Galleries in Leitrim

Sandra Vernon

■ *Above: Gail Quinn, Sandra Vernon & Jan Alexander having a chat at the Solas Gallery during Sandra's very successful exhibition.*
■ *Below: Ethel McVeigh, joint owner at Morpheus*
■ *Right: Guests at the Gallery*

SANDRA VERNON For many years now there has been a steady increase of Artists and Craftworkers drawn to the County. Perhaps a lot of that was due to the availability of cottages needing "renovation" and at a reasonably low price as well as falling for Leitrim, it`s people and its land. The property reason has virtually gone, but now we have a wonderful resource of artists and craftworkers within the County, many of them local and now realising their own potential.

Over the years this has lead to the setting up of facilities to encourage and promote their work, such as the "Sculpture Centre" in Manorhamilton and the "Leitrim Design House" at the Dock in Carrick on Shannon. The Dock itself, a wonderful example of the investment in the arts in this County promotes the more contemporary side of the arts as well as its Theatre and many activities and courses available to the public. The Leitrim Design House, in the same building, shows the best of craft from the area in their recently refurbished gallery.

However, there are far more artists now than there are galleries to show their work. Whatever their level of work, and many have got the "Painting Bug" from attending classes, they have the right to display their work to the public. In Carrick for many years, this need was catered for by the Bookshop, run by Kathleen Coleman, but time marches on and sadly this is now closed. BUT, every cloud has a silver lining, so they say. In September a new gallery was opened in Carrick on Shannon, " The Morpheus Gallery". The gallery is in the Craft Yard, down by the side of the Bush Hotel. The Morpheus has been opened by a very dedicated and talented pair of artists, Ethel McVeigh and Gareth Curtis. Apart from their own works, the gallery is also showing a high standard of works by other artists. At the moment they are preparing for their Christmas show and plan to have two or three exhibitions over the next year. The Gallery is open from Tues to Sat, a bit hidden in its lovely courtyard, but well worth keeping a lookout for and visiting.

At the other side of the County, there is a gallery in Ballinamore run by a Community Arts Group and part funded by the Leitrim Arts Office. The Solas Gallery is now approaching its third year and is already preparing its diary of events for 2010. It is run on a membership basis and any artist is free to Join. The Gallery runs three open group exhibitions a year, two of which are selected and themed. The third is at Christmas, which opens on Fri 4 Dec this year, in which all artists are hung.

As well, all members can apply for a solo exhibition at the Gallery. 2009 has had a full year of exhibitions, well attended, and happily for many of the artists a good few sales. This latter is important as it shows that there are many out there who not only enjoy having or giving an original piece of art, but also appreciate the work and time that go into a piece of art.

There is still a need for more galleries, sometimes the more there are in an area, the more people it brings in. Not just dedicated ones as mentioned, but places like the Bookshop as well.

In many of the towns and villages there must be shops with an empty but suitable space doing nothing, and there are certainly enough artists to fill them!

Contact info:

SOLAS GALLERY
above Four Seasons Garden Centre,
Ballinamore.
Tel: 071 9644210

MORPHEUS GALLERY
Bush Craft Yard,
Carrick-on-Shannon.
Tel: Ethel 087 6668366 or
Gareth 087 0623678

LEITRIM DESIGN HOUSE
The Dock
Carrick-on-Shannon
Tel: 071 9650550

SCULPTURE CENTRE
Manorhamilton
Tel: 071 9855098