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CREATE LIKE NOBODY'S WATCHING.

Kathy Tynan is an Irish painter, currently based in Dublin. She has shown in the RHA, Kevin Kavanagh and The Lab as well as Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris where she also completed residencies. Kathy's art has been described as off-beat and engaging and often depicts scenes of otherwise mundane urban living, brought to life in a captivating childlike aesthetic.

Danielle recently chatted with Kathy about the differences between being a creative in an industry like design and being a self-lead painter in the fine art world.





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Kathy Tynan with her work in her Studio in The RHA. Photo cred: independent.ie.

TELL US WHAT YOU'RE WORKING ON AT THE MOMENT.

I'm working towards a two-person exhibition in The Highlanes Gallery in Drogheda opening on the 1st of February. It's a beautiful big space that used to be a church. The artist I'm showing with is a painter called Andrew Vickery. I've been a big fan of his work since college so I'm excited to show alongside him.

CAN YOU TELL US SPECIFICALLY WHAT YOU'RE PAINTING, IS IT IN RESPONSE TO HIS WORK? DO YOU MEET UP AND PLAN THE SHOW TOGETHER?

Both of our work is based on memory and personal experience so we were selected for exhibition on the basis that there are already common themes running through our work. My paintings are always made in response to my everyday environment. While I'm going about ordinary day-to-day tasks like walking my dog, making food in my house or waiting for a bus I will see something that catches my eye and I'll stop and photograph it, with plans to make a painting when I get back to my studio. This can happen at any time and it has to be unplanned. At the moment I'm working on a painting of my two cousins whispering to each other in a restaurant.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO FINE ART, AND PAINTING SPECIFICALLY?

It was always what I wanted to do since I was a child. I did a portfolio course and went to NCAD after school and specialised in painting. I kept going from there but it took a long time to start getting the kind of shows I



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WHEN YOU SAY “YOU KEPT GOING” WERE THERE TIMES THAT YOU WANTED TO QUIT?

When I left NCAD initially I rented a studio and started painting but it felt a bit directionless and I didn't have much confidence in my practice yet. So after two years I decided to return to NCAD and do a masters called Art in the Contemporary World, which focuses on the theories and philosophy that surrounds contemporary art. I stopped painting for the year and just read and wrote essays. I became very interested in writing so for a short time after I'd finished I considered becoming an art critic. But in fact, what the course ended up doing for me was to give me the confidence to return to my painting practice with a better understanding of where it was situated in the greater scheme of things. I realised that it's important to gain knowledge about your practice from all angles, even if it means you can then put that knowledge aside and continue doing exactly what you want to do.



Left: Kathy Tynan & Danielle O'Connell during their school years, right: "Brain Massage"



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IN MY JOB, I HAVE TO WORK TO VERY SPECIFIC BRIEFS AND I
HAVE TO THINK ABOUT HOW TO SELL SOMETHING. A
LIMITATION/Framework THAT I BOTH LOVE AND HATE.
TELL ME ABOUT CREATING ART WITH NO BRIEF, WHAT AM I
MISSING?

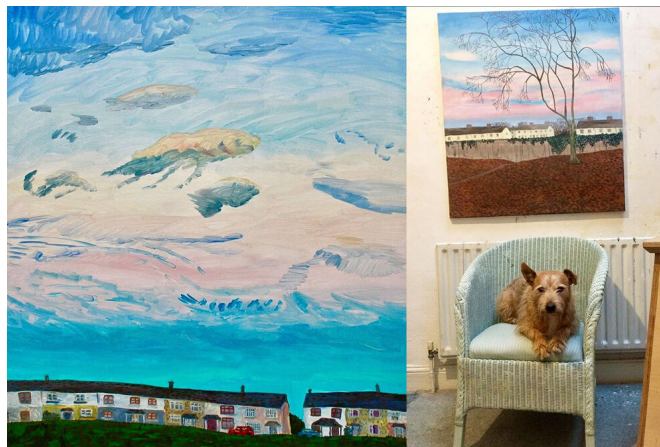
It's definitely easier to make work if I have the
deadline of an exhibition in mind. I will have
certain considerations to take into account in
terms of size of the paintings within the space
and subject matter depending on the venue
I'll be showing in and what kind of audience
will be there. For example, I had two shows
this summer, one in Kevin Kavanagh Gallery,
Dublin, by whom I am represented and the
other was a group show in the Royal
Hibernian Academy, Dublin which was
actually a competition for big prize money (I
didn't win, sadly). As the Kevin Kavanagh



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experiment with the hanging process.

Whereas for the RHA I wanted my work to impress and shout louder than the others so it was bigger, brighter and more detailed. Although I was proud of all the work I made, I prefer the first kind of show. But primarily I make the work for myself, if I've enjoyed making it and it makes me happy to look at when it's finished then it will generally be well received by others.



Left: "Was Low The Moon and High The Wind". Right: "Odyshape" and Kipper, Kathy's dog.

ONE MARKER FOR THE SUCCESS OF A PROJECT FOR ME IS BY HOW SUCCESSFUL IT IS FOR MY CLIENT'S BUSINESS - IE, HOW MUCH MONEY IT MAKES THEM. I'D LOVE TO SAY MY SOLE FOCUS IS ON 'PROGRESSING THE LANDSCAPE OF IRISH DESIGN' BUT, THAT'S NOT THE CASE. DOES THE FINANCIAL SUCCESS OF CERTAIN PROJECTS CHANGE HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THOSE BODIES OF WORK?

It's important to me that the work sells but only so that I can make a living at it and keep going. Most of the people who can afford to buy my work are wealthy but that doesn't mean that I value their opinions more than those who can't afford it. So genuine positive feedback from my peers is just as important to me in terms of evaluating success and giving me confidence. Good reviews in the media are



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Left: "Laethanta Saoire i Sasana". Right, photo courtesy @kathy.tynan on Instagram.

DO YOU EVER DRAW FROM DESIGN FOR INSPIRATION? WHAT CREATIVE FIELDS INSPIRE YOU?

A lot of painters throughout history get a kick out of including other artist's work in their paintings. Matisse, for example, would have included a lot of paintings within his painted interiors, or Harry Kernoff loved to use signage and posters in his. I love all that and you'll find all kinds of nods to other types of art and design in my paintings, things like tattoos, graffiti, architecture, billboards, wallpaper patterns and shop windows.



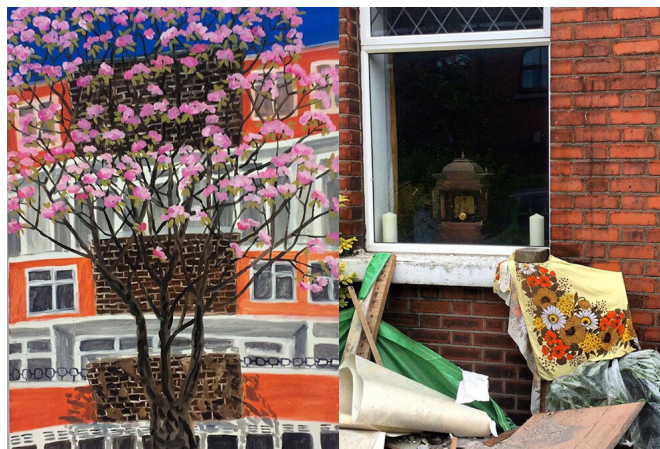


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Yes, usually after a big show I'll take some time off and it can be difficult to get back into it. I just have to work through it and make some bad work before the good work starts coming back to me. It always does but it can feel like it's gone sometimes.

I find that going to visit museums or looking at work from art history helps to stir the imagination. I often revisit Boy Eating Cherries and Le Dejeuner by Pierre Bonnard in The National Gallery, they never let me down.



'Finger Shaped Shadows', left and photo from Kathy's Instagram.

ANY ADVICE FOR YOUNG CREATIVES?

Don't worry if it takes longer than you expected to get where you want to be. Persistence and hard work is more important than talent or natural ability so if you love what you do just keep at it for as long as it takes. Also, get together with your peers to make things happen. If you have a good idea for a project, don't wait for the older people in positions of power to give you opportunities.



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WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 10 YEARS?

I would love to show my work more internationally. It's difficult for artists to make international connections without moving away from Ireland because there's not a huge awareness about all the great stuff that goes on here.

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

Besides examples like the Book of Kells or the high crosses, historically, Ireland doesn't have a big reputation in the visual arts, we were always more interested in music and storytelling. We also have little-to-no history of patronage for the visual arts before the last hundred years or so. In mainland Western Europe, it's always been a given that the wealthy support the arts and artists haven't had to struggle to prove their cultural worth or how that inevitably improves the economy. We're only beginning to catch onto that now over here and we still have a long way to go. But I really believe that the quality of art being made here is very high and there is a



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Staying here in Ireland and continuing to add to that new narrative while finding a good gallery to work with me somewhere like New York would be the dream. Here's hoping!

Follow [Kathy on Instagram](#) for some creative inspiration.



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