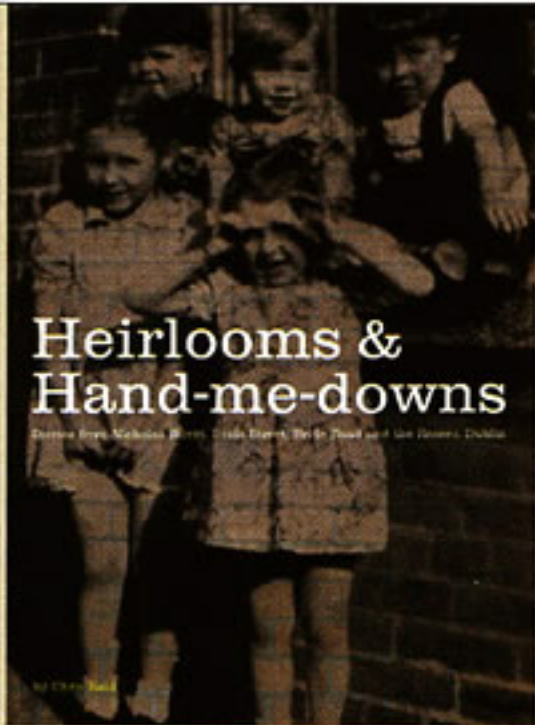


# letters



## HEIRLOOMS AND HAND-ME-DOWNS BY CHRIS REID, REVIEWED BY MANNIX FLYNN IN THE AUTUMN 2012 EDITION OF THE IRISH ARTS REVIEW

Dear Sir,

It is with regret that I feel compelled to reply to the review by Mannix Flynn of the book *Heirlooms & Hand-me-downs* in your last issue. One of Mr Flynn's contentions is that the stories in the book have been stripped of their context and have no meaning. This is just plain wrong. My late mother was one of the contributors to the book. Several stories relate to relatives of mine and as I read them, I can almost hear their voices. The stories are exactly in context as evidenced by the number of lost relatives in Australia and the United States who have made contact with me via the author having read the stories and recognized them as an authentic account of events in our family history. Chris Reid has faithfully interpreted the stories and

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placed them out there as the voice of the people who lived them. They are not 'childlike and sentimentalized musings,' they are true. As to whether we are the 'salt of the earth,' I will leave that for others to decide.

Mannix is partly correct in saying that communities who live in social housing complexes have been patronized and exploited, but

Yours Sincerely,  
James Gough

Dear Sir,

The aggressive tone of the 'review' of the public art project and book *Heirlooms & Hand-me-downs* in the last edition of the *Irish Arts Review* caught the attention of the RTÉ radio 1 talk show 'LiveLine' who featured it on 4 September.

Four people came on to support the project/book. Declan McGonagle, Cllr John Gallagher, James Gough and Peter Mooney. What follows is an edited selection of some of the things they said in response to Flynn's review, which speak for themselves and repudiate his claims.

**Declan McGonagle:** 'It's not really a review, because there is nothing constructive in this at all. It is entirely a put down.'

**John Gallagher:** 'Chris Reid seemed to me to be really sincere and I enjoyed the work, living not too far away from the Ross Road, it was real for me ... an excellent book. Well worth reading and Mannix is not right on this.'

**Declan McGonagle:** 'Why does Mannix think that the people in Dublin 8 with whom Chris Reid worked and whose stories are represented in these plaques are less able than him to understand what was going on here?'

**John Gallagher:** 'The plaques look lovely. When the sun hits the walls, it's magnificent looking at them. Everything in the book was recorded and it's accurate. The people enjoyed telling the stories. We have an opinion and we have a right to express it and other people have a right to know what we think.'

**James Gough:** 'Chris came in to see my mother a few times in Meath Community Unit and he recorded her. She was very happy to talk to him. I was very happy with her contribution.'

**Declan McGonagle:** 'The way this project was put together was painstaking in its attention to the sensitivities of people. There was complete participation and I reject completely that either Chris Reid is patronizing as an artist or that this whole way of working is patronizing.'

**Peter Mooney:** 'Chris Reid's project is bringing art into the lives of ordinary people and making art out of the lives of ordinary people and I'll bet in the Bride Street area of Dublin people are more aware of art and it's place and values and aesthetic qualities [because of this].'

Though the 'review' was read out by Joe Duffy, no one came on the program to support Mannix Flynn's opinion – not even Mannix Flynn.

Chris Reid

“The way this project was put together was painstaking in its attention to the sensitivities of people”