

# Near-death experience changes Irish artist's life

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Irish artist Roisin Fitzpatrick

In 2005, a sudden and unexpected near death experience completely changed **Wicklow**-based artist **Roisin Fitzpatrick**'s life.

It wasn't just the shock of almost dying, although that was bad enough. It was also what happened in the immediate aftermath that set **Fitzpatrick** off on a new artistic course.

"I had just turned 35 and I was in wonderful health," Fitzpatrick, whose work is currently on display in a SoHo gallery until May, tells the **IrishCentral.com**. "Then, the day after my birthday, I just turned my head from right to left and bam – in one moment I had the most horrendous headache.

“All I could do was call an ambulance and lie down. A wonderful ambulance man came along and he helped me enormously. I was seen quite quickly in the hospital because he insisted on it.”

Unknown to her, Fitzpatrick, now 39, was suffering from what medical specialists call a subarachnoid hemorrhage, a dangerous bleeding occurring at the base of the right side of her brain.

Immediately she displayed classic symptoms of the condition, including a thunderclap headache and vomiting. Up to half of all of these cases are fatal, and many die before even reaching the hospital. Others end up with severe disabilities. But Fitzpatrick survived completely unscathed.

“I wasn’t scared. For years I had practiced meditation and that really helped to keep me calm, it kept my blood pressure down,” she says.

“And then suddenly out of the blue, in the midst of all of this, I had the most wonderful near death experience. As I was waiting in intensive care I felt myself coming out of my body.

“I felt a deep sense of bliss, a sense of calmness and joy, and for me it suddenly didn’t matter if I got back into my body or not, because I was discovering that there was no such thing as death. Once you realize that it totally transforms your whole perspective on life. Once you learn that life is infinite it becomes a matter of enjoying every moment, because there is nothing to worry about.”

Next morning the medical specialists were astounded to discover that the bleeding in her brain had stopped.

“I was able to stay calm. It certainly helped the situation. And the whole experience has stayed with me and informs my work now. I create from that state of joy and bliss I discovered unexpectedly,” she says.

Now Fitzpatrick’s unlikely artistic discoveries have been rewarded. When she exhibited at the New York Art Expo recently she got a phenomenal response from attendees.

“As children we’re in touch with that universal energy until we learn to forget it. I mean, just look up at the Milky Way sometime. It really puts you in your proper perspective. We don’t even know how big the universe is,” she says.

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“It’s incredibly humbling and awesome at the same time. I mean, if something this big and this intricate all functions and all works then there must be an incredible power out there. I believe that power is also within you too.

“When you relax into it then your life really starts to flow. My art wants to help you shift into a consciousness of a much bigger picture.”

Fusing light, crystal and silk, Fitzpatrick creates art that subtly mesmerizes the observer. Contemplating her intricate and elegant patterns produces a light trance state in the viewer, which brings you closer to her intention with each work.

Born in **Dublin** in 1969, Fitzpatrick grew up in Howth, attending the local school. The landscape of the nearby **Deer Park**, including the stunning megalithic tomb, still has a lasting pull on her imagination. In particular the quality of the light in **Ireland** has given her a deep appreciation of the natural world and the seasons.

“I loved all of that growing up. It gave me a sense of magic. The whole area around **Deer Park** is a beautiful place,” she says.

“There’s something incredibly inspiring about it. It’s the first place I go when I go home to visit my parents. It was also where I took my fiancé Pearse on our first date.”

The magic and light in Fitzpatrick’s recent artistic work arises directly from her near death experience, she says. “I want to share that sense of inner peace, that sense of joy and connection that we have and have forgotten about because we get so caught up in the every day world and have become so busy,” she feels.

Recently in her art she has also begun to revisit Celtic lore.

“I have a whole series of pieces created around those famous tales. I also refer to the ancient carvings on famous Neolithic sites like like Newgrange,” she says.

“I’ve studied all the art in those places because those images are inspiring and universal. They weren’t tombs, they were observatories. I want to connect with pre-Celtic art, ancient mythology and the amazing places we still have in **Ireland**.”

Fitzpatrick’s latest artwork will be on view at Ward-Nasse Gallery, 178 Prince Street, New York throughout May.

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