



When life gets in the way yet art continues to be made

A show in Carrick-on-Shannon featuring emerging artists challenges a cultural fixation on youth



Aidan Dunne

Curator Alice Lyons plays with our expectations in titling her current exhibition at The Dock *Emerging Artists*. Rather than the youthful profile the term suggests, the show's four participants turned to art in a serious way relatively late. They are emerging in the conventional sense, but decades later than one might expect.

Yet even a cursory glance at their work will confirm that none of them is what might be termed a purely recreational art-

George Wolff, was an established painter and critic, and during the war years he taught her how to paint in watercolour and tempera.

The work she produced at the time was lost in the turmoil of the closing stages of the war. In any case, she began to work as an accountant and between that and parenting, in difficult enough circumstances, she had no opportunity to pursue art. Until, that is, many years later when she became interested in weaving.

From the early 1970s, she began to explore embroidery and, as she puts it, she has "remained faithful to it for more than 40 years now," and still devotes several hours a day to it.

Rather than approaching it as a decorative form with its own set rules and parameters, she treats it as an expressive, representational medium. And in that respect, she's a virtuoso.

The mostly miniature compositions she creates, based on the world around her



not known as an artist until late in life, but he had for many years dedicated himself to painting.

Born in 1931, he trained as a mathematician and began his working life as an academic statistician in London, producing a standard textbook on stochastic process or, as it is also known, random process – which is intriguing, given his interest in the intuitive practice of painting and, in his case, painting landscapes, which involves

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imposing order on the chaos of nature.

His landscapes, made in France and rural Ireland, are beautifully poised compositions in the classical manner. They look

poised, elegant and serene

One might say that the process of painting is a process of the mind that is interesting and

are.

As another said, “For me it is a pain.

While she felt drawn to landscape painting, she also painted portraits and, emboldened by the fine art de la tradition, she painted the work of the museum. The close-up of

ist or a hobbyist. They each engage with their medium of choice with a searching, exploratory, challenging spirit.

The eldest exhibitor, Zofia Malanowska, was born in central Poland in 1915. She married quite young and had two children. Then, in 1939 her husband, Wladyslaw, was drafted into the Polish army. He was killed fighting in Burgundy, in France, the following year.

As it happened, Malanowska's cousin,

and memories of past experiences and places, are exceptional. Her use of colour, texture, pattern and imagery is both practised and inspired. Embroidery is a slow process but she manages to infuse it with real spontaneity, and there's a wonderfully flowing, lyrical quality to her work.

Sadly, another exhibitor, Hilton Miller, died last year while the exhibition was still at the planning stage.

The father of artist Nick Miller, he was

■ **A self-portrait by Benita Stoney – the careful, meticulous precision of her close-up portraits recall the almost frightening clarity and detail of Lucian Freud; and (top) a French landscape by the late Hilton Miller, a beautifully poised composition in the classical manner**

like pictures that would be very good to live with.

The calculation involved is evident from the incredibly detailed charts and diagrams on palettes and colour-mixing exhibited alongside the finished paintings. Presumably he never thought of them as art, but they are, surely, and it's entirely appropriate that they are on view.

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