



## Alliance Française de Cork Exhibiting Artist Interview AF Cork Exhibition Programme 2016/2017

### About the artist:



Heidi Etsell was born in Ontario, Canada and lived in Switzerland for several years.

She is a mixed-media artist and children's book author who uses mediums ranging from paper, paint and ink to puzzle pieces, old light bulbs and rusty bits that she picks off the ground wherever she may be. She draws, paints, does paper cutting, and wire sculpting. From time to time she pulls out some sterling silver wire and makes unique pieces of jewellery.

In 2012 she wrote, illustrated and published her first children's book, *A Little Blue Whisper*.

Heidi is currently based in Cork, Ireland.

### **When did you decide to become an artist?**

Well, I don't think I ever really decided to become an artist. I've just always been 'making stuff', 'writing stuff' and marveling at the great Mystery of Life. Gradually throughout my life these things seem to have merged. I suppose that makes me an artist.

For a long time I considered myself a bookseller (that is what I went to school for...but who are we kidding, school, diplomas and certificates are over-rated!) who was slowly but surely writing and illustrating a children's book during my free time. When I published the book in 2012 and began placing it in bookshops and selling it at markets along with all the 'stuff' I had been making, people started calling me an artist. I'd say that's when it dawned on me that really I was an artist that was a bookseller in my free time...a bookseller to pay my rent and a book loving artist by nature.

### **What inspires you?**

Mythology, literature, poetry, childhood, snails...

Picking up rocks, sea shells and rusty bits and pieces.

Nature and its grand cycle of life and death.

The softly whispered hints of wonder in the forest of symbols that we live in... or that we are.

### **What attracts you to your chosen medium? Are there any limitations?**

I don't have one chosen medium so there aren't many limitations. Pretty much if something fits into the flow of what I'm making I'll use it. I guess it's the lack of or the limited limitations that attracts me to the mixed-media technique.

### **What role does an artist have in society?**

I think Joseph Campbell puts it well: "(...) Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are artists of one kind or another. The function of the artist is the mythologization of the

environment and the world."

**Is there such a thing as a good artist and a bad artist? If there is how would you define this difference?**

No, I don't think there is such a thing.

But I can say that artwork that appeals to me most is the kind that sings the universal song. The kind that has a mythological quality to it in the sense that it reflects deep inner experience that is personalised through style but that remains universal. I'm thinking that when an artist has realised that everything that surrounds them is them and vice versa, that the inner and outer do not really exist at the end of the day, it shines through in their artwork whether or not they actually meant to sing the universal song.

**Have you been influenced by other artists?**

Yes, many. Virginia Woolf, Charles Baudelaire, E.A. Poe, Vladimir Nabokov, Dr. Seuss, C.S. Lewis, Antoni Gaudi, Salvador Dali, Frida Kahlo, Ani Difranco... to name a few of the top of my head. I recently discovered Harry Clarke who will no doubt inspire me and I look forward to discovering Yeats.

When it comes to the image transfer technique I have used in the mixed-media paintings in this exhibition, Jill Pillon, a Vancouver, Canada based artist is the influence. By chance I ended up in a one day workshop she held back in 2008. A seed took root in me that day.

**Do you have an online presence?**

[www.blue-snail-garden.com](http://www.blue-snail-garden.com) / [heidi@blue-snail-garden.com](mailto:heidi@blue-snail-garden.com)  
[www.redbubble.com/bluesnailgarden](http://www.redbubble.com/bluesnailgarden)  
[www.facebook.com/bluesnailgarden](http://www.facebook.com/bluesnailgarden)  
[www.facebook.com/WonderfulWhispersMurmuresSecrets](http://www.facebook.com/WonderfulWhispersMurmuresSecrets)

**Have you sold work previously and if so by what means?**

Markets, festivals, bookshops, stationary shops, internet, word of mouth.



***REPLANTING THE BLUE  
SNAIL GARDEN*** is running in AF  
Cork Galerie from 27<sup>th</sup> of Oct –  
25<sup>th</sup> Nov 2016.

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