

---

# Bray Arts Journal

---

Issue 7

March 2008

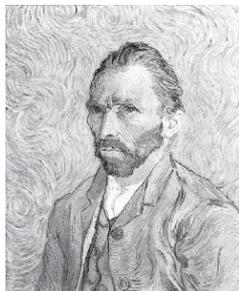
Volume 13



## The Idle Genius

“There are two great works of the nineteenth century which, more than any other writings of the time, give us a sense of what it was like to be a real creator in the visual arts during that marvellously rich and strenuous era. One is the Journal of Eugene Delacroix; the other is the correspondence of Vincent Van Gogh.”

Mark Roskill 1933 - 2000



In 1880 when he was 27 Vincent Van Gogh had no clear idea of his path in life. He was miserably poor and estranged from his family. In July of that year he wrote to his brother Theo - who had sent 50 francs to him - to try to explain why his life was in such disarray.

“But you will ask,” wrote Vincent “what is your definite aim. That aim becomes more definite, will stand

out slowly and surely, just as the rough draught becomes a sketch and the sketch becomes a picture.”

In this particular letter ( July 1880) to Theo, Vincent wrote most eloquently on what people might imagine as his idleness.

“There is the other sort of idle man, who is idle in spite of himself, who is inwardly consumed by a great longing for action, yet does nothing because he seems imprisoned in some cage because he does not possess what he needs to make him productive, because the fatality of circumstances brings him there; such a man does not always know what he could do, but he feels by instinct: all the same I am good for something, my life has an aim after all, I know that I might be quite a different man! How can I then be useful, of what service can I be! There is something inside of me, what can it be?”

Vincent discovered his vocation shortly after this and Theo supported him in what became an explosion of creativity ending in Vincent’s mental breakdown and suicide, only ten years later.

During his own lifetime, this outstanding genius was an insignificant failure as far as the art establishment was



concerned. His letters to Theo reveal a profoundly spiritual and sensitive human being. This aspect of Vincent Van Gogh is probably best summed up in Don McCleane’s haunting song

### *Starry Starry Night*

...

For they could not love you,  
But still your love was true.  
And when no hope was left in sight  
On that starry, starry night,  
You took your life, as lovers often do.  
But I could have told you, Vincent,  
This world was never meant for one  
As beautiful as you.

(ref : *The Letters of Van Gogh* edited by Mark Roskill)

**FRONT COVER:** High Nellie, one of David Creedon’s powerfully evocative images from his photographic exhibition *Ghosts of the Faithful Departed* : see below.

## GHOSTS OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

David Creedon’s photography is outstanding and from the 7th March to 5th April the *Mermaid* is hosting his highly acclaimed collection entitled *Ghosts of the Faithful Departed*. According to sociologist Kieran Keohane these photographs are “works of art of enduring importance.”



It was by pure chance that Sarah McCarthy, home from the USA, spotted a couple of David’s photographs of abandoned houses and decided there and then that, if he could produce more work of this type, she would arrange an exhibition in the USA. David began to tour the country, photographing old derelict houses.

“The Irish” David says “have an image as an emigrant

people; driven away from their homeland by poverty, despair oppression and lack of opportunity.

While visiting these unoccupied houses I felt like an intruder disturbing the spirits that still haunt every room. While looking at the scenes about me I felt I was awakening ghosts from my childhood past .

I decided at an early stage to shoot in colour as against black and white because this allowed me to capture the unique rich colours within the houses which were in contrast to the poverty of the times. I have strived at all times not to move or arrange items but to photograph as found.”

David’s exhibition is in huge demand. It is touring Ireland at present and early in 2009 will travel to London and Europe after that.

The front cover photograph of this Journal was chosen by Penguin as the front cover of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch*.

You can view David’s work on his website: [www.davidcreedon.pro.ie](http://www.davidcreedon.pro.ie)

## REVIEW OF JAN AND FEB ARTS EVENINGS.

### January 14th 2007

Paul Mahon started the evening with a lovely selection of classical guitar music. He has a fine delicate touch and his final piece, called ‘A Day in November,’ was memorable.

Mary Higgins is a fine actress. She performed Nicola Lindsay’s ‘Resting’ with humour and pathos. She talks bravely and confidently about giving up the fags and making a comeback but it’s all show. In reality she knows she is a failure and the best she can hope for are bit parts like the aging hooker in Fair City, a part, the producer said, she played like a woman who knew exactly what she was about. She refuses to play pantomime, a suggestion of her agent, but there is genuine despair in her final, “Oh God, God, please God.” ‘Resting’ was written by Nicola Lindsay and directed by Frank O’Keefe.

Hugh Carr delighted the audience with a lovely cocktail of poetry, novel extract and song. Hugh kindly gave us permission to publish his poem ‘Sufferin’ Jaisus,’ (see pg 4). He then read from a semi-autobiographical novel with most amusing characters and situations like: Kangaroo the burglar who, dressed as santa, gets locked in a toy store overnight , while robbing a doll and pram for his daughter. then there’s Kathy, the prostitute who services the locals and gets into a bit of a legal battle with a shell-shocked customer who says she stole five pounds. Finally Hugh rounded off his very entertaining contribution by singing a song called Going Home ( an original composition) from one of his plays. The audience thoroughly enjoyed this multi-talented man.

Ben Lyons took up where Paul Mahon left off and played a very nice set of guitar pieces ranging from a Spanish Pavana to a Catalan Folk Song and finally Bach. Ben told us he will be shortly sitting for his Teaching Diploma. We wish him the very best.

The final act of the evening was Pat and Bert. Bert Van Embdon jnr, sang and played the Appalachian Dulcimer while Pat Played the Accordion, Harmonica and also sang. Bert is a great singer and he gave us a terrific selection of favourite ballads like, ‘Red is the Rose,’ ‘Come Back Paddy Reilly,’ a rousing version of ‘The Charlady’s Ball’ and very nostalgic set of English, Yiddish and Dutch songs.

Pat aka Padruig McFarlane-Barrow, played a wonderful lively set of tunes on the harmonica that had the audience clapping their hands, tunes like, ‘The Happy Wanderer,’ and ‘Roll Out the Barrel.’ He also played Shostakovitch and a number of waltzes. This pair are very accomplished entertainers and Bray Arts thanks them for a most enjoyable musical evening.

### Feb 4th 2007

The February Arts Evening opened with a Video called Painters and Poets. It was produced by D. McCabe and was shown some years ago at a Mid Summer concert in the Mermaid. It features the work of visual artists, who have presented their work at bray arts, and poets who specifically wrote poetry to accompany those artworks. The soundtrack for the DVD was composed and played by Gavin McCabe. The Video got a very favourable response from the audience.

Nicola Lindsay then performed her own monologue called “Parliamo Italiano.” This is a comic piece with a very sharp edge to it. The narrator of the monologue is one of those rich and glamorous women who has a totally inflated opinion of her own superiority.

Nicola looked and played the part to perfection. She decides to take up Italian but cannot countenance demeaning herself by attending the beginners class. She attends the higher level class and it soon becomes evident that she has not a clue when she is addressed by the lecturer. But nothing seems to dent her self regard.

This was comedy of the Mrs Bucket variety where you long for the downfall of the main protagonist because you detest all she stands for and laugh gleefully at her discomfiture. Directed with a assured hand by Frank O’Keefe.

The musical item for the evening was really outstanding: Eamonn Sweeney on guitar and Roisin O’Grady singing. They played and sang 17th century music. These two performers were so assured and accomplished that they took total control of the audience. We knew immediately that



we were in the company of class performers. Eamonn is truly a master on the guitar and Roisin’s beautifully controlled singing was sheer delight. When they come to the Mermaid (to be announced) give yourself a treat and go

along to listen to these exceptional musicians.

## SUFFERIN' JAISUS

(Th prisoner in the dock is always Christ - in one of his many effective disguises.)  
by Hugh Carr

Sufferin' Jaisus at the cross  
Thumbing cars outside New Ross,  
Crowned with horns his horrent head,  
Spiked and jelled Golgotha red,  
Studded jacket, faded gilt  
On belt and buckle, dirty kilt;  
Words incensed with rot-gut wine:  
'Croist I'm 'ere since half past noine!'

Last year at the Galway races  
You were blotto Sufferin' Jaisus  
As you hailed me from the stand,  
Chasing me to shake my hand:  
"Could you ever loan me ten?  
Strolling Home is going to win;  
Put all your money on the hure,  
And follow me, I need a cure."

Christmas Eve you drank all day  
With gets and whores for company;  
Then you rang the back-door bell  
At the Sally Ann hotel:  
Could they fix you with a bed,  
Anywhere to lay your head?  
Couldn't pay them there and then,  
You promised you would come again.

Sometimes hurrying along  
I have glimpsed you in the throng,  
Begging, pimping, snatching purses,  
Swapping insults, shouting curses,  
Playing dirges on the fiddle,  
Unmelodious as a griddle,  
Or, as cynical as can be,  
Selling views of Calvary.

Sufferin' Jaisus you're a prick,  
Always up to some new trick -  
Do you ever pay your way,  
Go to mass or work a day,  
Help the needy, always broke;  
Yet come Sunday and I swear  
You'll be raising hell somewhere,  
Fornicating with some bitch  
Or lying drunken in a ditch.  
Is your Kingdom really such?

## Far out to Sea

By Shirley Farrar

Horizonless yet on the horizon, beyond the pale  
of memories' reach, a creeping pulse below the  
line  
where sky meets sea, advances oblivion.

She used to read salacious scandals in disreputable  
newspapers, laughing a deep-throated smoker's  
laugh,  
as smoke wraps itself around the curve of her  
mouth.

She sits in lilac, surrounded by yesterday's news,  
her fingers gently tapping ash, another cigarette,  
the trail of smoke weaving a fog around the  
room.

She liked to talk about this and that- life's chit-  
chat. *Would you like a cup of tea?* as she listened  
to the stove  
hiss, brewing another cup, life's deep water.  
She studied catering before the war, Scotland,  
then south to Margate, menus for hospital  
inmates,  
before the bombers tossed her back

to the bank house Maghera and its luxurious  
garden.  
Now her visitors let themselves into her world,  
up the stairs, until she gets her strength back.  
Two armchairs side by side, bed covers in pinks,  
purples, lilacs, the scent of chrysanthemums  
mingles with the smell of ash; forgetfulness.

She disguises it well, those momentary lapses. She  
said  
the doctor with the brown eyes was trying to  
catch her out.  
At the edge of the water waves shuffle towards  
the shore.  
Dark eyed she smiles with liquid eyes, medicine  
bottles line up cheek by jowl, Cream of the Barley  
her favourite tippie on the pull-over table beside  
the window.

*Lovely to see you*, she says, her eyes light up.  
But it's daylight outside, the curtains drawn,  
she's sitting in her favourite chair.  
I slip downstairs into the large kitchen,  
gently pressing the right button on the stove.

Far out to sea, horizonless but on the horizon,  
below the line where sky meets sea, advances  
oblivion.



*METHOS, ;THAS.*

*The woman with the twisted face begs  
in the lee of the little lane off Clarendon Street  
the sheltered lane everyone knows but no one knows its name.  
She has someone new to look down on her now.*

*Methos, Angel of Peace,  
trapped in mid-flight appears,  
clinging to church belfry.  
Has he arrived bronzed on this New Year wakening day  
to shine among our sunless city faces?  
Or finding no open hearts but only minds doubting his reality,  
strains to set himself free?*

*Methos, from the Greek peace  
cadenced with ;thas, from the Irish joy.*

*Methos Peace  
;thas Joy  
You I  
The woman with the twisted face.*

*Angel of Peace, Imogenís Angel  
Will you gather us all under your wing?*

*Methos, Angel of Peace, sculpted by Imogen Stuart,  
was unveiled at Saint Teresaís Church Clarendon Street Dublin on  
World Peace Day, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008.*

*Dedicated to Imogen Stuart  
Breandan O'Broin, Eanáir 2008*

## Inside *The Outsider* by Tim Smyth



Albert Camus

Albert Camus was born in Algeria in 1913. He started out on his career as a writer in 1939, with the play *Caligula*, and he joined the French Resistance group Combat on the outbreak of World War II. This did not put an end to his literary ambitions: in 1942, his books *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Outsider* were published. It was in these books that his doctrine of absurdism was contained. Camus' star was on the rise - a rise that would culminate in his becoming the second-youngest winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957.

*The Outsider* concerns a young, emotionless Algerian named Meursault. He sees ambition as "pretty futile", but in spite of such a desolate point of view he lives a free, easy life of simple pleasures. By accepting that his actions come to nothing, he is numbed to any further disappointments. This is Albert Camus' philosophy of "absurdism" in a nutshell: if one accepts that life is a cruel joke, then anything pleasant comes as a surprise. It's as if to say that the sun shines brighter because night-time is so dark.

The story is spooled out in suitably cool, precise prose. Descriptions, while vivid and sparsely evocative, serve more to throw up symbols and motifs than to set a scene. "Red" and "hot" characterise the surroundings, though Meursault seems unaffected - except at a pivotal point in the tale. That the heat has no effect on Meursault seems to support how detached he is from his fellow man.

Part One begins as Meursault hears of the death of his mother and as he attends her funeral. Later, he begins a love affair and a friendship. Part One ends with the murder which spells his downfall, and in Part Two he is tried and sentenced to death. Although many might think this the lowest point to which a person can sink, Meursault believes it is the opposite. The last pages of the novel are an account of his thoughts the night before his execution. He seems to be looking forward to his death - to the escape it will bring. It is at this point that Camus speaks of the "benign indifference of the universe", and it is at this point the reader is most willing to embrace what he says. It is as if Camus deliberately hits the reader with the climax of the novel and his core message, simply so we will listen more closely.

This final image of Meursault is of a man completely at odds with conventional attitudes. Such an image is carried through right from the start of this novel - the first lines of which read: "Mother died today. Or, maybe yesterday. The telegram leaves the matter doubtful". As the novel progresses, we see that he contemplates all the world with the same remote, almost amused logic. Soon after this telegram, he thinks: "What an agreeable walk I might have had, if it hadn't been for Mother".

Later, it becomes clear that he is not entirely emotionless -

but he does suppress his feelings. In prison, he goes through agony as he adjusts to his surroundings. He is tormented by memories of outside life. Eventually, though, the detachment returns. He admits he "wasn't too unhappy" and "I hadn't a moment's boredom". Why, then, does this apparently stable young man commit murder? You might think his mother's death tipped him over the brink, but Meursault reveals later that: "My physical condition at any given moment often influenced my feelings". At this point, one is inclined to re-read the murder scene. The possibilities then are that heat-stroke made him lose his cool - or that he killed out of idle curiosity, and he's lying to us. But that is up to the reader to decide. This is a consequence of living by Camus' teachings. He accepts the world as absurd and thus regards it with absolute clarity and total absence of feeling. What is more, he is completely and utterly happy. He seizes each moment. He savours simple meals, goes swimming, spends a whole day watching a street while eating chocolate. In short, he's just like the mayfly in the Vodafone ad.

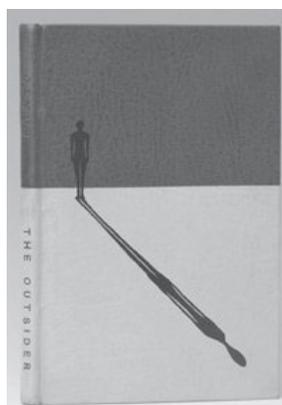
Camus would call him "lucid". According to him, humans in society are constrained by the hardships and unreasons of this world, which ultimately end in death. Thus are we called to live as fully as we can within these boundaries and to work to create reason in spite of the unreason - just like the character of Sisyphus in his other great work. Meursault, then, could be Camus' "model man": one who is able to face difficulties and accept unreason - and therefore live a happy life.

However, society's response to this "model man" is less than positive - simply because of their own twisted attitudes. Living by Camus' philosophy gets Meursault into a lot of trouble. People see him as "taciturn" and "self-centred". They say he shows "great callousness" at his mother's funeral. The jury at his trial finds his unflinching dedication to the truth completely unbelievable. The subtext is that because he isn't a hypocrite, they won't believe a word he says. He also shows how unhappy they are - because they live their lives as if meaning is to be taken for granted in the world. Heat is a ubiquitous motif for inner tension. The widower Salomano speaks to Meursault of his failed dreams of becoming an actor,

while Meursault himself had to drop out of college. And, from his balcony above the crowds, Meursault lazily watches people rush about "in an absurd hurry".

Camus' eye slices with surgical coldness through the world of facades and hidden depravities of its populace. It is a world of dishonesty, leading to pain. People fool themselves into contentment - but Meursault does not. He accepts how awful the world is,

opts out of normality and signs up for absurdity. And, even though the world comes crashing down on him, he goes to his end with what must be a bemused smile. With this in mind, *The Outsider* becomes an argument in favour of absurdism. Meursault becomes Camus, and - in the second part of the



story - comes to represent Camus' beliefs. He is questioned by a man representing the emotionally-centred Romantics (the magistrate) and a prosecuting lawyer representative of more scientific thought. Camus also responds to their questioning. Though people see Meursault as being "wholly without moral sense", it is the court's morality which sentences him to death.

Whether you see it as a disturbing essay on the mindset of a murderer, an argument for a bleak and yet liberating philosophy, or a simply a very black comedy of errors, *The Outsider* is a magnificent read. The character of Meursault - who, both amused and bemused, takes a step back from the absurdity of modern life - is a gripping one. You will find his pithy observations on life hilarious, or a reason to start wearing berets, smoking Gauloises and listening to Miles Davis. *The Outsider* is not a weighty "War and Peace" tome. It's a slim volume - but its message will linger for a lifetime. You will find echoes of Meursault in *A Clockwork Orange* and *American Psycho*. As an introduction to one of the last century's greatest minds and as a gripping, challenging, shocking read, I cannot but recommend *The Outsider* - a true "philosophical novel".

---

### Luke at War

By Jack Cuddihy

He'd have stopped at Tynan's  
On the way to the railway.  
Bulled through blue doors,  
Bellied to the bar  
All quips and sallies,  
My father the gunner Luke.  
Two years down the road  
Washed up at Warlemont  
On a tidal wave of shit.  
Shredded on the Somme.  
But see now the brown-eyed boy,  
King's shilling in a fist,  
Baying for porter, first-born Fusilier  
Ear cocked to Kitchener.  
Luke, I would know:  
At the last, was it shot or shell-burst  
Flayed you femur to ankle-bone?  
What chancre of war  
Caused you to careen  
Round the earth  
From Bowery doss to Routon house,  
Or system shock propelled  
Fist to pulverize jawbone?  
Unknowing, you and I,  
We passed each other  
On Patrick Street  
Or so I've been told.  
A year to the day, give or take,  
Before you gave up the ghost,  
Breathless, vomit stuck in your throat.

**Preview of March 3rd Bray Arts Evening  
Heather House Hotel, Seafront 8:00pm  
Admission •5 / •4 conc. All are welcome.**

Bray Arts has arranged a very interesting line-up of film, theatre and music for the March Arts Evening.

### Film :

We are delighted to present :  
**Marion agus an Banprionsa.** Written and directed by Mellanie Clark Pullen, produced by Simon Maxwell.

### Theatre :

**Route 66 Theatre  
present extracts from  
"The Ninth Bar"**

This forthcoming production is a new work by Noel McAiodh. The piece features Ciaran and Colm Coogan as estranged friends who by way of circumstance and gardening tools find them digging themselves into ever deepening trouble.

### Music:

Original and well known music and song from Michael Byrne.

---

### Signal Arts Centre

Wicklow-based artist Mary Duffy holds her second solo exhibition of paintings in the Signal Arts Centre, Bray, from March 4-16 next. Inspired by the unique landscape of a rare fen habitat at Blackditch, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow, Mary Duffy's show is entitled

### Sea, Sky & the Square Mile.

This exhibition is a vibrant, colourful exploration of big skies, watery marshes, deep dykes, lush, green woodlands and the ever changing sea that form part of one of the largest wetland complexes on the east coast of Ireland.



### Video Voyeur Harold Chassen

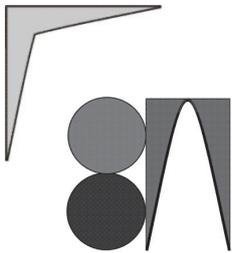
**3:10 to Yuma** This is remake of a 1957 film of the same name. Dan Evans (Christian Bale), along with others of a posse, is hired to take stagecoach robber Ben Wade (Russell Crowe) to the train station to face transportation, trial and hanging. Wade's gang ride into town and offers a reward for the killing of any member of the posse. Westerns are few and far between these days but I never miss an opportunity to see one. I didn't see the original so I can't offer a comparison. But I did enjoy this film and would recommend it to anyone who enjoys this genre.



### Submission Guidelines

Editor : Dermot McCabe : [bacj@eircom.net](mailto:bacj@eircom.net)  
Creative Writing Prose/Fiction Editor : Anne Fitzgerald : [afitzgerald3@ireland.com](mailto:afitzgerald3@ireland.com)  
Poetry Editor : Eugene Hearne : [poetrybray@yahoo.ie](mailto:poetrybray@yahoo.ie)  
website : [www.brayarts.net](http://www.brayarts.net)

Email submissions to any of the above or post typed submissions to  
The Editor BAJ 'Casino',  
Killarney Rd. Bray,  
Co. Wicklow  
Visual material: Photographs by Post. Digital Images by Email or CD in JPEG format.  
Deadline 15th of each month.



*Arts Evening Monday 3rd March 2008  
at the Heather House Hotel Strand Road 8:00 pm  
5 Euro / 4 Euro Conc. Everyone is welcome.*

Film : *Marion agus an Banprionsa* written by Mellany Clark Pullen and produced by Simon Maxwell.

Theatre: **Route 66 Theatre** present extracts from *The Ninth Bar* written by Noel McAiodh and performed by Ciaran and Colm Coogan.

**Music** : A mix of Original and well known music and

Bray Arts is grateful for the support of Bray Council, Wicklow Council, CASC and Heather House Hotel.  
Printed by Central Press

If undelivered please return to :  
Editor, Bray Arts Journal  
'Casino'  
Killarney Rd.  
Bray  
Co. Wicklow