

THANKS TO THE IRELAND FUNDS, KILKENNY'S BUTLER GALLERY  
OFFERS FREE PROGRAMS TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



CREATIVITY  
&  
CULTURE



"THANKS TO THE IRELAND FUNDS, WE HAVE CONTINUED OUR PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND EVEN IMPROVED THEM. WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO OFFER MORE WORKSHOPS AND USE BETTER QUALITY MATERIALS IN OUR ACTIVITIES AS A DIRECT RESULT FROM THE GRANT WE RECEIVED," SAYS BAIRBRE-ANN. "IT HAS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE."



**6 YEAR-OLD GRACE** is having a bit of trouble with her mask. She pushes another handful of leaves into the glue to see if that gives her the effect she hopes for. “I want it to be beautiful, but I want it to be kind of scary too....”

Grace, and 17 other children are spending a sunny Saturday inside the Butler Gallery located inside Kilkenny Castle. Against a backdrop of an exhibit of self-portraits by Irish artist Tony O’Malley, the children are being guided through an art activity by two adult artists who first discuss the importance and interesting aspects of the many faces presented by O’Malley on the walls.

But it’s anything but a boring lecture. The children ask questions and make observations

about the art. This then becomes a few hours of intense mask-making with a fantastic art cart filled with art supplies and natural materials ranging from prickly chestnut hulls to tiny red apples, all ready for small hands. The children are encouraged to get creative—and yes, messy—as they build their own masks.

“Children are definitely not intimidated by art,” says Bairbre-Ann Harkin, Education Curator at the Butler Gallery. “When children are exposed to art at a young age and allowed the freedom to explore, there is a noticeable benefit in their self confidence. They may not become artists or art professionals, but that confidence extends into other areas of their life.”

The Butler Gallery is one of the preeminent contemporary art spaces in Ireland. Producing seven exhibits a year to the public of early to mid-career contemporary artists, the Gallery also undertakes a full educational program for the public in Kilkenny and beyond. This includes their Solas program that invites children ages 5-12 into the Gallery every other week for education and activities. The programs are so popular they often book up in a matter of hours.

“It has been a challenging time for the Gallery with the funding cuts, but we’re working smart to keep these educational programs solid,” explains Bairbre-Ann. “Everyone in the cultural sector

knows what The Ireland Funds are doing for arts and culture. So I attended one of the seminars run by The Ireland Funds to teach organizations about applying for their grant round. It was because of this that we applied for funding when we realized our Solas program might be a good match.”

*The Butler Gallery received a grant thanks to the Promising Ireland Campaign. Today, that grant from The Ireland Funds is enabling the Gallery to offer top-quality programs to children, at no charge to local families.*



Works by Irish artist Tony O'Malley on the walls of the Butler Gallery inspired the educational activity for children to discuss the works and craft their own masks.

