts, and to have your work professionally styled and photographed – you can’t overestimate the value of a good image. I never thought hearing my name and the phrase ‘the back of a bus’ in the same sentence would give me pleasure – but it really did! The image of my scarf appeared on the back of a bus in promotion of last year’s National Crafts & Design Fair in the RDS, Dublin, I certainly couldn’t afford that sort of exposure but, thankfully, somebody liked and used my image.

I used to think of my paintings and silk scarves as two separate entities, as my paintings are detailed and my silks abstract. Once I accepted these were the extremes of one personality and not evidence of a split (I did wonder at times!) I set about merging the two styles – difficult – but I love the results!

I took the scenic route in my career; administration and finance in a city and making hand painted silk scarves for the home and export market for ten years, commuting between Shinrone and Dublin for most of them. But now I work fulltime as an artist and now an award winning textile designer! Happy days! [www.hazelgreene.ie](http://www.hazelgreene.ie)

## WHAT'S THE STORY

### Alan McMonagle delivers another writing masterclass in Longford

For the second year running, Longford County Arts Office has offered budding writers a unique opportunity to expand their skills.

Facilitated by renowned writer Alan McMonagle, the course intends to give 'A Guide to the Short Story'. Using a mix of theory, exercise and class discussion, the ten-week guide will lead participants through topics including: finding a voice; beginnings – opening lines, paragraphs and chapters; constructing characters; dialogue; place/setting; engaging the reader; conflict; point of view; editing and presenting your work for publication.

"Early last year I facilitated a ten-week course in prose writing," Alan told Midlands Arts and Culture. "Initially the intention was to run the course on a Tuesday night for a group of ten. The level of interest and the standard of applicants was so high we had to put on a second night." Travelling from Galway every week for the duration of the course, Alan revealed that the interest and enthusiasm shown by the writers made for "a memorable couple of months".

Unfortunately, Alan pointed out that the short story is "a notoriously 'hard sell'", but went on to add that, "In these fast times of shortened attention spans, the short story is and can be a wonderful way to capture the idiosyncrasies and flip-flop patterns of life". Within the ten-week programme, Alan hopes to instil an appreciation for the short story within participants as well as getting them to craft their own stories. "For each of the ten weeks I would hope to zone in on one element of what I consider goes into the making of an effective short story (character, dialogue, voice, beginning, ending and so forth) and gently steer participants towards the completion of a successful piece of short fiction," he concluded.

Of course, the participants couldn't have a better teacher. An award-winning writer, Alan holds an MA in Writing from NUI, Galway and has published two collections of short stories; 'Liar Liar' (Wordsonthestreet, 2009) and 'Psychotic Episodes' (Arlen House, 2013). He has had his work produced and broadcast by RTÉ and is also a contributor to the anthology 'Young Irishmen' (New Island, 2015).



## The Day Hollywood Rolled Silently into Kinnitty

On Aug 23rd last, Kinnitty paid tribute to its famous son, Rex Ingram Hitchcock, the renowned Hollywood director of the silent movie era. Directed by Ciarán Taylor, for one of the Secrets of Offaly, public art projects with Offaly County Council, over 40 local people donned costumes to recreate scenes from Rex's life and his famous movies, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) and *The Magician* (1926)

By working together to play with Ingram's legacy the village bonded in a new way. Commenting on the process of realising the project a local woman said: 'from those few acorns grew the massive oak tree that will stand so tall in people's hearts, minds and memories -

it brought the community together in a special way.'

The audience were brought on an exclusive location tour led by director Ciarán Taylor in character as a silent movie director setting up scenes and calling 'action'. The **Silent Journey** went through significant locations in the picturesque village and along the road to the castle, allowing the audience take in the views while placing a layer of dramatic stories on the landscape. Scenes were out of sequence as in film making, so everyone had to try to piece the stories back together, with the aid of the written titles displayed at each location. When the four horsemen of Kinnitty arrived to participate, an eeriness enveloped the village, ably assisted by the

mist and rain for additional atmosphere. Familiar places now have a whole new set of associations from the day the exotic characters of Ingram's imagination came back to town.

Ciarán Taylor will assemble the black and white photos taken on the day for an online exhibition as a permanent legacy of the day Kinnitty brought Hollywood to life. A documentary of the process was screened at the OFFline Film Festival in Birr on Saturday Oct 10th

[www.offaly.ie/arts](http://www.offaly.ie/arts)

## ATHLONE'S BOOK TREASURE?

The death of Aidan Heavey in April this year marked the passing of a great benefactor who left a most impressive private library to his native Athlone.

For many years Aidan and Maureen Heavey ran a very successful textile business, Heavey Textiles, in Dublin from their warehouse in Little Strand Street. From an early age, Aidan had a passion for books. This passion would include a love for books in the Irish language, for the works of the Irish literati, and in particular for works by Oliver Goldsmith and Douglas Hyde. His interest in the world of Irish books saw him amass an outstanding private collection, a collection which would become a legacy for scholars worldwide to avail of.

In 2002, out of the blue, Aidan contacted Westmeath County Council through the then County Manager, Ann McGuinness, and offered to donate his remarkable private library to Athlone, provided that the Council would provide suitable housing and staffing for the collection. The County Manager agreed and the collection consisting of over 22,000 volumes of Irish interest was transferred to Athlone.

The Aidan Heavey Collection is a closed access, scholarly library of books which are in the main the best, brightest and most sought after copies available. Apart from books the collection includes letters, photographs, manuscripts and maps – there are signed copies, association copies and beautifully bound copies. In years to come there will be many masters and doctoral theses undertaken which will depend heavily on the contents of this library.

Aidan Heavey was in the truest sense of the terms both a scholar and a gentleman. He was a man of impeccable taste. His library was the finest private library of Irish interest material assembled in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, his sartorial elegance was legendary and he was the best of company. Staff in Athlone Library always welcomed his visits and he was very modest about his wonderful legacy to his home town. He was always extremely helpful to academics and scholars and generous with his time and his expertise. His gift to Athlone will ensure that his name will be known to generations of Athlonians yet unborn. The public library in the town is named The Aidan Heavey Library in his honour. To-date two books have been written on aspects of the Aidan Heavey Collection.

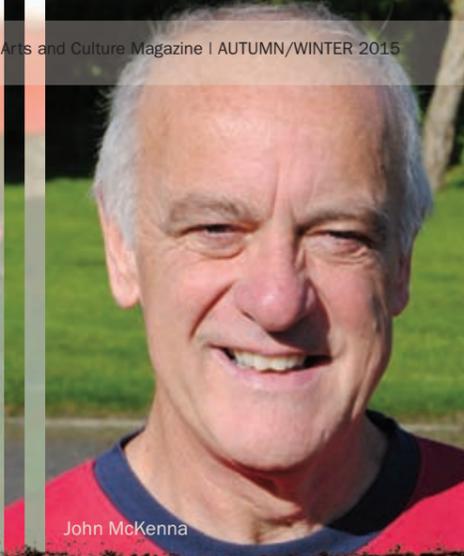
Ní beidh a leithéid ann arís



Rita Ann Higgins



Dermot Bolger



John McKenna

# LEAVES

## LITERARY FESTIVAL 2015

Celebrating the literary arts in County Laois, a special evening of music and literature will take place in Abbeyleix Manor Hotel on Saturday 7th November featuring writers Dermot Bolger, John McKenna, Rita Ann Higgins, Liam Ryan and Andrea Carter. M.C. for the evening is Seamus Hosey and music will be performed by Harper Siobhan Buckley.

This year we will offer a series of scriptwriting clinics and a masterclass for new playwrights. Schools and Libraries in the county will have a visit from storyteller and actress Nuala Hayes as she brings her recently published book *Laois Folktales* to life.

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 8pm in the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel,**

**Dermot Bolger** Novels include; *The Journey Home*, *The Family on Paradise Pier* and most recently *Tanglewood*. His poetry collection includes *The Venice Suite* and *A Voyage Through Loss*. His play, *The Lament for Arthur Cleary*, received the Samuel Beckett Award and his stage adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* has just toured China.

Saturday 7th November there will be a 3 hour Group Masterclass in writing for performance. To apply for a place on the Masterclass, writers should prepare a short biography, detailing their experience and/or interest in writing or theatre, and email: [artsoff@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:artsoff@laoiscoco.ie) **Deadline Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October.** Suitable for all experience levels. Age limit: 16+

**Schools & Library Events In association with Poetry Ireland, Laois Folktales will tour Laois schools and libraries as part the 2015 Leaves Festival Nuala Hayes will visit a number of schools in the county on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November.**

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November at Portlaoise Library Nuala Hayes, actor, storyteller, radio producer is the author of the recently launched *Laois Folktales*, illustrated by renowned artist Rita Duffy. Gathering stories from many sources in Laois; including recordings she has made with living storytellers and oral historians and material from the National Folklore Collection. The book includes versions of the original story of the Laoighsigh, the legends of the Fianna and stories from local people such as Johanna O'Dooley and Adrian Cosby of Stradbally, as well as stories from the oral tradition.

**John MacKenna**, novelist, short-stories, memoir, biography and poetry, John has also written a number of stage and radio plays and is a frequent contributor to RTE Radio 1. Recent publications include the novel *Joseph* and the poetry collection *By the Light of Four Moons*. He is a regular contributor to Sunday Miscellany on RTE Radio 1.

**Rita Ann Higgins** has published ten collections of poetry, her most recent being *Ireland is Changing Mother* and a memoir in prose and poetry, *Hurting God*. She is the author of six stage plays and one screen play. Her next collection *Tongulish* is due out in April 2016.

**Liam Ryan**, born in Donohill, Tipperary, now lives in Co. Laois. Doghouse Books published his debut collection of poems *Touching Stones* in 2009 and *What's Happening in the Shade*, 2015. His poems and reviews have been published in *The Irish Times*, *Poetry Ireland* and *The Shop*.

**Andrea Carter**, Andrea Carter grew up in Ballyfin, Co. Laois. She graduated in law from Trinity College, Dublin, qualified as a solicitor and moved to the Inishowen peninsula where she lived and worked for a number of years. In 2005 she transferred to the Bar and moved to Dublin to practise as a barrister. *Death at Whitewater Church* is her first novel. The second in the series *Treacherous Strand* will be released next summer.

**Seamus Hosey** worked for almost 30 years as an RTE Radio Producer and Broadcaster in the Arts and Features Department of RTE Radio 1, producing programmes such as *The Arts Show*, *The Poetry Programme* and *Miriam Meets*. Since retirement he works as Literary Adviser to Listowel Writers' Week and participates in the annual James Fintan Lalor School in Laois.

**Kate Heffernan** Playwriting Clinic and Masterclass, Leaves is delighted to have Laois native and award winning Playwright Kate Heffernan to lead a series of workshops for writers and playwrights of all abilities. Three writers will be given the opportunity of a one-to-one session with Kate. The clinics are suitable for writers who have a draft of a completed script or script portion (for theatre or radio). Writers interested in applying for a clinic bursary should send a short sample of their writing (max 10 pages) and a short biography detailing their experience to [artsoff@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:artsoff@laoiscoco.ie), (clearly marked Individual Clinic) to be received no later than **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October**. Applicants will be notified by email of results and details at a later date.

For more information on the Arts Programme contact:  
The Arts Office, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co Laois.  
**057 8664033/13**  
or email [artsoff@laoiscoco.ie](mailto:artsoff@laoiscoco.ie)  
or visit the website [www.laois.ie](http://www.laois.ie)



# The Norse & The Gael

## NEW ADDITION TO MULLINGAR'S PARKSCAPE AS ARTIST RICHIE CLARKE GIVES NEW LEASE OF LIFE TO AILING TREE

The Norse and the Gael is based on the story of the killing of the Viking chieftain Turgiesius by King Malachy in 845. Local legend has it that Malachy captured the Viking and rolled him down Captains Hill into Lough Owel to drown. This is probably folklore, but Turgiesius did die at the hands of Malachy. Above the two heads are a Norse Dragon's head and an Irish Hound, which represent both cultures. Woodcarving artist Richie Clake says "it's been great working in a public place listening to kids' laughter in the playground nearby, and also the nice comments from passers-by".



# RESPOND project Set to Return

Following the success of its first venture, the Respond project is back, but this time, with a modern twist.

Last year, ten writers and ten visual artists collaborated on the first Respond project. Local writers submitted prose and poetry, and the artists were given the challenge of creating a piece of art in response to the writing. The project was a huge success, resulting in an enjoyable exhibition, and a book containing the twenty works used.

This time around, it's the turn of local film-makers and videographers to make short video responses to the assigned writing.

Explaining that YouTube and social media in general is a huge presence in today's world, Literary Editor Lorne Patterson said, "It was a new way of publication, a new outlet apart from traditional hard copy."

According to Lorne, the project proved very popular this year, with a huge number of writers submitting works under the theme of 'Longford' for consideration.

"It's still in the early stages," Lorne continued, going on to say that "it's a good start. There's certainly some interesting and some intriguing ideas."

On the other side of the project, Shane Crossan had the difficult task of finding ten film-makers to create the short videos.

"It's a really interesting project," he admitted. "We're looking forward to it. "When we meet up, the pieces of writing will be assigned randomly," he explained.

With a wide variety of writers and film-makers from different backgrounds and disciplines, Shane added, "Hopefully, we'll get lots of different perspectives on it."

While a beautiful book was published at the end of last year's Respond, it is hoped that this year, the pieces will be displayed on [www.virtualwriter.ie](http://www.virtualwriter.ie) and [www.longforddigitalarts.ie](http://www.longforddigitalarts.ie)

# THE FUTURE is Youth

Youth arts in Longford look set to receive a massive boost in the coming years, with the Longford Arts Strategy 2015 – 2019 to place a larger emphasis on a younger demographic.



Sally O'Leary

The strategy, the fourth of its kind for Longford, is being researched and written by County Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy and Sally O'Leary, Independent Arts Administration Consultant

Explaining the task at hand, Sally revealed that it involves the consideration of all existing arts and cultural provision as well as a review of the current Arts Strategy. Other elements have to be taken into consideration, according to Sally, including "the context of the arts in Longford, both rural and urban, the policies that have been successful as well as any challenges or gaps that may be perceived within the confines of the current economic environment".

"At the same time cognizance is also taken of relevant local, national and international frameworks for arts policy."

Though it's difficult to say what direction the strategy will ultimately take, Sally revealed that initial discussions have included a focus on Arts and Artists of the future.

"This focus will concentrate limited resources on initiatives which will develop both artists and audiences for the future, thus concentrating on areas such as Youth Arts, Arts in Schools and the development of Professional Arts Practice in the county (spanning all arts forms), developing initiatives which will encourage professional artists to want to live, work and practice in County Longford," Sally continued.

Throughout the process, local opinion will play a key role, as Sally believes that consultation and liaison with key stakeholders, communities and artists is an "essential part of the process when researching and writing an Arts Strategy, which is, after all for the

benefit of artists and the community as a whole".

Pointing to some of the initiatives supported by the Arts Office for youths in Longford, including the secondary schools photography programme and the School of Rock, Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy explained that, "We're exploring all the funding and development initiatives that exist to see can we run with them and develop synergies and pool resources."

He agreed that public participation is extremely important in the development and implementation of the strategy, adding that "the public have an excellent insight based on their own experiences".

Though it will be a while before the strategy is complete, Fergus is already looking forward to the results, saying, "it could make way for new and exciting developments in the county".

## the CREATIVE LENS of RECOVERY by Ciara Kelly

Through the lens of the recovery approach, the creative arts show up as often having a central role in a person's journey towards health and integration. Psychiatrist Dr Pat Bracken

Since 2005 Anam Beo, Offaly's Arts Health and Wellbeing programme has been providing a programme of arts to help promote health and wellbeing through creativity in health centres around Offaly.

To mark 10 years of their work and with funding through Offaly County Council's percent for art scheme, "Storyboards" has been installed in Tullamore Train Station. Storyboards features a collection of images and quotes made by participants over the past 10 years and it tells of the journey that both participants and artists have been on since the beginning of the programme.

Displayed on the railings of the train station, visible to passengers both on the platform and passing through, each piece has its own stand-alone meaning but forms part of the linear story of Anam Beo.

Recently, Tullamore Hospital marked the occasion of its permanent loan of work from the Anam Beo *Outside Inside* project, a series of artwork created by members of the Irish Wheelchair Association in 2006. The artwork consists of a row of walnut boxes filled with personal tokens and items chronicling the lives and memories of those who made them. Now permanently displayed in Tullamore Hospital, they form a very personal and local reflection of the importance of expression while in healthcare.

Anam Beo place great emphasis on marking occasions and reminding us of what people can achieve when given the chance, regardless of their physical or mental limitations. As another way of expanding the means in which Anam Beo can assist in the wellbeing and rehabilitation of those they work with, a pilot music programme is currently underway in Ofalia House with patients of

dementia. Hidden in the enjoyment of music are activities which build on the well-known preserved memory for song and melody in the mind. Even when many memories are hard to retrieve, music is especially easy to recall and is seen as a backdoor into reconnecting with the true self, something those with dementia and their carers long for.

Later in the year to mark the decade, an exhibition of select pieces will take place in Offaly County Council's atrium, which will reflect that over 500 people in care centres and facilities across Offaly have benefitted from and been empowered by creative expression during Anam Beo's first of many decades.

[www.anambeo.wordpress.com](http://www.anambeo.wordpress.com) and [offaly.ie/arts](http://offaly.ie/arts). Anam Beo is funded by Offaly County Council and the HSE.



“ We so seldom allow ourselves consider the fact that once upon a time the Irish Midlands were considered the core of all life, the multi-directional (and dimensional) centre. ”

# Midhe The Irish Midlands

by Manchán Magan

© Liam Kidney

**That the Midlands are the heart of Ireland is no great revelation, yet consider what ‘heart’ actually means. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as the centre of thought, feeling and emotion (especially love). A rather profound way of regarding our region, is it not?**

Perhaps you are doubting it already, dismissing it as mere semantics. The Midlands aren't really the heart of anything, you're thinking; if anything they are the guts, the liver and spleen. Why is that always our reaction? We so seldom allow ourselves consider the fact that once upon a time the Irish Midlands were considered the core of all life, the multi-directional (and dimensional) centre. The simple truth of it is that the Midlands have a potency that is not accessible elsewhere, and it's about time we woke up to this again. For our ancestors, there was no doubt as to where all life and energy radiated from.

Let's look at the facts: every schoolchild learns that Ireland is divided into four provinces; na ceithre cúige. Note though, that the Irish for 'province' is cúige which actually means fifth. So, ceithre cúige

is four fifths. Where then is the fifth fifth? Therein lies a tale. The fifth fifth is generally accepted to be Midhe (the Middle). The only evidence of this province now is in the county names Meath (Irish, Mí, or Old Irish, Midhe) and Westmeath. Still today Meath is known as the Royal County, as it was the seat of High Kingship in Ireland from the Iron Age onwards. It was a royal centre of sacred governance, the nexus of all life.

At the beginning of the growing season each year, leaders, chiefs and subjects would gather at the Hill of Uisneach in Westmeath for a ritual of rejuvenation, sparking the land into fertility by means of sacred bonfires which then spread out from the centre to all points throughout Ireland. It was natural and intuitive that such powers would emanate from the core and that people would

make annual pilgrimage to the region to invoke and ignite these powers. It was a region of rejuvenation and replenishment, a place to gather energy for the season ahead.

This event was known as Beltane, and its importance in pre-Christian Irish society is hard to underestimate. The lighting of a bonfire on the Hill of Uisneach and the spreading of that fire to the Hill of Tara and then on to prominentries throughout Ireland was the annual catalyst for rebirth upon this island. Its impact on the Irish psyche was profound: the fire radiated out in all directions, shining, warming, enlightening and illuminating the darkness. Uisneach and the other sacred sites in the Midlands were the navel of our world, the centre of our firmament, like Tiantan Temple of Heaven in Beijing, which the Chinese

considered the centre of all existence on all levels and dimensions. The fact that we feel so disconnected from this ancient sense of the Midlands shows how far we've drifted from our core. The truth is that we, the inhabitants of this area, have always been the guardians of the light, the flame-keepers. We have responsibilities which we are no longer fulfilling.

What happened? It's a simple story: those who colonised us realised it was vital that we be disempowered to ensure our subjugation. We Irish were so rooted in the autonomy of our land, and the energies that arose from it, that we were invincible until the connection with it was severed. Each successive group realised this: the Christian missionaries in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, the Vikings in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, the Normans in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and the English Tudors in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. All had an agenda to promulgate, and an authoritarian regime to enforce. They made sure to close down the sacred areas, or supersede them

with centres of their own on top of the original site or nearby – like the Christian site, Clonmacnoise in Offaly, in the vicinity of the Hill of Uisneach in Westmeath, or the castle on the Rock of Dunamase, Co Laois on the site of an early Christian settlement, which in turn appears to be on the site of a fort that Ptolemy mapped in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD.

So successful were our colonisers at disconnecting us from our power points that we now happily build a motorway through the royal site at Tara and ignore the Hill of Uisneach almost entirely. We have forgotten where our power lies, and now sneer and denigrate the Midlands that was once our axis mundi (the cosmic frontier where the sacred and the physical meet).

It's about time that we woke up again. The Irish Midlands were once a vibrant, buoyant, artistically promiscuous place, animated by a belief in Animism, the illuminating life-force within all

things, infusing them with sanctity. In the first millennium, our eccentric, spiritually-promiscuous monastic ancestors went to Europe to reintroduce a nature-focused Christianity to a war-devastated civilisation in the Dark Ages: St Feargal from Co Laois went to Salzburg; St Killian of Cavan went to Wurzburg and many other monks went to Italy and France to bring light to the darkness left by the Goths, Vandals and Visigoths.

We Midlanders could and should do the same: light creative fires that trigger acts of artistic expression in others: art, music, dance and theatre. It only takes a few brave souls to step forward and begin the process of awakening and reconnecting with our past, with who we are, our land, language, culture. Is that too fanciful? Don't doubt the power of the midlands as a place of transformation – the bogs here are more than just preservers of torcs and leather satchels, they are energy banks, time sponges, and what is held within them seeks release.



# painting in between

**Louise O'Brien talks to Sinéad O'Reilly about rural town living, the lure of the bog and occupying that in-between space necessary for her painting.**

Sitting in Louise's kitchen in Edenderry she lines up the coffee and her sage-apple cake, her vibrant paintings are rich with the smell of oil and *The Power of Horror, an essay in abjection* by Julia Kristeva is part of the pile of notes and notebooks. Louise also admits that the *Satanic Verses* are never too far away when the paints are out.

Her two children are back at school and the kitchen floor becomes her studio in their absence. Not her ideal 'studio', she says but "there is a domesticity at work in the movement of paint on canvas. There are the workaday happenings and thoughts that dictate a mark or restore a colour. I love the theatrics of uncertainty that comes with painting, but it sheds light on the linear uncertainty in motherhood. Every child knows that a simple disturbance in a web sends ripples throughout the whole connecting structure. Art infuses me with the alchemical ingredients for perceiving new dimensions, which as a single Mum I couldn't be without!

Edenderry is Louise's hometown. Her formative years led her to NCAD, an MA in Fine Art in Winchester, spells in Barcelona, Dublin and London, where in the latter she hung out with Albert Irvin and William Cozier and the London art scene of the 1990's. She shows me a postcard note and doodle Irvin wrote for her, clearly a pivotal influence. "He was a fighter pilot before being an artist, I felt safe with him, like he incarnated a part of me, when I wasn't in a good place."

As an art student she did a performance art piece in Carbury castle, outside Edenderry, fragile and naked against a cold stone ruin, "in my tortured soul days"

she giggles. She feels estranged as an artist in the town, trying to provide for it alongside motherhood is central, "I don't often get to talk about art," she says with some lament.

She had a solo show in the now closed Public Access Arts in Edenderry last year, a converted retail space on JKL St. "People said they liked looking at them through the window. Windows are a big thing, when you are surrounded by them in a housing estate, there is no place to stand outside and scream!" she says with a mock gesture, but its truth is clear.

"People who feel displaced recognise it in others" she says of the response to her show, "I want [painting] to do more for young people in that way. Feeding and nourishing children is so important."

She considers, "there is a hunger for something different here, there is a fear of it too. One older man said to me, 'you should put those up as signs coming into town; it would lift people's spirits'. There is a social order to rural towns, the characters, the leaders, people embody these identities, but they stunt themselves in order to not feel exposed. It's important to be a stranger to yourself sometimes." "When I paint it's ritualistic, almost a meditative state, a performance." She describes that creative space as being in between. In place out of place, between spirit and flesh, insides and outsides, male and female, the self and the not-self and ultimately as a space where shared habits and beliefs are at play. "I love that being said about the Midlands too, as it being somewhere in the middle and in between; as a space to occupy for artists, it's powerful."

"Words don't always bring us places, like movement in dance can or pigment and gesture in a painting. Painting to me is a way finder. It helps me find which way to go, but not with a certainty. It gives me that sign post."

"I love walking in the bog, I have a walking pattern. There is a religiosity in walking, the embodied act of the female pedestrian" she says sincerely. She is concerned about the local perception of the bogs around Edenderry following many years of industrialisation, "the bog to many represents a place of labour rather than the ancient earth that lies beneath us and what that evokes. There is mysticism, an ambience that doesn't exist anywhere else, where you can wipe the red ledger out of life."

The occupying and poetic thoughts of an extraordinary painter. The localness and ordinariness of influences, sometimes dark places but also excitement, captured in a vibrant palette of wandering and wondering. "I have radical places to go with painting. I like the idea that I can disregard a painting the next day, wipe it all out. We all need to bin things in life and move on."

"There is such mass media right now, excitement doesn't have to be fleeting and shallow" she explains by way of identifying the importance of the arts in our lives. "There is a common place for painting, it is the job of the artist to strip away all locatable contexts, and isolate something. That's the social responsibility of the painter."

Louise can be contacted on [louiseobrien4@gmail.com](mailto:louiseobrien4@gmail.com)

# Get into HALLOWE'EN SPIRIT at Creative Ardagh

**Forget about Hogwarts, the real magic is at Ardagh School of Witchcraft and Wizardry this October.**

Held during the October bank holiday weekend each year, the event is loosely based on the Harry Potter series. Participants take part in potions and dark arts classes, and may even find a few fantastic beasts! This year, Creative Ardagh are hoping to extend their Hallowe'en events, by introducing a literary element.

On a recent visit, Longford County Arts Officer remarked on the gothic setting of the building, pointing out that it would

be ideal for a workshop on gothic writings. As a result, Creative Ardagh, in conjunction with the Arts Office, will host a literary Fright Fest. This year, Ardagh School of Witchcraft and Wizardry takes place from October 24 – 26, while the brand new Fright Fest takes place from October 28 – 30, hopefully followed by a Hallowe'en Ball on October 31.

For more details, visit [www.creativeardagh.blogspot.ie](http://www.creativeardagh.blogspot.ie) or search for Creative Ardagh on Facebook.



## The Bus to Ballyragget

'The Bus to Ballyragget' is a new play by first time playwright, Amanda Kelly from County Laois.

The play's present day setting brings us to a small midland's town. The bus represents one woman's journey through an emotional crisis, her escape through Bingo, and her eventual return to the sometimes perverse comfort of the familiar. The play is due to be staged in several locations across the country, including Athy Arts Centre on Friday, November 27th 2015.



In this play, Amanda documents some of the emotional dilemmas and difficult decisions people face as they make their way through life. The play concentrates on the life of Mags Murphy, a woman in her fifties, who lives with her unemployed husband, Matt. She has started to question the possibility of there being more to life than a lacklustre existence. Through her interaction with her friend Josie, her husband Matt and a possible lover in Eddie, we see how she copes as she navigates her way through this time of questioning and become aware of the reasons behind the decisions she makes. Amanda grew up in Mountrath, lived in Portlaoise for many years with her husband Alan and two children Orla and Gavin, before finally settling in Abbeyleix in 2010. She is a civil servant, working for the Department of Agriculture. Just as Mags Murphy escapes through Bingo, Amanda absconds as often as possible from the everyday, to write. Having completed a Certificate in Creative Writing for Publication through National University of Ireland, Maynooth, she continued onto their two-year 'Two Roads' programme and was tutored by renowned Irish writers Suzanne Power and John MacKenna. Amanda began writing the play as a one page dialogue assignment for this writing programme.

'The Bus to Ballyragget' is a comic-tragedy, full of quick-witted humour, honest language, which by virtue of its honesty, is strong at times! Despite the laughter, an underlying sadness permeates the story. There is a strong, local cast in the production and most have previously worked in productions by Laois Open Door Theatre. Amanda is directing the play, another first for her! She is taking on board valuable advice from people who have done it all before. She is delighted to have her cast and crew form part of 'A Ha'Pert Production' for this, her first, of hopefully many plays. Tickets are priced at €10 and are available on the door on the night of the performance. Please refer to Athy Arts on Facebook, or web page [www.athycommunityartscentre.com](http://www.athycommunityartscentre.com) or alternatively, e-mail [athyarts@gmail.com](mailto:athyarts@gmail.com) for further information.

The play finishes its current run in Co. Laois at the Dunamais Arts Centre, Portlaoise, on Thursday, December 3rd 2015. Tickets are priced at €12 (€10 for groups of 8 or more) and are available from the box office at Dunamais, telephone (057) 8663355, [www.dunamais.ie](http://www.dunamais.ie)



## Museum Without Walls

Artist Liz Johnson walks us through her experience of working with IMMA on the innovative and thought-provoking project *The Contemporary Museum Without Walls*

*The Contemporary Museum Without Walls* was a socially engaged art project that explored the potential of creating a meaningful engagement with the Irish Museum of Modern Art's (IMMA) National Collection - without physically visiting the museum.

Grounded in André Malraux's concept of the 'Museum Without Walls' (1933) the project created an access point to IMMA's National Collection and contemporary arts practice that would not otherwise be available to the participating group. The core aims of the project were to demystify various forms of contemporary art and eliminate the notion of "geographical location" as a disadvantage by emphasizing the diversity and value of a "regional" place.

The project was led by Artist Liz Johnson, who worked in collaboration with members of a community art group, based in the rural village of Ballynacargy, County Westmeath.

The participants learned how to unlock hidden meanings in artworks, whilst they investigated different types of contemporary art through a process of blended-learning. They took part in practical and digital art workshops, and collectively produced their own forms of contemporary artwork; using 'found' materials to make art installations that addressed local concerns as well as global issues.

During the project the group also assumed a curatorial role, creating a collective virtual exhibition by selecting artworks from IMMA's online Collection. These artworks were chosen on the basis of their relevance to the participant's work, lives and community.

This virtual exhibition, also titled *The Contemporary Museum Without Walls*, was screened publicly on Culture Night in Ballynacargy Village. The exhibition provided a unique opportunity for the local community and the public to view the installation artworks created by the participants; and brought virtual contemporary artwork from IMMA's National Collection to the village for the first time. The project, which ran from April to June, received funding from Westmeath County Council's Arts-In-Community Scheme 2015, and the virtual artworks from the National Collection were shown with kind permission from the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

# ours and other people's

Or The Philosophy behind an Artist's Process, through Wordy Words on 'Works in Progress.'

by Rosalind Fanning

# Words

'Getting started is hard but finishi...' words neatly painted on a small rectangular canvas hung at a jaunty angle above a painted 'hole' in the wall; below the 'hole', a small heap of rubble spilled out across the floor. To complete this 'still life' were carefully positioned, well-worn, hole-bashing and shovelling tools! The amusing illusion topped with a piece of paper stuck onto an exposed nail with the handwritten words 'Work in Progress', as if work has temporarily ceased for an absent workman's coffee break. A table draped with a drop-cloth was proof of his present absence, with an empty coffee mug, a cast biscuit wrapper, the other half of the notice paper, and a pen.

The pile, the hole, the tools were one part of more three-dimensional 'still lifes' in the small showing entitled, 'Outside-In – Work in Progress.' It told a story, as still lifes do, in an illusory visit to an artist's studio. What was the story behind the heap and the abstract canvases on display, in a small gallery in Birr? Was it art? And did it all need a wordy explanation?

This was a highly enjoyable collaboration for the recent Culture Night, between me as the artist, inside, and Gerry Murphy who created video projections for the street-side. It was an exhibition to encourage passers-by into popping-in and lingering on.

For all our stories there is the beginning, a middle and an end. My beginning was 'philosophy' – for the sake of it. For many years, I have been telling of my intention that at 'a certain age' all of my assorted commitments would be put aside. "I shall give up all the practical stuff and do something completely 'useless.'" Pronouncing, "and I will study Philosophy!" No binding to a 'School of...' but a hope that a university might take an aged, though immature student for a broad immersion in reading, studying and writing (waffling?) .

In the sixth month of this year, this significant number was upon me and I had begun to perceive a wobble in my resolve. Sudden retirement from all sorts of commitments – would be unsatisfying. To focus on philosophy felt frivolous, impractical and foolishly indulgent.

If truth be told, there's nothing like the opportunity for Arts Funding from Offaly Arts Office to stimulate the grey cells into glorious colour, as I had been feeling a creeping disappointment in myself with dreams of scholastic quadrangles fading. During one of my regular strolls .ping! Thanks to that application, the unique possibilities of having it *both* ways: to undertake a self-imposed and selective 'speed-read' of philosophy for its relationships and inspirations to the arts, and from this, produce artworks on canvas and a number of essays. A perfect combination for me! The written and the visual.

During my DIY-thinking, it led me to wonder about how in beginning the 'process' of making art, why artists feel a requirement to explain it? In seeking inspiration, artists need quiet time to poodle on something completely different, for ideas and jumbled thoughts to assemble. However, once the artwork is off the easel, we are then required – or think we are required – to sort those thoughts and our process of creating this art, into mini-philosophical theories.

'Have ye written yer Waffly Bollocks yet?' asks the partner of the artist (a friend) before her exhibition – it still makes me giggle! We may first put down our blether onto application forms for the purposes of getting funding, or for acceptance to get exhibited – and trowelling on the impressive terminology. Some of our explanations about ourselves and our art is for wordy captions and catalogues. We expound to explain, to impress, and to self-elevate, to feel an importance as part of the collective belonging under the heading of 'Arts'. This we do for bureaucratic files; for the commission-takers, and very importantly for the art critics and media promotions through which we earnestly seek public acknowledgement and naturally, sales. All that wordiness. Should it be taken by ourselves with quite as much utmost reverence? Or are we taking it all a little too seriously?

As I placed large, brown string-tags on the corner of each of my three canvases-in-progress: 'Primary Colour Blue'/'Primary Colour Red'/'Primary Colour Yellow', I had been wondering some time

before that about labelling. If in reality, visual artists thus labelling, packaging, defining a style (as a belonging-to) are then *confining* themselves by words, titles and terminologies. Once labelled, an artist may be limiting the possibilities of changing and breaking out of the recognisable 'thing I do'...and that makes one what? A self-copyist, and a conformist?

Within a list of many usable quotes by Pierre Bonnard, is a pertinent one: 'The precision of naming takes away from the uniqueness of seeing.' And here's one for adapting, "Acting [replace that with art] shouldn't be talked about it should just be done." Judy Dench.

Half-an-hour before our recent exhibition *Outside-In* was about to open I was still panic-struck that my full, printed explanations were not quite finished. But finished they got, just as the moon rose and Gerry began illuminating the street-side of our walls with the moving pictures. Inside, I provided another option for our visitors' engagement:

The sign read:  
*When faced with Abstract Art in a gallery, which camp do you feel you're in?  
The Artist's or The Philosopher's?*

*No Artist's Explanation Required:*  
"As far as I'm concerned, a painting speaks for itself. What is the use of giving explanations, when all is said and done. A painter has only one language."  
**Pablo Picasso**  
or  
*A Full Written Explanation of The Artist's Motivation, Inspiration and Description of What The Art Means?*

The renowned young philosopher, Alain de Botton spoke about a visit to the Tate Gallery in London. After having seen 'the Rothkos' (abstract and darkly coloured paintings) which meant little to him, he later watched the artist Rothko being interviewed on television. "The American interviewer wouldn't stop asking what his paintings meant", said de Botton. "Suddenly the artist lost his temper and said ... 'There's sadness in my paintings, and sadness in you

and I hope my paintings bring our sadnesses together.' The philosopher de Botton commented, 'I thought it was a shame there wasn't a big sign next to his paintings in the Tate, explaining that!'

Here in mid-September, it mattered not a jot what I'd supplied in the form of reading material and explanations. No-one read mine! unless I had pointed them out. It was more of a social gathering, along with the delight in discovering what image of them was being projected onto the gable wall, which leads me to the next quote I sprang upon. An apt Wittgenstein, yes! Don't yawn, he'd been on my mind for some time, for an article on art and literary tourism. Wittgenstein, whose philosophy on language – communication and experience – had words to the effect that, "If the lion could speak, we still wouldn't understand each other." Mmm. And so too artists and non-artists?

We might be putting up barriers through our clubby terminologies and flowery language, much as other groups have created their own in-terms. We are needy in getting attention in the form of invitations to 'show', and we seek validations in the form of a purchase. But who needs to know all about our artistic process? Surely, the art if true, it will communicate something – all that is needed to the heart and eye of the beholder. Its meaning will be conveyed and appreciated subjectively. Or not. And so what. A Work of Art has really – admit it – been a Work of Play, so ditch the pomposity say I, and the 'porridge', to quote another art-friend.

My philosophy whim has so far been less-speed-reading and more of a dipping but now started, the reading will be continued. No disappointment. I thank the friend whose belated birthday card read, 'Sometimes on the way to the dream you get lost and find a better one.' (Another wise quote from a wordy artist: a short actor.)

## ADDENDUM:

It is with very grateful thanks to Offaly Arts Office that though my studying of philosophy is at a beginning it has started the process. Rosalind Fanning opened Tin Jug Studio, Birr in 2000. She studied the History of Fine Arts and Interior Architecture in London and worked in New York and London before returning to Ireland in the early-90s

Gerry Murphy is now a lecturer with the Civil Defence. He has a number of Diplomas and Degrees including Fine & Decorative Arts, Local History & Community Studies. The two met many years ago through the Birr Chapter of The Irish Georgian Society and have remained friends. They collaborated on a much lauded leaflet on the Preservation of Period Windows, and last year worked together in shared enthusiasm on his idea for projections onto historic buildings.

[www.tinjugstudio.com](http://www.tinjugstudio.com)



# Athlone's Farside Festival

After its inaugural year - Athlone's Farside Festival reflects on its success, and eagerly looks forward to 2016

Athlone's new boutique arts festival, the Farside Festival, took place this Autumn. Launching on Culture Night the festival's maiden voyage was a huge success, offering a diverse range of arts events in a wide variety of locations across the town. Chairperson of the festival Brenda Burke commented "we are delighted to have received such positive and enthusiastic feedback in our first year. The festival has been put together by a very dedicated group of volunteers who have an interest in highlighting the huge creativity that is in Athlone. We're already looking forward to 2016 and what we might do next."

The opening event took place on Culture Night and in a huge coup for its first year, the festival was delighted to welcome Ireland Chair of Poetry Paula Meehan to Athlone. Jackie Gorman, who curated the poetry programme for the festival commented "it's more than 40 years, and nine books, since Paula Meehan emerged from childhood in the inner city Dublin tenements to give voice to the disenfranchised everywhere. We were delighted to have one of the finest poets in modern Ireland take part in our festival. On Friday night, she took us through Dublin city streets, arctic landscapes and to herb-filled fields through her words. It was a tremendous opening to the festival and the performance of Bianca Fachel was also very special." In a lively evening of reading and discussion, Paula Meehan read a wide variety of poems and also took part in a discussion with Philip Coleman of Trinity College Dublin about her work in environments such as prisons and addiction centres and her passionate belief in the power of words to create power in people's lives.

The Farside Festival is supported by the Arts Council, Westmeath County Council, Celtic Roots, Sheraton Athlone, Makin Media Mobile, Athlone Springs, House of Hen and an on-line Fund-it campaign. Other events on Culture Night included a fringe exhibition at the Shambles Art Studios, unveiling of a grid drawing of Athlone by students in Burgesses window, the latter of which was supported by Corin Bishop Photography. There was also comedy with Breda Larkin at Making Space and Friday Night Blues at Flannery's with Eamonn Hatten, Gerry Flynn and Martin O'Hara.

Over the weekend, those attending the festival also took part in a poetry workshop, discussions and talks, a history walk and discussion and a response room in Abbey Road Studios. The response room provided participants the opportunity to make their own art in response to the workhouse experience in Athlone. Facilitated by artist Clodagh Kelly, the response room was entitled "home for blue children", a reference to the local term for the workhouse "the gorm". The festival also included an intimate and atmospheric concert in the Methodist Church with Brigid Power and the Driftwood Manor. Both performers put on amazing shows on the night and the historic church provided the perfect background for this event.

Videos of a selection of festival events will be available [www.thefarsidefestival.com](http://www.thefarsidefestival.com). The festival is also on Facebook and Twitter.



# Andrea CARTER

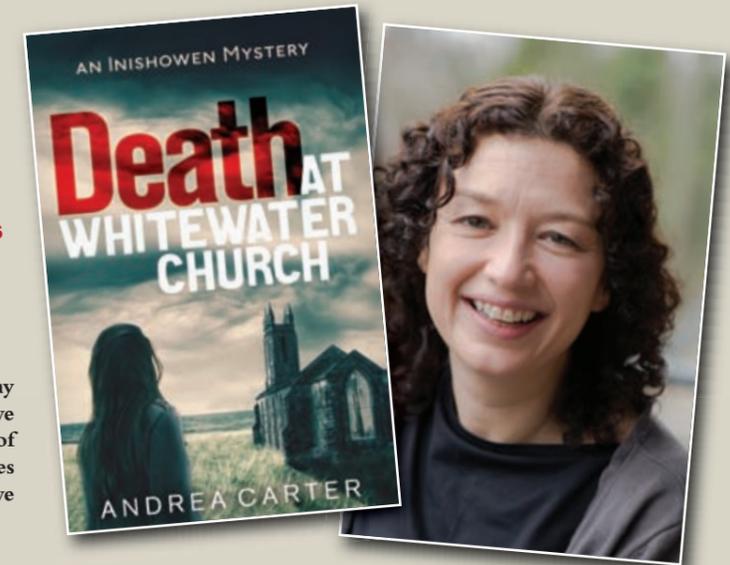
'Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwrecks.' Robert Louis Stevenson

I grew up in Ballyfin, Co Laois, in a Victorian schoolhouse that my brother and I were convinced was haunted. Looking back now, I have no idea whether the little boy who appeared regularly at the end of my brother's bed or the girl who watched me silently from the eaves were real or simply the products of two avid readers' over-active imaginations, but I do know that our old house had stories to tell.

Like the other local kids, my siblings and I spent our childhood roaming the grounds of Ballyfin Demesne (then a secondary school, now a five star hotel). We climbed the tower (ignoring parental warnings about missing floorboards), tramped around the lake and scared each other silly in the dank caves. Even the old handball alleys were spooky at dusk, the echoes of our voices reverberating off the walls as we chased each other in the fading light.

It was my grandmother's belief that a place retained the essence of what occurred there, and that one could sense it. And despite years of level-headed, rational legal training I happen to think she was right. She sensed that the old schoolhouse I grew up in was happy, the spirits – if that's what they were – unthreatening. But there were other places, a stretch of road between Abbeyleix and Carlow for example, that frightened her.

As a crime novelist of course, the places that interest me most are those that are not so happy: the derelict houses, the old hospitals, the ruined churches. When I visit somewhere for the first time, I find myself imagining what might have



happened there, and whether the memory of those events might have remained embedded within the walls, marking it out as a place of contentment or sadness. Or fear. My story begins with setting.

For ten years I worked as a solicitor in the Inishowen Peninsula, Co. Donegal, and, inspired by towering headlands, windswept beaches and a violent sea, I began writing a crime novel, which would become the first in a series set in the area.

I am not a writer who plans everything out in advance. Once I have my setting, I write as if I am driving along a foggy road at night. There are times when the road stretches clearly ahead and other times when it is barely visible; either way, I can never see further than the next bend. But it's the sense of not knowing that keeps me engaged.

*Death at Whitewater Church* is published by Little, Brown Book Group. The second in the series *Treachurous Strand*, will be released on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

## Using digital technology as a platform for the arts

There are some exciting developments in store for Longford County Arts Office, with the appointment of its first ever Technologist in Residence.

Paul Grealley is the new appointment and according to Paul, "The role will be multi-faceted but will primarily focus on how to incorporate digital technology into the creative process in visual arts, literary arts, music and dance. "It is an exciting and potentially stimulating position. Plus there's the bonus of working with some very creative people."

Paul is also more than qualified for the role, which will begin in January 2016. First working as a computer programmer with Dublin-based companies, he ultimately wanted to work in what he describes as "the emerging multimedia industry". To do that, he earned an MA in Digital Design at DIT, which he revealed gave him great insight into combining elements such as technology, graphic design, video and audio to deliver exciting products. Now working for himself (he set up Create Interactive in 1999), the inaugural Technologist in Residence admitted that though keeping up to date with technological advances is a challenge, he enjoys researching and learning new technologies and techniques, though finding the time to do so can be difficult.

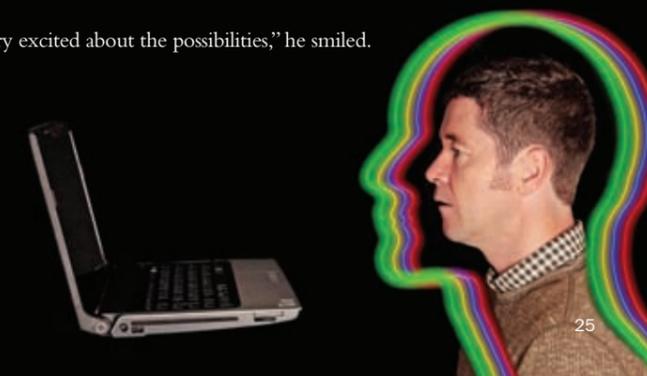
The first website Paul developed for the Arts Office was [www.virtualwriter.ie](http://www.virtualwriter.ie), which was established approximately 15 years ago, and he complimented Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy for his recognition of technology and how it could be harnessed. With an increasing demand for an online presence, the Arts Office and those involved in the arts in Co Longford have certainly landed on their feet with Paul. Outlining the main factors in building and maintaining a website, Paul was keen to show that the users are key, and so too is finding ways to encourage them to engage with the site. "Sometimes there can be a mismatch between how the client envisions the finished site and what best serves the target audience. It's my job to make the client aware of this and somehow deliver a finished product that satisfies all."

Longford County Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy has welcomed Paul to the role, while also stressing the importance of the internet when it comes to promoting the arts.

"No service can ignore the internet and digital technology," he maintained. "We have to adapt. From a creative perspective, the internet offers a multitude of creative opportunities." The internet is an important tool in offering a platform for Longford talents, Fergus believes, and it also bridges the gap between local artists and their counterparts all over the world.

Speaking about the new appointment, Fergus added, "Paul has been our tech advisor from day one. He is a highly-skilled software engineer who has a sensitivity for the arts, the visual arts in particular." With five websites catering to musicians, digital artists, writers and visual artists, as well as the Longford Arts Office website, and with a desire to use digital technology to benefit those involved in the arts, Fergus is very much looking forward to what lies ahead.

"I'm very excited about the possibilities," he smiled.



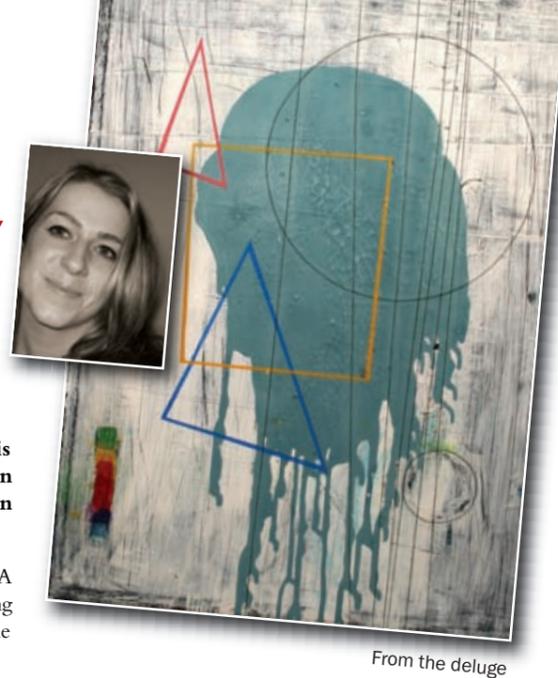
# AISLING CONROY

## RESIDENCY AT LAOIS ARTHOUSE

Visual artist Aisling Conroy has been awarded a six-month bursary at the Laois Arthouse, which commenced in September 2015. Aisling will be making work in response to a previously unseen collection from the Patrick Scott archive; a collection currently held at the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL).

The collection consists of Scott's studio diaries, photographs, sketchbooks, and personal papers. A rich account of the artist's life and studio practice is expected to unfold, influencing and connecting with Aisling's own studio practice. Aisling is working towards an exhibition of this work at the Arthouse in February 2016.

A native of Portlaoise, Conroy is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Dublin. Her practice involves painting, print, sculpture and sound installation. She holds a Hons degree and Postgraduate degree in Fine Art from the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) and she also works as the New Media Librarian at the Edward Murphy Library, NCAD, as well as in the archive at NIVAL. For more info, visit [aislingconroyart.com](http://aislingconroyart.com)



From the deluge



# 'Can you HEAR what I SEE?'

That was the question posed by Longford artist Brendan Duffy and Athlone writer Jackie Gorman, as they presented their exhibition and publication.

Brendan and Jackie met for the first time in 2014, both participants in Longford Arts Office's 'Respond' project, whereby ten writers penned a response to the work of ten local artists.

Jean Healy, Art Programme Director at St Christopher's explained that Brendan and Jackie 'clicked' the first time they met. "It's brilliant and it's been a great experience. [Respond] was just a lucky dip and it was really a perfect match." Explaining the reason behind the title, Jackie, who has written for publications including Wordlegs, Headspace, Elephant Journal and the Irish Times, stated; "We were trying to come up with a title that could convey the work and the process and I feel the title 'can you hear what I see?' does that."

According to Jackie, the title speaks to the process that she has had with Brendan, in terms of art and poetry and the way in which paintings and poetry can speak. Drawing on Leonardo da Vinci's statement that 'painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt, and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen', Jackie also feels it's important that it is an open question as, "most people will have their own individual reactions to a poem or a painting, a reaction that reflects their own experience and also what is being said or shown by the person who has created the work".

This time around has been a very different experience for the duo, Jackie admitted, as they had a larger volume of work to complete in a longer amount of time. "I also think we are more familiar with each other and we have both gotten a lot out of the experience," Jackie added.

Agreeing with Jackie, Jean continued, "I'm delighted to see it. Over the years Brendan's work has really been recognised a lot." As Brendan is non-verbal, Jean pointed out that he expresses himself a lot through his abstract works. Stating that "he really does paint from the heart," Jean also acknowledged Brendan's mother, Olive, who has always been extremely supportive of her son's work. The first launch took place in Longford, and after running for a few weeks, the exhibition moved to Athlone, where the launch was attended by artist and art therapist Dymphna Bonfield. The accompanying publication went on sale for €5, with proceeds going to St Christopher's Services.

Adding her delight at their special guest in Athlone, Jackie concluded by saying, "We haven't any plans at the moment for another project but there's certainly a possibility we might do something together again in the future."

# OFFLINE, IT'S PURE MULE!!

OFFLINE FILM FESTIVAL (Oct 7-11) went pure mule this year, with a strong focus on Offaly on the big screen, and in particular marking the 10th anniversary since the iconic RTÉ series *Pure Mule* hit our screens and woke Ireland up to the Midlands of the Celtic Tiger.

Pure Mule, in case you need an explanation, is a phrase in the Offaly dialect which may mean "really good" or "lousy", depending on the intonation. Edenderry screenwriter Eugene O'Brien who penned *Pure Mule*, officially unveiled the OFFline programme on Culture Night in September and was joined by director and Clara native Declan Recks, at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre on Friday 9th October.

Speaking at the OFFline launch O'Brien said: "It's hard to believe it's already been 10 years and it's good to know people are still interested in the show. At the time, Irish audiences hadn't seen a show like that, a story set primarily in the Midlands, but the characters just clicked with people. We're delighted that OFFline has decided

to celebrate the series in this way, the Festival has really gained momentum in recent years."

The 2005 six-part drama mini-series aimed at a young audience featured Birr, Banagher and Tullamore in the series. It intended to offer an insight into modern day rural Ireland with a second edition in 2009 called *Pure Mule: the Last Weekend*. *Pure Mule* won five IFTAs and is still referenced in the Irish media a decade after its original broadcast. The show is credited with progressing the careers of new young actors such as Charlene McKenna, who became a household name and face in Ireland following its success.

Festival Director Gary Hoctor said: "We are delighted that OFFline continues to go from

strength to strength. We've received over 600 short film submissions from 55 different countries, even more than last year. With every Festival we face new challenges, but each year, OFFline brings fresh interest to filmmaking in the region. We were thrilled that we hosted the *Pure Mule* 10th Anniversary Night. The success of the show not only put Offaly on the filmmaking map, but also inspired the foundation of FilmOffaly and subsequently OFFline Film Festival"

[www.offlinefilmfestival.com](http://www.offlinefilmfestival.com)  
[www.filmoffaly.ie](http://www.filmoffaly.ie)



# in the COMPANY of GREAT IRISH WRITING by Eileen Casey

When I was invited to contribute to the most recent Faber and Faber Irish Short Story Anthology, *All Over Ireland* I felt extremely fortunate. I've always held this London Publishing House in very high esteem, mainly due to one of my favourite poet's (T.S.Eliot) stewardship of the house when it first began in 1929.

Although I began publishing as a writer through poetry, I've always written short fiction, winning a Hennessy Award (Emerging Fiction) in 2010 and then my debut collection 'Snow Shoes' (Arlen House) appearing in 2012. That said it was still a great honour to be included with writers such as Eoin McNamee, Frank McGuinness, Belinda McKeon (a fellow Midlander), Selina Guinness and Colm Tóibín, among others. This current anthology, edited by Deirdre Madden, is the fifth in the series.

*All Over Ireland* is a mix of established upcoming and new writers. Michael Galligan's first ever publication appears here in the wonderful story 'Absence'. Ita Daly, widow of David Marcus is also within the pages. I remember taking two buses from Tallaght to Dundrum in the early '80s (toddler daughter in tow) to attend Ita Daly's fiction workshops with Dundrum Adult Education. I also have fond memories of Colm Tóibín coming to talk to a group of writers I was facilitating at Virginia House Arts Centre, Tallaght. Tóibín was kindness itself and gave great advice on the night. He absolutely refused to take a fee and at that time (mid '90s) he was still establishing himself.

When I was first approached to submit a story, I went into panic mode. Once I calmed down I asked myself, what was the story I really wanted to tell? A character had lodged in my mind, born out of a series of conversations I had with a friend. Although the character began in fact, it wasn't long before the fictional world (more real in my view) kicked in. Providing a backdrop (stories are like paintings, with foregrounds and backgrounds) arrived in the shape of Nelson Mandela's funeral rites. I recently sent a copy of *All Over Ireland* to Historian and dear friend Margaret Hogan (my English teacher in St John's, Birr many moons ago). She said she liked the story because it continued to offer up secrets and twists and didn't "spill everything" at once. I will never forget hearing Booker Prize Winner Anne Enright talk about writing fiction...she said that fiction is like driving a car in the dark, "you only show what the headlights reveal, what's immediately up ahead". The experience of being a Faber and Faber writer has been invaluable as a learning curve. Attention to absolutely every single word has taught me that every single word must earn its keep and good writing needs to 'rest' and 'breathe' before being sent out into the world.



# ART has always been part of ME

**“Never look down on anybody unless you are helping them up”**

The words of Jesse Jackson, and also the ones which Angelika Sowul uses to describe her exhibition at the Backstage Theatre. Working on the theme of ‘Masks’, Angelika, a native of Mragowo (previously Sensuburg), Poland, opened her exhibition at the beginning of October, displaying photography and drawings and even performing a story through the medium of contemporary dance.

Speaking about the chosen theme, Angelika explained; “Life impels me to think [about] how people behave and how they react in some situations. “In these days, people are engrossed in a vicious circle of the rat race when at the same time they forget about their natural response to human suffering. Sometimes people get lost and it is important to remind them that there is love, friendship and the power of goodness. “I believe that every one of us is wearing a mask,” she continued. “Many times people like to judge other people by looking only at their mask. But in most cases they are very misleading. We are thinking in stereotypes where people have their mask to manipulate others, to use others, to be on the top, to be fake. In some situations that might be true, but do we have to put all people into one dirty bag?” Angelika has met many people in her life, and she has seen how people wear their masks to hide broken hearts, feelings, problems and often, health issues. She added that; “in the social media era we are getting shallow and [we’re] not really bothering to look deeper into another person’s soul. Wouldn’t it be brave to take off someone else’s mask and look through to its heart?”

Angelika’s love for art began at a very young stage. Describing her home town as being “located in a beautiful land of lakes and forest,” Angelika pointed out that many natives became painters, and she believes that this is largely due to the environment and the area’s ‘magical’ landscapes. “My mother told me many

stories that I always drew something rather than playing with the typical toys,” she smiled, going on to say, “Art has always been a part of me, I believe art was born with me and because my whole family are very artistic and creative people I must have art in my blood.” A self-taught artist, Angelika studied International Connection in Higher University but kept art as a hobby. Arriving in Ireland in 2008, sadly, Angelika stopped creating to focus on settling in. “I came to Longford around 5 years ago and I felt burned out working in the Bank of America in Carrick-on-Shannon so I decided to leave the job and I started to think of myself more and open myself to the world.” Admitting that she had been through hard times trying to find her path in life, Angelika happily revealed that she fell in love with her now husband, who helped her to understand herself and choose the way of life she was looking for. It is her husband whom she credits with helping her to get back to art.

“Now I can tell that I am the happiest person in the world!” she exclaimed. Angelika, who has since graduated from Templemichael College’s Art course, also expresses herself through dance, which she has been doing since she was thirteen years old. Part of a school cheerleading group, Angelika went on to set up a dancing group with her friends. Though she attended a few classes, Angelika’s dance, like her art, is very much self-taught. Though she always wanted to join ballet classes, none were available, so she focused on hip-hop and contemporary, the latter of which she is extremely invested at the moment.

Acknowledging Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy and Photographer Shelley Corcoran for their invaluable help and support, Angelika hopes that her exhibition has shown people the real Angelika, and she concluded by saying; “I hope I will persuade at least one person that before making any judgement about another person we should start with ourselves first.”



# OBOE Tuition



**Oboe tuition is an exciting initiative that is part of a new pilot programme through the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras, Laois School of Music and Music Generation Laois.**

A specialist tutor will travel to Portlaoise to provide oboe tuition, and the approach will include both one-to-one music lessons along with the introduction of periodical Skype lesson. Lessons will be subsidised and an oboe will be provided. The aim of these lessons is to develop oboe players in County Laois, and further develop the woodwind section of the Laois School of Music Youth Orchestra.

Music Generation Laois are also delighted to introduce Double Bass tuition to the range of classes available in the Portlaoise Youth Education Centre, a fantastic instrument which would ideally suit a young musician interested in joining the Laois School of Music Youth Orchestra and Music Generation Laois’ School of Rock & Pop.

A new branch to the Music Generation Laois tree introduces Traditional Flute, Tin Whistle and Concertina as the latest instruments in our Irish Traditional Music programme which already includes Uilleann Pipes and Harp. The classes will be taught by the talented Musician Áine McQuaid.

Pop, Rock, Classical, Traditional or African Drumming? Music Generation Laois are delighted to announce that bookings are still open for our evening music lessons in Portlaoise for 2015-2016. Our experienced tutors will work with students to unleash their creative side through classes, workshops, performances and masterclasses.

For more information, please contact the Music Generation Laois Office on 057-8664176 or musicgenerationlaois@laoiscoco.ie



# The Birth of a New Work by Karina Lundström

**A few days ago I was invited to sit in on the first rehearsal of a new composition. There’s something very special about watching musicians working out how to approach a new work. It’s even more special when that work is still in the process of being written and the composer is also present.**

Last year the wind quintet, Cassiopeia Winds, decided that they would like a new work by John Buckley, their composer of choice. John, one of Ireland’s leading composers, instantly agreed and so (with the aid of a very welcome grant from the Arts Council) he started work last June on what is his second wind quintet. The rehearsal was taking place in St. Patrick’s Teachers’ Training College where John Buckley lectures. It was a very wet Wednesday afternoon and the rain was drumming on the windows of the rehearsal room as the musicians arrived. The five members of Cassiopeia Winds are among the top wind players in the country and have played together in different ensembles for many years. Two of them have been playing music together since they were 11 year olds and so the banter between them is always amusing.

John Buckley passed around the scores of the first movement, said a few words about it, asked for some feed-back on the layout and then left the players to work through the four pages of the first movement. As an observer, this part of a first rehearsal is like watching a very intricate jigsaw being assembled. At first there are just notes and very gradually patterns emerge. From the time the music is placed on the stands, the banter gives way to serious discussion – “what speed will we rehearse this movement at?”; “how are you counting that 5/8 bar – is it 2 and 3 or 3 and 2?”; “let’s take that again from bar 15”. Eventually, John Buckley is invited back in to hear his first movement...

I wish I could have stayed on to hear the rest of the rehearsal but duty called and I had to get back to my office. However, despite the rain and appalling traffic I got back to my desk in high spirits. Watching the birth of a new work is wonderful and this particular new work is vibrant and exciting and I feel very honoured to have been given the experience. Cassiopeia Winds will take John Buckley’s new quintet on tour this autumn with the debut performance taking place in Birr Theatre and Arts Centre on Saturday 7 November at 8pm.

Other venues on the tour: Tullyally Castle, Castlepollard, Saturday 14 November at 8pm; The Black Abby, Kilkenny, Sunday 29 November at 3pm; Dunamaisé Arts Centre, Portlaoise, Tuesday 8 December at 8pm; St. Peters Church of Ireland, Drogheda Thursday 11 February (2016) at 7.30pm.



Cassopedia Winds are Catriona Ryan, Matthew Manning, Deirdre O’Leary, John Hearne, Cormac O hAodáin. Photo Emily Manning

# Birr comes up smelling of Turf & Roses

**Author Breda Joy reflects on a week of writing in Birr.**

“As a Kerrywoman rooted at the edge of lake and mountain, I never harboured ambitions to journey into the bogs of Offaly – with one exception. Whenever I drove through Birr en route to a friend’s house in Mullingar, I stole fleeting glimpses of its Georgian terraces. That glancing acquaintance, married to mentions of the Birr Telescope, convinced me that Birr was a place to visit – eventually.

While it took me half a lifetime to venture into ‘the interior’, I returned to the Kingdom with the zeal of the converted for Ireland’s centre or ‘Umbilicus Hibernia’. I went to Birr as one of four writers on the Birr Writers’ Residency, sponsored by Offaly County Council Arts Office. Put simply, a residency is a ‘writing holiday’ to escape the demands of everyday life and concentrate totally on a project, in my case a novel.

For one week of grey skies (Fifty Shades of Birr), I was based at the Tin Jug Studio at Brendan House, home of artist Rosalind Fanning, and her journalist husband, Derek. To sense the ambience of Brendan House, imagine the contents of a stately home transferred into a centuries old town house. A wall tapestry in my bedroom was suspended from a spear. A leopard skin, complete with fanged mouth, draped a chair in the sitting-room. Rosalind is a very solicitous ‘bean a tí’ – she has a passion for the Irish language – and her breakfasts and dinners are divine.

My time in Birr allowed me the time to unloose my mind, to fill pages of my notebook while I encouraged myself with the wisdom, ‘accumulate pages and not judgements’. Birr Library, with stained glass and artwork from its former life as a convent, was an inspirational space to write in. Also, I found material on the mythology of horses which tied in neatly with an aspect of my novel. When I wasn’t writing or plotting, I toured Birr and its hinterland. The ‘interior’ came up smelling of turf and roses.



# Culture Night

## Culture Night in Laois

Culture Night on Friday 18th September was a night to remember in Laois with a great selection of events happening throughout the county. The highlight of the night was a concert with acclaimed Irish Singer, Songwriter **John Spillane**, at the Arts Centre, Mountmellick. John was joined on stage by students from around the county who took part in workshops led by the singer titled "Songwriting in Laois". John visited a number of schools in the county to encourage them to explore songwriting, with a focus on songs through the medium of Irish. The performance featured some of these students, and the work that they had created together.

Another highlight for families in Portlaoise at the Dunamase Arts Centre was a Family Book Reading and Art Workshop called "The Adventures of Flopsy Hop the Rabbit in Origami Wonderland". Offaly based designer, craft maker and 'Maker of Magic' George Dempsey Flanagan of Mojo Creations presented a very special fun filled event of Origami Magic. Also near Portlaoise, a group of artists enjoyed a fantastic opportunity to paint outdoors on the Rock of Dunamase with leading landscape artist Jock Nichol. Heritage House, Abbeyleix hosted a traditional Irish crafts evening with demonstrations in craft making and exhibitions of wonderfully creative work.

Relaxation and Art at Mount Henry Art Studio, Portarlinton made for a really chilled out opportunity for people to enjoy art and meditation.

Other events included a plaque unveiled at the former Quaker Burial Ground in the Mountrath followed by a talk on the "Quakers in Laois". A series of free tours at Emo Court and traditional nights were held at O'Dempseys GAA Club, Ballybrittas, Knock Hall in Spink and Portlaoise Comhaltas performed in the Library in Portlaoise. For more information about Culture Night or to offer ideas for events in 2016 please contact: **The Arts Office, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co Laois**

**T: 057 8664033/13 E: artsoff@laoiscoco.ie or W: www.laois.ie** or visit the National Culture Night website [www.culturenight.ie](http://www.culturenight.ie) Culture Night was brought to you by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in partnership with Laois County Council. An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta a dhéanann comhordú ar an Oíche Chultúir, i gcomhpháirt le Comhairle Chontae Laoise.



Pauline Conroy painting outdoors on the Rock of Dunamase



George Dempsey Flanagan and workshop participants at The Dunamase Arts Centre



Participants enjoy relaxation and art at Mount Henry Art Studio



John Spillane performs at Mountmellick Art Centre



Scalene Dance Company from Grenoble France wowed audiences in Foundation 15 for Culture Night



Emma Nee Haslam, Miriam Smyth, Patrick Ryan, Angela Ryan Whyte and Eugene O'Brien at the performance of The Elephant by Miriam Smyth at Foundation 15, winner of the 2015 Scripts Playwriting Festival.

## Culture Night in Offaly



Zoetrope - artist Caroline Conway with the 'the amazing sporting zoetrope' in Birr for Culture Night



Clara Musical Society's Georgia Ireland and Darren O'Hara



Christiane O'Mahony and Aine Ni Laoighaire performing a rehearsed reading of a new play Rebels and Rich Tea in Tullamore Library



Paul Timoney enthralled young audiences in Edenderry and Tullamore



Kate Flynn performing in JJ Hough's Banagher



Cormac Lally did a poetry reading in Linda Kellys Inspired Craft shop in Birr



Michael Kilmartin at Columb Barracks

## Culture Night in Westmeath



The Westmeath Culture Night Team



Oisín Metal Art by Gerry Hesnan in Market House



Mullingar Arts Centre



Harp School Recital at the Greville Arms Hotel



Luan Gallery Children's Workshop



Mullingar Town Band at Market Square



Midlands Youth Orchestra at Council Buildings, Mullingar



Moate Choral Society at Council Buildings, Mullingar

## Culture Night in Longford



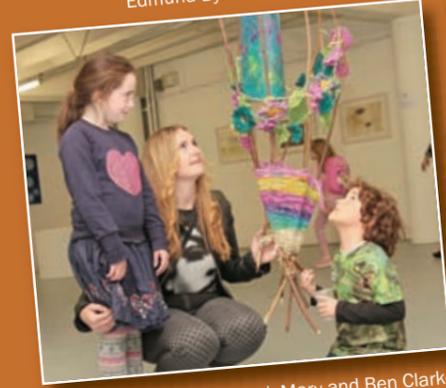
Patrick Baxter, Donal Mac Aodh, Edmund Byrne and Paul Masterson



Holly and Ciadh Robinson



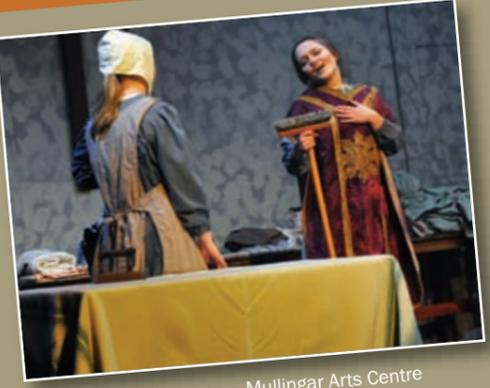
Caption to go here



Joni, Mary and Ben Clarke



Maria, Annette, Oliver and Anne Corkery



Mullingar Arts Centre



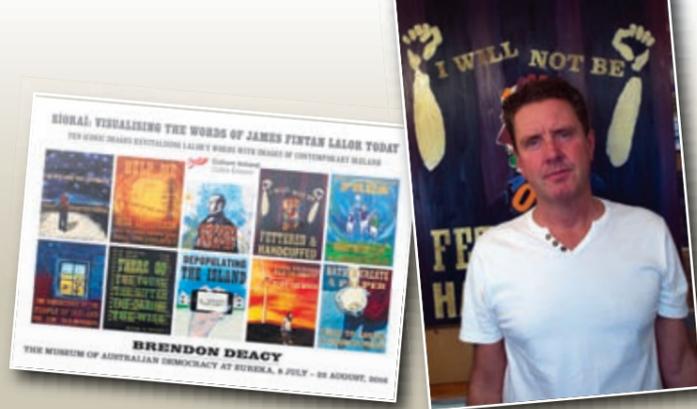
# EUREKA for Laois Artist

**Brendon Deacy's exhibition inspired by the words of James Fintan Lalor is to travel to the Museum of Australian Democracy in Eureka as part of the International Culture Programme to celebrate Ireland 2016.**

Following the success of Brendon Deacy's latest exhibition in Laois, 'Sioraí: Visualising the Words of James Fintan Lalor Today', one of the artworks from it was presented to the Museum of Australian Democracy in Eureka (MADE) by Margot Coogan, Lalor Clan Chieftain, which led to an official invitation to exhibit the show at MADE in 2016.

'Sioraí' originated from a commission by Laois County Council who asked Brendon to produce new work as a central feature for the James Fintan Lalor conference 2014 at the Dunamais Arts Centre, Portlaoise, where the public came together with academics, artists, journalists, politicians and social leaders, to discuss Lalor's legacy and relevance today ([www.jamesfintanlalor.ie](http://www.jamesfintanlalor.ie)). Lalor (1807-1849) dedicated his life to lobbying on behalf of the downtrodden and had a profound effect on Irish democratic developments. The exhibition's title, 'Sioraí' ('Eternal'), is in respect to the enduring relevance of his words on key parts of Irish history up to the present day. Pádraig Pearse called Lalor 'one of the four evangelists of Irish freedom' so the timing of the show is befitting to mark the 1916 centenary as it expresses the influence he had on visionaries like Pearse as well as Davitt, Larkin and those who drafted the Democratic Programme of the first Dáil in 1919.

The artist created ten iconic paintings using oils mixed with debris collected from Tenakill House, where Lalor was born, significantly forging a metaphysical



connection between the work and the man. To emphasise his contemporary relevance, Lalor's words were presented verbatim in the style of Irish posters of his time and juxtaposed with depictions of present-day Ireland. A series of prints were also made. The whole journey to the exhibition was documented in a short film which premiered at the conference and will also be shown at MADE.

The venue's location is ideal for building on the strong links between Australia and Ireland's culture and history as MADE stands on the site of the Eureka Stockade, an event that shaped Australian democracy which was led by James Fintan's brother. Peter Lalor's contribution to Australian politics and human rights is celebrated at MADE who state, James Fintan Lalor, as Peter Lalor's brother, is of significant interest to the museum. His influences on his younger brother and the Young Ireland movement trace directly to the events in Ballarat in 1854. The presentation of these influences and issues by Brendon Deacy also resonate with the challenges that both Ireland and Australia face today down through the centuries.'

Culture Ireland are generously supporting the exhibition as part of the International Culture Programme to celebrate Ireland 2016.

The exhibition will run from 8 July - 22 August 2016, at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka, Ballarat, Victoria.



## World Class Arts Events for All at **Bringing the Arts to Life in Laois** **Dunamais!**

**Dunamais Arts Centre Portlaoise recently unveiled its Autumn Winter 2015 Season Programme and it is jam packed with award-winning, highly acclaimed events for every taste.**

Whether you're into classical or country, comedy or drama, history or fiction; Dunamais has it all! The new look Dunamais' booklet is currently being distributed to households across County Laois or can be picked up from the Box Office, libraries and various other outlets throughout the county.

Taking place from October to January 2016, a taste of the wonderful arts highlights of the season include exquisite Irish language versions of Van Morrison's songs by Liam Ó Maolaí, Hilary Bow and The Brad Pitt Light Orchestra in *Moondance: The Van Morrison Project*; performances by Serbian-American

pianist Ivan Ilić; Phil Coulter who celebrates his 50th anniversary in music and Ireland's top wind players Cassiopeia Winds; film screenings including the landmark documentary *Older than Ireland* which will also feature a Q&A session with the film's Director Alex Fegan and the Oscar nominated *Song of the Sea*. Ballet Ireland present their captivating show Coppélia and families and schools can look forward to award-winning Barnstorm Theatre Company's show *Me Too!* and Paul Curley in *Bake!*, a delightful new theatre experience for children ages 4+. Theatre fans are in for a treat and will laugh all the way home with the hilarious comedies *The Importance of Being Honest* which went down a treat

recently at Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival and the fast paced comedy about life, love and dieting – *Weighing In*.

A range of music, storytelling, historical presentations and political debates will be held as part of the 3rd Annual James Fintan Lalor School. Dunamais is delighted to also host performances by talented local performers including 65 Kitchen Choir, Portlaoise Musical Society and Portlaoise Pantomime Group over the coming months. For details about these and more fantastic arts events see [www.dunamais.ie](http://www.dunamais.ie) or call 057 8663355.



# OUR TIME HAS COME

**Music Generation Offaly/ Westmeath and Westmeath County Council have commissioned composer Vincent Kennedy to create a newly written work Our Time for Moate Community School on the occasion of their becoming All-Island Choir of the Year 2015.**

Vincent Kennedy first visited the school last May, spending time with the winning choir, their choral director Ms Lorna Duignan and Principal Tom Lowry. Vincent was so moved by the joy that the young people and their teachers brought to their singing that he decided to compose a completely new work to mark their achievement.

The composition process began what Lorna described as "a completely new experience for us, we've only ever sung pieces that we could hear first. To be the creators of that first sound was a great responsibility – we so wanted to do Vincent's composition justice as it truly captured a unique moment in our school's history. We started rehearsing in July and continued to work with Vincent as the piece took shape. This has been a huge learning curve for us, not only as singers but the insight into the compositional process has been inspiring."

Vincent Kennedy was born in Dublin and studied trumpet winning many prizes and performing with orchestras and ensembles before establishing himself as a composer. He has written for orchestral, chamber, instrumental and vocal combinations. His music has been performed by the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, the Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra, Antipodes Ensemble, Concorde, Donegal Camerata, Cantando, the Rathfarnham Concert Band Society, the Band of An Garda Síochána, the combined bands of the Irish Army and many symphonic wind ensembles, brass and pipe bands throughout Ireland, Europe, USA and

Canada. In the past year Vincent has completed and performed the stage production of "The Torch Still Burns Brightly" based on the words and episodes in the life of John F. Kennedy and will shortly begin recording this work. He conducted a brilliant performance of his music "The Chronicles of Meath" at the World Harp Festival in Sydney Australia. A recording of that work with the Meath Harp Ensemble will be released shortly. He wrote music for a new stage musical about the journey and plight of Irish women who journeyed to Australia pre and post famine and will be the music director when this premieres in Australia in the near future. Vincent is also working on new music to commemorate 1916. Throughout his career, Vincent has had a passion for music education and working with young people and this manifests by being musical director of the Rathfarnham Concert Band Society, conductor of the Donegal Youth Orchestra and to have been the first conductor to be asked to direct the Wexford Fest of Youth Orchestras in the Opera House in Wexford.

Our time was premiered on Culture Night in Westmeath, (where else might we hear it?)

*Music Generation Offaly/ Westmeath is a partnership between Music Generation and Offaly Westmeath Music Education Partnership which is managed and administered by key stakeholders Offaly and Westmeath County Councils and the regional ETB' and is supported by U2 and The Ireland Funds.*

## Four years of myths and magic at Creative Ardagh

**The partnership of Annette Corkery and Ann Gerety Smyth, Creative Ardagh celebrated its fourth anniversary in Ardagh Heritage and Creativity Centre in August 2015.**

Through their varied careers and qualifications, (Arts Coordinator Annette has a BA (Hons) in Literature and Psychology and completed an MLitt thesis in NCAD, while Events Coordinator Ann has a BA (Hons) in European Business Studies (with Spanish) and is a Fellow with ACCA), the duo bring their complementary skills together to create a place in which people of all ages, from toddler to experienced adult, are encouraged to explore their creativity, be inspired by the beautiful setting and create their own individual artwork.

As well as classes and drop-in art days, Creative Ardagh also provide curriculum-based school programmes and are the only accredited Discover Primary Maths and Science Centre in County Longford. They also cater for birthday parties and have a permanent art gallery space, where artists can exhibit.

"Going to school in Ardagh, its history and heritage were always important to me," said Annette. "As one of the last class to start Junior Infants in the old school, the building has always been special to me too and so I am really excited to be working here." It's fair to say that one of Creative Ardagh's

biggest achievements to date, excluding, of course, the visit of President Michael D Higgins in 2014, is their successful celebration and promotion of local traditions - such as Bilberry Sunday - myths and history. The most well-known of these projects is the work on the local legend of Midir and Etain.

"Midir is from Ardagh Mountain, Brí Leith," the ladies explained. "And it is a beautiful legend which we have a passion for and wish to let the world know about. When the heritage centre was first established in the 1990s, a lot of work went into promoting the legend, as can be seen by the beautiful Eamon O'Doherty statue in the gardens and a big part of the heritage exhibition is dedicated to it."

To further highlight and celebrate the tale, Ann and Annette decided to put together an anthology of works inspired by the legend. "We approached Fergus Kennedy, County Longford Arts Officer, about producing an anthology and he was delighted with the idea. We also approached the Cruthú Arts Festival with the idea and it then became the community project for the festival. We were overwhelmed by the response, locally and internationally, with submissions from all over the



world and from all ages," they admitted. With contributions from people ranging in age from 3 to 100, the anthology was launched during the Cruthú Arts Festival in July, on Bilberry Sunday, and is still on sale at Ardagh Heritage and Creativity Centre for just €7.50.

To celebrate the launch, the original art and photography pieces were displayed, and since then, the exhibition has remained in place. Ann and Annette went on to acknowledge local artist Gordon Farrell, who let them include three of his works in the exhibit for the time being, before concluding, "We received so many submissions for the first anthology and we are aware there are many more inspired works out there that we hope this will be the first of many. We will continue to promote the legend through our workshops, tours and plays and are working with other groups in the county including the tourism office on this."

For more information on Creative Ardagh and the exciting projects, classes and events that they have lined up, visit [www.creativeardagh.blogspot.ie](http://www.creativeardagh.blogspot.ie) or search for Creative Ardagh on Facebook.

# James Fintan Lalor School

## October 2015

The third annual James Fintan Lalor Autumn School explored the centenary of the 1916 Rising.

The school launched the public engagement process in Laois, discussing in detail themes relevant to the people, events and lead-up to the Easter Rising. The Panel Debates linked the writing of James Fintan Lalor with the revolutionary ideals of those who planned and took part, with a special debate on the 1916 Proclamation, the wording of which was influenced by James Fintan Lalor.

Chair of the James Fintan Lalor School Committee Muireann Ní Chonaill said "We are delighted that the speakers and topics for this year's school presented such a strong picture and that there was so much energetic debate at the event, with wonderful participation from the audience, as in previous years".

The opening event took place on Friday 9th October in the Dunamais Arts Centre with a keynote address entitled, "Commemoration" delivered by Professor Diarmaid Ferriter. The evening also featured a special performance of music and stories inspired by the recently published book

Historian Diarmaid Ferriter at the James Fintan Lalor Autumn School



Journalist and author John Waters at the James Fintan Lalor Autumn School

by Nuala Hayes entitled "Laois Folktales". She was joined by musicians Cormac de Barra and Sean Ryan. The original illustrations from the book by Rita Duffy are on display throughout the event.

Saturday's programme included "The Life & Times of Peter Lalor", an address by Chair of Laois Heritage Society Michael Parsons, on Peter Lalor, the brother of James Fintan Lalor and leader of the Eureka Stockade in Australia. A response to this was given by Professor Erik Ekland, Australian Studies at UCD.

Throughout the day debates included; "Irish Freedom in the 21st Century" chaired by Professor Diarmaid Ferriter, with contributions from Pat Cooke and Dr. Regina Uí Chollatáin of UCD, and Senator Fiach Mac Conghail, of the Abbey Theatre.

The second panel debate was "The Power of Interest Groups" chaired by Catriona Crowe, of the National Archives of Ireland, and panellists Helen

O'Carroll, Curator of Kerry County Museum, Dr. Sandra Collins, the newly appointed Director of the National Library of Ireland and John Waters, Journalist and Author.

The final debate of the day was "The 1916 Proclamation" chaired by Prof. Bryan Fanning of UCD, with contributions from Liz Gillis, Author of "Women of the Irish Revolution 1913 - 1923", Artist Robert Ballagh, and journalist Ruth Dudley Edwards.

# Sue Reid

Sue Reid commenced her 6 month residency in Laois Arthouse in September 2015.



After successfully studying and enjoying her time in NCAD, Sue felt that full time education did not suit her individual requirements. She then continued her education through self-directed and peer learning. Together with a number of artists they successfully applied for an incubation studio at The Lab, Dublin City Council from July 2014, for one year's duration. The group of artists named themselves 'The Place'. They attended lectures, courses and shared information and they also managed to continue their individual art practice, presenting an exhibition at the end of the year. Having loved her time at The Lab, Sue looks

forward to her time at the Laois Arthouse, Stradbally. She has always been fascinated by paint and its metamorphic abilities, which lead her to experiment transforming paint from liquid to a flexible solid. She now likes to work with the materiality of paint in its pure and simplistic form, allowing the paint to influence the work.

First starting with layers of moulded paint creating small stand-alone pieces. When accumulated the pieces create a much larger piece of work. Choosing white as her present colour to work with, paint becomes something to play with both

inside and outside of a space. Now no longer supported by the paint brush, the paint is removed from its traditional canvass.

Sue will also familiarise herself with the local community and beautiful surrounding countryside taking photos and sketching, keeping ideas fresh and studio work interesting as the moulding process of paint can be therapeutic, but can also be monotonous. Her time at the Laois Arthouse will culminate with an exhibition in February 2016.

# HULLABALOO SHOW STOPPERS!

Young audiences at the 9th HULLABALOO! Offaly's Children's Arts Festival this October midterm break will be in for a treat with an international line up of show stopping performances for little people.

**Barnstorm Theatre Company** will perform their latest play for children *Me Too!* by Sarah Argent. The leading Irish children's theatre company are on a premiere tour of the new play for children aged 4+ (and their families) about two strangers who meet for the first time. Like snowflakes, from a distance they appear the same but, look closely - they're different.

Like starting school or a new job, nothing is familiar. Barnstorm teams up again with director-deviser, Sarah Argent and the creative engine that produced the international hit *The Bockety World of Henry and Bucket*, to produce a gem which will resonate with all children whether from the same street or from different parts of the world.

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> of October **Birr Theatre and Arts Centre 7pm**

From the UK, **Theatre Fideri Federa** presents "Pitschi, The Kitten with Dreams". Based on a Swiss story, little Swiss kitten Pitschi is not happy, she would rather be a chicken, a goat, a rabbit, a duck... for after all, anything is better than being a cat! Come enjoy this perfect show for young children, full of good humour, music, song and adventure. This is a tale that has delighted generations of children - and cat lovers - all around the world. Following the show, children will be invited to meet and play with the animal characters. "45 minutes of pure magic for young children" EDINBNURGH FRINGE REVIEW

Thurs Oct 28<sup>th</sup>, 11am **Birr Theatre, 5pm Edenderry Town Hall**

**Professor Plunger**, the award winning show by the Fanzini Brothers performed by Con Horgan is an interactive non-verbal comedy clown show.

The Professor has already travelled to America, India and Australia... but he has never been to Offaly to show off his greatest invention; his amazing hair! An inventive and original show featuring dancing, hair, plungers and a bell playing finale. The Professor is a charming old world rogue with a little cheeky grin and a very large head of hair. "Talented and hilarious" The Irish Times **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> Oct 6pm Clara FRC, Thursday Oct 29<sup>th</sup>, 11am Edenderry Town Hall, 6pm Birr Theatre**

**Little Red Riding Hood** by Little Gem Puppets is a classic tale with a twist, there are firemen, a serious dose of Granny power and Little Red Riding Hood is studying to be a scientist when she grows up. What chance does the wolf have against that lot, well he has a few tricks up his sleeve as well! Finally your chance to tell that wolf exactly what you think of him, young and old alike. **Friday Oct 30<sup>th</sup>, 11am Edenderry Town Hall and 5pm Clara FRC**

For more information on Hullabaloo Offaly's Children's Arts Festival see [www.hullabaloofestival.ie](http://www.hullabaloofestival.ie)



# CEILIÚRADH 30 Years of Local Arts

2015 marks the 30th anniversary since the 'creation' of the first Local Authority Arts Officer, a partnership between the Arts Council and Clare County Council in 1985.

The ambition underpinning that initiative was simple; to place professional arts expertise at the heart of local governance. The investment in the arts by local authorities, spearheaded by the energy and dynamism of arts officers, has proven to have been one of the most successful and effective national achievements for strategic arts development in Ireland.

With substantial Arts Council Touring funding, the 30th anniversary will return to Clare, Glór in Ennis, where Ceiliúradh will be launched as a major touring exhibition of art works selected from the collection of every Local Authority in the Republic. The exhibition will tour up to 12 venues nationally over the following 18 months, including Limerick City Gallery of Art, the Model Niland in Sligo and the Dunamais in Portlaoise.

Featuring 31 works by renowned artists, the exhibition brings together notable names such as Robert Ballagh, John Kindness, Theo McNab,

Sean Cotter, Alice Maher, Nick Miller, Norah McGuinness, Micky Donnelly along with Frances Leach, Constance Short, Roisin McGuigan, Brigitta Varadi, Vanessa Lopez, Jan Voster, Jane McCormack, David Stephenson and many others.

The exhibition is curated by Muireann Ní Chonaill Laois Arts Officer, who says, "It is our intention to mark this anniversary with art and with artists. This exhibition will tell many stories in many layers, but curatorially the threads of place, home and people prevails. Local authority arts development, is just that, of a place and of a people, of rural and urban Ireland, of home in a changing island and a country bold with new ideas but stories rooted in its past."

Not only will this selection of artworks and artists be uniquely brought together for the first time, the provenance of how local authorities came to acquire these works tells a genuine story of support for and commitment to artists over many years.

For more information on this exhibition, please see [www.localarts.ie](http://www.localarts.ie)



Micky Donnelly, Old House Series #20 collection Offaly County Council, inspired by the home the artist shared with his late wife Noreen O'Hare in Mountmellick.