

Artist connects with the Animal Spirit at Wildewood



By Nate Smelle

A year after its official opening, the Wildewood Gallery in Maynooth is hosting its first solo exhibition entitled Animal Spirit. Featuring the paintings of artist Henry Gordon, the opening reception held on Saturday, July 4 packed in the crowd, with some attendees spilling out the front door onto the sidewalk.

Gordon's collection takes a deep and loving look into the eyes of the Animal Spirit, capturing special moments shared between the artist and a family of non-humans. Some of the animals represented in the paintings include: goats, hare, deer, a chimpanzee and horses. Working as a healer at the Anahata Horse Centre, many of the animals in Gordon's paintings are like family to her. Others, such as the chimpanzee are painted from photographs. To connect with an animal, Gordon said that all we really need to do is open our hearts to the love they have to give us.

"When you look into an animal's eyes you can really see and feel its spirit," Gordon said.

"Animals are individual beings. They are not just a herd of goats, a herd of horses or cows, although they have these attributes. Each animal has its own spirit that we can connect with and learn from."

Studying and practicing shamanic spirituality and healing for more than 15 years, Gordon sees the natural world as a helpful teacher. Whether its plants, animals, or the landscape, all of these things can teach people how to bring more balance to their life.

"We are part of everything that is here," said Gordon.

"Realistically we're not the best or even the smartest species. If we pay attention animals will teach us how to live in balance with the environment and with other species. It's what they do every day because if they don't they will die. In the modern world we go from our house to the car, to the mall and to work. We don't really have a lot of contact with the natural environment."

Grateful for the opportunity to be the first solo exhibit in the space, Gordon was thrilled by the turnout at the opening reception.

"It's a beautiful venue here in Maynooth. This community has so many great artistic and creative things going on."

"This branding of artistic Maynooth is really working," added Wildewood co-owner Joe Shulman.

"Karen Gray gave us that when she moved here seven years ago. She put up a sign that said, Welcome to Artistic Maynooth, and it stuck. People have started coming in telling us how they had passed through Maynooth for 40 years and never found a reason to stop until recently. One person described the experience of going from gallery to gallery similar to trick-or-treating."

Gordon's work will be on display at the Wildewood gallery until Aug. 1. The next solo exhibit on display at Wildewood will open in September featuring the work of artist Rocky Green. Following Green's show will be the work of Arne Roosman on display in October.