



THE POWER WITHIN

Gerard M Burns' monumental works bring subtle nuances to classical themes

I have often thought that music and art are inextricably linked. A great painting can rivet you to the floor and create spine tingling emotions in the same way as your favourite piece of music.

My inability to draw a straight line or hold a tune only serves to increase my admiration for creative people. My only problem with this is that I think it's downright unfair that any one person should be so good at both.

Gerard M Burns is the person in question. After completing his degree at Glasgow School of Art, his band— Valerie and the Week of Wonders— were signed to A&M records. Success followed and the band went on to support Lyle Lovett, Love & Money and Simple Minds among others. They even managed to write a film score for a Jim Gillespie movie.

In 1999 Gerard decided to give up his job as principal of art at St Aloysius College to concentrate full time on his painting. In this short period Gerard has found great success. His large figurative works seem to have struck a chord and I get asked about

WITH TRACEY McNEE

Tracey, founder of Pivotal art, was a consultant with Christie's in New York

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Gerard's work more than any other artist at my gallery. Perhaps it is the initial familiarity which attracts us: we recognise a human figure, we look more closely and the fine detail makes the figure seem almost photographic, which in turn encourages us to look deeper.

This ability to engage the viewer and make them feel comfortable allows Gerard to lead us further into the painting. He often uses themes and stories based up on classical mythology and Christianity. Sometimes this can be the subtle reworking of a legend or parable set in contemporary times, the deeper meaning of which would be lost on the viewer were it not for the title. At other times, as with the monumental canvas *Labyrinth*, the

symbolism is less subtle but still enigmatic. The theme of Europa recurs in Gerard's work and is a typical example of how he uses myths and legends to convey aspects of modern life.

Immediately we are struck by the size of the bull and its implied power and strength, yet the young girl appears unfazed. Her power is her innocence. Unaware of this power she is not able to affect her destiny. The bull, on leading the girl to the sea, reverts to its original form, Jupiter, and ravages the young girl. Destruction of innocence may seem a rather depressing subject, but Gerard is inviting us to look deeper and explore the power of this child-like innocence and its ability to engender hope.

Gerard Burns' work has many levels but it is his ability to capture the viewer with his beautifully painted figures that allows those other strata to be explored. In December, Gerard embarks on his first solo show in London. His works can be found in private and corporate collections as far afield as Australia and Canada. ■