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# Bray Arts Journal

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**DONAL O'DONOVAN:** Jan 30th, 1928 - Jan 8th, 2009

Donal O'Donovan who has died aged 80, was a journalist (Sunday Independent and Irish Times) and author of *Dreamer of Dreams*, *God's Architect*, *Kevin Barry and His Time*, *Little Old Man Cut Short* and *The Rock from which You were Hewn*. He also worked as a public relations executive.



Donal was a frequent attendee at Bray Arts Nights where he also read from his own work on at least two occasions.

Born in Ranelagh, Dublin, in 1928, he was the eldest of four children and lived at various addresses before the family settled in Shankill, Co Dublin. He was educated at Presentation College, Bray, and Blackrock College, and studied legal and political science at University College Dublin where he was very active in student politics.

Donal always had an interest in the Arts and during his period as PR manager for Bank of Ireland ( a break in his journalistic career) he played a pivotal role in setting up the bank's sponsorship of the Arts.

He returned to freelance journalism after 10 years and, under the pen-name Mercator, contributed a weekly column, 'People in Business', to *The Irish Times*.

He recently completed a biography of Paddy Little, minister for posts and telegraphs under Éamon de Valera in the 1940s.

Bray Arts offers its condolences to Jenny, daughters Kristin, Síofra, Marina and son Julian. We would like to dedicate the following to the memory of Donal :

### Crossing the Bar

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar  
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of time and place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.

*Alfred Tennyson*

Front Cover : 'Holding Court.' painting by Paul Flynn. Paul will be showing more of his work at the Feb Bray Arts Night. (see opposite page)

## Bray Arts Night

**Monday January 12, 2009**  
review

The January meeting opened with a reading of her work by **Breda Wall Ryan**, short story writer and poet, to an audience of enthusiastic lovers of the arts.

There is a layer just below the surface that Breda Wall Ryan's fiction inhabits. It is where badness and the evil that can invade our lives hides. Her story "Kindness is the Key" epitomises this evil. It is finely crafted and beautifully written. It contains nuances of darkness flawlessly communicated to us, but above all else it shows a writer able, on the surface at least, to make us interested in a the protagonist that is a murderer. Despite ourselves we find we are trying to take on board a flawed logic that expounds killing plans. Told in the first person, the story revolves around a serial murderer who is about to 'do in' her next victim. Society sees her as a normal person, a lover of animals and with a soft spot for her mother. The true nature of her evil becomes apparent as we listen into her thoughts and are carried along with her as the story unfolds to a macabre surprise ending.

It is obvious Breda put a lot of work into this fiction. If the theme is startling, the telling is smooth and the story moves relentlessly on to a horrible climax. Unease might be the word to use to describe the effect of the telling on the audience as if, somehow, the murderer had crept in amongst us and might, at any minute, stand up and take a bow.

Breda also read a selection of her poetry, notably "Brigid's



*Breda Wall Ryan*

Eve", an intensely written work underlining a period of severe illness the writer suffered. Told, in this case, in symbolic fantasy language. Breda followed this with a poem "Guess my Occupation", revealing again her penchant for the macabre. Well done to a talented and original writer with a very unique voice.

Bray Arts was thawed out from its winter chill with a fine set from guitarist Dan Carollo to close out the meeting.

Dan is over here in Bray from Seattle, Washington, and brings an American guitar picking sensibility to a repertoire strong on Irish influence. So, here is music that spans the Atlantic and even pokes a toe in the Pacific.

This guy really is from a foreign country in a deeper sense too, from a place where they do things differently. Hear the notes spill from his guitar and you're listening to the



Dan Carollo

language of that country, this is pure music delivered as an effortless patter. Carollo has no struggle with his instrument, coaxing fluid melody and rhythm from his acoustic guitar like a laconic storyteller spinning a familiar yarn. I am amazed how so many of us out here who, like me, speak no music, can understand it perfectly when it is spoken so well, and feel such joy in the listening. I have tried the language, I have struggled with that very instrument - (I have shaken the plectrum from the sound hole many times) - but, briefly, in the Heather House around ten o'clock, I could say: ah, I understand, it may be instrumental but it speaks. I can't translate it now but I remember it well.

The guitar of Dan Carollo is also preserved for posterity on the excellent CD, Miles From Dublin, where he is augmented by a troupe of Irish musicians playing pipes, flute, fiddle and accordion. At the arts evening we were treated to the pure drop, a pleasure we hope will be repeated before long.

Carmel Cullen and Shane Harrison  
Photographs Peter Growney

### North Wicklow Singers

meet 3rd Saturday of every month for 'impromptu' singing in the back lounge of the Strand Hotel, at 9.30pm.

On 21st February they have a special guest singer, **Brigitte Cloarec** from Brittany. She sings in English, French, Breton and Welsh (usually not at the same time!)

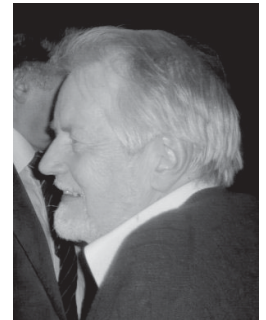
If you enjoy songs, and haven't been before, why not pop down and have a listen? No charge, no mic, any song, any voice. Listeners very welcome.

## Brilliant Line-Up for the Feb 2nd Bray Arts Night

Doors Open 8:00pm Heather House Hotel, Bray Seafront  
Admission E5 / E4 conc. Everyone welcome.

### Drama

We await with great anticipation Derek Pullen's production of 'The Last Act is a Solo' by Robert Woodruff Anderson: a drama about an aging actress and the theatre director who offers her one last chance for a career comeback. The very strong cast of **Rosary Morley**, **Jim Fehilly** and **Martin Davidson** have already picked up their fair share of prizes, tributes and commendations on their recent tour of the regions.



Derek Pullen

### Art

**Paul Flynn:** His Art is influenced by Irish landscape, culture, Writers, Storytellers, the people and all aspects of Irish life which in itself has a story to tell. In a lot of his work there is a strong motif centred around rock and veg-



etation, be it the man-made stone walls set against the little fields in the west of Ireland or the ancient Burren slabs where delicate ferns and flowers insinuate themselves in cracks and fissures. His early knowledge and skill in etching and print, gained when working for John Hinde, show in these distinctive paintings.

### Music

The velvet voice of **Mia Parsons** has a kind of intimacy and warmth that makes you feel she is singing just for you. Her music is deep and personal: she speaks to the heart. Her emotional power is exemplified in the very moving 'Song for My Son.' This song expresses the pain and longing of a woman who had to give her child up for adoption when she was just a teenager. RTE have recently featured Mia in a forty minute documentary in the series 'Would You Believe'. We are delighted to welcome this very talented artist to our February Arts Night.



## Beecher Island, First Night, Dream Phase

by Susan Smallwood Herold

In my fifth sleep  
the coyotes laughed  
as if mocking our clumsy attempts at healing  
while in the other room of the museum the  
VCR played  
the "Life of the Comanche" for visitors.

In my seventh sleep  
a weighted pounding rushes our campsite,  
eager hooves throwing sand against tents,  
a courageous hammering toward a ghostly  
destination,  
an island no longer there.

In my ninth sleep  
a woman was showing her quilts,  
hanging them from clotheslines.  
In my arrogance I said they were all machine  
made -  
When an owl fell from high in a tree  
dropping into the swimming pool I was  
standing near  
-  
Its wing broke as it hit the water.  
I hurriedly took it for mine.

Ann appearedtelling me in the tongues of  
many people  
that I must make something very beautiful  
from those old feathers.

In my Eleventh sleep  
I saw my Mother briefly with my left eye  
while Tony embraced me,  
putting his knee between my legs so I could  
rest.

I felt warm in my tent even as the owl cried.

On the second night of the waning moon  
my first sleep was deep and still.

Awakened by an uneasiness  
I lay and listen.  
There was a busi-ness in the silence.

Tense body alerts the bladder  
but caution keeps me still until first bird song.

Kneeling at the tent door needs wait no longer  
I zipper through the sleep of others,  
and push aside the nylon barrier.  
Thinking it still night I am surprised by an  
early red dawn  
and moonlight enough  
to find my way behind an ancient cottonwood.

Squatting for relief  
the sharp, dry grasses poking at my bareness  
I feel watched  
and cannot empty myself fast enough.

Pulling up my yellow thermals  
I hurry back to my nomadic house,

Rolling in, I turn and re-zip, blocking-out the watchers.  
Scrunch-down in the oversized sleeping bag,  
pillow and teddy bear along for comfort,  
I breath deeply and wait for the return of sleep.

The man from yesterday enters my thoughts.  
Wearing only shorts and shoes he seemed out of place-  
a break in our sense of security and isolation.  
Is he a threat, a reminder of our vulnerability?

Second sleep.

Three Indian women walk happily through camp  
brushing my tent as they prepare to leave Beecher  
Island.

They are laughing.  
The fringe on their clothes moving in harmony,  
in celebration.

I awake - I am tired yet peaceful.

Unzipping the tent a second time,  
stepping out into the day there is a slight October  
chill,  
red sky now a soft white,  
D is at the picnic table writing.

I move in the path of those three in my dream  
and know they are free  
as I breath in the offerings of sage and sweet grass.

*Susan Smallwood Herold lives in Colorado, USA*

## Disappearing Shoes

By Shirley Jane Farrar

She bundled up her life in boxes,  
different tones of denim wrapped up  
too tightly. Thirty shades of blue jeans,  
ripped legs, trailing hems elbowing  
jumpers' arms around one another.  
She left squeezing wardrobes  
into cavernous cardboard boxes,  
arm wrestling, especially close  
to duvet covers, sea-green,  
moody-blue to match her eyes,  
maybe her mood, desperately

deciding what life to take or leave  
behind, the empty space, her room.

Beguiling views across deep water.  
She's journeying to mind's foreign land.  
Student house, well-heeled road, universe  
where she will set out her stall.  
Stamp her feet with tall stilettos.  
Tight T-shirts, hooker boots  
battling it out with accounting books,  
equations hooked around hockey sticks,  
photographs of family, father,  
first man to fall in love with.  
She leaves behind footprints on my heart,  
*Pythagoras Girl's* footsteps echo  
on another path.

### **After A Funeral**

by Oliver Marshall

When I hear a dog bark in the morning,  
Outside my window,  
I think of you putting  
The dog in the basket of your bicycle,

Then cycling up to the hospital,  
Where you worked all day.  
They told me that after the funeral,  
When we all went back to the house,

For tea and sandwiches. You called  
At our house on your way home,  
Sitting on the side  
Of the armchair, drinking tea

Which my father made  
For you. At night, you slept  
On your own side of the bed  
For years, wondering why

Your husband had died so early.  
In your entire life  
You never spoke an unkind word to me.  
So I remember you with affection,

Making tea and sandwiches  
For everyone around you.  
In the morning, struggling to say yes  
To another day,

You put the dog in the basket  
And cycled up to the hospital.  
Your eyes faced ahead, your feet  
Turned the pedals persistently,

As you moved over the ground,  
The wheels of the bicycle  
Going slowly  
Around and around.

### **Monsoon**

By Debashis Sen

Like sculpted beauties the dark clouds overshadow,  
streak dazzled lines across far skies, dreaming in  
their highest spheres, stilled fluttering shapes send  
down invisible messengers to us. Along trimmed  
levels where the purple flash of a hundred suns  
in their dying reflections fall. Any of us could be  
led anywhere, deep beautiful gloom, casts shapes  
of something far away. An intangible silence  
like the first kiss of love. Long shades meander  
across our courtyards; criss-cross drowsy floors.  
A few strays in the crows: their sleepy eyes fix  
at nothing. An enchanting isle of mind never  
cease to fall, full of dreams now everywhere.  
The solitary hush that quietly steals upon this space,  
upon its breath and air full of wordless beginnings;  
syllables without shores – The flower of this monsoon:  
wilting grasses stoop in spite of sunlight, drops of rain  
turn to soft reminiscences. Blossoms of silent words,  
unknown flowers open their eyes, unknown fragrances  
waft by like a drift of memories driven by rains.  
With uncharted movements through air, green shoots  
Nod. Water rushes through their cleavages, inviolable  
clouds join reflections in the mythical kingdom of rain.

### **Poemlets**

by Hugh Rafferty

The fruit of the vine  
With a little help and time  
Overcomes the mind.

Get a mobile phone  
Be like any other drone  
Talking on your own

Words weave a fiction  
From inspiring to tragic  
Music makes magic

## Beyond Barcelona

by Carmen Cullen

Can Serrat Writers and Translators Centre is situated beside the village of El Bruc in the district of Montserrat, and about forty five minutes by bus inland from Barcelona. Stepping from the bus you find yourself following a sign for Can Serrat House, down a steep lane. It is like an avenue to a farmhouse. You are walking down a steep ravine with shady trees on either side. The scene is rural; there are no houses in sight. Shortly after the path forks. One part meanders into woods. You turn right towards and old house with an angel sculpture beside the entrance and a passage paved with coloured tiles and a crossword of



*Can Serrat*

names. November trees drop their leaves at your feet. Dark evening arrives and a friendly moon lights up a deep set garden, disappearing into hollows. A solid oak door; part of an archway, leads to the reception. Artists and writers talking round a log fire set in a wide hearth raise hands in greeting.

Morning reveals all in Can Serrat. Although it is mid-November the sun shines in a bright blue sky. The Centre can accommodate up to forty residents but this late in the year there are ten. Such a small number allows you to get to know each other quickly. Writers, translators and artists are here from Teheran to Canada and other European countries. English is the common language.

I have already found out details of the studios and bedrooms from the Can Serrat Website but I don't expect them to be so individualistic and full of character. This was once a three-hundred year old farmhouse. It was bought as a ruin by an enterprising group of ten artists from Norway, still the present owners. Uneven ancient stone stairs and idiosyncratic rooms make you feel you have entered a story-book mansion full of hidden corners. My room has an Italian influence. It overlooks the long table and vine covered passage where meals are served out of doors.

Outside the gardens are a marvel to explore. A small suspension bridge leads you across a deep ravine to a secret looking woodland. Roman arches are set into a terracotta cut-out cliff-face. The garden spreads into many arbours of small plateaus and hidden nooks creating a Dali like effect. It is an adult adventure playground. We know about the rich cultural and artistic mix that makes up Barcelona and this is reflected in Can Serrat. The work of artists is displayed inside and outside the house and an encouraging atmosphere makes it easy for the writer or artist to dedicate themselves to their task.

Montserrat is part of Catalonia and Catalan is spoken everywhere. Time for exploring the countryside has to be allowed to benefit from the beautiful setting of this house. Autumn is an ideal season to explore. It is cool enough to walk the mountain trails of Montserrat Mountains. Rock formations like giant cigars rear into the sky and there is a spread of vibrant green pines in the lower regions. The air is pure and bracing and choices of walks endless. It will take you four hours to walk to the Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat, perched at a terrifying height on a hillside. This could be the start of your pilgrimage trail that eventually leads to Bilbao. There has to be time for work though and you make your way reluctantly back to the centre.

All the details of accommodation cost and studio facilities are available on the Can Serrat website. It must be noted the centre closes at the end of November and opens again in March. Perhaps it comes into its own in the summer when the sun calls and art can be created out of doors. Whatever the season, a convivial atmosphere abounds. There is always somebody to chat with, round the fire or basking in the sun. A sense of camaraderie is increased by the constant availability of free wine. The local red is delicious and irresistible. A tasty meal is served every day, again providing an opportunity to socialise and at other times the residents can help themselves to whatever they desire from the kitchen.

The nearest village, El Bruc, is a five minute walk from the hostel. It boasts a few shops, bars and restaurants and in the autumn particularly is a sleepy spot. Catalan is spoken and everyone is very courteous.

### Recommendations

Book early if you want to go in the Summer. The Centre offers stipends. This information is on their website, (google Can Serrat) and they are worth applying for. You will not need proof of work to go but distraction is easy if you don't have a project in mind. RyanAir travel to Reus Barcelona and Girona Barcelona. Both airports are suitable but you will need a late time for your return flight to take bus travel getting there into account. Don't ask for an ensuite room. These are not available and all bathroom facilities and showers are shared. Be prepared to have a good time. The Bonhomie in Can Serrat is infectious. It is no wonder that people return again and again. Ring or email the staff if you have any queries. They are very helpful. Without a stipend the cost is 350euro a week for single accommodation and 280euro for shared; to include all meals and wine!



*Montserrat*

## Mermaid Delights with a Local Flavour

There are some really interesting offerings in Mermaid for the first quarter of 2009.

### Feb 6th :

A fascinating exhibition of photographs titled **'Fade Out'** by **Fiona Hackett** explores the Bray Head Hotel from



the intimate details of its interior personal spaces to the impressive exterior. Fiona is giving an Artist's walk around on Thurs 5th at 4:30pm after which the exhibition will be opened in Mermaid at 6:00. Places on this walk around are limited so please ring 2724030 to make a reservation.

### Feb 7th @2:00pm :

Martin Nolan and Dan Carollo, two master musicians will play a diverse repertoire of Irish Music on the Uilleann Pipes and Guitar. The Fagan Irish Dancers will be there to add their graceful energy to proceedings (see our review of Dan Carollo's music on page 3).

### Feb 7th @8pm:

Unlike the economy, Redmond O'Toole's reputation has



been following a continuous upward curve. Redmond will play music by Bach, Scarlatti, Hayden, Rodrigo and Torroba. This year Redmond has been selected as the National Concert Hall's Rising Star and no one is more deserving of this accolade. Continued success Redmond, from all your friends at Bray Arts.

### Jan 27th - 31st :

The ever popular Bray One Act Drama Festival will, no doubt, attract full houses as it does every year.

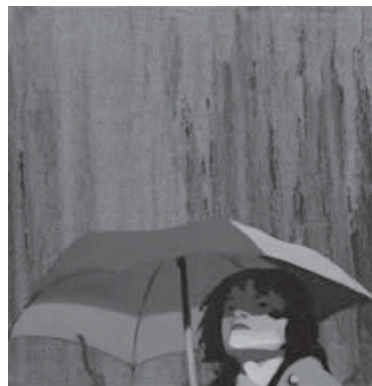
## Upcoming Exhibitions at Signal Arts

### 'The Sketchbook'

Oil Sketches on Canvas by **Bartosz Kolata**

From Tuesday 3rd February to Sunday 15th February 2009

Bartosz obtained an MA in Fine Art in his hometown of Torun, Poland and since then has exhibited in various solo



and group shows both in Ireland and abroad. He won two awards in 2007, the Irish Art Award and the Luas/RPA Art Competition, Dublin.

He finds inspiration in people around him, their relationships, and their feelings. His paintings are like snapshots of private, unpremeditated moments which make the viewer almost voyeuristic. The subjects of his works are captured in everyday situations - relaxing, chatting, sunbathing, or sleeping. There is a story behind each face.

He says, 'I am not trying to change the world. You will not find in my art a direct engagement with subjects such as war or death. In my opinion there is too much blood and sadness on TV and in the media generally.'

Opening Reception: Thursday 5th February 7-9pm

### 'Stories' Shared'

Multi Media Exhibition by Youthreach and Artists In The Community 2008

From Tuesday 17th February to Sunday 1st March 2009

Signal Arts Centre is delighted to present an exhibition of work produced in collaboration with Youthreach, the Artist in the Community winners; Greg Murray and Denis Dunne and some senior citizens from the community in Bray.



The premise of the project is to engage Youthreach and the senior citizens in a collaborative project. The project is based on the art of storytelling, of conveying events in words, images and sounds.

## Video Voyeur by Harold Chassen

The Dark Knight got quite good reviews but when I saw it I wondered if they needed to make so many remakes of the same film. I can't count them all. I found this film just a bit too dark. There are only so many ways to portray the Joker and I think it has been done better than in this film. Maybe if I hadn't grown up with super-heroes in comic books I might have liked the film better but I didn't think much of it. Kids who doesn't know Batman that well might like the film but I don't think it is a film for adults.



## Submission Guidelines

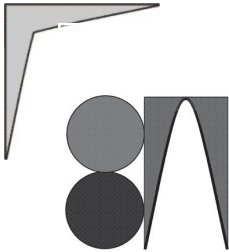
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Email submissions to any of the above or post typed submissions to

The Editor BAJ 'Casino',  
Killarney Rd. Bray,  
Co. Wicklow  
Deadline 15th of each month.  
Bray Arts website : [www.brayarts.net](http://www.brayarts.net)

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*Arts Evening Monday 2nd Feb 2009  
at the Heather House Hotel Strand Road 8:00 pm  
5 Euro / 4 Euro Conc. Everyone is welcome.*

**Drama : 'The Last Act is a Solo' with Rosary Morley, Jim Fehilly & Martin Davidson. Directed by Derek Pullen**

**Art : Paul Flynn presents and talks about his distinctive art and influences.**

**Music: The velevt voiced Mia Parsons brings her haunting and powerful music to Bray Arts.**

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