



Alexandra Van Tuyl Van Serooskerken, 54, a Dutch painter living on Achill Island.

ALEXANDRA has been living in Ireland for 27 years and says she will never leave. "When I'm away for more than 10 days I feel really homesick," she says of her adopted home, Achill.

She first came here when her husband took up a position with a Dutch company in the midlands and bought a summer house in Achill. "I'm lucky now that I live on Achill permanently. I love it here," says the full-time painter.

But it was not for tax reasons that Alexandra chose to stay. As an artist it was the light of the island that attracted her. "The light is supreme. The interplay between the light as it comes dancing through the Atlantic air and interacts with the landscape is wonderful. I love living in Achill. It's strong and enigmatic and it demands a constant dialogue between the landscape and the observer."

Also, as an artist, Alexandra finds the Irish much more open and liberating than her fellow Dutch compatriots. "Dutch

society is very linear and blunt in its direction. Here, everything is circles. An affect is not necessarily the direct outcome of a cause over here. There is a certain half-tone in Irish society and people," she says by way of explaining the openness and flexibility she feels.

Alexandra feels there is more space and less pragmatism here than elsewhere in Europe. "On the continent everyone is busy defending their own square inch of space and the Irish are often less insistent on being always right like the more Germanic nations are."

Not wanting to dwell on anything negative, Alexandra is worried by what she sees as the polarisation of society as Ireland becomes more progressive and wealthy. However, she doesn't want to be negative, preferring to point to the benefits of Ireland's progress. "Everybody has a little more money in their pockets which is a good thing."

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Irish Examiner