

Report

Who are Ireland's bright young things?

A new generation of Irish actors, writers, musicians, artists, film-makers and comedians is bursting with talent and hope for the future. Eithne Shortall picks 30 of the best aged 30 or under

Met the 30 most talented Irish artists under the age of 30. This is the next generation. To these actors, writers, film producers, musicians, comedians and artists, we entrust Ireland's cultural canon. It will fall to them to chronicle our rise and fall, to portray our people and their concerns, and to maintain Ireland's artistic reputation internationally.

While almost all of them were born in Ireland, that was not a requirement for inclusion. They had to be 30 years of age or younger, have lived in Ireland for five years, be notably influenced by the country and adding to its cultural landscape.

After sifting through contenders for a month, I have become fiercely confident about Ireland's creative future. It was never a matter of filling space but rather of trying to justify omissions.

These authors and playwrights deal with contemporary issues of class, drugs and youth culture. The musicians have stepped out of U2's long shadow, and include feisty frontwomen, unapologetic pop and folk acts. The gallery space is no longer holy ground for the visual artists, and the actors alternate with ease between international and domestic projects.

What marks them out most from their predecessors is that these

young artists do not think they have to emigrate to succeed. Some have set up base abroad, but others are reaching an international audience from Ireland, assisted by the internet and cheap air travel.

This new generation is helped by fresh initiatives and centres that specifically support young artists. The Project, and particularly its Project Brand New scheme, is a vital starting point for playwrights, directors and performers. The work is not always up to standard, but it gives artists the chance to make mistakes, to learn, and to move on and create accomplished pieces. This year's fringe festival was one of the best, and Irish theatre groups were at the centre of it.

Several new music venues have opened, despite the recession, including the Workman's Club in Dublin city centre. The recent phenomenon of turning derelict buildings into art venues, as done by Pretty Vacant, has given less established painters and sculptors a better chance to exhibit. These venues are also attracting younger viewers, who previously shunned white cubes.

This is a strong and determined generation of performers, writers, directors and visual artists. They have the talent and savvy to succeed at home and abroad. It is almost time for the baton to be passed to them and we can rest assured it will be in good hands.

KEVIN COSGROVE

Artist, 25

The Dublin-based painter made his mark with his degree show, part of which was shown on the cover of *Circa* magazine. He was selected for the RHA's Futures in 2009 and has exhibited in London and Berlin.