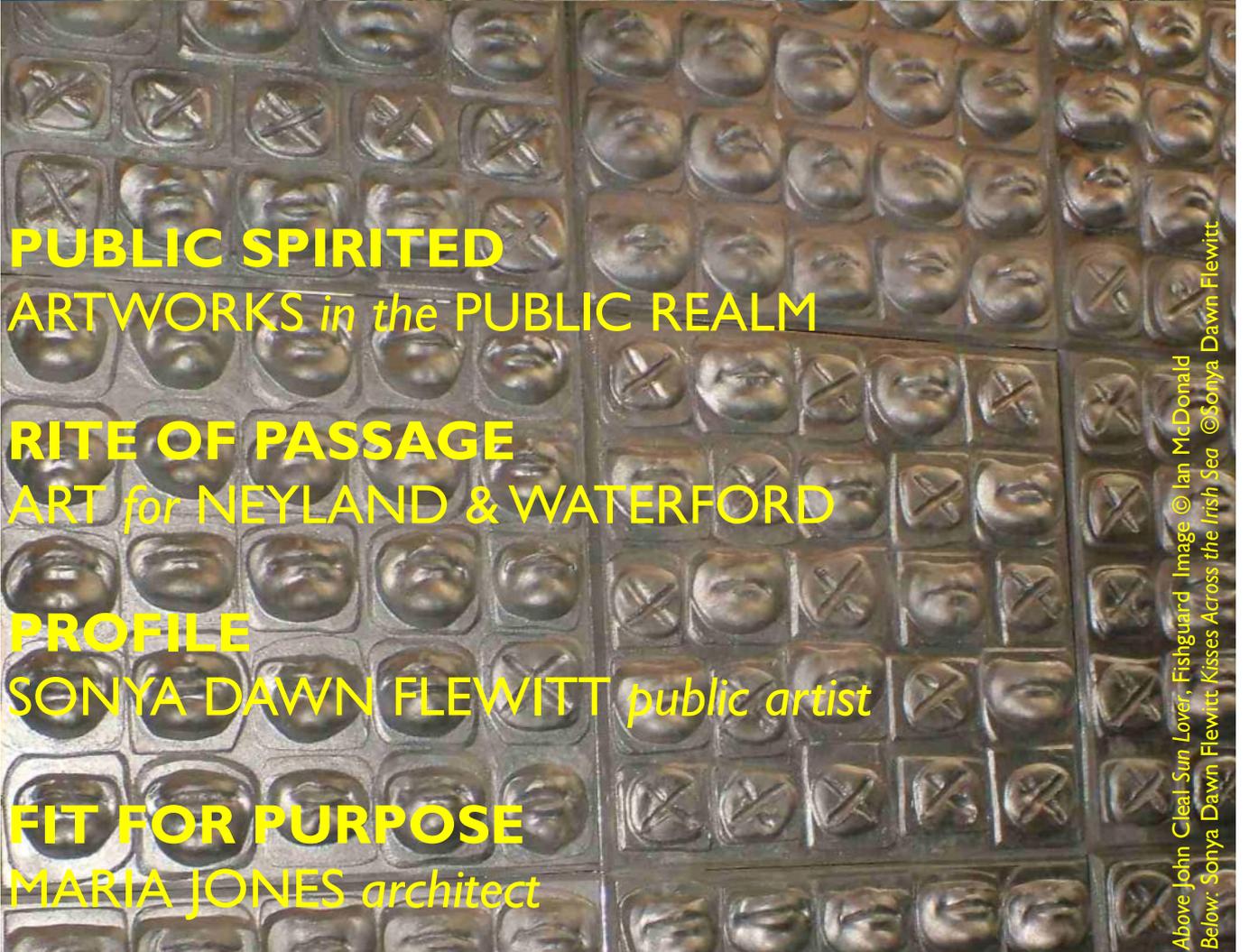


# ARTicle

CULTURAL LIFE ON THE EDGE



**PUBLIC SPIRITED**  
ARTWORKS *in the* PUBLIC REALM

**RITE OF PASSAGE**  
ART *for* NEYLAND & WATERFORD

**PROFILE**  
SONYA DAWN FLEWITT *public artist*

**FIT FOR PURPOSE**  
MARIA JONES *architect*

Above: John Cleal Sun Lover, Fishguard. Image © Ian McDonald  
Below: Sonya Dawn Flewitt Kisses Across the Irish Sea © Sonya Dawn Flewitt

# PUBLIC SPIRITED?

## ARTWORKS *in the* CIVIC REALM



The author poses with public art, Zagreb, 1989. Statue of Croatian writer August Šenoa  
Image © Susan Grant

Our cover shows two well-known pieces of Pembrokeshire Public Art: the late John Cleal's *Sun Lover* sculpture, which sits in Lower Town harbour like the culmination of a Fishguard Sculpture Trail that doesn't quite exist yet; and *Kisses Across the Irish Sea*, a 2005 installation not far away in Goodwick, by Sonya Dawn Flewitt (profiled in this issue). Perhaps it is telling that these two works – so different in style – both face out to sea; inland, we don't have a great deal of public art in Pembrokeshire. County town, Haverfordwest, is singularly lacking in this respect, and in many cases the various European regions (particularly those with conflicted recent histories) would seem to have an edge over UK public art generally, despite the recent proliferation of Gormleys and Craggs.

Public artworks can articulate, more effectively than any historical treatise, what a 'public' thinks of itself – and they can range in subject matter from the whimsical to the deadly serious. In the former field, art can even imitate art in expressing a national or regional identity. Brussels has its statue of famous-yet-local boy-reporter Tintin, while Ipswich, home of revered British cartoonist Carl Giles, boasts a redoubtable 3-D likeness of his 'Grandma' character, ready to take on all comers.

As an architecture student inter-railing through northern Europe in 1989, I recall being struck by the change in public sculpture north of the Baltic. The stuffy Classical effigies of Teutonic worthies had, by the time I arrived in Finland, given way to enormous, naturalistic statues of elk, owls and other creatures of the far north – evidence, perhaps, of an older, more animistic culture lurking beneath the orderly south-Scandinavian veneer?



Giles Grandma statue in Ipswich, by Miles Robinson  
Image © Ian McDonald

Later, in still-divided East Berlin I posed defiantly next to the colossal red-granite statue of Lenin just north of Alexanderplatz. Imposed on the hapless East Germans in 1970 courtesy of the renowned Moscow sculptor Nikolai Tomski, within a year of my visit this effigy of the Bolshevik leader would be decked out by Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko – via a cinema-scale film projection – in a red-and-white striped sailor's shirt (also, incidentally, the colours of the Polish flag) and a supermarket trolley brimming with consumer goods. This ironic appropriation of a tarnished piece of 'People's Art' was a sure sign of the momentous changes that had occurred in the intervening time, with the fall of that most manmade of public 'interventions', the Berlin Wall.

Later still, I was privileged to be living and working in reunified Berlin when Bulgarian-born artist

# IAN McDONALD

*artist*



*Wrapped Reichstag*, Berlin 1995, by Christo and Jeanne-Claude Image © Maria Jones

Christo ‘wrapped’ the Reichstag building in one of the most ambitious and deliberately impermanent pieces of public art seen in Europe. Across Asia, by contrast, the ephemeral is often a vital part of public artworks: in western India, artisans work for days moulding clay models of the elephant-headed deity Ganesh, only to have them decked in flowers and dissolved in the ocean as part of the annual Ganesh Chaturthi festivals in Mumbai and other cities. This technique was recently adapted by Indian sculptor Ved Gupta in his piece *The Man: Life Un(der)covered* for the south Asian art exhibition ‘Through Other Eyes’, seen at Swansea’s Glyn Vivian Gallery.

Finally, on a recent return visit to Berlin I observed how the German capital has now broken even its strongest civic taboo and erected a very public memorial to the Holocaust. Rather than a single conventional statue, US architect Peter Eisenman’s mute but mesmerising stone stelae occupy a huge ‘field’ within sight of the Reichstag, forming an unchallengable, but distinctly uncomfortable, tourist attraction.

Returning to west Wales, the relative lack of public artwork bemoaned above may be about to change. Just across the Ceredigion border, Channel 4’s mammoth Big Art Project has found a site in Cardigan Town for an ambitious visual/aural piece. *Turbulence*, a cluster of over 100 interactive buoys supported by a boat-style hull in the middle of the town’s River Teifi, looks set to be the first permanent UK work by Mexican-Canadian multimedia artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. The *Rite of Passage* project described in these pages plans an ambitious series of contemporary public artworks for the town of Neyland and, courtesy of the town’s many historical links with southern Ireland, for Waterford and Cork as well. Finally, in the light of Pembrokeshire’s new Oriel y Parc Landscape Gallery and its boldly specific remit, architect Maria Jones examines recent public-art venues in the Republic of Ireland itself in terms of their own stated ‘themes’.



*Holocaust Memorial (Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe)*, Berlin, 2005, by Eisenman Architects Image © Ian McDonald

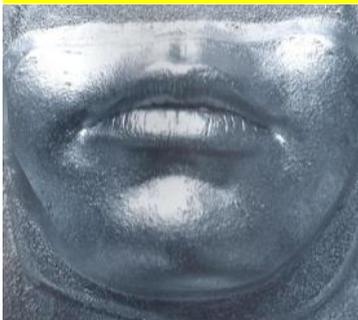
# METAL WORKS

## Public Artist Profile

Dawny Tootes (aka Sonya Dawn Flewitt) has lived and worked in Pembrokeshire since 2002. Her work has both a community and an environmental focus: she has received a Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Award for her 'contribution to cultural conservation and sustainability through language, recycling & innovative public art'. Dawny was responsible for the acclaimed 2005 public-art installation *Kisses Across the Irish Sea (KAtIS)*, in which 2,000 lip casts from young people in Wales and Ireland were reproduced in recycled aluminium and installed in two 10ft x 16ft panels in Goodwick and Waterford. In 2007, Dawny was shortlisted for Welsh Artist of the Year with her conceptual piece *The Very Art of the Matter*. She also participated in the 2008 Caerleon Arts Festival, working from her 'Scrap Shack' to transform children's sand drawings into molten aluminium sculptures. For details of her upcoming exhibitions, see 'Highlights', back page.



Dawny © Luminis Contemporary Photography



A kiss from KAtIS  
© Sonya Dawn Flewitt

**ARTicle:** Tell us a little bit about KAtIS; where did you first get the inspiration for this work?

**DT:** I began taking kiss casts of family and friends while at college; alginate (dental material) gives a wonderfully realistic definition. Soon after moving here, I met Myles Pepper from the West Wales Art Centre. I'm sure you know his enthusiasm for facilitating opportunities for artists between Wales and Ireland. All this inspired me to develop the kiss casts around this concept of cultural friendship: they symbolized communication, expression and affection – all of which were sculpturally blown across the sea.

**ARTicle:** Was this your first piece of public art; do you in fact consider yourself to be a 'public artist'?

**DT:** Yes it was; I'm proud of my debut – first of more, I hope. I really enjoyed collaborating with the communities, from kids to planning officials, and felt privileged to have experienced the many challenges of completing a self-initiated project. Currently, alongside my studio practice I've been developing ideas for future large-scale public-sculpture projects and would like to collaborate again with the community. The physical scale of public sculpture also has a lure for me; I'm finding it increasingly difficult to constrain my ideas to fit inside gallery walls. Public art is certainly something I'd like to do more of.

**ARTicle:** How did you arrive at aluminium as a suitable material?

**DT:** I wanted the medium to inherently carry a sustainable message. Potentially, aluminium has an endless life cycle, which – together with its silver, shiny quality – made it the perfect choice for me. I initially wanted to use recycled cans, but soon realized the sheer volume required would have made it impractical. Fortunately, MDW Haulage (Europe) Ltd – based in Newport, Gwent – very generously donated 2 tons of alloy wheels to the KAtIS project. The first time I saw the molten aluminium in the

# SONYA DAWN FLEWITT



*Miss Preseli, A1*, from *Naked Landscapes*

© Sonya Dawn Flewitt

crucible, I was totally besotted: I'd never seen anything quite like it before, and to have this as a medium to explore was just thrilling.



*Amulet*, studio view © Sonya Dawn Flewitt

**ARTicle:** Of all the artists we've profiled, you appear to be the one with least attachment to the landscape and physical surroundings. Or do you feel Pembrokeshire has influenced your work?

**DT:** I believe my work has been very much inspired by Pembrokeshire, the landscape itself and the feeling of living within it. In 2007, as a member of Sculpture Cymru, I responded to the brief 'Hiraeth' [roughly, a yearning for home] by taking inspiration from the boundary hedgerows of the field where we lived temporarily, creating *Amulet* (7x5x1ft) and *Bitter Twist* (8x8x2ft), freestanding botanical sculptures. Also that year, I created *Naked Landscapes*; these smaller 6x2ft pieces are traditional landscapes in one sense but illustrate the charm of the feminine curves found around my local landscape, resulting in *Miss Carningli*, *Miss Preseli*, etc. My most recent exhibition, at West Wales Arts Centre, featured more large-scale botanical forms, inspired by the hardy shrubs surviving on the rugged environment of The Preselis.

So I'd say I have a healthy attachment to the landscape and my personal physical surroundings.

**ARTicle:** Can you give us a sneak preview of your next project?

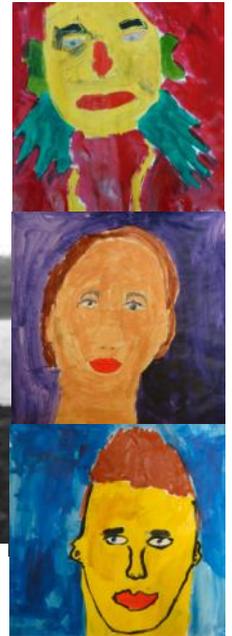
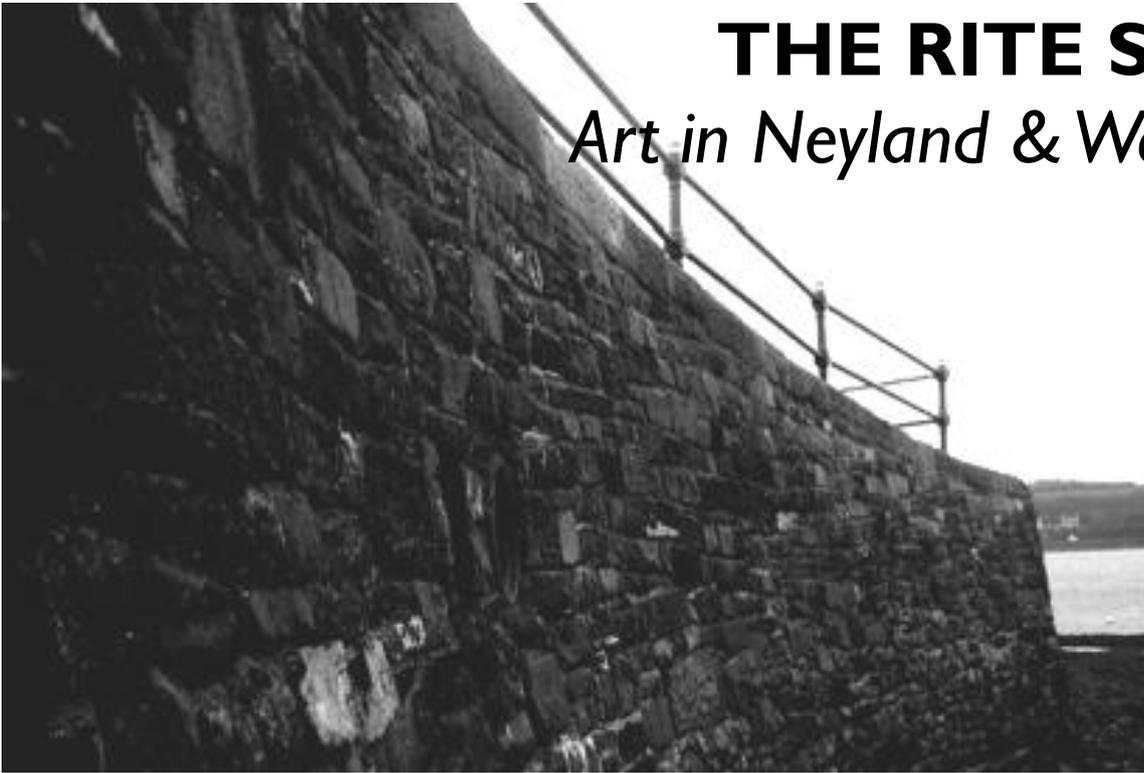
**DT:** I am currently exploring two aspects of my work. One is studio-based work: I'm gearing up for an exhibition in 2010. I would like this series of work to be a landscape you can wander through, reminiscent of a set design. Suspended and freestanding sculptures from salvaged metals will evoke a tale of emergence and evolution, concepts which can also describe our understanding of matters sustainable. The second aspect, but very much connected, will be the Scrap Shack Ali workshops which I am taking to residents groups and schools. It is an opportunity for the public to see the imaginative and rewarding outcomes from recycling – plus, it promotes waste awareness through sculpture. I think I'm right in saying that Scrap Shack Ali is the only workshop in Wales offering portable foundry facilities.

**ARTicle:** Do you have a gallery; how can our readers contact you?

**DT:** I don't have a dedicated gallery space of my own as yet, but I am considering sorting an area at my studio to do just that. It would be a great to have a well-lit dedicated area in which to contemplate my work, and interesting to invite people to visit. My website has a gallery of images of past works ([www.dawnytootes.co.uk](http://www.dawnytootes.co.uk)) and all my contact details are there. Readers can also reach me via Fishguard's West Wales Arts Centre. Thank you for the interview, you'll have to come back again when I'm melting scrap.

# THE RITE STUFF

## Art in Neyland & Waterford



Above Proposed site for the arts commission, seen from the foreshore Image © Guy Norman  
Right Self portraits by Year 6 pupils, Neyland Community School, October 2008 Images © Pip Lewis

Neyland in mid Pembrokeshire is a small town accustomed to big plans. In the 1850s, Isambard Kingdom Brunel envisaged it as a terminus of his South Wales Railway and a crossing point for Ireland. Accordingly, a ferry service was set up to Waterford – and later also to Cork City. As a result, for over 50 years Neyland became a major point of embarkation from Ireland – yet the town boasts no public memorial to mark this unusual episode in its history.

Until now, that is: a community heritage and public art project called *Rite of passage* has been working with the local community since 2007, making a documentary film and staging historical exhibitions as well as instigating community music and children's visual art projects. They are, however, building up to something even more significant: a major piece of public art to mark the town's history – either permanently or for as long as a unique 'event' might last in the memories of residents. In seeking to mark the past, its organisers are keen not necessarily to commission a static piece of sculpture (wonderful as that may turn out to be) but to commemorate Neyland's heritage in the most creative and memorable way possible. As project coordinator Guy Norman, of the freelance community artists' and consultants' group spacetocreate, comments: 'It could be permanent or impermanent; comprise light and sound – whatever seems most appropriate'.

With the support of a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, *Rite of passage* has been looking at an impressively broad range of artists and their past works with the help of arts consultant Gill Hedley, a former director of the Contemporary Arts Society, and SAFLE, Wales's leading public arts consultancy. SAFLE has run projects as diverse as a comic strip chronicling local life in the *Denbighshire Free Press* and a radio station for a 1-mile-square district of Cardiff – and is currently involved in Cardigan's *Turbulence* project, described on p. 3. The projects reviewed have included a luminous-painted 'Ghost Ship', realised in memory of the many light ships once moored off the Irish coast; a programme of maritime films; and arts festivals in Whitstable and Folkestone – in-

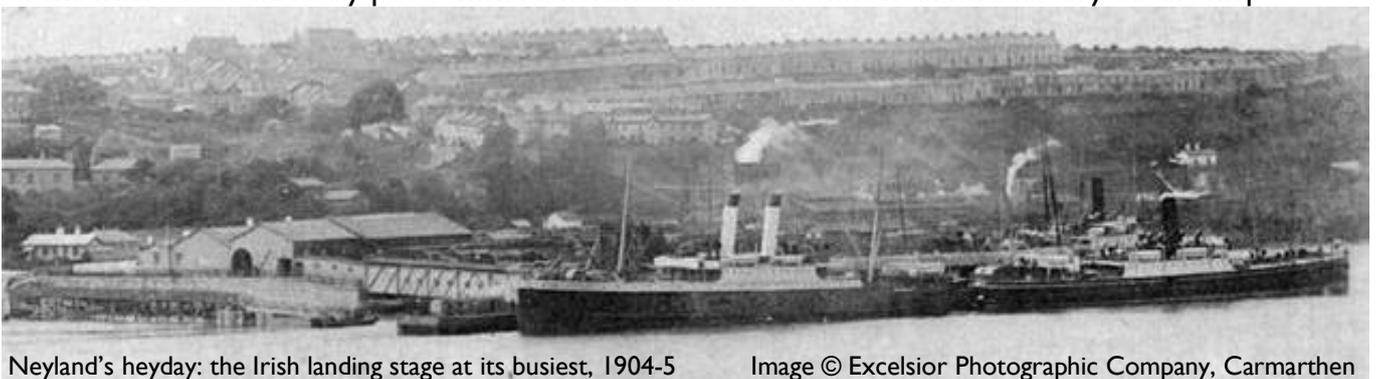
# Art in Neyland & Waterford

## THE RITE OF PASSAGE PROJECT

cluding, at the latter, an irreverent homage to the humble seagull. The group has also resolved to build up to this 'main event' via a series of smaller temporary pieces, to be commissioned as a 'necklace' of artworks reconnecting the town with its historic quayside. These will form the basis of a Neyland festival, with the working title 'MIGRATION – echoes and traces', to be held in autumn 2010. It is envisaged that potential partners might include Waterford City Council and Milford's Waterfront Gallery and revamped Torch Theatre. The concept of a local arts trail, or open-studio event (such as are held annually in Bristol and the towns of North Somerset) breaks new ground for Pembrokeshire, while, in the current economic climate, the idea that an empty town-centre shop premises might be found to act as the focal point for an artist's residency is a particularly inspired one. The group will be holding an open meeting to share their vision on 29 January 2010 at 12 noon in Neyland Yacht Club.

*Rite of passage* has not, however, lost sight of its initial community-based projects. The traditional-music element, with a series of workshops for local musicians, led to the commissioning of a brand new piece, and the portrait project involving Year 6 pupils from Neyland Community School formed the basis of a community film which also showcased the opening of an exhibition held in Neyland Library in October 2008. The historical research for this exhibition was carried out by Simon Hancock, of the Brunel Festival Association – a local historian and champion of the project.

A further proposed step will be a 2011 exhibition documenting all progress achieved thus far, along with newly commissioned work – not in Pembrokeshire this time, but in Waterford's City Library. This shows yet another significant facet of the project: Waterford Library, newly refurbished and extended by McCullough Mulvin Architects, contains within its sensitively crafted fabric references to that Irish city's illustrious past, including a section of its ancient town walls which contributed much to the reputation enshrined in its civic motto: '*Urbs Intacta Manet Waterfordia*/Waterford Remains the Untaken City'. So celebrated is this motto – dating, after all, from the days of the (largely Pembrokeshire-driven) Anglo-Norman Ascendancy in southern Ireland – that it was the title of a major art exhibition at Waterford's Garter Lane Arts Centre in 2008. That level of heritage 'name-recognition' on this side of the Irish Sea could really put a small Pembrokeshire town with an unusual history on the map!



Neyland's heyday: the Irish landing stage at its busiest, 1904-5

Image © Excelsior Photographic Company, Carmarthen

Further information on Rite of Passage, please contact Guy Norman on 01437 760375 [guy@spacetocreate.org.uk](mailto:guy@spacetocreate.org.uk), visit the project website [www.riteofpassage.org.uk](http://www.riteofpassage.org.uk) or come along to their open meeting on 29 January at 12 noon at Neyland Yacht Club. For details on SAFLE's many community projects in Wales and beyond, visit [www.safle.com](http://www.safle.com)

# RÔLE MODELS

## *Purposeful Arts Venues in the Irish Republic*



Lismore Castle, Waterford Image © Maria Jones

In ARTicle 2, I commented: ‘In its deliberate promotion of artistic subject-matter, Oriel y Parc is unique’. Indeed, other recent regional gallery buildings throughout the British Isles, whatever their claims to the architectural avant garde, have themed themselves in fairly traditional ways. One thinks of urban examples, such as the Lowry in the former wasteland of Salford Docks, with its core of work by one extraordinary ‘local’ artist; or Walsall Art Gallery’s defiantly civic rehousing of the prestigious Garman Ryan Collection in a battered post-industrial Midlands town centre.

In one of Pembrokeshire’s closest neighbours, however, artistic themes have been unashamedly prominent over the last few years: the Irish Republic has seen a recent crop of arts venues which have placed a deliberate theme at the centre of their efforts to promote not only the art itself, but also more prosaic concerns such as the local economy and tourism.

Perhaps the closest in feel to Oriel y Parc is Lismore Castle Arts in its idyllic setting amid the river valleys of County Waterford. This refurbished castle-wing gallery’s commitment to showcasing conceptual art as a way of promoting its historic home by contrast is a deliberately avant-garde step, but it appears to have paid off splendidly. Since opening in 2005, the gallery has played host to many internationally known artists, and has boldly commissioned specifically local works. In its 2006 Richard Long exhibition, the artist’s Turner Prize-winning *Cornwall Slate Line* was reconstructed in the castle’s Jacobean gardens, but the landscape artist also produced a large-scale ‘painting’ on the wall of the gallery itself using mud brought from the local Blackwater River.

In 2005, Cork City had the distinction of being Europe’s Cultural Capital. One of the highly public building projects timed to coincide with this accolade was a new arts venue for the city’s university: the



Above *Three Lismore Columns* (2005), David Nash, Oak, Devonshire Collection

Right United Technologies exhibition, Lismore Castle Arts, 2009 Images © Lismore Castle Arts



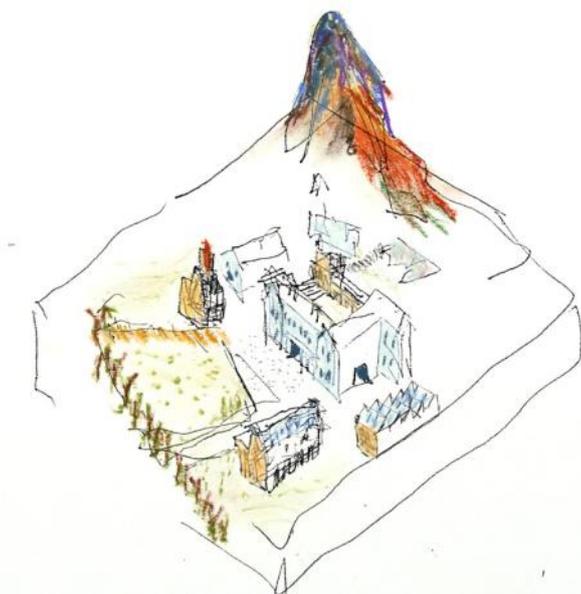
# MARIA JONES *architect*

Lewis Glucksman Gallery. As its trans-Atlantic moniker suggests, this was the result of a bequest by wealthy US patrons; the Lewis Glucksman Foundation's highly specific remit is the showcasing of art which has never before been seen in the Irish Republic. As such, it posed a challenge for the architects, internationally renowned practice O'Donnell + Tuomey. In contrast to their customary contemplative and highly conceptual approach, they were obliged for funding purposes to present a ready-formed image of what the gallery would look like – making the building effectively a piece of highly public sculpture in itself. The result, however, is a triumph:



Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Cork City, by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects Image © Maria Jones

a curvaceous, elevated timber-clad 'box' conceived as an object within its parkland setting yet 'floating' at the same level as surrounding trees. The architects even make reference to a Seamus Heaney poem which imagines the anchor of a celestial ship becoming caught on the altar rail of the historic Clonmacnoise Abbey in the Irish Midlands. It is a beautiful and poetic place in which to view cutting-edge art.



Letterfrack Concept Sketch  
© O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects

Previously, the same architects had been involved in a far more remote and challenging project, which was nonetheless formed by a desire to make an artisanal purpose drive the regeneration of an entire area. The Letterfrack Furniture College sits in the wilds of Connemara, a region of bleak beauty equivalent to a UK National Park such as Pembrokeshire. Indeed, John Tuomey has commented on the area: 'No tree in Connemara grows straight up from the ground; every bush is bent by the wind...' – a sentiment that will strike a chord with residents of Pembrokeshire. The Letterfrack project involved the remodelling of a late 19th-century reformatory school for the notoriously strict order of Christian Brothers, who had nonetheless introduced hydroelectricity and trade workshops in an effort to 'colonise' this

slice of Celtic wilderness. Into this visually stunning but highly conflicted landscape, O'Donnell + Tuomey have inserted a series of beautifully crafted buildings, which provide workshop facilities, a machine hall and the Connemara West Centre, at which students hold annual exhibitions of their work. The whole ensemble is stunning proof that even the most remote and disadvantaged areas can benefit from artistic stimulus.

# NEWSPLASH

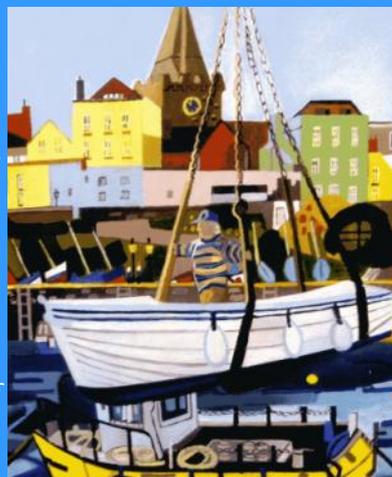
## ARTicle GETS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING!

ARTicle is thrilled to announce that it has won Sustainable Development Fund backing to establish a 'virtual arts centre' for the County's artists and makers. By Easter 2010 you will be able to go on [www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk](http://www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk) and visit Pembrokeshire's virtual art gallery, view past and present copies of ARTicle, source up-to-the minute listings and browse profiles of local artists. If you are a local artist who has not yet volunteered to have your details included on the website, please get in touch. For further information, email: [info@artpembrokeshire.co.uk](mailto:info@artpembrokeshire.co.uk) or call Heather on 01437 721907.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### ARTicle RECOMMENDS *for the WINTER*

- Sonya Dawn Flewitt (profiled inside) has 2 exhibitions coming up. The *Naked Landscape* series will be on show at St Dogmaels Gallery from 4 December 2009. For further details, see [www.saintdosmaelsgallery.com](http://www.saintdosmaelsgallery.com) or call 00 44 (0)1239 612677. A selection of her *Gorse Bushes* will be at Oriel Canfas, Cardiff from 5 December 2009. See [www.olacanvas.co.uk](http://www.olacanvas.co.uk) or call 00 44 (0)2920 666455.
- *Original paintings by Robin Boyd* is at St Davids Studio Gallery, 14 Nun Street, St Davids: 16 December - 3 January 2010. Contact 00 44 (0)1437 720648
- Tenby Museum & Art Gallery's Christmas selling exhibition *Deck the Halls: Works of Art as Perfect Gifts*, showcasing 11 local artists, runs until 18 December. For details, contact 00 44 (0)1834 842809.
- St Davids Oriel y Parc has been transformed for *Influere*, the exhibition marking the completion of its first artist's residency. The work of Brendan Stuart Burns is on display in the gallery spaces – along with works from the collection of Amgueddfa Cymru, the National Gallery of Wales, which have inspired him: 14 November - 14 March 2010. See [www.orielyparc.co.uk](http://www.orielyparc.co.uk) or call 00 44 (0)1437 720392.
- Also at Oriel y Parc until 15 January 2010: *Mythical, Wild & Human*, an exhibition of children's masks inspired by the corbels at St Davids Bishop's Palace, organised by spacetocreate as part of the Cultural Olympiad. See [spacetocreate.org.uk](http://spacetocreate.org.uk)



Winter Storage © Sarah Young - part of 'Deck the Halls' at Tenby Museum

## CONGRATULATIONS

to Ruthin Craft Centre in North Wales (featured in ARTicle NO 2), which has just won the prestigious Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize at this year's conference of the RSAW, Royal Society of Architects in Wales – a worthy (arts-based) winner!

## LOOKING FORWARD

- NEW GALLERY OPENING: Artist David Light will be opening the Wray of Light Gallery from the beginning of December 2009. Intending to promote the Pembrokeshire landscape through painting and drawing, it will be at the Print House, Parc y Shwt, Fishguard SA65 9AP. For details, contact [david@dalight.co.uk](mailto:david@dalight.co.uk)
- Continuing the cross-border theme of this issue, Pembrokeshire-based artist Jay Lear has an exhibition coming up in Waterford City: *Drift For A While* is at Waterford's Garter Lane Arts Centre from 16 January until the end of February 2010. For details, contact 00 353 51 855038, or visit [www.garterlane.ie](http://www.garterlane.ie)

## NEXT ISSUE of ARTicle

ARTicle NO 5 will be out for Easter 2010, and will include a major profile of St Davids-based artist, Grahame Hurd-Wood.

## LISTINGS

- *Western Telegraph*, weekly local newspaper, out on Wednesdays, also [www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/leisure](http://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/leisure)
- *Pembrokeshire Life*, published monthly; *Pembrokeshire Country Living*, six editions published each year.
- Arts Council Wales lists events happening in Pembrokeshire at [www.acw-ccc.org.uk](http://www.acw-ccc.org.uk)
- Arts events can also be found in the listings of [www.visitpembrokeshire.com](http://www.visitpembrokeshire.com) and [www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest)
- And if you want to track down the artists yourselves, see Pembrokeshire County Council's Art and Craft Guide 2009 available to pick up throughout the county and to download on [www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk](http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk) (type 'Pembrokeshire Art and Craft Guide' into the search box).

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