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GERARD BYRNE - PROFILE



On the Sunny Side of the Regent Street by Gerard Byrne.



Gerard Byrne in his his studio. Photo credit: Andrew Roche Photography



Gerard Byrne on the exhibition, Inside, Outside & Beyond opening day. Photo credit: Barry Cronin



Gerard Byrne painting en plein air National Botanic Gardens of Ireland. Photo credit: Esther Wang

This month **Gerard Byrne** celebrates 30 years of painting at the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland. His exhibition, *Inside, Outside & Beyond*, held in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW), is running in the Gallery Space, Visitor Centre, at the National Botanic Gardens.

Byrne has amassed an impressive body of work over his 30 years as a professional artist. The 60-year-old painter has divided his time between his native Dublin and his adopted London. Now that he has returned home his work reflects the character of both cities, their quirks and foibles, the nightlife, food-obsession and the ever-present defining flow of the Thames through London. Like many artists before him he has travelled to distant lands to experience the interplay of light on landscape, but Dublin's Georgian elegance is the inspiration for his current exhibition. The Victorian magnificence and florid diversity of the Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin show us the exotic textures of palm leaves and Swiss cheese plants caught in close up.

In November 2017 he established The Gerard Byrne Studio, fine art gallery in Ranelagh, Dublin. A visit to the gallery reveals his fascination with architecture, both built and natural. This is no slavish copying of line and proportion. He takes an artist's eye to the world around him. Images are enhanced, lines twist, a lattice of tree branches warps and he plays with views and vistas. What

emerges is a painter's perception of place, an emotional engagement with the parameters of parks and gardens – the rhythm of urban streets and the juxtaposition of dramatic man-made structures in the natural unpredictable fluidity of rivers and the sea.

A Thrilling Process

Byrne's work is performed on a large scale. It takes a big canvas to hold his expressionist reaction to the scenes he finds himself in. He is happily following in a tradition of painters from Claude Monet, Winslow Homer, Vincent Van Gogh and others, who created their works *en plein air*. Byrne states: "This is a thrilling process for me. Trying to react to the changing light and rendering the different sources of illumination in a scene. Tackling the shadow-inducing direct sunlight or the diffuse radiance weaving through foliage, or reflected beams bouncing and dancing on leaves and windows is wonderful."

He captures this with decisive draftsmanship; his brush strokes are swift and confident, his pallet vibrant. He chooses colours with perfect harmony and tone. However, amid all this visual frenzy there is a sense of control, the buzz enhancing the subject before us.

Capturing Moments

The paintings capture a moment in time, whether it is the briefest blossoming of cherry trees by Glasnevin's glorious glasshouse, or the angled look of a chef as he presents a dish of delights to a gourmand. The chef holding a delicate

fruit between an ostentatious finger and thumb, as if to say "this is my creation... now let it fly." In this, and indeed all of Byrne's work, there is an electric energy – each image is not a still from a roll of film, they invite us to feel the chill drifting in on an early morning river-mist. They invoke a smell of autumn as leaves begin their winter senescence. Byrne comments: "One becomes overjoyed at the hope of spring in the first pink blush of those Glasnevin cherries, and then there's the leathery leaves of the weird and wonderful evergreens held inside the Botanic Gardens' Great Palm House."

Byrne's work is in the private collections of Lucinda O Sullivan, Diarmuid Gavin, Ronan Hardiman, the late Maeve Binchy and Gordon Snell, and Louis Walsh. His publicly purchased work can be seen in the Shelbourne Hotel, the Gresham Hotel, Sligo Park Hotel, Electricity Supply Board, Department of the Marine, and the Department of Justice. There are also examples of his work at the Irish embassy in Beijing and the Abraham Foundation, Texas, USA.

You can catch Gerard in action as he paints *en plein air* at the *Inside, Outside & Beyond* exhibition, which is open to the public at the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin, until Sunday, July 15.

The Gerard Byrne Studio

opening hours:

July - August – by appointment
(086 8321094)

from September –

Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday 1-6pm
Thursday, Friday 1-7pm

The Gerard Byrne Studio, 15 Chelmsford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

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