



by Sinead Hogan

Welsh artists to exhibit in Cootehill

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RESIDENTS of Cootehill and its surrounds, don't be alarmed if you see posters containing the strange words 'LLINELLAU AC AMGYFFREDIADAU' around the area over the coming days. It is neither the work of a possessed printer nor a stressed staff member at the local library! Rather, the words are Welsh for 'Lines and Perceptions', an exciting art exhibition by three talented Welsh women, namely Nichola Hope, Sarah Hope and Eirian Llwyd. 'LLINELLAU AC AMGYFFREDIADAU' opens in Cootehill Library and Arts Centre on Thursday 2nd February and promises to be an original and inspiring display by these professional artists. And if the foreign tongue isn't enough to arouse curiosity, you may also have to do a double take should you see the artists in person, as Nichola and Sarah are identical twin sisters.

The visual art, however, transcends language differences – and Nichola and Sarah's individuality sets their artwork apart in the midst of their other similarities. Adding a further dimension to their stylistic drawings will be Eirian's prints which, she says, "contain an ambition for a personal and poetic vision". Neither of the sisters nor their friend Eirian has any connection with Cavan. The forthcoming exhibition, in fact, is the result of an internet search that Sarah did from Wales two or three years ago, which put her in touch with Cootehill Library and Arts Centre for the first time. When the artists travel over to County Cavan

with their exhibits in the coming weeks, it will be the first visit to the county for all three, although Sarah and Nichola's father was born in Dublin and they have previously been to Ireland on visits.

Inspiration from Welsh Opera

Nichola and Sarah are from Cardiff in South Wales, while Eirian is from Anglesea in the north of the country. Sarah explains that the three artists produce different styles of work. "Eirian is a friend of ours whom we met a couple of years ago. I actually saw her work in a gallery and I got in touch with her because I was very interested in it. As a result, Nichola and I have been exhibiting with Eirian for the last year or so around England and Wales. Eirian is a printmaker. Nichola and I concentrate more on drawing and painting. My sister and I have been interested in art from a very young age and we do have the same interests, I suppose. However, although we share that, we went to different art schools and with those different learning backgrounds, our styles are quite different."

Nichola studied at the Open University, Winchester School of Art and is currently studying for a masters degree in Cardiff. Her works are often inspired by her constructed

environments. Wallpaper, ornaments and objects are a recurring imagery in her works, using decoration and ornamentation to inhabit the space and create a narrative within the richly coloured paintings. Her recent works show an increasing interest in portraiture, a fascination with capturing the sitter's individuality and identity. Her works are rooted in an interest in the human figure and portrait. The artist has undertaken



Nichola Hope



Nichola Hope's work

studies at the anatomy rooms of the School of BioSciences, Cardiff University. Together with her twin

sister, Nichola has produced drawings based on stage and dress rehearsals of The Welsh National Opera which

has included Don Carlos, The Merry Widow with Lesley Garret and The Barber of Seville.

Sarah, meanwhile, studied at Cheltenham and Gloucester C.H.E. and the Prince of Wales Drawing Studios, London. Drawing is central to Sarah's work. Among the feathers in Sarah's hat are judging a national drawing competition in Bracknell last November, winning second



prize in the prestigious Llanfairpwll Big draw competition and having exhibited widely throughout the UK in solo and group shows. The forthcoming exhibition in Cootehill will include her drawings from The Welsh National Opera. These were drawn during the stage rehearsals of Don Carlos, an epic production conducted by Carlo Rizzi. She plans to go back to make drawings of the following operas: The Marriage of Figaro, The Flying Dutchman and Jephtha.

Ravens are "skilled acrobats"

Alongside these drawings and paintings inspired by opera will be prints by Eirian whose inspiration is taken predominantly from the Welsh landscape. Eirian studied in Coleg Menai Bangor and Brunel University London and the School of Art University of Wales Institute Cardiff. She describes her work philosophically and eloquently. "I am enthusiastic to distraction with the possibilities that the processes of printmaking offer an artist... I am often struck by the sharp, clear light, the low horizons and the influ-

ence of the wind on trees and banks. My work reflects a landscape that can be uncompromisingly bleak or amazingly beautiful, peaceful or magical. Yet there is a dichotomy in my feeling of belonging and not belonging to the place. There is a preponderance of prehistoric relics on Anglesey. The Neolithic mounds, the standing stones, patterns on stones at Barclodiad y Gawres or the Celtic head found at Hendy farm all remind one how a people and identity can survive and how the Welsh language is a link between then and now. I have enormous pleasure in watching ravens fly. They are skilled acrobats. Their strange and unique sound carry for long distances. They are often referred to in European mythology, often being symbols of death and darkness. They are important in relation to my themes as birds, which inhabit a certain place all their lives. They have survived over the centuries, offering us hope and a challenge perhaps."

For further information about LLINELLAU AC AMGYFFREDIADAU (Lines and Perceptions) contact Cootehill Library and Arts Centre at 049 5559873.

