

Loan Bush

Introduction by **Peggy Sue Amison** : Director Sirius Arts Centre, Ireland

Taken from the exhibition catalogue 'The Loan Bush'
A 1 person exhibition at Sirius Arts Centre by artist Marie Brett, 2008

Social Memory, culturally constructed folklore and its relationship to place are integral in Marie Brett's artwork. The final piece whether in a gallery installation or a site specific creation, is directly connected to the multi-cultural identity of the artist, one that has its roots firmly buried in Irish soil, but its branches reach out to other destinations. Marie's immediate connection to memory and place was fostered in her youth. Born of Irish parents and brought up in England, she grew up immersed in a cultural bubble of Irishness abroad. Returning to Ireland to make her home in West Cork with her own family, Marie carries with her an intrinsic sense of this country's psyche.

Ireland has changed drastically in the past 10 years – the speed of life and prosperity of this island has increased exponentially. With the highest population since the famine and a massive reverse migration pattern ebbing and flowing across this nation, the social and cultural landscape of Ireland is actively evolving. Multiculturalism is now an exciting reality in a land everyone once left behind for a better life. Irish folklore grew out of mysteries in the darkness of the rural communities from the past; that darkness has, in many towns, been replaced by bright neon lights, fast food restaurants and all night markets. Faster communications, texting, email and the prevalence of television, has gutted the haven of storytelling and cultural interaction. Cars have replaced bicycles and long walks and, like a lot of the Western world, Ireland has lost its innocence and with it a special relationship to nature that was the foundation for a great deal of its culture and beliefs. Yet in this new Ireland, highway construction will still be diverted to allow a fairy tree to remain in its ancient space, and at the same time, there are protagonists with chain-saws that will cut off the tree's limbs to make their own statement about such compromises.

Though Marie Brett's work begins in Ireland, it is inspired by her own international travel and experience. Her work explores threads which when brought together reveal the universality of ritual, myth and customs of many cultures and creates a dialogue that speaks to the past and dreams of the future. Marie utilizes myths and rituals, transforming them into vibrant, creative expression. Often invited to interact with pieces, Marie allows visitors to leave a part of themselves behind and restores, for a moment, the chance to recall that special relationship to nature that is the source of transformation. The Lone Bush again becomes a home of fairies; everyday objects take on a sense of sacredness. Wishing trees are recreated in gallery spaces and new artefacts are introduced into the natural landscape. Marie's work connects her audience to something that is basically intrinsic in every culture – a visual language consisting of symbols taking one beyond the verbal to a place of silence and imagination.