JANET MULLARNEY
MY MINDS i

HIGHLANES MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY
Janet Mullarney: My Minds i
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CONTENTS
Foreword: Aoife Ruane, Curator/Director
Janet Mullarney: My Minds i - William Gallagher
Janet Mullarney: Some Form Of Key - Manchán Magan
Janet Mullarney: Mending - Janet Mullarney
Artist’s Acknowledgements & Biography
Highlanes Gallery & Drogheda Municipal Art Collection
Exhibition & My Minds i Tour
Foreword

My Minds is an exhibition of sculpture/installation and works on paper by artist Janet Mullarney, her first solo (museum) show in five years.

It continues a strand of solo exhibitions for Highlanes Gallery by artists including Thomas Brezing, Sarah Browne, Kate Byrne; Diarmaid Coppinger, Richard Germain, Sanya Hama, Anthony Haughey, Gereon Krebber, Jackie Nickerson, Siemad M Mhaisaag, Abigail O’Brien, Paul Seawright and Samuel Walsh.

The title of the exhibition is not only a reference to the expression, ‘the mind’s eye’ but it is also, and far more significantly, an exemplification of the human ability to experience and decode complex metaphorical ideas.

While Mullarney’s usual practice is to work on a larger scale, here, in response to the specific demands of, and approaches suggested by, Highlanes Gallery, she has chosen to look at space differently, working with smaller models and displaying with light and shadow a more circumscribed and judicial, though no less intuitive or meaningful, way.

My Minds is a collection of strange and outlandish figures, poem in a novel, and an overarching theme which is the exploration and decoding of memory and its potent expression, ‘the mind’s eye’, or indeed a simple play on the words ‘eye’ and ‘I’. It is also, and far more significantly, an exemplification of the human ability to experience and decode complex metaphorical ideas.

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Janet Mullarney: My Minds i

The swing shapes or quietly sitting, twirling in the inimic or dancing with the imagination. Janet Mullarney’s taste of beguiling inventions act out a radian new drama so what it is alive to, think, feel and to make art. Though standing still; the swing goes for ever, as or as far can go with it, on her great themes of strength, vulnerability, strangeness, surprise and memory – open to all, ours and others. It’s exuberantly visual – so that in imitating, Allusiveness, bountiful, fantasy, be the way to keep it (lay every’s) layered, without false complexities and ideas and creative connections tumbling though the thing, enthralling but elusive as a barnaw, rewarding to the wonder such as the long-time admirer. To favours moments from the flow to be choralizable their grace, but her work has always been forgiving of the imperfect, a champion of the flawed.

Centre-stage of the show is a wide lightbox platform, illuminating a large group of diverse figures or objects (one or two are both). It is at once an offset plinth, a disco floor, a theatre set, a lighting of casting, a fantastic, the avant-guard, a convention, a conversational forum; the one’s scale is that of playthings. Were we playthings of the God who once lived? Of those shadows? Who might that God be now?

They seem delicate under our giant’s gaze. Their scale is that of playthings. Were we playthings of the God who once lived? Of those shadows? Who might that God be now?

Momentarily arranged, they are performers, but so are we. They seem to the phrase opening up at least some of the boundless threads running through it, relationships of seeing and expressing, jobs and self, of playful invention and double meaning.

To engage with the work is to traverse wide territory, mapped out on a small plane.

Its themes are multivalent, interlinked, coherent, inexpressible, like people and the lives we make. We get to meet a whole family of creations, forms, ideas, arch genealogy of memories and inventions. In The Perfect Family (1998) the artist looked with mirroring at the challenge of surviving and being oneself within the ideal unit of society. Here the articulate or the inarticulate, the winner or misfit can share the stage, different sometimes even within themselves, contrary as beings and art. In their heightened individuality they compete for attention and prosper, they may both gain and post something when separated.

Play may be the most natural art, but galleries (and churches) are not conceived for laughter. Both are adult spaces. Another boundary dissolved here as play becomes work, toys become adult tools of meaning, the discarded becomes beloved.

Playfulness as a viewpoint focussed but not fixed. Janet Mullarney described in the RHA interview how ‘it is space that adapts what she wonderfully calls ‘fond objects’ .

In her work Janet Mullarney has been impressed, elsewhere between India and antiquity. She has expressed respect for such masters of the monumental as Serra, but also her preference now to move in the other direction. In the RHA the viewer walked among the sculptures, here in the exhibition her space is as much psychically as physical. Only the viewer can walk among these pieces. Their stillness is their strength. As galleries internationally grow larger and gigantic works hang here Janet Mullarney’s intimate, penetrating figures suggest there is no space more vast than the imagination.

We sense the arm around and above these beings, and the show resonates powerfully with this space, from the taped sounds of nature that waft gently, to the shadowplay across the altar – another stage, theatre, installation, refuge. Creativity as an alternative salvation. Creation is another art form. Play the very beginnings of painting were the outlines of a lover’s shadow traced on a wall. Ghosts of the street packets imposed on art and humanity come into focus with the ‘Tourn Noctaliastical angels’ (figures of the altar) then demuy joy, unstained flesh and decorous acиде properly outshone and subdued by the raw naked, headless dancers cavorting below.

A dialogue of light and shadow runs through the work, and the installation. The light of revelation, (height, trust and pleasure) against of shades of mortality, pain, power – only occasionally given a name (one is God’s-eye viewpoint in Bruegel, another Christ’s-eye). The artist herself ‘contains disequilibrium’ a viewpoint focussed but not fixed.

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Power, control, Freedom in her work Janet Mullarney has not been intimidated by the essential human dilemmas, but driven by their charge and distinct in engaging with them so directly and expressively. If she has in part warmed with the forces regarded to tame the imagination: church, family, convention, fashion in art – it has in another to find her own authority as a maker, inventor and a voice, one that now against shades of mortality, pain, power – only occasionally given a name (one is God’s-eye viewpoint in Bruegel, another Christ’s-eye). The artist herself ‘contains disequilibrium’ a viewpoint focussed but not fixed.

Rocks from S. Apollinare in Classe (2010) in which an Indian street artist, surviving on ingenuity alone, inscribes a circular pattern on the ground with a simple chalk-filled perforated tube.

As free as the work is from sculptural convention and predictability it is just as free from intellectual dogma, academic or psychological, though its depth may coincide with the insights of others. Cliodhna Shaffey observed how her appreciation of the unaccountable mysteries of the self parallel Judaism’s perception that one is never to say to ourselves ‘Janet Mullarney’s extensive travels in India and Mexico, and knowledge of their artistic traditions, may sometimes figure as sources for her art. But her work is just as likely to enrich our reading of other art, like the outsiders in the images of Jack Yeats, the God’s-eye viewpoint in Bruegel’s Children’s Games, or the glassy stage of an ice scene by Berenson.

Compassionate, generous and humane, Janet Mullarney’s art is also unabashedly intimate; its existing capacity to convey magic, all-inclusive, Vande Nabokov’s late novel, the young hero Van Veen takes to running around on his hands (reducing some to tears). It is done not just for the performance, but to one’s extreme. The artist herself ‘contains disequilibrium’ a viewpoint focussed but not fixed.

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William Gallagher: February 2015

William Gallagher is an art historian and lecturer


"A Glass of Milk" - William Gallagher, February 2015

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This is all by way of saying that My Minds is not your typical self-absorbed, introspective exhibition. Mullarney is anything but a metaphysician, an impressario of our hidden dreams, our glorious frailties and shameful charades. This is a thinly veiled attempt to trick her audience; there is definitely something else needed to her work: A spiritual fascination with existence and the vagaries of our planet’s self-absorbed dominant mammalian species.

Consider a farting Buddha. Though the venerable master could easily discourse on the intellectual minutia of spiritual dogma, he realises it is equally valid to engage with the concept of other more vital, corporeal matters. There is a touch of indulgent goddess to Mullarney, adopting, as she does, a curious, non-judgemental interest in humanity: Our secret stains, our soul yearnings and shameful charades.

Once one is engaged, the work reveals its Velcro aspect - a visceral, viscous quality that begins to stick up our sleeves, references and reminders from the recesses of the mind. The sensation feels nonlinear, like dream thought, or as if one’s peripheral vision was stimulated rather than the predictably patterned visual cortex. Is it too much of a stretch to suggest her art is tuned to a frequency similar to that used by noncorporeal entities - angels, devils, saints, etc. - when attempting to reach us? Either way, the fact that she so courageously displays primal sensations such as loss, lust, aspiration, passion, grace, shame and fear encourages us to begin to engage with our own core fears, loves, urges and interests. It’s heady stuff, but done with a light touch… like a mother’s kiss or, for that matter, the Buddha’s fart - that sense of equality and clear intent.

Describing the work is always a challenge. Shorn of black letters or paper will invariably fail to capture its multidimensionality. Were I Mullarney I’d grab whatever was to hand – old rags, cardboard, paper will invariably fail to capture its multidimensionality. Were I Mullarney I’d grab whatever was to hand – old rags, cardboard, plastic, wire – and mould them instinctively into some form of key that could offer access through one’s neural pathways, or perhaps even manipulate this actual page, by erasing or adding text, allowing the viewer is manipulated into a particular choreography to gain the best view of the work. Often the works are positioned on unusual platforms: tables, steps, perches, trestles, trolleys, mattresses, pillows - foundations for her flights of fancy. Take note too of a counter-intuitive quality or in terms of a piece’s weight or weightlessness.

Although the focus of My Minds is on the sculptural figures, there are a selection of genuinely alluring paintings and drawings which draw one further into the bosom of this quintessentially idiosyncratic Mind. My words here may have only further muddied the waters. All I can advise is to engage with the work as much with the heart as the mind. This is what Mullarney is all about, communicating at every level, peeling through artifice, revealing essence. Engage with her at your peril – you are unlikely to emerge unaffected.

Manchán Magan
February 2015

Manchán Magan is a travel writer and documentary maker.
Janet Mullarney: Meandering

Drawing is the celebration of intensity in a small, anti-monumental and anti-Academical dimension; the silent revelation of the hidden treasures of our soul.

Lorand Hegyi, Almanach-Cabinet du Dessin

An accumulated practical knowledge of craftsmanship and skill and the beauty of the vernacular language of material skills, together with the panache involved in lateral thinking, are things I appreciate and inspire my work. The materials used in sculpture have always been very important to me because the visible tactile quality of the material informs as much as the form and the concept.

Long stretches of time spent in Italy rubbing up against the humus of Western Art History, there at hand to be lived with, has been an important influence on my work. Other travels to India, Mexico, and Egypt have also played a role.

Here, and possibly a constant in my work, is a personal journey of exploration of myself in the world. Working through not academically but physically thinking and trying to experience from within how we feel inside our skin. I also have a sense that disequilibrium and instability are extremely important aspects of this, difficult to live with, yet they enrich experience.

Titles are a way into the work as they vaguely identify these figments of my imagination that inhabit this illuminated field of the subconscious. I myself don’t want to delve too deeply into their meaning, rather let them float as freely and bizarrely as they appeared. Made from “anything” though each time very specifically, with everything from cardboard, glue and wax.

The source of St. Anthony’s Temptation is a large painted surface of many shades of brown and beige just about registered in El Prado, a dark St. Anthony in an even darker cave. What did register, however, was a tiny hare off in a bucolic landscape, top left hand corner, offering a bun to the poor starving Anthony. And the slant of that body up on another headless state of unfathomable worry? Absolutely untitled - Is too long a story to tell, and paper is the right support for that story.

Stairwell - The fable goes that Giovanni di Bologna’s St. Anthony in an even darker cave, what did register, however, was a tiny hare off in a bucolic landscape, top left hand corner, offering a bun to the poor starving Anthony. And the slant of that body up on another headless state of unfathomable worry?

Unmade bed - Something I grew up with, and a very Irish phenomenon.

Mother mine - The ever watchful disappointing turn of the head of the penalized mother mine.

Modigliani - The painter himself would attend fairs, in that glowing peach pink pigment taking glancingly to the plaster.

Double take - This unassuming Mexican mask - is it worn as a shield, a raiment, an appropriated attribute? Only the child’s uncertainty knows.

Lost tribe no. 2 - Submerged in Crawly cardboard armour there are many members of that tribe waiting in the wings to play their pathetic part.

I stole my shoe - Is too long a story to tell, and paper is the right support for that story.

Weasily squirrel - Heedlessly enjoying her own strength, the dry pink plaster a good surface for a fearless nudity.

Modigliani’s daughter - In the tradition of William Gallow’s test (p.4). It is probably a shame-filling emoji of the subject of painting, a small vis being looked at intensely by his father Picassa. In version 2 (p.3), the ‘we’ll made/good girl’ traditional woodgets various untraditional smoothingers, in glue and wax.

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Artist’s Acknowledgements

A line at the very end of the film Babettes Feast, *which brings me to tears sum up this wonderful experience has been put together.*

“Through all the world there goes one long cry from the heart of the artist - *Give me room to do my utmost*”

This is exactly what Aoife Ruane, Director of the Highlanes Gallery gave me, by not only allowing me, but truly supporting, encouraging and helping me to achieve this exhibition. I was propelled to do my utmost and that is to be in almost privileged space. Her constant fine tuning, attention to detail, co-ordination and managing another tremendous energy have made the making and touring of this show a wonderfully positive experience. I imagine all artists dream of being “taken care of”.

I would also like to thank all the staff at Highlanes Gallery for efficiency, cordiality, warmth and interest in achieving this outcome and the ongoing care and their interaction while the exhibition was up and running, and into its tour.

Special thanks go to Marcus Costello for his achievement with the lighting, understanding what I had in my mind’s eye.

Making this book has been a huge and one that I anticipated and relished. Huge thanks to Fiona O’Reilly from Oriel Design for her tenacity and sensitivity. Sincere thanks to Don Hawthorn for a relished. Huge thanks to Fiona O’Reilly from OntheDot Design for the cover design, attention to detail, co-ordination and managing another tremendous energy have made the making and touring of this show a wonderfully positive experience. I imagine all artists dream of being “taken care of”.

Mullarney’s work is included in many public collections including, The Arts Council of Ireland, The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, Limerick City Gallery of Art; The Office of Public Works, The Butler Gallery; The Model; AIB art2, Irish Bank; The Model, All-Ireland Bank (AIB); Works commissioned for public spaces include Gröningen, Markt Plazt, Holland; Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast; and St. Ultan’s Primary School, Balymount, Dublin.


Janet Mullarney is an Associate member of the RHA and a member of Ascodina. The Arts Council established Ascodina in 1981 to honour artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the creative arts in Ireland, and to encourage and assist members in devoting their energies fully to their art.

She is represented by the Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland. www.taylorgalleries.ie www.janetmullarney.com

**Biography**

Janet Mullarney has exhibited extensively in Ireland and abroad and has had solo exhibitions at museums and galleries including Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA), Crawford Municipal Gallery, Limerick City Gallery of Art; The Model, Sligo, The Orchard Gallery, Danny MACS, Museo di Arte Contemporanea, Guadalajara, Mexico; Casa Museo Arte Contemporaneo, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy. Group exhibitions include the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI), the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), EV+A, Limerick, The Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada; Millennium Art Museum, Beijing and Shanghai Art Museum, China; Palazzo della Repubblica, Siena and Palazzo Mediceo di Sarzana, Italy.

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**Selected Bibliography**


Pier Luigi Tazzi, Patrick Murphy, Things made, Things Done, 2002, web catalogue www.janetmullarney.com


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Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda Municipal Art Collection

The Drogheda Municipal Art Gallery was founded by the late Bea Orpen, HRHA and her husband CEF (Terry) Trench together with the Municipal Art Gallery and Museum Committee in the mid-1940s. The Collection dates from the middle of the eighteenth century and is housed at the gallery in the former Franciscan Friary Church on Laurence Street, Drogheda.

Artists represented in the Collection


Highlanes Gallery Patrons

The Family of Bea Orpen and CEF (Terry) Trench, Founders of the Drogheda Municipal Art Collection

Brendan and Bernadine O’Donovan
Bernard Gogarty, Smyth & Son Solicitors
Paul Smyth, Smyth & Son Solicitors
Orlaith & Gavin Duffy

Highlanes Gallery Benefactors

Patrick Brangan, Phelan Brangan Solicitors
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Drogheda & District Chamber of Commerce
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Lucan Lyons & Associates, Architects
Peter Lyons
Alies Lyons
Kevin McAlester
Caroline M McBride
Dr B O’Connell
Scon Briche N S, Bothar Brigha, Drogheda
Patrick Walsh

Highlanes Gallery Curator/Director: Aoife Ruane
Operations and Security Manager: Patrick Casey
Exhibitions and Installation Officer: Ian Hart
Accounts and Administration: Sarah Culkin
Duty Officer/Reception: Siobhan Murphy
Duty Officer/Public Relations: Hairy Kelly
Housekeeping: Myrsylda Bodgan, Ramonda Kasparszieni

*Administration/PR: Aidan March; *Building Maintenance: Berta Hartenberg

*Gallery Invigilators: Irene Bagnall, Domingos Caldeira, Dermot Finnerny, Joseph Flanagan, Ben Kelly Moloney, Margarette Newall, Jennifer Teas, Deirdre Whelan

Highlanes Gallery is supported by *INTREO Community Employment Project through Millmount Cultural Development Services.

Board of Management

Chairman: Kevin McAlester, Board: Sean Cotter, Mary T. Daly, Karan Lawless, Alison Lyons, Rosin McAuley, Sarah O’Hagan, Fr. Arbie O’Murchu, Paul Smyth, Brona O’Reilly

Board of Directors

Chairman: Joan Martin, Board: Brian Harten, Karan Lawless, Rosin McAuley, Joseph McGinniss, Brona O’Reilly

Opened in 2005, Highlanes Gallery received funding from Drogheda Borough Council (now Louth County Council), Louth County Council, and the project was part-funded by the European Union through the Interreg IIA Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by East Border Region Interreg IIA Partnership, the International Fund for Ireland, and South County Council - EU Task Force under EU Peace II Programme and part-financed by the Irish Government under The National Development Plan.

Highlanes Gallery and F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio, Banbridge, Co. Down were developed through the Interreg IIA Programme, and continue to share exhibitions and resources.
Exhibition & My Minds i T our

Highlanes Gallery
Friday 29 January – Saturday 11 April 2015
Laurence Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth, A92 F7PH, Ireland
W: www.highlanes.ie
T: +353(0)41-9803311 F: +353(0)41-9803313
Curator/Director: Aoife Ruane
Opening Hours:
Monday - Saturday 10.30am - 5.00pm Closed: Sunday
Tour 2014-2015

Butler Gallery
Saturday 24 October – Sunday 20 December 2015
The Castle, Kilkenny, R95 YRK1, Ireland.
W: www.butlergallery.com
T: +353(0)56-7761106   F: +353(0)56-7770031
Curator/Director: Anna O’Sullivan
Opening Hours:
Monday-Sunday 10.00am-1.00pm, 2.00pm-4.30pm

Wexford Arts Centre
Saturday 15 October–Saturday 26 November 2016
Wexford Arts Centre, Cornmarket, Wexford, Y35 X5HF, Ireland.
W: www.wexfordartscentre.ie
T: +353(0)53-9123764   F: +353(0)53 9121765
Visual Arts Manager: Catherine Bowe
Opening hours:
Monday-Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm Closed: Sunday
Open: Sundays during the Wexford Opera Festival
11.00-5.00pm

The Exhibition will then tour to Northern Ireland to:
F.E. Mc William Gallery & Studio
Saturday 3 December 2016 – February 2017
F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio, 200 Newry Road, Banbridge,
Co. Down, BT32 3NB, Northern Ireland.
W: www.femcwilliam.com T: +44 28 4062 3322
Curator: Riann Coulter
Opening hours:
Monday-Saturday 10.00am-5.00pm Closed: Sunday