

Two Rivers of Light

EXHIBITION BY

Romio & Sophie Shrestha

Siamsa Tíre

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An Roinn Cultúir, Cumarsáide agus Spóirt
Department of Culture, Communications and Sport

ABOUT TWO RIVERS OF LIGHT

This exhibition is an invitation to remember something humanity seems to have forgotten: the sacredness of art, the wisdom of the Divine Feminine, and our profound connection to one another.

We bring together two remarkable spiritual cultures, separated by mountains and oceans, yet connected by a deep reverence for the mysteries of life - Tibet and Ireland. Two ancient lands. Two great artistic traditions. Two cultures that have preserved extraordinary spiritual treasures through centuries of devotion, hardship, and change.

In Ireland, we see this devotion in the extraordinary illuminated pages of the *Book of Kells*. In Tibet, we see it in the sacred thangka paintings, mandalas, and representations of enlightened beings.

These works were never intended simply to decorate a wall or fill a museum. They were created as acts of devotion, contemplation, and transformation.

Art was sacred. Beauty was a pathway to wisdom. And the image was a doorway to the Divine.

Restoring the Divine Feminine

There is something particularly important that Romio and Sophie wish to bring into this conversation: the restoration of respect for the Divine Feminine.

Across the centuries, humanity has increasingly celebrated power, conquest, competition, and material achievement, while neglecting the feminine principles that sustain life itself.

The qualities of compassion, unconditional love, intuition, nurturing, wisdom, creativity, and the ability to bring life into harmony. These qualities are not exclusive to women. They are essential qualities of our shared humanity.

In Tibetan Buddhism, we encounter the Divine Feminine through Tara, the embodiment of compassionate activity, and Prajnaparamita, the wisdom that transcends all limitations. In Ireland, we find echoes of this sacred feminine inheritance in Brigid, in the ancient reverence for the land, and in the enduring devotion to Mary.

These traditions are not identical, nor do they need to be. Each carries its own extraordinary wisdom. But they remind us of something universal: the feminine is not something to be dominated or diminished. It is something to be honoured, protected, and awakened.

Perhaps humanity's greatest task today is to restore balance between masculine and feminine principles, between intelligence and wisdom, between achievement and compassion.

The Common Field of Tibet and Ireland

Why should Tibetan sacred painting meet the *Book of Kells* here in Ireland? Perhaps because these two cultures have something important to offer one another.

Both have known the pain of displacement, the loss of cultural treasures, and the struggle to preserve their spiritual inheritance. Both have understood the importance of monasteries, sacred spaces, contemplative practice, and the transmission of wisdom through generations. And both have used art as a language that reaches beyond words.

Romio believes there is a common field here—a meeting place of consciousness, beauty, and spiritual imagination.

Imagine Tibetan monks creating paintings inspired by Christian sacred imagery, while Christian monks discover the beauty of chanting Om Mani Padme Hum. Not to abandon their own traditions, but to recognise the sacredness in another.

When we can appreciate the prayers, symbols, and sacred images of another culture without fear or prejudice, we begin to understand that humanity is much larger than our religious identities. Perhaps then we can begin to know peace.

A New Purpose for Sacred Art

For Romio, this exhibition carries a very personal meaning. His life's work as a Tibetan thangka artist has been dedicated to awakening the Divine within every human being. He has always believed that art is much more than something beautiful to look at.

Art can awaken memory. It can transform perception. It can open the heart. Beauty can awaken wisdom. Wisdom can awaken compassion. And compassion can bring peace.

We are living in a time when technology and material intelligence are advancing at extraordinary speed, yet our inner development has not necessarily kept pace. We have learned how to communicate across the world, but have we learned how to truly connect?

We have accumulated enormous material wealth, but have we nurtured our spiritual wealth?

This is why Romio believes sacred art has an important role to play in the future of humanity.

Ireland's Gift to the World

And this brings Romio to Ireland. He believes Ireland has a special opportunity. A country that once sent its people across the world can now become a place to which people come seeking spiritual nourishment, inspiration, healing, and renewal.

Ireland has an extraordinary inheritance of poetry, music, sacred landscapes, storytelling, and contemplative wisdom. He encourages us to build upon that inheritance.

Let us create places where art, nature, meditation, music, and different wisdom traditions can meet.

Let Ireland become an energising point for the world—a place where people rediscover their connection to themselves, to one another, and to Mother Earth.

Romio envisions communities of unconditional love beginning with a few individuals and growing outward into society. Into our homes, schools, workplaces, farms, institutions, and governments.

A revolution not through force, but through consciousness. Not through division, but through compassion. Not through power over others, but through the awakening of the Divine within ourselves.

Romio & Sophie's Invitation
Today, the *Book of Kells* and Tibetan sacred paintings come together to remind us that beauty is not merely decoration. It is a sacred inheritance. It is a universal language. It is a bridge between cultures, generations, and spiritual traditions.

And perhaps, most importantly, it is a reminder of who we really are. Many traditions. Many paths. Many forms of expression. But one humanity.

The Shresthsas hope that visitors will leave this exhibition not simply remembering what they have seen, but feeling something they have experienced.

A little more compassion. A little more wisdom. A little more love.

Let these two rivers of light flow together.

Let Ireland and Tibet share their gifts with the world.

And may the beauty we encounter here awaken the wisdom within us, restore our reverence for the Divine Feminine, and inspire a future founded upon unconditional love.

When art becomes sacred, the human heart remembers its true nature.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Romio Shrestha (born 1960 in Kathmandu Nepal) and Sophie Shrestha his wife (born 1967 in Dublin Ireland) met in 1990. Romio is a modern master of the Indo-Nepali-Tibetan Buddhist traditions of enlightenment art and together Romio and Sophie have devoted their time to preserving the ancient art of Thangka painting.

They have spent the last thirty five years together pioneering a new renaissance of this art form, preserving and developing this art form along with their atelier of artists in Nepal. They exhibit the art and translate the universal spiritual message around the world.

They live in Ireland and Nepal with their four daughters, Amber, Topaz, Metta and Jaya. By carefully balancing the traditional and his own expression Romio has developed his own style and is constantly breaking new ground. His work can be found in many of the great permanent collections of the world, including the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin Ireland, the American Museum of Natural History, and other museums and private collections around the world. He also directs a school of artist-craftsmen in the Kathmandu Valley of Tibet.

Sophie learned early, through her parents, that creativity was not separate from life. Sophie studied textile art and design at NCAD, developing a deep sensitivity to colour, texture, and the quiet narratives held within materials. Working across weaving, print and mixed-media processes, she learned how pattern, repetition, and touch could shape a visual language. After meeting Romio, who became both her partner in life and in art, they spent years exploring the Kathmandu Valley and the landscapes beyond it, shaping their shared visual world. Nepal's vivid colours and clear mountain light offered a striking counterpart to the softer palette of Ireland, and these experiences deepened Sophie's instinct for atmosphere, pattern, and story.

Sophie paints in complementary synergy with Romio, her work is in many private collections. Their purpose in life is to awaken the divine in every single human being. It is their ultimate dream that hopefully we will evolve to realise our body of light.



Thank you. May all beings be happy.
May all beings be free. May all beings be peaceful.