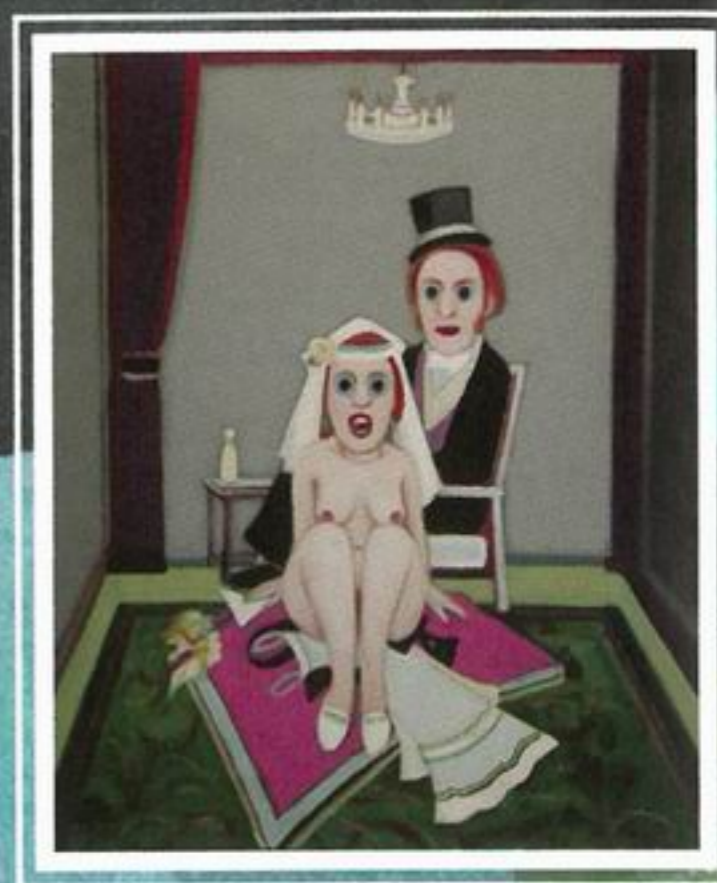


Oil & Water

A joint exhibition of paintings from two exceptional Limerick artists mixes genres, generations, themes and inspirations as Ciara Peters discovers when she spoke to Martin Finnin & Jack Donovan & Melissa O' Brien



Director of Limerick Printmakers Melissa O' Brien is very excited about the launch of a joint exhibition of paintings by two outstanding Limerick born artists, which opens on Thursday October 8th in Limerick Printmakers Robert Street Gallery. "It's an ideal opportunity to see both of these artists, even though the recession is on and everything is doom and gloom, there is still this strong quality of work coming out of Limerick that we are delighted to be able to show. It's going to be a representation of strong Limerick art." Martin Finnin and Jack Donovan have previously exhibited individually with Limerick Printmakers and enjoyed sell out shows. "Both artists are very strong investment artists. So anyone who is looking for an investment, to keep their money safe over the next couple of years, these are the two artists to put your money in to," says Melissa.

Formerly head of the Limerick School of Art and Design, Jack Donovan has influenced and taught many painters, such as John Shinnors and Brian Mac Mahon. Melissa adds, "Jack Donovan has

influenced a whole generation of artists in Limerick over the years. He has been very influential in terms of his teaching practice and through his own work as well. His work has always been innovative and interesting and it has always been relevant to people."

Jack Donovan knew from an early age that he didn't want to do anything else but paint and draw. His love of art began when his parents bought him a set of oil paints for his 9th birthday; he has been a compulsive painter ever since. He draws influence for his work from the great French painters: Braque, Picasso and Matisse but has developed his own style. Jack's work is very distinctive according to Melissa, "A lot of them are very cheeky but they are very interesting in terms of composition and how he puts the paintings together, and the figures and how they interact. They all have these very intense eyes, you are being confronted by them, they are not passive and it does tend to draw you into the work." The images in Jack's work of clowns and balconies hark back to his childhood. "It's images you remember from your childhood

that dictate your imagery," says Jack. We can expect some of Jack's Balcony Series in the exhibition, as well as clowns, some flower pieces and nudes.

Similarly, Martin Finnin discovered young that his passion was art. "When I was about 16 or 17, I used to sneak into the painting department (where Jack Donovan worked) and I thought I'd love to be in here all day painting, I loved the smells of everything; I loved the smell of the linseed and the white spirits," says Martin.

Martin, who is Limerick born but now lives in Cork, has worked on exhibitions in Europe, USA, Asia, and South America, celebrated sell out shows in the Origin Gallery in Dublin, won first prize in the Dedaldo Art Competition and was awarded a scholarship to the Vermont Studio Centre in USA. His work is exhibited all over Ireland as well as Mexico, Holland, Italy, Canada, Lithuania, and England. "Martin's work is just absolutely divine. There is so much colour, it's so well put together in terms of the layering and the pigments," says Melissa.

In contrast to Jack Donovan, Martin's imagery is not inspired by his childhood; it is inspired by his environment, "You see things all the time: the seasons changing, or the fuchsias growing out of the roofs, you might see the colour on a wall or discolouration on a wall," says Martin. "I think getting up in the morning and walking around is fierce inspiration!" The exhibition will be a beautiful contrast of work, of abstract art and contemporary painting from one generation to the next. In May, Martin has a solo exhibition in The John Martin Gallery in London that he is focusing on for the next few months.

The joint exhibition will open on October 8th at 8pm at Limerick Printmakers, with previews and sales starting at 7pm, and all are welcome. It will run for three weeks and all are invited to view the paintings in Limerick Printmakers, who open from 11 to 5.30 Monday to Friday and 10 to 4 on Saturdays. For more info log onto www.limerickprintmakers.com