
Bray Arts Journal

Issue 5

January 2010

Volume 15



How January Got Its Name

The Roman god Janus gave January its name. He was pictured as two-headed (both heads bearded) and situated so that one head looked forward into the new year while the other took a retrospective view (not a very pleasant view in Ireland). Janus also presided over the temple of peace, where the doors were opened only during wartime.



It was a place of safety, where new beginnings and new resolutions could be forged, just as the New Year is a time for new objectives and renewed commitments to long-term goals.

Bray Arts Review

Monday December 7, 2009

The final performance of Bray Arts for 2009 brought the year to a close with a triumphal flourish that was a credit to all the performers and committee members concerned. Supported by a great attendance, a programme of brilliant performances led to a great feeling of pride in the artistic talent of the town of Bray.



The new artist this month was guitarist and song-writer Craig Murray. Craig has been playing acoustic guitar and writing songs for some years now but only started performing a few months ago with his own band. Appearing solo for Bray arts, Craig's songs have a personal touch and relate to people he knows. Good lyrics and a first class guitar accompaniment showed an artist to watch for the future.

The Bray Gospel Choir appeared in force and began with "Oh Happy Day" in full blown close harmony.



The audience loved their bright cheerful style and rich harmony. The choir created a real "Night of Soul" as they invited their audience to clap along to "Amazing Grace", "Let It Be" and showed that they really have "Something Inside So Strong". The crowd loved every minute and refused to let them go without an encore of the classic "Oh Happy Day".

Turning from music to the spoken word, Ciaran and Gay Griffin delivered a programme of well-chosen Christmas poems. Opening with Patrick



Kavanagh and moving through Áine Miller, Paul Durkin and other great poets. Gay and Ciaran took turns recreating images of Christmas Day at home and abroad finishing with a bi-lingual presentation of the work of Máire MacEntee.

After the break, and Bray Arts Christmas raffle, richly supported by spot prizes from twenty-eight of the traders of Bray, the final act took the floor.



Alex Mathias, jazz saxophonist and his four-piece band enthralled the audience with his own compositions. Starting with the lively "Jumping Jellybeans", Alex gave each musician a chance to

show his style as the music spun between keyboard, Base and rhythm, guided by the moving pointer of the saxophone. Alex's "Going Roaming" was a delightful surprise of soft mellow notes, literally "roaming and mysterious, lifting in excitement and returning again to mellow curiosity. Intrigued, the audience was captivated by the notes of a true master musician. Rising to the inspiration of the audience, Alex closed a magnificent night with such a powerful array of skill and deference to his own musical colleagues in the band that the audience refused to let him go without an encore despite the lateness of the hour. The Band are :

Alex Mathias: Saxes. Johnny Taylor: Piano, James Little: Bass , Dominic Mullan: Drums

Cearbhall E. O'Meadhra



Calcutta, December

by Debashis Sen

Air carries all my unspoken syllables,
written upon my fingers, stirs like leaves,
or palm-full's of water beyond distances
of amber traffic confusion moving

mournful silences of bus passengers staring
into their unknown dreams.
It is as if they have gone back to the river's
dry bed of winter, feasting upon its sandy

beauty, glistening like a past mystery:
an unwritten love that sings, a blue ring
in which the first alphabet is scripted,
one hardened moment floods the small balcony

of the heart, where sunlight is golden,

The Circle Line Home

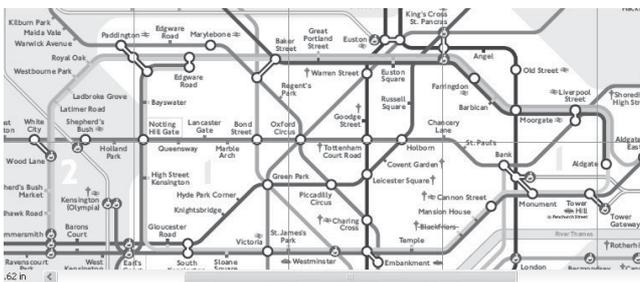
by Eileen Mayer

The homeward dash is hard to bear,
counting seconds down the stair.
Feet chasing heels, briefcases and bags.
'Five soldiers killed,' shouts the seller of mags.

Catching that thought, we continue the race,
no time to think - just keep up the pace.
Bodies cross at the end of the snake,
west to White City - east to Aldgate.

Reaching the map, lights seem to stare
on a man, down on his luck - down there.
Tightly stretched skin forms his face,
his hidden thoughts are hard to trace.

A man from the flames of war, perhaps
some hell, only he can tell us more.
Glancing down, his body seem to mime
'look at me - I have nothing but time.'



The Unconscious Gardener

by Donna Barkman

More stones appear each year
working themselves to the surface uninvited
ugly roots, their subterranean sisters,
move horizontally through the hardened soil

Like the stones
they take over inhabited territory
they challenge my spade
they terrorize my hoe

They force me to my knees
where buried meets stubborn
where confrontation gradually softens into
détente
and flowers can be planted

Twilight Elegy

by Donna Barkman

Streetlights cast a moody blue on snowbanks
that loom above us
Inside woodframe houses, set back from the
road
lamps blink on, offering an impossible
invitation
Our breath freezes on our mufflers, frosting the
wool
Our feet weighed down in snowboots tramp
along the shoveled walks
The heft of Sunday dinner strains the basket we
swing between us
until finally -

rising from the dark, the corner gas station
aglow in the false cheer of gleaming red and
green pumps

Inside, the heavy smell of oil floods our lungs
Our father tries to wrest a smile from his
exhaustion
his shovel standing sentinel against the wall
Thanks for supper he murmurs as a car drives
up for service,
then another -
He trudges out to pump their gas
swab their windshields
check their oil

We place the basket on his vacant chair,
wave our mittened hands, now nearly
thawed,
wait for his quick salute and grateful nod
and turn again into the bittersweet night

THE WAKE

by James W. Corcoran

He was scared. After much coaxing, he eventually climbed beneath the cold crisp sheets of the bed, its cast iron frame leaning inward towards the sagging horsehair mattress hollowed in the middle by the passing years. His mother pulled the covers tight, tucked him in, and kissed him gently on the forehead.

‘Good night sweet heart’ she said, reaching for the switch.

‘Please don’t!

‘You’re nearly ten!’ Surely you don’t still need the light?’

‘Please’ he said softly.

‘Ok’, she said, stroking his tousled hair, ‘but remember we have a busy day tomorrow, you’ll need all the sleep you can get!’

He watched her fatigued figure cross the room and draw curtains.

‘Night night’, she whispered, and gently shut the door.

With it she was closing a chapter in his young life. Though he could hear the muffled sound of family, friends and neighbours downstairs, chatting, even laughing, he felt utterly lost and alone, lost in his grandfather’s house, alone in his grandfather’s bed.

He was gone!

The words rolled repetitively around in his head.

He was gone, and he wondered where? Only yesterday he had taken ‘Rusty’ for a walk down by the old Mill. The neighbours said ‘he was in great form and full of life’

Full of life?

What happened? Did he spring a leak?

‘He was gone!’

The words returned to haunt him.

The tick of the alarm clock seemed amplified, resonating on his grandfather’s bedside locker. It reminded him of the metronome in Miss Heggarty’s.

He detested piano lessons. He hated the disruption, leaving his friends playing in the park or down by the river, and having to scurry up the street to be incarcerated in her dull smoke filled drawing room, she standing silhouetted by the window, cigarette in hand, gazing through the laced curtains at passers by, while he sat practicing his scales till his fingers ached. He felt robbed and cheated. Despite the numerous protests, his Saturday mornings had been sabotaged, stolen from him, lost to of all things, a tetchy spinster. Notwithstanding, he still liked music, but not the kind she taught.

His grandfather had often asked him to wind the clock. The poor man’s arthritic hands, made it impossible for him to turn the key. ‘Hong Kong’ it said on the back, in tiny imprinted letters. There was even a lever to make the clock go fast or slow. He loved the idea of that. ‘Wouldn’t it be great’, he would enthuse, ‘if school could be counted in fast seconds, and holidays slow.’



Time?

What was it?

He couldn’t see it, or touch it, so how was he supposed to get his head around it. If he had he been able to stop time, like his mother had stopped the grandfather clock in the hall, perhaps the old man might still be alive, and probably would have lived forever?

‘It’s just a mark of respect’ she told him, as she stilled the swinging pendulum and closed the cabinet door. ‘People do things differently down the country!’ He

watched as she then proceeded to cover every mirror in the house with a black veil. He wasn’t sure why, and didn’t bother to ask.

He was gone.

Yet, he was all around, wherever he cared to look, the coat behind the door, the old brown hat and walking stick, even the stale tobacco lingering in the room. It wasn’t unpleasant; in fact, he almost liked the musty sweet aroma. He loved watching his grandfather cutting the plug with his small

pocket knife, rubbing it between his palms, pulverising it like grain beneath a millstone, packing it tightly into the bowl of his pipe, and then, the scent of sulphur and blue smoke wafting upwards as he pursed his lips and puffed away contentedly. He had often asked if he too could cut some, but the wise old man would smile. 'When your older' he would say and pat him gently on the head, 'besides, knives are much too dangerous for little boys!'

The sudden rattle of water pipes in the attic made his blood run cold and he quickly pulled the sheets above his head. 'Monsters in chains' he thought, 'lurking in the dark, gargling their throats with the blood of victims'. Eventually the din subsided, replaced by a hissing sound, not unlike cats, hair standing, back's arched, ready for confrontation. Finally it too faded, and stillness prevailed and he ventured back from beneath the covers. He could hear his heart thump, and the clock tick. Thump, tick, thump tick, tick thump... drifting in and out of synch with each other.

Later outside, beneath the window he could hear footsteps on the gravel shuffling to and fro and muted conversation. Words wafted upwards towards his straining ears.

'He'll be sadly missed!' (*further shuffles,*) 'God rest his soul!' (*a closing door,*) 'Ah sure he's gone now!' (*the sound of a breaking glass*) 'Didn't he have a lovely death!'

He looked to the ceiling and the timeless worlds hidden in the cracks above his head. He could see a boy sitting in a bath, and a sailboat in a bay, and creatures, too many creatures, hiding in every nook and cranny.

'A lovely death?' What could they possibly mean? What could be lovely about death? Locked in a casket, no light or air, buried six feet under the ground, with worms your only companions, and they busy feeding on you.

Downstairs he could hear a voice begin to sing, softly at first, rising as others joined in the chorus. '*But come you back*' they sang, and he knew he would never again walk the riverbank on a summer's eve, and sit with his grandfather and fish the lazy river, while flies skimmed low and brown trout broke the mirrored surface, silver streaked underbellies glistening, before plopping back into their watery world.

He turned in the womb of the bed and buried his head deep into the feathered pillow fighting himself, seeking sleep. The pipes rattled once more. Fearful, he opened his eyes. On the locker he could see his grandfathers reading glasses, taped at the nose with a grubby plaster, and strands of his hair, woven into the greased bristle of the brush, that lay turtle up beside his jar of 'Pomade'. He once heard that hair grows, even after you die, that it carries on regardless, just like fingernails, blissfully unaware and he shuddered at the thought.

Earlier that evening the heavy smell of disinfectant and flickering candles filled his nostrils as he entered the darkened parlour to pay his respects. He was surprised to see the coffin propped on four simple kitchen chairs and his grandfather's hairy ears and nostrils plugged with cotton wool. He looked almost comical lying there in his cramped box, his chin practically touching his nose, bound up with an old tie. When they recited the rosary, he knelt close and stared long at the laughter lines on his grandfather's face, searching for a sign of life, for some visible stir, unable to comprehend that never again would they move or break into a warm smile, nor would a hearty chuckle pass through those caved in purple lips. He wondered if his grandfather was listening now, and if he could hear the revelry below. He hoped he could, and that he had heard him earlier that evening, when he bent over and kissed his cold marble forehead, and whispered a last goodbye.

Footsteps climbed the stairs and he closed his eyes pretending to be asleep. The door opened and sounds from below gushed in. Through half closed eyes he could see his mother stand above him and pull the covers tight. He watched as she turned away, stopping by the door to lift the coat from its hook. He could hear her sobbing as she held it close and caressed it, and he could taste the salt of tears flowing down his cheek. Once more sounds gushed in. He heard the flick of a switch and the room went dark.

The End



James Corcoran is a member of Abraxas Writers. He moved from Bray to Portugal recently but still attends Abraxas meetings on his frequent trips back to Bray.

Signal Arts Center 2010

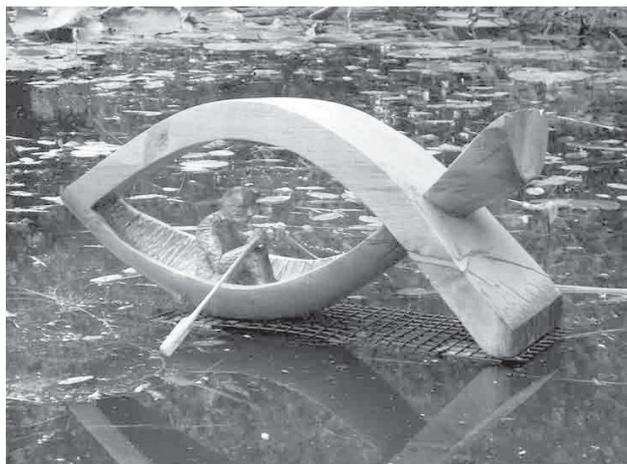
New Year New Works

Exhibition of Sculptures by **Conleth Gent** and Paintings by **Maeve Stafford**.

Tue 5th Jan to Sun 17th Jan 2010

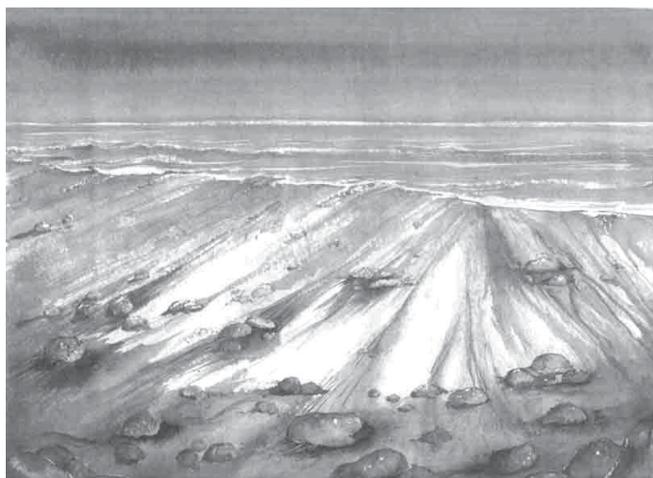
This exhibition shows paintings and sculptures based on images and forms inspired by nature.

Conleth Gent's love of wood and working with wood can be clearly seen in each of his one off unique



pieces. His is an individualistic approach, communicating something of the character of the particular piece of wood and the artists interaction with it

Maeve Stafford, since leaving college, has been involved in adult education with the VEC in various



centres. She is also a founder member of Signal Arts Centre. This is her first exhibition since returning to full time painting.

Opening Reception: Fri 8th Jan 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

The Interaction of Time, Place and Being

Exhibition of Paintings by **Edel Bartley**

Tue 19th Jan to Sun 31st Jan 2010

Edel's work has been inspired by the landscape of rural county Leitrim where she spent most of her life. She says, "Rather than recreating a landscape, I aim to express its essence and curiosity."

The series of paintings for this exhibition are in panel form and are influenced by Japanese art. This elongated form creates a new perspective to her work. There is a certain awkwardness and mystery to the presence of 'humans' within her landscapes, a feeling of discovery and exploration.

Opening Reception: Fri 22nd Jan 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

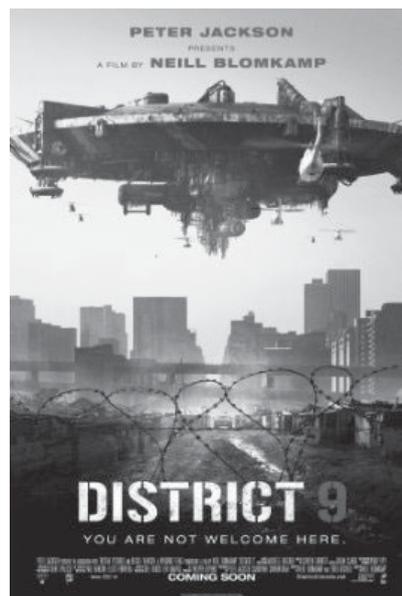


Video Voyeur

Harold Chassen

District 9 is a South African science fiction film. There are no well known actors but is produced by Peter Jackson. The aliens nicknamed "The Prawns"

live in ghettos. A private security firm is contacted to evict them led by Wilkus and is exposed to a strange alien chemical which slowly turns Wilkus into an alien himself. He must rely on the help of his only friends to reverse the process since the security firm is only interested in autopsying him for military purposes.



The film opens in a documentary style and has subtitles even though the language is in English. This is a good film to pick and makes you think.



**Front Cover :
Three Paintings by
Edel Bartley**

Edel has an upcoming exhibition in
Signal Signal Arts in Jan 2010 see
page 7 for details.

Submission Guidelines

Editor : Dermot McCabe : editor@brayarts.net

Creative Writing Editor : Anne Fitzgerald :
afitzgerald3@ireland.com

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

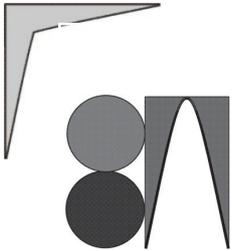
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*Arts Evening Monday 11th Jan
Heather House, Strand Road
5 Euro / 4 Euro Conc. Everyone is welcome.
Come Early Doors open: 8:00pm sharp*

Another Great Arts Evening to start the New Year

**Performance Programme :
See enclosed Flyer**

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