

“Art is anything and everything, it is everywhere, outside and in mind or heart.”

Daniel Kennedy

“Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will”

George Bernard Shaw

Creating visual art has defined us since the most ancient cave paintings and the interaction between people and images is one of the most elemental aspects of what it is to be human. ‘Painting is the fibre of all things’, the poet John Wieners once declared in a poem.

To spend time with art is an intimate yet collective experience, a relationship between persons and images, between humans and other beings, and with the environment all around us.

It is an act of sense-making to express through art, through painting, the world we move in, hear in, sense in. When we confront emotion and feeling and energy in a work, it touches us, the viewers, somewhere. A tug at the heart, a butterfly turns in the stomach or even a tear can escape the eye. It is an encounter. The exhibition invites us into a portal, to a liminal space where we meet the art.

Amidst the bustling of the busy Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray as the leaves of autumn change, the powerful and vibrant paintings of Daniel Kennedy explore and animate the face.

These faces, in both their insides and outsides, like in the paintings of Jean-Michel Basquiat, could be portraits, or visions or even reflections. They are both what we see and what we imagine the artist sees.

Raw, yet considered, these paintings are both corporeal and otherworldly. The viewer senses both dimensions. Jagged emotions we recognise are articulated by determined brush strokes. The faces are seeing their way in the world and sensing their way through. Two eyes seeing different things. In through a window and out through a window. A third eye seeing beyond all.

The eyes tell just part of the story, and we are left wondering if vision is only available to the eyes, and asking if the body, expressed by the brushstroke, intuitively senses the world through the other senses. There are ears and noses and mouths. Provoked by a visceral sensibility the viewer sees sound and feels pain and joy. The world we encounter is made of emotions, textures, sounds, and smells all at once. We observe the many avenues of perception and we find some of our own.

As the philosopher Michel Foucault observed;

“my head: what a strange cavern that opens onto the external world with two windows. Two openings – I am sure of it, because I see them in the mirror, and also because I can close one or the other separately. And yet, there is really only one opening – since what I see facing me is only one continuous landscape, without partition or gap”

Michel Foucault, “Le Corps utopique” (1966)

Colours mix with words that often emerge, as companions in the work. The painter Georgia O’Keefe remarked, “I found I could say things with colour and shapes that I couldn't say any other way - things I had no words for” and in Daniel’s palette, the colours in many works are bold and vivid, vibrating with energy while others in black and white hint at a different mood.

There is a darkness in paintings such as *AWOKEN* and ‘*Untitled*, red grey face and travel angels’, reflecting difficulties and challenges met in life. In *Cold Nights Stroll*, “the World is blue at its edges and in its depths” (Rebecca Solnit). We see sounds all around and we are drawn in.

Above all else, in this exhibition, in the story told, art and painting are salvation. Feelings of hope shine through in works such as *Fraternal Salvation*, affecting us, inspiring us, as the faces pass us by.

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