# **Arts&Books**

## Not waving but sinking – in a deluge of pomp and ceremony



**TV REVIEW** 

EMORIES OF LAST weekend's Late Late 50th Anniversary Special (RTÉ One) prevented this column taking quite so much pleasure in the bags the BBC made of Queen Elizabeth's jubilee coverage. Someone decided that the showpiece event. the Diamond Jubilee Thames **Pageant** (BBC One, Sunday), would be much better if celebrities were dotted at random around the flotilla, so Maureen Lipman was peering out from a barge Richard E Grant was on a bridge talking about underpants and Clare Balding was trying to get a rowing crew to say some thing interesting.

And the commentary, which laid on the hyperbole (inevitably, I suppose). talked up how happy the queen looked (which she didn't) and how much she was enjoying herself (she looked bored). having a good time bobbing around in a boat in a downpour

gravitas. Culled from the more excitable | in" on it might be

seeing that the Beeb can get it wrong – | in the world. that's if I hadn't been wondering Tattoos are big. One young man festival. It all looked so easy-going and between the action outside, introduced whether scrubbing my eyeballs with a explained that he was willing to spend relaxed, with well-known writers and archive footage (including Ronnie Dela-Brillo pad might remove the images | £1,000 on a tattoo because the images | musicians wandering round, giving talks | ny's epic win in 1956) and dished out planted there by the anniversary *Late* 

If you've managed to forget Sinéad O'Connor's creepy story about the first time she met Gay Byrne, Dustin's offensive and unfunny quip about three men and a bike, Liam Neeson's coherence or the rest of the boring drivel, good for you. As the night dragged on even Ryan Tubridy had the look of a man who might at any moment clutch his head and do a passable mpersonation of *The Scream*. Why didn't they make it shorter? The first 40 minutes, when Gay Byrne and Pat Kenny were on gassing with Tubridy, was entertaining; the rest felt like more proof that The Late Late Show has run its course.



even though no sensible person could be | It rained on one's parade: Queen Elizabeth with Prince Harry and the duke and duchess of Cambridge on her jubilee barge

And you couldn't hear the music or even see much of the boats, what with **Possible Taste** (Channel 4, Tuesday), proportionally more on art than a banker the cutting back and forth between the transvestite Turner Prize-winning wittering celebs. But the real problem | potter explores his theory that "nothing | that's exercising them over in Blighty is | has such a strong influence on our aesthe BBC presenters and their lapses in thetic taste as the social class we grow up measure with a ruler". Getting ready to

youth wing of the broadcaster, they In this week's first part he was in them done up to the nines (though requently didn't quite know who was | Sunderland to look at working-class taste | toning down his usual look) on a girls who (though with all those samey gold | – a minefield of potential sneeriness. But | night out. "The difference is that middle epaulettes and people dressed like toy sol- as an Essex boy who had moved into the class women put a lot of time into diers, who could blame them?) and kept | middle-class art world, he was curious | looking like they haven't bothered." doing fantastically inappropriate things. Fearne Cotton and Paloma Faith dis-nated by what he called taste tribes. The in Milton Keynes mightn't be so kind. cussed jubilee memorabilia and how mines and industries are gone, replaced useful the sick bag with the queen's face by gyms where young men bulk up. "This STEVEN BYRNE'S documentary gym is the factory for building the mem- **Making Magic Happen** (RTÉ One, pership of your tribe," he said. Written Tuesday) told the story of Listowel BEACHED ON THE sofa for a rainy | down, that looks like arty nonsense, but | Writers' Week, which celebrated its | weekend, watching the jubilee coverage | when Perry said it, and the hard man he | 40th year last year, and, as well as telling | gramme from the studio, she interbecause nothing much else was on, there | said it to nodded, pleased to be so under- | how the festival evolved from Bryan should have been some pleasure in stood, it seemed the most obvious thing MacMahon and John B Keane's original Paul Hession and Olive Loughnane, with

Get stuck Dead Boss (BBC3. Thursday) is a new

murder/mystery/come series written by the brilliant Sharon Horgar (right), who plays a woman imprisoned for killing her boss. Jennifer Saunders costars.

**IN GRAYSON PERRY'S** intriguing three- meant something to him – his granny's would on a Damian Hirst." said Perry The women have big hair, high shoes and deep orange tans – "beauty you car go out is a big deal, and Perry joined Next week's look at middle-class taste

and chatting among themselves.

the festival, committee members carry on talked at length about how they just as interesting.

how adept Eileen Dunne was smile on her face. throughout the three-plus hours of the **RTÉ News Special: Olympic** tvreview@irishtimes.com

Fearne Cotton and Paloma Faith discussed how useful the sick bag with the queen's face on it might be

Torch Relay (RTÉ One. Wednesday) which followed the flame as it went through the city. Anchoring the proviewed her panel of Olympic athletes idea, it demystified the idea of a writers' | an engaging ease, flipped back and forth Olympic facts. There was never any You'd forgive the poor camera work - | doubt that if anything went horribly ust – but what was a pity was how one- | wrong, and someone legged it with the sided the film was. Writers gave long | torch, she'd lose the smile, whip back rviews about why they loved into her trusted-newsreader persona and

"Think about it, okay: last year we had sed it, but what about the | Barack Obama, this year we have the Jain people? Why they go and Olympic torch," said one of the Jedwards what they get out of it would be on the stage on St Stephen's Green, having relieved a bemused Sonia O'Sullivan of the torch. The crowd **TO BE FAIR** to the BBC and its | roared. "We'll give it back to this guy," iubilee coverage, filling airtime said the other one. "This guy being the on unscripted big occasions is | lord mayor, Andrew Montague," said tricky. But it is possible. Just look at | Dunne, knowing who's who and with a

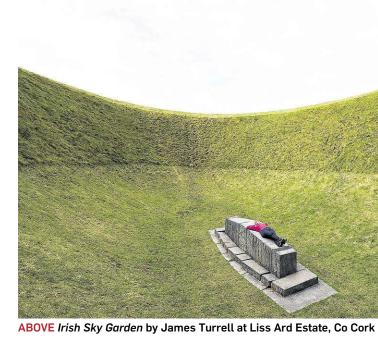
# Getartin that Barden



Recent installations at Bloom and Chelsea show how well art works outside the white cube of the gallery. So are gardens art? And can a forest walk become an outdoor gallery?

VISIT TO BLOOM or to the Chelsea Flower Show - in which, for just a few days, gardens appear | in gardens. At the Boboli Gardens of the Pitti ully formed – demonstrates the arti- | Palace in Florence, Abundance looks over the fice of gardening. Using nature as a | natural world while Neptune commands the medium, designers create places and spaces | water features, and the Roman emperor out of nothing. The descriptions of many of the Hadrian once lent a not-so-subtle whiff of gardens imply that they also mean something. | power by proxy to the Medici family. In con-The World Vision Garden, for which John | temporary times, art in gardens is more often Warland and Sim Flemons won a silver medal | a question of design and decoration. At at Chelsea. symbolises "how World Vision's | Chelsea and Bloom, crafted objects were generwork with children also helps families, commu- ally more aesthetic accompaniments than nities and, ultimately, entire countries". At Bloom, the Departures garden, by Cillian Nevertheless, there are places you can go to McDonald and Luke Byrne, investigated | see art and nature come together in a way that "the motivations of the emigrants in a stimulates the senses, making you look again contemplative setting"

Bringing natural or manmade materials | tings, and not simply large public pieces on together to create something meaningful is motorways and roundabouts and in civic



## Cuts and a clueless power



## On the road to nowhere – and Poland



**RADIO REVIEW** 

S THE RESIGNATION and apathy of the fiscal-treaty L campaign suggested, our attitude to Europe has become increasingly weary, if not cynical. But even the most ardent Europhile must have been slightly alarmed at the symbolism of the German ambassador appearing on RTE the day after the referendum was passed to give his country's verdict on the result. Admittedly, when Dr Eckhard

Lubkemeier spoke to George Lee on The Business (RTÉ Radio 1, Saturday), he came across as an impeccably mannered diplomat rather than an all-powerful plenipotentiary passing judgment on a vassal state, but it was still clear which country was the supplicant. When Lee asked what the German reaction to the Yes vote was, the ambassador immediately replied "relief" But when it came to relieving Ireland's fiscal woes, Lubkemeier offered little eassurance

He recognised that bank debt was a major problem but counselled caution "not to expect the chancellor [Angela Merkel] to say today what we will be doing". It was advice that Ministers might have heeded, given Berlin's subsequent silence on the matter. By the time the ambassador acknowledged that "a lot of hardship has been taken by the Irish people, and we greatly respect and appreciate this", the impression was of a wealthy Teutonic uncle giving his ragamuffin Celtic relatives a pat on the head before shooing them along. It was a patronising remark picked up by Paul Sweeney, chief economist with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. when he said that "we made a terrible mistake in socialising bank debts, and of course the beneficiaries of that are the German banks, so no wonder he [the ambassador] respects that". Lest we were left with any lingering

traces of optimism after that exchange, Lee spoke to the Nobel-winning economist Paul Krugman, whose jaunty manner belied his deep gloom for the future. On the referendum outcome he was unequivocal: "The fiscal thing is a bad idea, and one shouldn't vote for a bad idea.'

Far from requiring more austerity. Europe needed to spend to kickstart the economy, as our example proved: "Ireland has been such a good soldier

#### Radio moment of the week

It was hard to know whether to laugh or cry when the Independent TD Mick Wallace, a loud voice for equality and fairness, went on Thursday's **Morning Ireland** (RTE Radio 1, weekdays) to explain why his construction company underpaid VAT. resulting in a €2.1 million settlement with the taxman.

"I acknowledge that what I did was wrong, but I did it in good faith, he said. "Even though it was illegal. thought it was the right thing to do." Wallace was candid as ever, but

his honest image took a knock.

Having spoken from Dunkirk, John Murray drove 1.000km to broadcast from Berlin the next day

and done everything it's supposed to do, and austerity still hasn't worked.' Krugman was downbeat about the uro's chances of survival – "about 50/50" – and was even bleaker when Lee asked what the Government could do to alleviate the situation. "Wow, there's very little," the economist chirruped: as a small country without its own currency, Ireland's economic policy options were virtually nil. "Salvation has to come from Frankfurt and Berlin." Clearly, we might have to get used to

hearing from Lubkemeier. Last Saturday's edition was a good example of how Lee has reshaped The *Business* since he took over from John Murray as host. There are still interviews with bigwigs and items on successful Irish enterprises, as well as comic asides courtesy of the comedian Tara Flynn. But Lee has given the show a spine of intellectual rigour and serious inquiry, as his illuminating discussion on Europe testified

Since entering the environs of daytime talk radio with **The John Murray Show** (RTÉ Radio 1. weekdays), Lee's predecessor has given free rein to the playfulness that marked his tenure on *The Business*, as his own forays into Europe last week proved. Not for Murray analysis of the prospects for the single currency; his mind was focused on Euro 2012, as he drove across the

Continent to arrive in Poland before Ireland kick off their campaign in the football finals.

It was a vintage ploy by Murray, road trips having been one of his trademarks on The Business and Morning Ireland. This was of a larger order than usual however. Having spoken from the beaches of Dunkirk on Wednesday Murray and his travelling companior Zbyszek Zalinski, drove 1.000km to broadcast from Berlin the next day. Bu for all the scale of the journey, it made for curiously flat listening. Murray's reports on his progress only

accounted for a few minutes each dav much of it occupied by slightly forced banter with the comedian Neil Delamere, who handled studio duties back in Dublin. Attempts to give a Homeric spin to the trip foundered characterising Wednesday's long drive as "epic", Murray told awestruck tales of

ailbacks like vou've never seen before" There was also a slightly perfunctory juality to his on-the-spot chat with Irish expats in Berlin, moving rapidly from guest to guest without allowing time for a rapport to develop. Given that Murray had only a short time in each destination. a certain looseness could be forgiven, but the tone was rushed and confused rather than freewheeling and anarchic.

Still, Murray's journey had its telling moments, as when he took a diversion off a jammed motorway in the Netherlands to meet a group of Irish graduates working at a Dutch software company. Expressing varying degrees of thusiasm for their emigrant lifestyle, they had thrown themselves into one area of the local culture. "You can go out every night," said one interviewee. "We've got Irish bars, Dutch bars,

German bars and Belgian bars, so there's no problem on the socialising front." For some, at least, the European dream lives on.

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Saturday, June 9, 2012

one of the definitions of art. So are gardens

art? When art goes into gardens, does art or

Mark Twain on golf, is sculpture in the out

doors a good walk spoiled?

Гај Mahal to Versailles.

nature emerge the winner? Or, to paraphrase

Gardens have always had meaning. Persian

gardens were laid out according to the pre-

cepts of paradise. A walled, rectangular enclo

sure is irrigated with a canal, pond or fountain

often quartering the space, echoing the four rivers of the Garden of Eden. This template

can be seen in gardens from the grounds of the

The gardens and large landscaping projects

by 18th-century designers such as Capability

Brown and Humphry Repton were also made

to convey something. Beyond merely creating

charming views by damming rivers, forming

lakes and sometimes almost moving moun

tains, they demonstrated man's mastery over

nature, even though the work of Brown in par

Throughout history, sculpture has featured

ticular often involved copying nature closely.

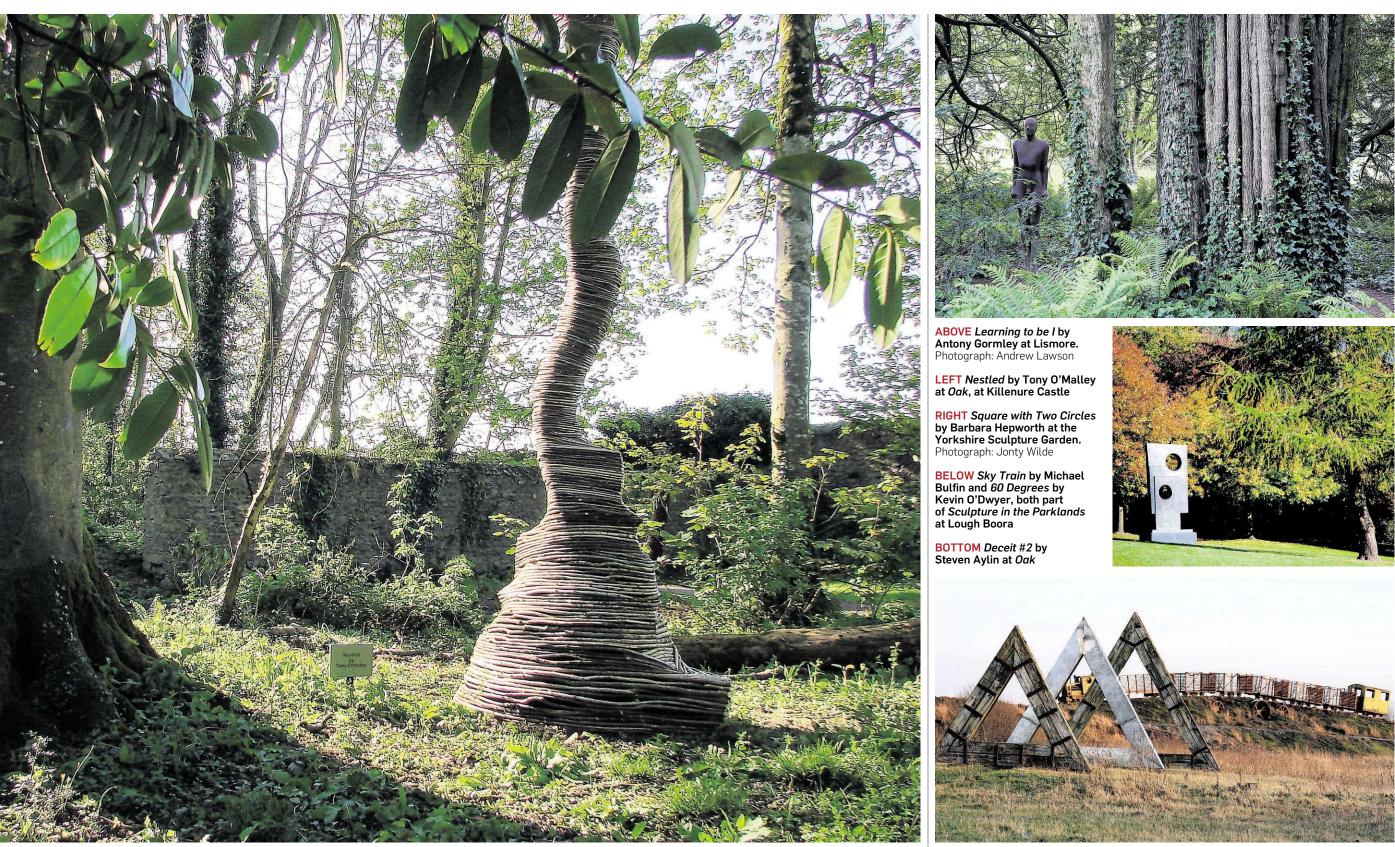
carriers of any particular meaning.

at both. At its best, sculpture in outdoor set

#### Saturday, June 9, 2012



### SOLDIERY OF THE CANVAS: John Banville on conversations with Louis le Brocquy and other artists





At its best, sculpture in outdoor settings, and not simply large public pieces on motorways,

roundabouts and in civic spaces, benefits from being freed from the confines of the art gallery

spaces, benefits from being freed from the sometimes stultifying confines of the art gal-

lerv or museum. In his groundbreaking study of art galleries Inside the White Cube Brian O'Doherty writes about the way in which "the ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is 'art'. The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself.

In describing how the cultural and percep- | the white walls of an art gallery, and far less for- | ting. Tony O'Malley's *Nestled* is a wrapped tual forces embodied in the gallery not only turn objects in them into art, O'Doherty shows | So what happens to sculpture when it gets | tops. It gives a sense of the nature of growth, how art taken out of the gallery sometimes down off the plinth? Against the riot of colours and the shifting shaping of climate and seems less "art" than when it was inside.

texts: wine might taste better in crystal glasses and by candlelight, and dresses can appear back of a chair at home. Nature can be a far harder taskmaster than

## Greats outdoors Where to soak up sculpture

ARTISTS' GARDENS Gardens created by artists can be the perfect ombination of nature and vision. Claude Monet created the gardens at Giverny that then inspired some of his most beloved

paintings. Derek Jarman's garden at Dungeness in Kent is a bleak beauty in the shadow of a nuclear power plant. Barbara Hepworth's garden at St lves contains many of her sculptures and is in the care of the Tate

#### THE GREAT AND THE GOOD From the guirky to the curious, the **Lwe**

Gardens at Glengarriff in Co Cork (theewe.com) are worth a visit. All the pieces, including Fish (RIGHT), are by Sheena Wood. The gardens have a charity tea party today, from 1pm to 5pm, in aid of RehabCare and the onal Learning Network.)

The Shekina Sculpture Garden at malure in Co Wicklow includes work by Leo Higgins, Alexandra Wejchert, Imogen Stuart and Ken Thompson.

giving of art that doesn't come up to standard. and forms that nature can come up with, the weather over the years. The same effect can be seen in other con- | merely decorative is often not enough.

At *Oak*, which runs at Killenure Castle in Co Andrea Cleary's *Spore Drip*, a cascade of felt Tipperary until the end of June (kil- | hangings that grow like an invading organism more attractive on velvet hangers in designer | lenure.com), Aoife Barrett's *Favela* is a series | across the path. Not all the work at *Oak* surboutiques than they do when thrown over the | of wooden dwellings that appear to have been | vives the setting, but it would be hard for any made for fairytale-scale slum dwellers. They | gallery cafe to replicate the sheer pleasure of are made stranger still by their woodland set- having a coffee in the shade of the enormous



hazel-rod structure that reaches to the tree

Also mysteriously wonderful at *Oak* is

T IS TEMPTING to say that the current Government is the most philistine in the history of the State. But that would be a wild exaggeration. It is merely the most philistine since the end of the second World War. For 50 years it could be said that, even when official cultural policy was neglectful, it was not actively hostile. This claim would be hard to make now.

Roughly speaking, for the first 25 years of the State's existence, cultural policy was dominated by prurience and paranoia. The young State did make some positive moves. such as making the Abbey the first subsidised theatre in the English-speaking world. But cultural policy was dominated by two major themes. One was a very badly executed attempt to revive Irish as the main vernacular language – a policy that arguably did more harm than good. The other was the idea, inherited from turn-of-the-century cultura nationalists, that there was an authentic (rural and traditional) Irish culture that needed to be protected from foreignness and filth (which amounted, pretty much, to the same thing). The idea that free artistic expression might be a value in itself, that the State's existence might be validated by its vibrant modern culture, had little purchase on official

There was little to choose in this regard between Cumann na nGaedhael, which dominated in the 1920s, and Fianna Fáil, which replaced it as the governing party in the 1930s Both were led by men with no real interest in the arts: William Cosgrave admitted in 1924

## grab characterise this Government's approach to the arts

that he had never been to the Abbey; Éamon de Valera went to the national theatre for the first time when he was in his 50s, to see a play about St Francis of Assisi Each has his signature piece of culturally destructive legislation. Cumann na nGaedhael's was the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929, a response to the report of the official Committee on Evil Literature. (How apt that one of the books banned under the legislation was George

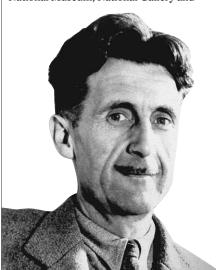
Orwell's 1984.) George Bernard Shaw remarked that, with this legislation, Ireland "has apparently decided not to be a cultured country". (The Free State governmen had already, as one of its first acts, introduced censorship of films, but the banning of almost every serious Irish author was even more destructive.)

Fianna Fáil's great act of cultural vandalism was the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935, which attacked traditional music and dance by placing dances under the control of the courts, the police and, in effect, the clergy. Since the end of the second World War. however, the broad tendency of official cultural policy has been supportive. The Radio Éireann ymphony Orchestra was allowed to expand during and immediately after the war years. A new Censorship of Publications Act in 1946 was slightly more liberal, in that it established an appeals process under which some serious works (Proust's In Search of Lost *Time*, for example) were unbanned. The

interparty government of 1948 established th

cultural-relations committee of the departm

established the Arts Council in 1951. It was just as significant that Seán O Faoláin, the most trenchant critic of previous State cultural policy, was appointed as its director in 1956 making a statement about the council's



National Archives, have had to struggle for the most basic of resources, including storage and exhibition space. Big ideas, such as relocating the Abbey, have come and gone, generating acres of comment and analysis and no action Many important artists, especially performers,

still struggle to make a living. But the worst that any government has done since the 1950s is nothing. The most inadequate governments have been simply neglectful. I can't think of one of which it could fairly be said that it was actively destructive of the fragile fabric of our cultural institutions. Now, however, for the first time since the 1930s, we have a Government that is moving

beyond benign neglect to active harm. It is pretty bad in itself that the programme for government has virtually nothing to say about cultural policy. There's a bland statement about encouraging touring "in order to protect the State's investment in regional arts infrastructure" - not, one notes, in order to create transformative artistic experiences. And there's an equally bland aspiration to encourage more private sponsorship. But this wouldn't be the first time a government was so cluelessly tokenisti

Nor is this even the first time that arts organisations have faced serious cutbacks in funding, though the drastic effects of cumulative cuts likely to be in the region of 30 per cent have yet to be realised. What is new is the combination of cluelessness. cutbacks and a mania for centralised control. The enormous financial pressure on the whole arts and culture sector makes it crucial that the



One is an innovative vision. The other is a determination to strengthen the institutiona supports that can help individuals and companies to make the best of hard times

of external affairs. More significantly, it

This is not to say that the story of cultural policy since 1945 is one of great progressive

independence from government. achievement. Progress has been slow, piecemeal and inadequate. Key cultural institutions, such as the National Library. National Museum, National Gallery and



Victoria's Way in Co Wicklow victoriasway.eu) is a sculpture garden ontaining large-scale works from India. The National Botanic Gardens will hold Sculpture in Context in September and October (sculptureincontext.com). Kilfane in Co Kilkenny has work by David lash and Bill Woodrow. It opens in July and

August (kilfane.com).

CORPORATE GOOD

One of the best sculpture gardens was ted for the soft-drinks company Peps by its former chairman Donald Kendall, in he belief that his vision for the company ould be reflected in the atmosphere of stability, creativity and experimentatior that the art creates. About an hour from Manhattan, the **PepsiCo sculpture** gardens contain works by Auguste Rodir Henry Moore, Claes Oldenburg, Alberto Giacometti and Jean Dubuffet. The gardens have been landscaped to suit the sculptures



ord (lismorecastlegardens.com), which are open from May to September, have works by artists including Eilís O'Connell and Antony Gormley, and this year there are also sculp ures by Hans Josephsohn

At Liss Ard in Co Cork (lissardestate.com the Irish Sky Garden by James Turrell, one of a series of works the artist made around the world frames views of the sky concentrati the visitor's understanding and experience o what often passes unnoticed above our heads.

Like the sky gardens, the best of outdoor art s often made in the landscape, rather than being imported into it. Sculpture in the Parklands at Lough Boora in Co Offaly (sculpture intheparklands.com) showcases art made during residencies in the workshops of this former Bord na Móna cutaway bog. Artists include Alan Counihan. Martina Galvin. Kevin O'Dwver, Julian Wild and Johan Sietzema. It is one of the art treasures of Ireland, well worth a visit at any time of the year.

Putting art in a gallery asks us to look at it in has painted delicate multicoloured lapwings. | a different way: as an idea, a comment, a piece *Oak* is a temporary exhibition and admission | of history and a commodity. Putting it outside charges apply, as they do to most gardens and | can seem an intrusion into an already beautiful sculpture gardens. This turns up the intervisit gardens but not art galleries, even though | lery walls, something very special can occur. similar levels of creativity, energy, labour and And if you think nature doesn't need the artifice of art added to it, don't forget it would be Some art, such as that of Antony Gormley, hard to experience nature at all if it wasn't for lends itself very well to the outdoors, but one | the roads that bring us to it, or even the paths

tree in the courtvard, on to which Steven Avlin esting paradox that we seem happy to pay to overbearing energy of those plain white gal commitment are required for each.

person who has triumphed both inside and out that wind within.



A vision of the past: Minister for Arts Jimmy Deenihan at the National Library and, left, George Orwell, whose novel 1984 the State censored in 1929. Photographs: Alan Betson; AF

State has at least two substitutes for money.

For the first time since the 1930s, we have a government that is moving beyond benign neglect to active harm

That the Government has no vision is obvious. (Its appointment of an Arts Council with a conscious paucity of artists is telling.) What's staggering is that the energies it is willing to devote to cultural policy are going into undermining the integrity and independence of institutions such as Culture Ireland and the National Library.

The only point of all of this seems to be a bureaucratic power grab. The enigmatic statement in the programme for governmen that "responsibility for policy-making will revert to the Department, while agencies will be accountable for implementing policy. assessing outcomes and value for money seems to suggest that the goal is to reverse 50 years of progress towards establishing cultural bodies as the property of the nation not of the Government.

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