

Galway Arts Centre *presents*

CÚIRT

International Festival
of Literature

24-29 April 2007
Galway



Welcome

The **22nd Cúirt International Festival of Literature** presents a rich cross-section of contemporary writing, from household names, to cult classics, to new talent. As ever, the festival endeavours to bring to our audience writers who, whether familiar or unfamiliar, will stimulate the mind and heart.

This year, writers from Ireland and around the globe – including Spain, Mexico, Nicaragua, South Africa, Latvia, Croatia, Slovenia, Lebanon, the US, the UK, and a particularly strong contingent from Northern Ireland – will travel to Galway to share their work in person. Our week-long programme of readings, launches, drama and discussions, will showcase some of the very best authors currently at work. Joe Boske's beautiful image, commissioned for our poster and part of his festival exhibition, is a thoughtful response to the spirit of the programme. A selection of his iconic images are featured throughout this brochure.

This year's programme includes a very strong non-fiction line-up, including many authors who have experienced homelessness and/or imprisonment. Some of these authors will visit Castlerea Prison in Co. Roscommon to read in the Education Unit. There will also be a discussion in the Town Hall Theatre on how writing can redeem lost lives.

The centenary of the birth of Louis MacNeice and the fortieth anniversary of the death of Walter Macken will be commemorated with plaques located in the Claddagh. The plaques – MacNeice's poem "Galway" and an extract from Macken's *The Rain on the Wind* – will continue the very successful series begun last year with Seamus Heaney's "Girls Bathing, Galway 1965", located on the Salthill Prom. It is hoped that this series will continue to bring enduring work dedicated to Galway to a wide audience.

The influential and charismatic Lebanese artist, Mai Ghoussoub, will also be commemorated during the festival. Mai was due to be a guest of the festival before her sudden and premature death in February. Although not a household name in Ireland, she was a major influence on Arabic-Western cultural understanding. Along with a childhood friend, she founded the Arabic bookshop, Saqi, in London in 1979, which later developed into the innovative publisher, Saqi Books. As a tribute, Mai's exhibition on the subject of last summer's conflict in Lebanon, *Lebanon: Image in All the People*, will be shown in Galway Arts Centre throughout the festival and a memorial event will be held on Wednesday 25 April in the gallery.

This exhibition and her story, “Red Addiction”, included in the *Cúirt Annual*, are indicative of the depth and beauty of her artistic imagination.


The vitality of the Galway writing scene will be showcased by a number of events, beginning with a local publishers’ showcase on the second day of the festival. Later on in the week, there will be a reading by a number of promising authors who have performed in Galway City Library at the “Over the Edge” reading series, coordinated by Kevin Higgins and Susan Millar DuMars.

New work by Galway’s student population will be highlighted in the *ROPES 2007* launch and the *Document* exhibition. The new publishing initiative, Flosca Teo, has been undertaken by former students of NUI Galway’s MA in Literature and Publishing and promises to add much to the Irish and English language writing community.

New writing will get another boost with the coming together of the *Cúirt Annual 2007* and the city’s newest newspaper, *Galway First*. Contributors to Galway Arts Centre’s internet literary quarterly, *west47 online*, along with festival participants, will reach a wide audience with the publication of this year’s *Annual* as a supplement to *Galway First*. The newspaper’s support of new writing is to be admired and will increase the audience for poetry and prose in the city.

The *Cúirt Annual* New Writing Prize is being generously sponsored by Jimmy McGuire in honour of his late wife, Lena. The family business, Tígh Neachtain on Quay Street, has been at the centre of Galway cultural activity for many years. The prize is awarded to the best piece of writing published in the open submission section of *west47 online* and is judged by a guest of the festival. Thanks to the generosity of the McGuire family, this year’s winner will receive €1,000. The winner will be announced on the opening night of the festival and the author will be included in the *Cúirt* Debut reading the following Saturday.

The ever-popular Poetry Slam will afford a wonderful new opportunity to the eventual winner: as well as performing in Chicago as part of the Galway-Chicago Sister City calendar of events, this year’s winner will be a guest of Eastern Europe’s most prestigious literary event, the Vilenica Festival in Slovenia.



The Sealines Project comes to fruition this year and the work produced during the residencies in Riga, Koper and Galway in 2006 will be presented in a showcase event. Two Irish authors, Celia de Fréine and Michael O'Loughlin (who is Galway City's current writer-in-residence), will join Barbara Korun and Arturs Punte from Slovenia and Latvia respectively, to read from poetry and prose inspired by their host cities.

These are just some of the many exciting events that will be taking place over the week of the festival. As ever, the festival would not be possible without the support and expertise of our colleagues, partner organisations, volunteers and sponsors, all of whom we appreciate very much. We would like to thank especially the voluntary Cúirt advisory panel – Vinny Browne, Clíodhna Carney, Michael Gorman, Gerry Hanberry, Mike McCormack and Pat McMahon – whose advice and knowledge is invaluable to the festival, and our wonderful colleagues, Norma Flaherty, Kevina Pilkington, Ray McDonnell and Mattie Hynes.

All of us at Cúirt wish you, writers and readers, a very enjoyable and stimulating festival.

Tomás Hardiman
Managing Director

Maura Kennedy
Programme Director