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REGIONAL/HOME NEWS



OUT OF THE MID WEST

EIBHER MULQUEEN



£1m to be spent on upgrading art gallery in Limerick

UP TO £1 million will be spent on a refurbishment programme for Limerick City Gallery of Art on Pery Square, following the acceptance of a three-year development plan by the city council.

Mr Mike Fitzpatrick, the gallery's director, says that as part of the plan, a café would be built, the existing galleries would be renovated and visitor numbers would be increased by 15 per cent. It is also envisaged that extra staff will do outreach programmes with youth or elderly people groups.

The gallery had a permanent collection of 700 pieces and a strong series of contemporary exhibitions, he says. "A lot of people still wander in and they say, 'Is the library not here any more?' 'No, the library moved out of here in 1985'."

"Basically there is a mismatch between the amount of shows here, which is really cutting edge stuff, and the viewers. I want to sell the gallery to the public."

The current temporary exhibition is by the Limerick-born artist, Andrew Kearney, whose *With Intent* exhibition of multimedia installation work opened this week. Among the features is a giant balloon and a gun mike feeds sound into the installation from the outside.

"It is converted into a sound-effects machine and that is turned into a light-effects machine. It is all contained within the sphere itself," the artist says.

The gallery was founded in 1948 as an addition to the Cam-

egie Free Library and Museum but it now occupies the entire building including an extension completed in 1999. It is 70 per cent funded by the Corporation and 30 per cent by the Arts Council.

The collection is under-insured and is being re-evaluated by Christies following a recent visit by members of the London-based valuers and their Irish agent, the Knight of Glin.

"They brought over two people to learn more about Irish art. It has very good examples of perhaps the most important 20th-century Irish artists," Mr Fitzpatrick adds.

The collection includes paintings by Paul Henry, Jack B. Yeats and Harry Kernoff. Its most valuable painting is *Power-scourt Waterfall* by George Barrett, worth more than £500,000. The gallery is also home to the national collection of 140 contemporary drawings.

"We would be close to the Model Arts and Niland Gallery in Sligo and the Crawford in Cork. We have 650 sq ft of exhibition space."

He wants to create a greater awareness of the gallery locally. "You have to sell it to your own communities first. There are people who could use it for inclusion projects."

A new art gallery opened in King's Island in the city this week. D+L Gallery is run by Ms Chris Doswell, who has a print gallery, and Mr Paul Lynam, a Belltable Arts Centre board member. Its first exhibition features *Newsclapes*, paintings by Walter Verling.

Mr Mike Fitzpatrick, director of the Limerick City Gallery of Art. Photograph: Brenda Fitzsimons

FG anxious to put Carey's name on ticket

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