

*Gertrude Degenhardt, Farewell to Connacht, gouache and ink on paper, 20x14in*



## **Gertrude Degenhardt**

*Ómós*

**13 July - 18 August 2026 | The Kenny Gallery, Galway**

**The Galway International Arts Festival will present an exhibition of work by the German artist Gertrude Degenhardt (1940–2025) at the Kenny Gallery in July 2026.**

Born in New York to German parents and raised in Berlin, Degenhardt came of age in the difficult years following the Second World War. She trained in applied graphics in Mainz and began her career in the 1960s as a freelance artist and illustrator, working closely with writers and musicians associated with the German Liedermacher tradition. Over the following decades she developed an international reputation as a printmaker, draughtswoman and visual storyteller, illustrating literary and musical texts by figures including François Villon, Bertolt Brecht and Liam O'Flaherty. Her work was recognised with numerous awards, including the Order of Merit of Rhineland-Palatinate.

Degenhardt first came to Ireland in the late 1970s while researching illustrations for a German-language edition of O'Flaherty's short stories set on the Aran Islands. That visit marked the beginning of a long relationship with Galway and the West of Ireland. In time she and her husband Martin established a second home near Spittal, and for almost fifty years she lived and worked between Germany and Ireland, drawing deeply on the landscapes, people and cultural life of both places.

Her work is distinguished by a highly individual graphic language, combining precision of line with theatrical imagination and a keen sense of observation. Music is a recurring presence throughout her practice, particularly Irish traditional music, where

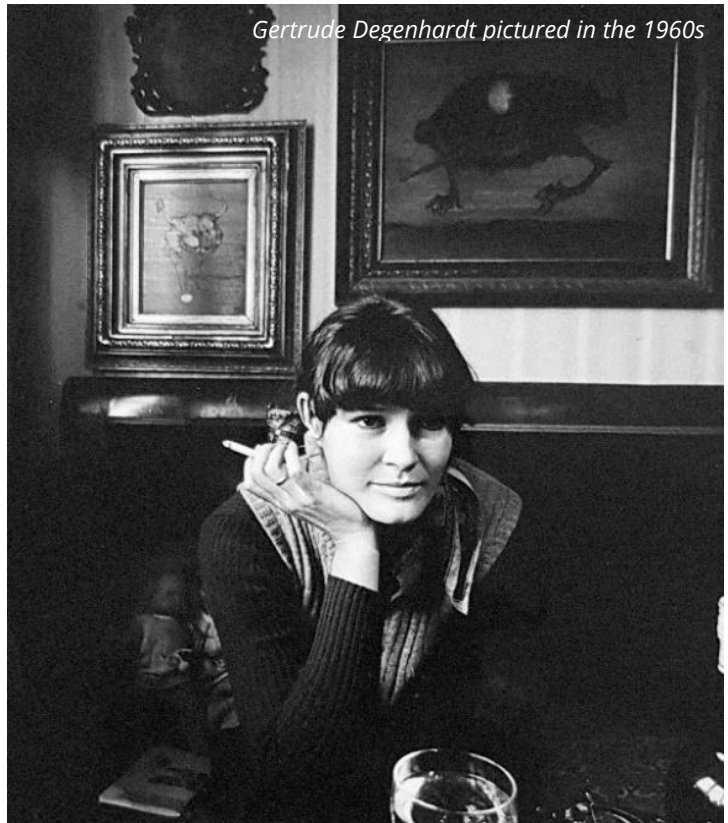
movement, rhythm and gesture become central visual motifs. Her figures, often musicians, wanderers, performers or solitary travellers, inhabit a world that is at once humorous, unsettling and deeply humane. A sense of exaggeration, satire and the grotesque frequently underpins her imagery, placing her work within a broader European tradition of graphic storytelling.

Across the decades she developed several major cycles that explored these themes in different ways. The *Rondo* series revealed an early mastery of movement and character through line. The *Vagabondage* works, developed from the 1990s onwards, introduced a more expressive and often darker register, frequently centred on female figures whose presence is defiant, theatrical and self-possessed. In the *Farewell to Connacht* cycle, her engagement with the West of Ireland became more reflective and elegiac. Among her most widely recognised bodies of work is the *Women in Music* series, a sustained exploration of performance, identity and strength through the figure of the musician.

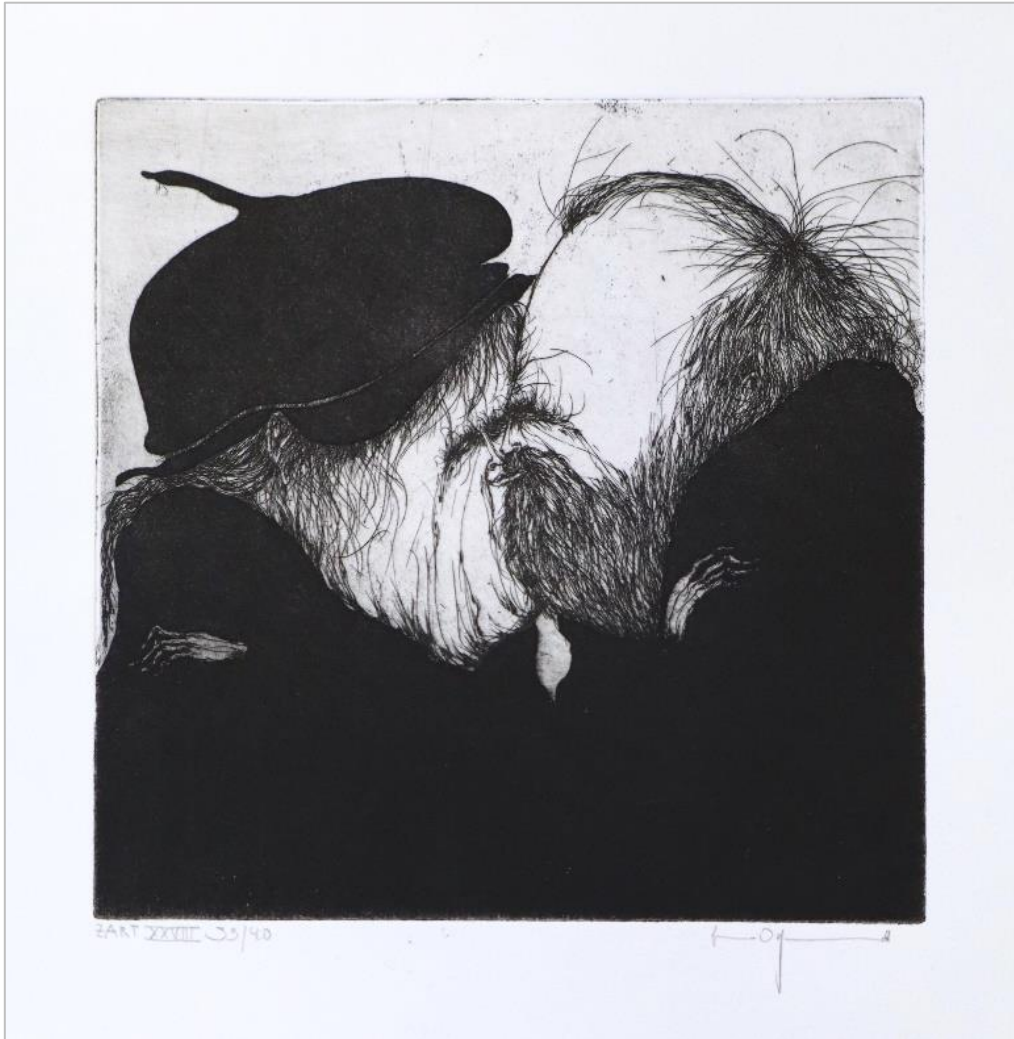
Degenhardt exhibited widely throughout Germany and Europe, while maintaining a particularly close association with Galway, where she showed work regularly over several decades. Her exhibitions became a familiar part of the city's cultural life, and her imagery, shaped equally by European graphic traditions and by the social rhythms of the West of Ireland, occupies a distinctive place within the visual record of the region.

Presented in the year following her death in November 2025, this exhibition offers an opportunity to encounter the work of an artist whose imagination moved between satire and lyricism, observation and invention, and whose long engagement with Ireland formed one of the defining threads of her career.

**Details of the official opening are to be announced. Admission is free, and all are welcome.**



Gertrude Degenhardt pictured in the 1960s



Gertrude Degenhardt, *Von Tanten die Trinken und Tanzen (XXVIII)*, aquatint etching, 6x6in, 33.40

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