

MEANING, CONTEXT, HISTORY & FUTURES

Sarah Searson

ONE OF THE challenges of programming and managing an arts centre like The Dock (housed in Carrick-on-Shannon's Old Court House) is to create a programme of arts that's vibrant and interesting to a range of the public. We offer a place where people can engage with the arts on a number of levels and share their creative interests. We do this through performances, exhibitions, residencies, talks, workshops and cultural cinema. Our programme focuses on music, visual arts, theatre, literature and dance. There are many groups who meet to work on their own interests such as painting, choir, poetry and learning about different art-forms.

The Dock offers a place to be together, meet and chat. We hope our work is read as nuanced enough to be attractive to artists and complex enough to offer visitors points of interest. As Director and custodian of an old building one is very much aware that the history and place can drive the character of the building and influence the programme of work. We are sensitive to the fact that the nature of our work in the arts is very pleasant and is in sharp contrast with the original function of the place.

As the old seat of administration and justice The Dock contains a fairly high quotient of traumatic memories, for descendants of those who were at the sharp end of its original functions. The physical and physiological make-up of the place is often referenced in the programme and in particular in the visual arts we curate. In late October 2017, as part of an exhibition opening for the solo show of the artist Andrew Kearney,



retired Professor of History and Fellow of Limerick University, John Logan, who is originally from Ballinamore, will speak about the building in relation to the artists work. John has been researching as far afield as the archives of Harvard University where he has found a portfolio of the architect William Farrell. This includes original Farrell's proposals for The Courthouse design. He was awarded the commission and completed the building circa 1826. By the late twentieth century the building had fallen in to a very poor state.

It was sympathetically restored and re-opened in 2005. The challenges and advantages are that these spaces are dripping with memories, history and future potential.

John Logan's research is responding to Andrew Kearney's large-scale installations in the Dock. Kearney is interested in themes of personal history and identity and how architecture and the built environment are used and experienced by audiences at different times.

His work is picking up on the sensitivities that are at play in this old building. He has investigated how interventions in architectural space transform the experience of being in those spaces, how people think about them, how they become remembered and how a built environment can animate real and imaginary memories, desires and dreams. Engaging the viewer, facilitating reflection on lives-lived and remembered, the work renders the everyday exceptional.

This summer we drew attention to location and place and worked very closely with Jo Lewis who is the director of The Green Door Festival. The festival has wide appeal and promotes conversations and exchanges about rural living and issues of sustainability. The weekend includes presentations from architects, workshops and film throughout the County and will take place in The Dock, The Glens Centre and The Sculpture Centre in Manorhamilton. This year nearly forty homes were open to the public. Designers, homeowners, visiting and interested publics and builders are drawn into conversations about their choices of design, building materials, their uses of technologies and ways of living and working in rural environments.

The festival grows every year and it's a testament to a generosity of spirit of the people in the region who are willing to share and exchange, learning, ideas and methods of build their homes. This year the festival attracted over 3,000 visitors. With Jo Lewis, the team here at The Dock devel-

oped an exhibition which included designers Leo Scarff, artists David Lunney, Nicos Nicolaou, Vanya Lambrecht-Ward, Zunaira Khurshid, Ali Kirby, Elaine Reynolds, and architect Dominic Stevens.

The exhibition was titled Thinking Living Dwelling of the reference to the philosopher Martin Heidegger's essay *Bauen Wohnen Denken (Building, Dwelling, Thinking)*. It was first presented at an architectural conference in Germany entitled *Mensch und Raum (Man and Space)* in Darmstadt, Germany in 1951. In his writing, Heidegger challenged readers to think about what it is to dwell and what it means to build. Heidegger's assertion in post World War Two Europe, was that the modern world had brought about a negative severance between building and dwelling. A central focal point of the exhibition was a large scale design by Leo Scarff that takes the form of a house. This structure formed a meeting point for knowledge exchange and information, which serve the dual purpose of exhibit and repository for films and

books that reveal some of the learning of various home builders and reflects on the interests and concerns of living and building in the rural.

It housed a number of books about 'living building', which have been recommended by the homeowners taking part in the Green Door Festival. The books included classics such as 'A Pattern Language' nominated by several homeowners including artist and self-builder Charlie Easterfield and architect Colin Bell, 'Primitive Architecture' Enrico Guidoni nominated by architect and eco-builder Peter Cowman and 'Handmade Houses — A Guide to the Woodbutcher's Art' nominated by photographer, filmmaker Tommy Weir.

Whereas many of Ireland's arts and cultural buildings reside in highly restored buildings or fairly new blandish builds, there is something in the shadow of our past here, that points us toward the many connections to be made and explored locally, nationally and internationally and towards a future to be ambitious for.

A FAMOUS FAIR DAY IN MOHILL

Paddy Prendergast recalls

IT'S THE 19th of October and I'm up early despite the fact that there is no school today. It's not quite bright yet but already I can hear the sound of cattle hooves going past the bottom of Hyde Terrace.

Making my way over the town I see McGarrys yard is open and already there are a few bikes thrown against the shed. Sheila's pub is open for business already.

Josie Nicholson is busy sweeping in front of his shop in anticipation of a few farmers that might buy a nice suit having sold their cattle.

There's already a good group of people at McKeons corner. It is easy to spot the Northern cattle jobbers, big hefty men wearing Crombie overcoats.

Pascal puts his head out the door. He is in great humour. Why wouldn't he be!

It's the last Fair Day of the year and the place is full.

"Are you going over yonder?" he asks...

"Yes I am, if I can make my way across to Mikey Farrells".

Glebe St is very busy, I see a couple of farmers going in and out of Joe Grays, probably warming their hands around mugs of Bovril.

Its a frosty morning as I make my way towards Fair Green where Mrs Nicholl will present me with an ash plant. Its going to be a long day...but sure you have to get the price of the pictures from somewhere!