



BIG NAME: The exhibition has works by new artists as well as established ones, such as *Lusa* by Stephen McKenna

Kid In A Candy Store

SUE CONLEY wishes she had more cash to splash at the RHA's annual show in its refurbished gallery

RHA 179TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION

Royal Hibernian Academy, 15 Ely Place, Dublin 2



IF I HAD €1 MILLION, and no scruples — meaning, I wouldn't feel too guilty if I didn't give at least half of that sum away to a worthy charity — then I would quite simply lose the head entirely at the RHA's latest yearly show of the best of the best work produced in Ireland in the last year.

It is uplifting to see so much amazing work, beautifully paced throughout the refurbished gallery. The new build most certainly has something to do with the success of the show. What used to feel like a cluttered yet enthusiastic accumulation of anything that could be lashed into a free corner has turned into an elegant tour of every available wall and floor space in the place.

This is the gallery's flagship exhibition, and for good reason. Contemporary artists nationwide compete to get a piece or two (or even

three, if they're a high-flyer) up on the walls. A piece in this show automatically confers prestige, and, for many, it can be the thin end of the wedge that opens up a career.

However, there's a lovely, down-home, reunion aspect to the show, as well. It's great to see the latest works from names that have become recognisable, and revered, over the years, and terrific to see new works from the members, academicians, associates and honourees, such as Stephen McKenna, and Barrie Cooke.

So my burning desire to run around the place like a lunatic with a bottomless cheque book is not a matter of greed. It's a matter of pride, and a desire to support the work of Ireland's visual artists, whose work, as a sector, is continuing to grow and change and impress.

If you ever needed convincing that Irish visual arts is a viable and vibrant thing, then look no further.

The RHA 179th Annual Exhibition continues until July 25th; the gallery is open seven days a week

AT THE FOREFRONT A photography show at Trinity College, *Leaders*, highlights the contributions of the people at the top of migrant networks. The extraordinary influx of people of many nations has created a new Ireland, and the show pays tribute to those who have been advocating for our newest residents. Swing by the Buttery between 8am and 4pm until June 25th... **NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK** The NCAD Graduate Show is running until June 14th. Be among the first to see tomorrow's top artists today. The show is spread across the campus and is always interesting and provocative.

MIRROR TO THE SOUL

Dreamlike, soft-stroke portraits reveal Beatrice O'Connell's feelings about family

BEATRICE O'CONNELL'S HAUNTING SERIES OF PORTRAITS will grace the walls of the Talbot Gallery for several weeks. Dreamy portraits of figures in a variety of poses are executed with a soft stroke, as if we are looking through a filter of the past. *Duende*, a Spanish word that describes a state comprised of the warring feelings of joy, melancholy, apprehension, and excitement, perfectly describes the painter's own response to her subject matter: her own youth, her mother's life, and her daughter's future.

HOW'D YOU GET YOUR START? I graduated from DIT in 2006, and I've been painting nearly 13 years now. The Kevin Kavanagh Gallery was my first big break when I was leaving college, and my first solo show was in the Lamp House Gallery in Howth.

YOUR PAINTINGS HAVE A TIMELESS QUALITY ABOUT THEM Well, I don't think in a linear way and my paintings are more of an emotional response than representational. People find that a little bit hard to get because the images aren't super-real, and they're not expressionist either. I sometimes feel that my work falls in between those two things.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE DUENDE AS A TITLE? It was something that resonated with me, because of my experience of parenthood, and my own experience of childhood, and the anxieties associated with both. I was also thinking about my mother, because she died when I was small: I was thinking about her a lot, and what it would have been like for her when she was bringing me up, and my own anxieties about my own daughter, for when she's older.

DID YOU CHOOSE PAINTING, OR DID IT CHOOSE YOU? I think it chose me, in the end. My mother was a painter — when I was growing up, she was absolutely obsessed with painting. She wasn't very well, she suffered from bi-polar disorder, so I associated painting with that obsessiveness. So when I was growing up, I didn't want to be a painter at all, I wanted to be an actress! I wanted to get away from all of that. But it chose me, I realised that it was all I really wanted to do, and all that I was good at! - SC

Duende runs until July 4th. See www.talbotgallery.com for info

THE DECISION:
O'Connell says her paintings represent an emotional response

