

The Gloss Magazine 'Artistic Licence: Dorothy Cross'

By Penny McCormick, 30 May 2024



“Veins of Other” is the first exhibition in five years by the acclaimed Irish artist Dorothy Cross. She explains the inspiration for the new artworks and her ongoing projects ...

Veins of Other is your first exhibition in Dublin for five years, central to which is the sculptural commission Tread. Can you tell me about the background to this – of the grouping of twelve, which is symbolic for you?

Central to “Vein of Others is the sculptural commission Tread. Tread is comprised of twelve different coloured marbles from twelve areas of the world: Green Chinese, Siena Gold, Belgian Black, Portuguese Pink, etc. It follows on from a series of works that I did of feet precariously balanced on top of large blocks of red Damascus Rose

marble from Syria. This arrangement of twelve feet appears almost like exposed fossils, with the veins of the marble running through the feet ... they seem like evidence of human presence in the landscape over millennia.



**What is the significance of the title
Veins of Other?**

The title “Veins of Other” comes from a poem by Emily Dickinson. The veins link the feet that are set in marble with each other, even though the stone originates from many areas around the world and the photographs taken of lives lived more recently are seen through a flow of life like bloodlines.

**You are also presenting a new
Bloodlines series too which includes
personal photographs taken by your
father ...which reflects your fascination
with the sea ...**

The exhibition also presents a new Bloodlines series. Several years ago I came across sheets of extraordinary handblown glass in a stained-glass suppliers. They sat in my studio for years before I decided how to use them. The red flow of blood-like veins running through the clear glass is exquisite. I decided to set them over black and

white photographs taken by my father. There are images of both my father and mother looking through a window and through binoculars ... also diptychs of sea and sail rigging, the Fastnet Lighthouse and Daunt Lightship. The images are still visible through that flow of red, adding almost a layer of physicality. It doesn't matter if you know or don't know that they are my parents – they are images of people that once existed, caught in time.

**For those who are unaware your
artistic journey began at Leicester
Polytechnic before enrolling in an MFA
in printmaking in San Francisco. Your
studio is now in Connemara. Who or
what kickstarted your interest in art?**

My artistic career began at the Crawford Art College in Cork, where I studied for a year before going to Leicester Polytechnic for an undergraduate BA in three-dimensional design – jewellery – then an MFA in



printmaking in California at the San Francisco Art Institute. I travelled a lot before returning to Ireland in 1983, after staying away for nearly ten years.

I came from a family who considered beauty in nature as well as in the domestic. None of them were artists, but there was always encouragement for whatever interest or passion myself and my siblings had at the time. There was a very strong aesthetic in the house – from the shape of a hammer to a Japanese vase ... My mother had a perfect eye and my father treasured good craft.

I don't really have a routine – never exactly 9 to 5... I have a beautiful studio in Connemara, designed by my architect friends McCullough Mulvin, where things get moved around and find each other ... then new ideas emerge that need to be worked on. It's hard to say how the work has evolved – the same concerns emerge from time to time – and thankfully new material and thoughts present themselves enough to excite new work. Someone said to me recently perhaps as you get older it's more about refinement.

From time to time, I have collaborated with charities and the Red Rhino Wilderness scarves I designed are still available at Sullivan's Grocers in Oughterard. It's great to get involved with such projects. We have also produced a beautiful Egyptian scarf to fund a book I am working on for a project called Kinship/Home, that involves returning an Egyptian mummified man home to Cairo. *[Scarves are available on www.dorothycross.com].*

Many of your works are specially commissioned or in collections of friends, like Bryan Meehan. Have you been to see your works in situ at Park Kenmare? Is it ever difficult to let artworks "go"?

It is rarely difficult to let artworks go. In ways my relationship with them has ended once they are finished, and then one hopes they find a new relationship. For example, I am delighted that Bryan Meehan has chosen some of my works for the new hang in the Park Kenmare. I haven't been to see them yet – but hope to!

Dorothy Cross, Veins of Other is at Kerlin Gallery until July 6