



# Eye of the Beholder

Many artists, like the viewpoint, but the individual should make up their own mind as to a painting's meaning, that no perception should be imposed which might limit someone's enjoyment of a piece of art.

When I met local artist Rose McGauran a similar philosophy was reiterated, but rather than begin with a blunt caveat from which to write this article, I was told many interesting opinions, experiences and perceptions of both art and life.

Revealing a glimpse of the artist behind the brushstrokes, but what was more clearly illustrated was the obvious connection between the artist and the art. As the two are inextricably linked, the interview which took place will go some way to help you, the reader, make up your own mind about the paintings of Rose McGauran.

When asked why she does not like to explain the meaning behind her paintings, Rose stated: "I think it is the hardest option to answer. A lot has happened to me over the last three years and I believe the paintings have developed with me over this time."

Events of both a personal and professional nature have gone some way to help shape the paintings as we see them today. Rose claims the beginning of this metamorphosis after graduation when a considerable amount of time was spent in the field of community arts. Following an invaluable work, she was fortunate enough to obtain a space at Queen Street Studios in Belfast. With one year devoted to studio work, the following twelve months were spent abroad. "I've been a bit of a gypsy in the last while," she muses. "I've been so inspired and affected by my experiences."

These experiences came in the form of an art fellowship to Rome which she describes as a "soft landing", being placed in an English-speaking school environment to study and develop her art.





The time was spent totally immersed in the stunning architecture, culture and lifestyle of Italy. "I was never out of the churches and some of the best art was to be found tucked away in the back streets," she says. "For me, the best part was discovering special places and sites that I felt no one else knew about. The light and climate were unbeatable too."

Consequently, the Italian artist Caravaggio is Rosie's favourite painter and to be surrounded by his work was sheer bliss. Known for the development of 'chiaroscuro' (the Italian term for light and dark tones), his skill can be seen to have a dramatic influence on the work of this Belfast artist.

However, Rosie is keen to point out that she is not concerned with monotone light and dark as colour and personal issues have been developed to play a pivotal role. "You know, it's funny," she quips. "When I was away all I did was think and paint about home and my life here."

And although Rosie is not keen to reveal any meaning behind the paintings, she does suggest that "home" is a predominant theme. Concerned with her environment, much time and research has been spent investigating what it means to be Northern or Southern Irish. Without touching on any political standpoint, the main concern is one of perception. "The rest of the world sees these clichéd images of Ireland and not what it's really like," she comments. Elaborating, she adds, "But I'm not being pessimistic; I'm looking for a realistic representation."

And, it seems, this representation and sense of reality is to be found in her work. Again, these trains of thought are of course personal to Rosie and she emphatically insists that viewers can make up their own minds as to what a particular painting "means". "If you create an expectation about a painting, then there's bound to be someone who doesn't agree," she explains. "I like to let the work stand on its own." What do you think?

For further information,  
telephone Belfast 01232 243145.

### COMPETITION

Ireland's Homes Interiors and Living, together with Rosie McGurran, are offering one reader the chance to win an original painting worth £500.

#### HOW TO ENTER

Answer the following questions correctly:

1. In which city did Rosie McGurran complete an art fellowship?
2. Name the Belfast studio in which Rosie now works.
3. Name her favourite and most influential Italian artist.

Place the answers, together with your name, address and telephone number on the back of a postcard and send it to: **October Artist competition**, Ireland's Homes Interiors and Living magazine, PO Box 42, Bangor, Co. Down, BT19 7AD. Entries to be received no later than Friday 22nd October 1999.

One entry per household. Judge's decision is final. No cash alternative.

