

Since Adrian's first exhibition at the Bank of Ireland, Eyre Square, in April 1998, he has continued to build a new portfolio of work that has challenged and extended his abilities. It was entirely possible that this would not happen. Having Autism complicated by profound deafness, it was possible that Adrian would retreat into the impenetrable world from which he first emerged to display his gifts. Fortunately this did not happen and his work has developed, displaying a greater confidence as he strives to understand his media and subject.

He has continued to learn, paying close attention to the qualities inherent in different types of paint, and how he can manipulate them to the best express his subject. He has learnt how to use a palette knife to create a textured surface and how to maximise the fluidity of watercolours to express subtlety and tenderness.

He has mastered the chalky qualities of soft pastel. This medium inevitably leaves him covered in coloured dust. This residue, once an obstacle to cleanliness, has become an integral part of the process and is completely accepted as such, often with some amusement.

Adrian's relationship with his materials is a very intimate one. They are not only a means to an end, they are an end in themselves. He savours the shape and texture of his work tools, reshaping his paintbrushes with his fingers after use, straightening all his paint tubes and carefully chipping or peeling away any stray flakes of paint from around the thread underneath the cap.

Squeezing paint from the tube is a painstakingly precise operation. Each colour is placed at equidistant intervals around his palette. The scent of each colour is inhaled before each careful deposit. All tubes are straightened before being replaced into their appropriate container.

Adrian is fascinated by the way acrylic paint hardens on his mixing plate and how it can be lifted and peeled away in sheets of colour. He has worn out several palette knives through constantly mixing and remixing paint, testing the flexibility of the blade, entranced by its pliability bending it to its limit; and beyond.

He has learned not to be frugal with paint. When he first started working with a palette knife, he found it rather strange that he was being asked to use, in his opinion, such vast quantities of paint. It was an alien concept to him. Through practise, he began to revel in the fusion of so many colours, folding and melding the precious material lovingly.

He has quickly learned how to handle this method of transcribing paint, and the work he has produced is rich, energetic and surprisingly self-assured. Working with Adrian involves a period of demonstration so he is able to learn the techniques of using different methods and media. He is then encouraged to use what he has learnt to describe his subject. In this way he has evolved and invented a widely varying repertoire of approaches and productions.

Adrian's ability encompasses fine detail, calligraphy and drawing with the tiniest detail perfectly reproduced; yet he can throw blocks of exquisite colour and form with seeming casualness to create a wonderfully balanced composition with bold elimination of all superfluities.

One of the most satisfying aspects of Adrian's work is his capacity to create unexpected but delightful surprises. His pictures are full of them. This is one of the ways we are allowed a glimpse of Adrian's understanding of the world and how he views it: a tiny window into a fascinating and unique mind.

*Margaret Parry*

# *Silent World Colour As Language*



An exhibition of paintings  
by

# *Adrian Tarpey*

## *Clifden Arts Festival*

*September 2001*

I have known Adrian for four years now. (I am employed on a part-time basis as his carer). To write that anyone can really “know” someone with autism might be called a contradiction in terms, especially since Adrian also happens to be deaf. And, of course, he is an artist. Being autistic, even with the power of hearing and speech, it is unlikely that Adrian would feel much inclined towards “explaining” himself. He is a genuine autistic *savant*. That word *savant* is interesting. It is from the French and it means “to know”. But we cannot *know* with Adrian.

Autists generally are not “big” on talk or chat, regardless of whether they are deaf or not, it isn’t their style. This is a nice antidote to the contemporary trends of our culture which almost demands that all of us speed dial one another or tap away on computer keyboards in a frenetic rush to *say* more and *do* more and *be* more. Exactly how much genuine communication is going on is anyone’s guess.

Significantly, though, Adrian is an artist. How did this come about? What stirred within him that compelled him to want to create? Apart from early clues provided by his parents, Vincent and Brid, we don’t know. And the man himself isn’t in a position to tell us. This might be just as well.

The singularly mysterious thing about what is commonly called “the creative process” is how, well, *mysterious* it is, in terms of motivation, ideas, themes. Where do these obscure impulses come from, where do they *really* come from? This is a genuine mystery, and has been since ancient man first scrawled his crude yet beautiful scenes on cave walls thirty millennia ago.

Unfortunately people who aren’t creative want to know *why* paintings or sculpture or novels or poems are created as much as *how* they are.

Art and the motivations of the artist, that’s a tricky one. As a writer myself, the only honest answer I can give is *I don’t know*. And even if I did have the insight somehow to know, I’m not sure that I would want to. I cannot explain it, I have no grand theories about it. I am just grateful that I have been blessed so far with the time and the grace to be able to write. I ask for no more than that.

A lot of out-and-out rubbish is written about Art. It is difficult to write about it without sounding pretentious or pompous, and it is even more difficult to write about an artist one knows personally, whose work one admires. Kenneth Clark at the beginning of his great work “Civilisation” said that he could not define civilisation/art in abstract terms, but that he could recognise it when he saw it. Looking at Adrian’s paintings, I know that what I see is art, and art created with skill and grace, from out of a sense of mute wonder and, yes, *mystery*.

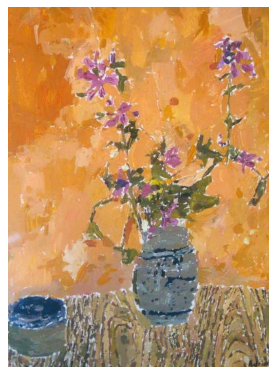
**Kevin Whelan**



*Daffodils II*



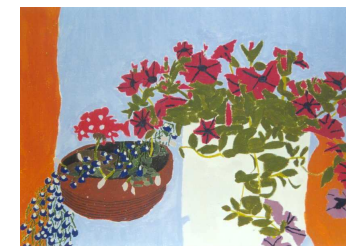
*Trinity*



*Marshmallow*



*Tulips*



*Trailing Petunia*

Title	Medium	Price IR£	Price Euro
Profusion	Watercolour	Not For Sale	
Claddagh Basin	Acrylic with Brush	550	698.50
Trailing Petunia	Acrylic with Brush	550	698.50
Daffodils II	Acrylic with Palette Knife	550	698.50
Tulips	Acrylic with Palette Knife	495	628.65
Marshmallow	Acrylic with Palette Knife	495	628.65
Three-Legged-Pot	Acrylic with Palette Knife	495	628.65
Reflection	Acrylic with Brush	495	628.65
Preparation	Acrylic with Brush	495	628.65
Achill	Acrylic with Brush	495	628.65
Fuchsia	Acrylic with Palette Knife	495	628.65
From My Garden	Acrylic with Brush	495	628.65
Trattoria, Quay Street	Acrylic with Brush	495	628.65
Westport House	Acrylic with Palette Knife	Not For Sale	
Trinity	Acrylic with Brush	450	571.50
Achill Cliffs	Acrylic with Brush	Not For Sale	