

SAT NAV A LITTLE UNRELIABLE?

THE IRISH TIMES

Mon, Jul 10, 2017

Dublin 13°C

NEWS SPORT BUSINESS OPINION **LIFE & STYLE** CULTURE MORE VIDEO PODCASTS JOBS

People > Obituaries | Weddings | New to the Parish

All Life & Style ▾

Painter boxing clever in the wilds of Cork

Artist Sarah Walker has used her sons' boxing as the inspiration for her latest exhibition

Sat, Feb 7, 2015, 11:00

Sarah Walker



Artist Sarah Walker in her studio in west Cork: 'I realised that boxing would be a great opportunity to play with the movement of the figures' Artist Sarah Walker in her studio on the pier, Castletownbere, Co Cork. Photograph: Valerie O'Sullivan

f *The Boxing Diaries* is the story of a mother of three teenage boys, two of whom are keen boxers. I grew up in Dublin 4, the daughter of an architect and an art critic; we spent all of our holidays in Bothar Bui, the house that my father designed in the Beara Peninsula in west Cork.

p In the cluster of buildings that is Bothar Bui, there is a large studio that many artists used. In 1991 I decided to spend a couple of months there, to enjoy the seclusion and benefits of the countryside working away from the hub of Dublin.

As it turned out, I never left. I married a fisherman from Co Clare and we had three sons. They grew up playing Gaelic football along with all their schoolmates, but my eldest son was mad about boxing since the age of about two and even before he could actually talk.

For about nine years he begged and cajoled us into letting him take up boxing. There are no clubs within easy reach of Eyeries where we live, but eventually I gave in and brought Seamus to Bantry Boxing Club, about an hour's drive away. This club was started by Andy Kerins who has kept it going for more than 10 years practically singlehandedly, working voluntarily with untiring commitment to a group of young people.

Boxing is a far cry from the teenage sports I grew up with in Dublin, where I took part in swimming, tennis and hockey; my brothers' main sport was rugby and my husband Kieran's sport was hurling. Seamus went on to compete in the National championships and over the last five years he has won four county titles and four Munster titles. My younger son Emmet soon joined Seamus in the club and started to compete as well; he has won two county titles and one Munster title.

ADVERTISEMENT

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE
From €410 per Month
Or a €4,000
Purchase Contribution
[FIND OUT MORE >](#)
T&C's apply.

Most Read in Life & Style

- 1 Brother Hubbard cafe expands into former Gary Rhodes restaurant
- 2 Time to run from the 'deadmill' gym treadmill
- 3 Dear Leo: Splitting parental leave might help close the gender gap
- 4 Bernadette McAliskey: 'I am astounded I survived. I made mad decisions'
- 5 Michelin star street food chef to cook in Dublin
- 6 My Oz visa is up but I don't want to go home. What are my options?
- 7 Is 'sitting the new smoking'? How to quit the sedentary lifestyle
- 8 Ross O'Carroll-Kelly: 'I officially name this Robbin' Island'
- 9 The five-minute make-up face fix
- 10 Live the "Good Life" in Dun Laoghaire without the grind for €675K



ADVERTISEMENT

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

From €410 per Month
Or a €4,000
Purchase Contribution

[FIND OUT MORE >](#)

T&Cs apply.

For the last six years we have driven the length and breadth of the country, taking part in various shows and in the national championships. It has opened up a whole new world of experience for me.

I've never felt that I have uprooted myself from Dublin as I visit there and other cities regularly. It is very satisfying to be in Ireland, the country of my roots but with a completely different perspective. When I grew up, everywhere outside of Dublin was "down the country"; since living in Cork I have a different view and since travelling with boxing I have an even wider perspective.

As soon as Seamus started to progress through the championships, I found myself completely drawn in to the world of boxing. I was hooked. I had never felt anything like the thrill of his winning his first Munster final and I got completely caught up in the excitement of the wins and the disappointment of the losses.

Seeing how much effort Seamus was putting into the training, running on the cold, wet, dark country roads, training constantly on the bag at home, denying himself any unhealthy foods. It was hard not to take it as seriously as he did. Emmet started out enjoying the club socially, but then got more serious as he entered competitions as well.

I had painted figures often over the years, runners, cyclists, usually a single small figure in relief within a large landscape. I was looking at stance and movement and I realised that boxing would be a great opportunity to play

with the movement of the figures. I use the paint in a sculptural way forming muscle and fabric out of the paint itself.

I was taken with the engagement between the trainers and referees and the youngsters boxing. The boxers are at the same time brave and vulnerable. The trainers encourage them and nurture a sense of respect, training them not only in the specific sport but also a whole set of rules for youth development: respect for one another, trust, discipline, commitment, fitness and even healthy eating.

All of these lessons are played out in the detailed rituals of the sport: for example touching gloves before each bout, the handshakes at the end of the match between the contestants, referees, trainers and officials, the hugs between the opponents.

Also, because of the nature of the sport, great care is taken that the contestants don't get injured and there's always a medic on hand.

I have painted Andy giving words of advice between rounds at the corner of the ring, Andy walking towards the ring with Seamus full of courage and intent, Emmet facing the wall trying to focus and clear the mind in the minutes before entering the ring, with Andy onside.

Boxing is a very concentrated sport, made up of 90-second rounds progressing to two-minute rounds as they get older, so naturally it is intense. I was drawn to these moments of intensity; the paintings in the series are all small to preserve that sense of something short and contained.

I also wanted to picture the watching and the waiting, not only the suspense leading up to one of my sons' important contests but also the time spent sitting through 20 or more other contests.

Travelling long distances and staying in towns around the country, all of this is the universal experience of being a parent that so many people can relate to.

Living in west Cork and because of this specific interest of my sons, I find that I have been sucked into a parallel world, one that I knew nothing of before. In turn, through my enjoyment of boxing and engagement with the sport, I am bringing that world back with me into my work and into my world.

Never miss a story. [SUBSCRIBE](#)

THE IRISH TIMES
WOMEN'S
PODCAST

The Women's Podcast SOUNDCLOUD
Ep 128 Separate...

The Women's Podcast - Ep 128 Separated...
The Women's Podcast - Ep 127 ... 2.7K
The Women's Podcast - Ep 126 The Walk ...
Latest tracks by The Women's Podcast

Cookie policy

Subscribe on [iTunes](#) Follow on [SOUNDCLOUD](#) Listen on [STITCHER](#)

IT Irish Times Health+
16,172 likes

Like Page Share

Be the first of your friends to like this

THE IRISH TIMES
Róisín
meets...

Maria Doyle Ken... SOUNDCLOUD

Maria Doyle Kennedy
Terry Waite
The Dublin Gay Men's Chorus

Latest tracks by *Róisín Meets* Podcast

Cookie policy

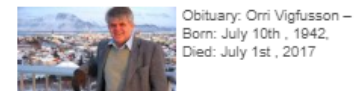
Subscribe on [iTunes](#) Follow on [SOUNDCLOUD](#) Listen on [STITCHER](#)

Obituaries »

Holocaust survivor who became champion of France's abortion law



Conservationist, entrepreneur and founder of North Atlantic Salmon Fund



German child refugee who made rewarding life in Ireland



ADVERTISEMENT



ABOVE & BEYOND

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

From €410 per Month
Or a €4,000
Purchase Contribution

[FIND OUT MORE >](#)

T&C's apply.



Something For The Weekend

Sign up to receive our email sent every Friday featuring offers, competitions and a preview of what's coming up in the weekend edition.

The Boxing Diaries is at the Oliver Sears Gallery , 29 Molesworth St, Dublin 2 until February 19th, 2015 oliversearsgallery.com

MORE FROM THE IRISH TIMES

Fashion



How to dress for the four-seasons-in-a-day Irish summer

Food & Drink



Michelin star street food chef to cook in Dublin

Motors



Peugeot 308 breathes new life into hatchback segment

Film



John Hume restored to his rightful place in Irish history

SPONSORED



Ageless beauty: "We need to embrace natural beauty more"



How a Best Managed Company award accelerates success



Lamb four ways: simple and delicious recipes for every day



Powers Whiskey: ten steps to the making of a global leader

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT