

Text of the Opening Address given by Trish O’Dea at Kanturk Arts Festival 2012

Miller, the wonderful novelist and water colourist, once wrote, *the moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.*

Whether it’s oil on canvass, impassioned poetry, prosaic prose, Liam O’Connor on the squeezebox, the Duhallow Choral Society in full flight, or the earnest scribblings of a nine-year-old given pride of place on the window of a town-centre business premises, art has the precious ability to make us slow down or even stop and just view the world anew.



Miller also said *‘One’s destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things’* and I believe that something remarkable has been achieved because of this festival. For most of my adult life I’ve lived in this area but for a lot of that time I will freely admit that I thought of art as something that you went to Dublin or Cork or Limerick or Galway to experience. Of course Miller is right. The destination isn’t a place, it’s a new way of looking at things and the vehicle that is the Kanturk Arts Festival is already compelling children to pull their mothers back, as we hurry into Twohig’s and insist that we examine the art work on display and discuss its merits. Who knows where those conversations may lead.

I’m one of a large Kanturk family, scattered to the four winds, but we do sometimes find ourselves discussing our sense of place and of home and of Kanturk. It seems odd that we often identify most clearly with our community when we’re away from home. However, artists in every medium can reflect for us all what it means to be in our time and place; what it feels like to come from where we are from - whether its the sounds of the language in the verse or prose; or the light and the feeling of the paintings or the moments in time captured by the camera lens; artists fill our sense of self. Unfortunately the space for any artist to bring their work to the public is not always made available. This is an omission that never benefits the place or the

people involved; and it is wonderful that Kanturk is now providing such a space with this festival for the artists to show their craft and skill; for all of us to enjoy.

My time is too short to underline sufficiently the amount of work, time, dedication, co-operation and passion that is involved for a voluntary organisation like Kanturk Community Council and its Arts Festival Committee, in particular, in organising an event like this. Precious evenings and weekends are sacrificed; logistics are laboured over; sleepless nights are had – and all for the sake of community. These people are owed a huge debt of gratitude and never, ever get the recognition that they deserve. They have turned this town into one massive art gallery and that is a remarkable achievement and something wonderful and inspirational in difficult times. There is also huge credit due to all of the businesses in town who have participated and particularly, tonight, to Con O’Keeffe for having the vision to provide what is the perfect setting for this launch.

I hope the artists receive the accolades they deserve and that the weather brightens the setting and the mood. I hope everyone has a great week and the event leads to a stronger sense of community for all. You might indulge me in one final quotation about art, from Oscar Wilde, *things are because we see them, and what we see, and how we see it, depends on the arts that have influenced us. To look at a thing is very different from seeing a thing. One does not see anything until one sees its beauty.*