

Artistic License: Anthony Murphy

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PENNY McCORMICK speaks to artist ANTHONY MURPHY about his inspirations, muses and mentors

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Blessed with a bi-coastal lifestyle living in Connemara and Carcassonne in France, Anthony Murphy's paintings are defined by their luminosity, colour and quirky subject matter. His summer collection at The Oriel Gallery showcases his passion for his home in France (where he has lived since 1992) and the Irish landscape (his ancestors came from Clifden). Murphy has worked as an actor and barrister before finding creative fulfilment in art.



Your career has been as colourful as your paintings and travel informs their subject matter. Could you tell us a little about places represented in your summer collection on show at The Oriel?

France is a country of boundless beauty. The tradition for landscapes with the avenues of plane trees always compels my imagination. The discreet symbol of the “road” signifying one’s destiny returns as my life unfolds. So my French landscapes are often gaily lit by avenues of trees and leading to a place of pilgrimage. Campostella means “field of the star”. The last words of the great French landscape painter Corot were: “I hope there is painting in heaven.” That would be nice.



Would you say the quest for light and life is your inspiration?

Yes, I would certainly say that the quest for light and life is my inspiration. Except the trick of the light is to let in some darkness, as light and life are curious things riven by paradox.

In the early 60s my father would travel with his family to visit his brother, Richard Murphy, the poet, living in the old forge in Cleggan outside Clifden. To supplement his meagre income my uncle would sail tourists to Inishbofin in his Galway hooker called The True Light. How well-named was that boat!



Have you any particular anecdotes about the paintings on show?

A lady asked who was the model for *La Baignoire* or *La Coiffure* or *rue St Honoré*. I am usually dreaming of a Ledeian body, I usually say paraphrasing WB Yeats. "That's not an answer!" she says. O very well then – my muse.



Who have been your muses and mentors throughout your career?

Irreverent to the marrow I nonetheless revere Thomas Rowlandson, Vuillard, Matisse, Gabriele Munthe and Kathe Kollwitz. All these men and women worked hard and left us much. My great mentor (after trial and error) is the god of labour – Hercules. For without him there would be nothing.



Where and how do you work?

I am working whenever I look at the world and nature and see there those endless sources of amazement. Sometimes no easel – a chair will do. A feeling of failure in dreary suburbia is often more generous to me than a brilliant idea sprung from a so called fascinating dream. So I drift along like a passenger watching the fields from a train.

When I return to my easel in the old hay shed in France, I shed the foolish overcoat of respectability. Grubby hands ... smudges and shabby coat and music. I listen to lots of music from Procul Harum to Tina Turner ...



You live between Connemara and Carcassonne – both loved by artists. Where are your favourite haunts in these places?

“Unless there is wildness around you something terrible happens to the wildness inside of you. And if the wildness inside of you dies, I think you are finished” said John Moriarty, of *Dreamtime*, Lilliput Press.

There is a dead-end valley in Connemara called Glentrasna. When I landed there from a hang glider no one had any English. If the road is bad then drive on. Above Cornamona, Lough Nafoeey with the sun on the water is lovely indeed, but Mweelrea shelving down deep into the Killary is where I put up my easel. The old magic still

lingers in the wilds here of the Languedoc. As in Ireland life moves to those old wild rhythms. Serviès – en – val; Montclar, Lagrasse founded by hermit monks. I follow their trail.

Need to Know: Anthony Murphy's Summer Collection is on at The Oriel Gallery, 17 Clare Street, Dublin 2; www.theoriel.com.

Penny McCormick