

# IRELAND'S HOMES INTERIORS & LIVING

IRELAND'S LARGEST SELLING MONTHLY INTERIORS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE November 2008

**42** pages of readers' homes & kitchens

Castlebar,  
Dublin, Gilford,  
Malvern Hills

**Lighting**  
Illuminating tips  
for brighter living

**Homebuild & Renovate**  
Practical advice & ideas including timber frame, home technology & eco villages

**Storage Solutions**  
How to organize your living space

**Christmas Market**  
Festive shopping  
European style

**Open Plan Living**  
A spacious way of life

46 pages  
of ideas





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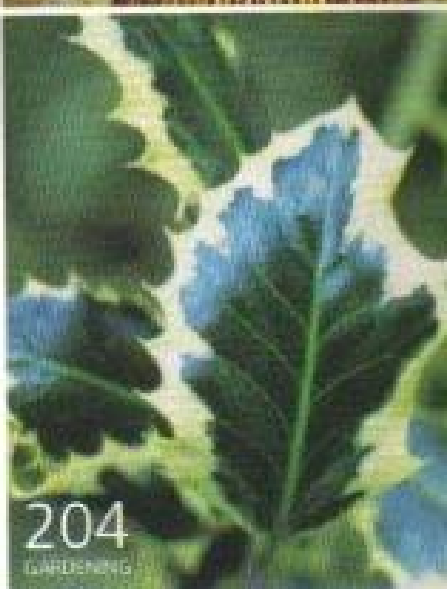
- 212** One of our readers can win a fabulous spa package weekend for two at Muckross Park Hotel and Cloisters Spa. The prize includes two nights' luxurious accommodation, champagne on arrival, full Irish breakfast and dinner on one evening in the award-winning G6 Shaw's restaurant. The winner is also entitled to a Ysara tropical fruit and flower facial or Rasul Moor Mud treatment and full use of Vitality Pools and Thermal Suites. Total prize value: **£769 / € 1,100**.
- 215** Ten copies of Cook by Thomasina Miers is up for grabs, worth **£16.99 / € 24.30**. Total prize value: **£169.90 / € 243**.
- 224** Maurice Orr is offering one lucky reader the chance to win one of his paintings, worth **£1,500 / € 2,145**.
- 237** Elizabeth O'Kane is giving away a bronze sculpture of a chorister to one reader. One of a limited edition set of 12, the sculpture is worth **£1,000 / € 1,430**.



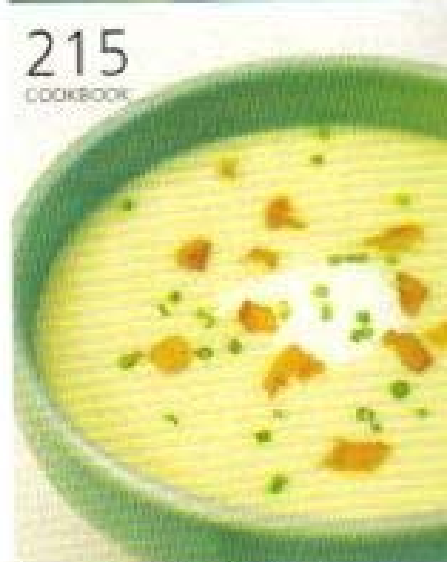
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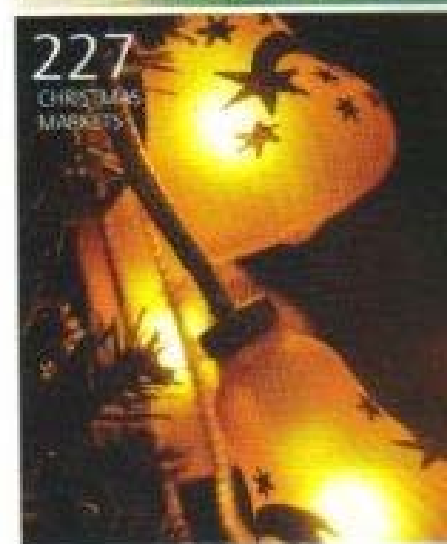
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# Hands On

Based in Trinity Enterprise Centre, Dublin, Elizabeth O'Kane is not only a very talented sculptor but she's an equally gifted painter. 'I love it here,' she says. 'It's a nice environment of people doing like minded work – that's important, as sculpting can be a very solitary pursuit.'



Born in Ballymena, Elizabeth swapped a successful career as an interpreter to follow her passion, art. It was certainly the right move, as her sculptures and paintings are now sought after by private collectors all over the world. Her work is displayed in New York-New York Hotel in Las Vegas but closer to home, she received her biggest commission to date – a bronze bust of Mary Ann McCracken, the eighteen-nineteenth century social reformer and campaigner for the rights of Belfast's women and children. It now resides at the Belfast City Hall. 'Art has always been my number one interest, but after having been predicted an A and then receiving a C at O'level, I began to think it might be too risky a career. The economy at the end of the 80s was different and there weren't as many opportunities. Instead, I took a degree in French and Spanish and became an interpreter. I lived abroad in Paris and Madrid and made lots of friends who I'm still in touch with. Art still remained a hobby, sketching friends in the evenings for fun.'

However, things changed. Elizabeth took a cheap flight to Vietnam for a holiday and caught a form of malaria. She ended up in hospital for a few weeks and while there realised she wasn't really happy in her career and started exploring different options. 'I didn't want to go back in for further education and do another 4 years, so I found a course in Dublin in interior design. It was craft based and funded by the EU, with an emphasis on ceramics, woodwork and architectural drawing. At night, I studied for a diploma in art history. I also had a placement in a local foundry. If you had to pick the one moment which changed your life, I think it would be that moment – I adored the smells, the sounds, the sight of the bronze being poured, the drama of the whole thing. Coming out dirty and tired at the end of the day, I thought, Oh my God, this is exactly what I want.'

Elizabeth worked part-time with two interior designers in Dublin, using the rest of her time to sculpt. Then in 2000, she won a prize for her work and a week after that, handed in her notice, deciding to go full-time. She worked from home, making clay and wax sculptures in her spare bedroom. 'But it was very solitary, so I found a studio with other artists on the north side of Dublin for two years, then I moved to the Trinity Enterprise Centre and I've been here for the last three.'

Elizabeth's sculpture style is figurative – people or animals – and realist. In her studio, she also makes busts of historical figures from old photographs or paintings, and loves working on sculptures of children and dancers in different poses. 'I work a lot from nudes – that's technically the way sculpture has been taught throughout the centuries. My recent work is mostly of animals, goats and bulls because I love movement and anatomy. My brother is a vet so he keeps me right!'





One of her most striking works is of local celebrity, Mark Follis, who went blind five or six years ago but still runs marathons in the Alps and the Gobi Desert with Ranulph Fiennes. 'Mark is inspirational! he's kayaking from Wales to Ireland. I decided to make the sculpture his eyes closed - it made it a specific feature as people immediately see the eyes and I can then explain his story.'

About 10% of Elizabeth's time is spent painting watercolours of buildings and cityscapes, and love glass, stone and metal - reflections, the fall of light, the play of light and shadow. My style is a realist, like the style of Hopper and that generation of American painters. I also love painting from heights, so that there's more perspective. I recently painted a watercolour of Lansdowne Road Stadium just before it was demolished but there's a very sad story behind one of her paintings.

'When I was in New York, I decided to paint a series of three views from the Empire State Building - the long avenues are like canyons and then you have the Art Deco buildings rising up like skyscrapers in shadows. New York is one of the most exciting cities from my point of view as a painter. The paintings were of the North with Central Park, looking out over to Queens, and South to lower Manhattan - that was the view which included the twin towers of the World Trade Centre. I actually finished the painting one week before the attack. For a long time I didn't know what to do with the paintings, with no one wanting to put them on the market. I had quite a lot of offers to buy them individually, but because of what had happened, I felt they had to be sold as one. Eventually I got an offer from a buyer in London who was willing to buy them as one. He'd have them and they're on show together now.'

Elizabeth keeps busy and was approached by Hillsborough to have an exhibit there earlier this year. She also shows at the annual exhibition at the Royal Hibernian Academy of Art and the Royal Ulster Academy of Art as well as galleries throughout Ireland. 'My languages came to me very useful when I went to study watercolours at the Academie des Beaux Arts in Paris, and last summer I did a course for a month at the Florence Academy of Art, Italy, which is probably the best figurative sculpture school in the world. It's wonderful to have the buzz of having other artists around. I hope to go back next year. I'm also doing an artist residency in New York, just painting buildings for a few months, but I still have no idea where my next sale is going to come from. I can go through several months without making a sale and then make 10 in a week. To become more established I got more major commissions and I've got more work in the corporate market as my name becomes more established - so fingers crossed.'



## The Process of Sculpting in Bronze

Elizabeth makes the sculpture in clay and, as the clay needs something to hold on to, she creates a metal frame like a skeleton and builds the clay up around it. She takes lots of measurements from photographs or walks around the sitter, adding on more clay until she gets the likeness she wants. A mould is then made of the clay original from plaster and rubber. The liquid rubber is brushed over the clay and it makes a negative copy of the exact features of the sculpture. Plaster is then put around the rubber to hold it in place. The mould is in two parts and when that's finished and dried, she opens up the mould and removes the original clay sculpture, setting it aside (the clay can be recycled). The open mould is a negative shape of the original sculpture and Elizabeth then brushes liquid wax into the mould, making a wax copy of the original. The mould is closed and sealed with liquid wax. When the mould is reopened she removes what is now a hollow version of the original.

The process of casting in bronze is known as lost wax casting. Elizabeth sends the wax mould to the foundry which does the casting for her. They take the wax and dip it to make a ceramic, heat resistant mould which is on the inside and outside of the wax. They then put it into a hot kiln, and the wax is turned out, leaving a hollow space within the mould. They then melt the bronze and pour it in. Once the bronze is cooled, they hammer off the ceramic mould, leaving the bronze sculpture. It comes out in a rough, textured finish, so then it has to be welded, cut in different places, polished and sanded down. That's all done in the foundry and Elizabeth oversees the process. You can choose to colour the bronze – patination. A patina/chemical, is burned with a blow torch and the liquid chemical is brushed on to the bronze. This is then heated with a blowtorch and the chemical changes the surface of the bronze to different colours – green, dark brown, grey, blue, any colour. It's not a paint, it's a natural process known as oxidation. For example, any bronze left outside in the weather will naturally turn green over the years, this is simply speeding up the process.

From start to finish the sculpture takes about four months, but the foundry stage is very labour intensive and skilled, and if any stage fails, you must start all over again. It's expensive but durable, wonderful to feel and will last hundreds of years.



## COMPETITION

Ireland's Homes Interiors & Living magazine, together with Elizabeth O'Kane, is offering one reader the chance to win a bronze sculpture of a Chorster worth £1,000/€1,430.

### HOW TO ENTER

Answer the following questions:

- 1 Where was Elizabeth born?
- 2 Which local celebrity did she produce a bronze of?
- 3 What's the name of the school in Paris?

Place your answers, together with your name, address and phone number on the back of a postcard and send it to:

### November 06 Sculpture competition.

Ireland's Homes Interiors and Living magazine, PO Box 42, Bangor, County Down BT19 7AD or Ashgrove House, Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin.

Entries to be received no later than Friday 10th November 06.  
One entry per household. Judge's decision is final.  
No cash alternative. Prizes are non-transferable.