



DREAM PICTURE: Ceramics and glass artist Olga Fitzpatrick with her object of desire, a triptych by Ruth Lockhart called *Winged Moment*.

Picture: Billy Higgins

Dreaming of childhood days

"I THINK art is all about escapism," says ceramics and glass artist Olga Fitzpatrick. "It's all about taking you away from mundane existence and giving you some space and time to think and dream. That's one reason why my object of desire is a triptych by painter Ruth Lockhart called *Winged Moment*."

"The painting was bought for me as a present by my boyfriend. It hangs in my bedroom at the moment. I suppose another reason why I like it so much is that it brings me back to my childhood when I lay down in a field somewhere and just gazed up at the sky without a worry in the world. It reminds me of a time when it didn't matter what I did next. I had all the time in the world."

Olga adds that such a feeling as having all the time in the world contrasts starkly with how most people live their lives in Ireland nowadays. Given Olga's thoughts on her object of desire it's no coincidence that the 34-year-old Dublin-born artist makes a strong



OBJECT OF DESIRE

Patrick Brennan

connection between her work and growing up in Howth.

"I was born in Howth village which back then was considered the poorer area to Howth Hill," says Olga. "There's probably not a lot of difference now, but my father bought our house for £750 and it had been his family home where he was one of 13 children."

"The thing I always remember was that every day I would take the

dog for a walk along the beach. I was so lucky to grow up beside the sea. As Carl Jung said the beach is the threshold between the sea that represents our dreams and imagination and the land that represents reality. There's a similar sense of borders in my latest work."

Olga (who says her father insists she's not called after the famous Russian gymnast Olga Korbet even though she was born in 1972, the year of the gymnast's triumphs at the Olympics) was always drawing.

Although she never explicitly envisaged a career as an artist she couldn't imagine ever not painting.

"I took a year out to do a portfolio at Colaiste Dulaigh in Dublin and it was a very wise decision," says Olga. "Twelve months later I got accepted to art colleges in Cork, Dublin and Limerick. Now, I'm a Cancerian and a real home bird. It never remotely occurred to me to go to college somewhere other than Dublin until one day I was talking to a friend of mine who told me she was going to go to college in Waterford. I ended up opt-

ing to go to Limerick. I remember as I was taking the bus back home to Dublin one last time before I moved down to Limerick it dawned on me that I was leaving home."

At college Olga gravitated towards the use of ceramics and glass, helped by the huge kilns at the university where she could create her works. She also developed a keen interest in old people and made them the focus of her work.

"I used to go to nursing homes to be with old people," says Olga. "I find they have a great sense of humour. My final pieces in college were all larger than life items, all bigger than me, and I positioned them up high on plinths, too."

"Ironically, after I finished in college I continued to combine art with working with marginalised people. I was a part of Art Squad under Fingal County Council where I worked with children at risk between the ages of nine to 13. I became really good at pool when I was doing that. I also worked in Larine Court for a year and a half

with adults with mental health problems."

These days Olga teaches art in Ballyfermot College in Dublin and to primary school boys in Dublin 6. Her latest works of art all go under the general rubric of *Winter*, Olga's favourite time of the year.

"There are a few themes running through this latest work. A lot of it looks icy and raw and feature the sparse imagery of winter."

There's also the notion contained in Patrick Kavanagh's poem *Advent* and those lines of his 'Through a chink too wide there comes no wonder. There's a glimpse of something else in the pieces.'

"Finally, there's this notion of a threshold and a door. I kept dreaming about a door ajar. I think it means that I have the answers inside myself as to what I should or shouldn't do. When I work I go very deep inside myself. That's the only way I can do it."

■ Olga Fitzpatrick's *Winter* exhibition was on show recently at The Blue Leaf Gallery in Dublin. For more information on her work: Olga Fitzpatrick@eircom.net; www.iol.ie