

REMEMBERING GWYNETH AP TOMOS

Dear Gwyneth. I'm not starting a letter but remembering Gwyneth ap Tomos. The first word that comes to mind is 'dear'. Dear, but strong and firm, and stable. Strong in her courage when facing difficulties; firm in her awareness of indigenous values; dear in her way and her welcome; steadfast in her wisdom and in her relationships with her locality, and the importance of place. She was an artist from the land, and from a landscape she knew well. In a way her work reminds me of the work of the rural artists, the 'artisan artists', Peter Lord discusses. If you are familiar with Peter Lord's work, you will know that this isn't a criticism, but an understanding of what matters in art in the true Welsh culture. It isn't necessarily high-brow academic art that 'speaks' our language or touches our hearts here in Wales. The *Aesthetics of Relevance* is how Peter describes work created for the native audience. Gwyneth's landscapes are unique, easily recognisable, and describe her surroundings with none of the 'frills' of the international art world. It is an intuitive response to the landscape, which also includes (where it isn't possible not to) the caravan sites that pollute the beauty of the landscape. Something that Kyffin never included. not ever a tractor nor a pylon!

But to me personally, my memories revolve around going to Glyn-y-Weddw, to the Plas, in the late eighties of the last century, and of the support that I received from Gwyneth and Dafydd. It was as a relatively young artist, looking for places to show my work, that I travelled to the end of Llŷn. Through Gwyneth and Dafydd, I had an exhibition, and work was sold, but I had much more than that. I had some kind of home back in the north after some years living in Cardiff. I had conversation and stories and help to bring several projects to fruition. One that was particularly successful was the co-operation between poets and artists during the Porthmadog National Eisteddfod in 1987. Another was the showcase with Irish artists called 'Transition/Trasnu' (Welsh and Irish words). While Gwyneth's kept the nest in the Plas tidy, Dafydd and I would be out 'hunting' for art, going backwards and forwards to Dublin, with numerous scrapes, and one arbitrary trip to the city of Galway in the west I will never forget!

But it is also important to remember that Oriel Plas Glyn-y-Weddw, now an integral part of the Welsh visual arts network, would not exist today unless without the vision and inspirational work of Gwyneth and Dafydd, resurrecting the place from ruin. Our debt is great to them, and I am delighted that my relationship with this place continues today.