

ART IN WALES

Caroline Juler & Nicholas Usherwood
tour galleries around the country

Compared to England, Wales has a small population which is generally either scattered widely or clustered into dense urban areas. For an artist, a gallery and sometimes for a bewildered public, reconciling the need for timeless and street-wise subjects that respond to these very different environments can be a challenge. Look around Wales's galleries this October and you'll find a fascinating range of answers – or deft compromises – to the problem.

Up on the north coast outside Conwy, for example, **Oriel Ffin y Parc** is showing *Poke Me*, 60 paintings by Sue Williams. The title is a pun on the Facebook button. Using her brilliant graphic skills, she drags us into a real and often ugly world of glamour, sexual provocation, exploitation, violence, loneliness and fear. The females in her large, painful pictures could be temptresses or victims: we have to decide . . .

Meanwhile in Conwy itself, at the **Royal Cambrian Academy**, *The Class of '58* brings together five painters and printmakers – Tom Jones, Karel Lek, Don McIntyre, William Selwyn and Edwin Forrest – who were included in the RCA's summer show in 1958. Their different temperaments, backgrounds and influences (Eastern Europe and Scottish Colourists to name only two) helped shape modern art in Wales.

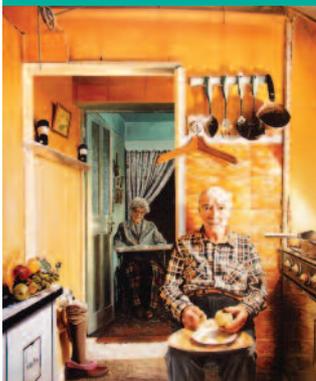
Oriel Ynys Môn on Anglesey is so attractive it's worth visiting for its own sake. An exhibition of

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Keith Bowen
'Ifor-study'
at Oriel Plas
Kevin Sinnott
'Mother in Crochet'
at Martin Tinney
Wilbur Heynes
'Contemplative
(St David's Head)'
detail
at Gallery 8, London

Amfueddfa ac Oriel Gwynedd Museum & Art Gallery



Mynediad am ddim/
Free Admission

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LL57 1DT
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Andrew Tift
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Gorffennaf 30 July - Hydref 29 October

Naws gan Bethau

Edrych ar Fywyd Llonydd a Ffigyrau gyda
Gwrthrychau

The Quality of Things

Looking at Still Life and Figures with Objects

www.gwynedd.gov.uk/museums

ORIEL Q

Truth, Lies & Alibis

- A journey

CHRISTINE KINSEY

22 October - 3 December

Queen's Hall Gallery
Narberth, Pembrokeshire
Wales SA67 7AS
Wed-Sat 10-5
www.orielqueenshallgallery.org.uk

ART IN WALES

Galleries WALES is a printed supplement to **GALLERIES** magazine - with the best of the latest and coolest **ART SHOWS** in and around **the country** it can be picked up from galleries, museums & hotels and many other venues. Further information see www.galleries.co.uk

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William Brown
'Circle Game II' (detail)
at The Art Shop

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pleasing local scenes by Bryan Griffiths and a rolling programme of other events makes it doubly alluring. It's not the only one on the island either: go to **Oriel Tegfryn** and you'll catch the tail end of Gwilym Pritchard's deceptively childlike post-impressionist landscapes. Meanwhile, in Holyhead itself, the **Ucheldre Centre** continues to uphold its encouraging policy of Art for All.

Staying in the north, you can also see good things at **Y Capel** in Llangollen while in Bangor, the **Gwynedd Museum's** exhibition *The Quality of Things* asks you to question whether still life painting is really about inanimate objects or something more subtle. Over on the Llyn Peninsula, **Oriel Plas Glyn-y-Weddw** presents new work by Keith Bowen and others. His fine drawings and pastels of the landscape and its people derive from a love of nature, of native peoples and minority cultures.

Right down south, the Pembrokeshire coastline is one of the most spectacular. Artists love it here, and **Harbour Lights** in the fishing port of Porthgain has long since made a virtue of the fact, showing well-established painters and sculptors as well as newcomers, all with something to say about the place. Then, further south-east, in the Pembrokeshire town of Narberth, **Gallery Q (Queen's Hall Gallery)** has somehow survived Arts Council of Wales cuts in 2007 via a 3 year Lottery grant, to put on really

adventurous shows, such as that (from 22 Oct) dedicated to Christine Kinsey's videos and paintings.

Moving steadily east now, Harl Ifold's show, *Can we know God?* at Cfarthfa Castle in Merthyr Tydfil asks those same questions, albeit in a more mystical way, that we saw raised in Sue Williams' show. Then further over again, **The Art Shop** in Abergavenny has a small gallery upstairs whose rooms open off one another like a series of Russian dolls. The quirky, medieval space with its uneven walls and floors chimes with William Brown's lino-block and silkscreen prints, paintings and drawings: direct and unsentimental as a child's, they make the world seem a brave, good, funny place to be.

Close to the English border, the **Monnow Valley Arts Centre** has its own dreamy location in east Wales. If the weather holds, you could spend time contemplating Wales's timelessness – and reflecting on the world's wickedness – by trying out the beautiful garden benches, designed in wood and stone and metal by 20 artists who were asked to bring something new to garden furniture.

All this touring of Wales's remarkable regional network of galleries takes no account, of course, of what's also going on in its more densely populated urban areas, most notably the capital, Cardiff. The **National Museum & Gallery's** current Artist in Focus show, for example, is Graham Sutherland whose work, strongly influenced at a key point in his

career by the Pembrokeshire landscape, often expressed torment. Based on the Gallery's collection, it makes connections between his images and the objects that Sutherland owned, and between people and places that shaped his development. The National Museum has also become, not surprisingly, the focal point for the city's most firmly established commercial galleries, **Martin Tinney** and **Kooywood**, for instance, both literally a stone's throw away from each other and from the museum itself. Both, too, are showing leading figures from the contemporary Welsh painting scene, Kevin Sinnott and Brendan Stuart Burns respectively.

Now in his mid-60s, Sinnott's career has been an interesting one and typical of the unmistakable emergence of a clearer sense of artistic identity (and confidence) within the Principality over the years since the announcement and creation of the Welsh National Assembly. With a well-founded career in London in the 70s and 80s, Sinnott's decision to return to his native country in 1995 has proved a huge success with 8 solo shows, a monograph (Seren Books) and major, hugely popular purchases by the National Museum. The work itself, in a bold figurative/narrative style, has continued to develop and change in highly distinctive directions.

Brendan Stuart Burns, a generation younger than Sinnott, made a similar journey, from Welsh art school to the Slade in London before returning to Wales in the 90s where he has enjoyed great success as an abstract landscape painter. Focusing on the rockpools of a remote beach in Pembrokeshire, Burns' complex technique, which involves layers of built-up encaustic wax and oil of an almost sculptural tactility, possesses an ethereal delicacy of remarkable richness, a vision of nature that is also intensely painterly. The show is followed by the powerful landscapes of Matthew Snowden (from 13 October).