



# “Fine Silver Exhibition” is Sure to Mesmerize

*Show Will Make United States Debut at Slidell Cultural Center*

A hammered silver teapot with multiple handles that playfully spiral, twist and turn. A polished silver bowl gracefully balanced upon a textured, pyramid-like base. A multi-angled, futuristic coffee service created from formed, fabricated and patterned sterling silver. They are all part of a lively collection of artwork created by silversmith Kevin O’Dwyer.

A hillside dotted with a perfectly-aligned row of trees which appear to be bowing to the sun. The weathered hands of a turf cutter from Griddlestone bog. A circle of massive, upright stones that seem to defy gravity. These are but a glimpse of the many images of Ireland captured in silver gelatin prints by photographer James Fraher.

Individually, each piece is a work to behold, intricate in detail and aesthetically mesmerizing. When combined, the collection becomes the “Fine Silver Exhibition” which will make its United States debut on March 5, 2004 at the Slidell Cultural Center, just north of New Orleans, Louisiana. The exhibit is being brought to the United States as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the City of Slidell’s Commission on the Arts.

Though a small city, with a population of about 25,000, Slidell is an extremely arts-driven community, as reflected in a myriad of cultural events throughout the year, and in the world-class exhibits featured in the Slidell Cultural Center. Recent exhibits have included the critically-acclaimed *Windows Into Heaven: Russian Icons*, a breathtaking collection of works from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the present, a collection of paintings by renowned artist Elemore Morgan and a sculpture exhibit by internationally-celebrated artist Lin Emery. The *Fine Silver Exhibition* will mark the first time the Cultural Center hosts an exhibit for its United States premiere. The show has been previously exhibited in the Espace Paul Richard Cultural Center in Paris and the Ulster Museum in Belfast.

The artists’ credits are as impressive as their works. Fraher is an Irish American photographer who currently resides in the United States near Chicago. He holds a BA in photography and an MA in media communications. He began photographing in Ireland in 1977, while he lived in County Sligo for two years, and has returned numerous times since then to continue to capture the essence of that country’s character, with fascinating studies of the people, the landscape and the heritage of Ireland.

Fraher’s photographs and posters are featured in permanent collections of the *Smithsonian Institution*, *The Chicago Blues Archive at the Harold Washington Library Center*, and *The University of Mississippi Blues Archive, Oxford, MS*. His images have been exhibited in museums and galleries in the United States, Ireland, Scotland and Paris. Fraher was one of 82 contributing photographers selected by Collins Publishers in 1991 for its book, *A Day in the Life of Ireland*. In 1998, he authored his own book, *The Blues is a Feeling: Voices and Visions of African-American Blues Musicians*, published by Face to Face Books.

O’Dwyer has had a diverse apprenticeship, both in life and his profession. The dual experience of his American and Irish upbringing has had a profound effect on his outlook and the scope of his creative influences. His interest in Irish prehistoric art, Celtic metalwork and 20<sup>th</sup> Century design and architecture is blended into his own unique style. Textural surfaces, flowing lines, lyrical decorations and the twists of

Celtic imagery combine in the typical informality of his tableware. In bringing silver into the modern arena, Kevin O’Dwyer has changed the preconceptions of the silversmith and brought elegant artistry into the life of design.

O’Dwyer’s works are included in the private collections of an impressive array of dignitaries, including the Japanese Imperial Family, President Nelson Mandela, King Juan Carlos of Spain, King Karl Gustas of Sweden, President Mitterrand of France, President Bill Clinton, and Vice President Al Gore. His works are also part of the permanent collection at The Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Ulster Museum in Belfast, and are on display at The Goldsmiths Company in Ireland, the Swiss Embassies in Beijing, China and Paris, France, at the Papal Nuncio in Ireland, in the Governor’s Palace at Liege, Belgium, at the Egyptian Embassy in Ireland, plus in a number of museums and corporate collections worldwide. O’Dwyer recently received word that two of the pieces in the exhibition have been selected for inclusion in a coffee table book entitled *Ireland’s Treasures, 5000 years of Artistic Expression* by Dr. Peter Harbison, to be published in February 2004 by Hugh Levin Associates, U.S.A. He was also recently commissioned to produce the awards for the European Film Festival Awards’ Short Film category, which will be presented at 15 European film festivals and five international film festivals this year.

Elise Taylor, Curator of the Ulster Museum, called the *Fine Silver Exhibition*, “powerful images which combine the purity of O’Dwyer’s designs in silver with the stark beauty of Fraher’s black and white Irish landscapes.” The show has been praised for its timeless quality and exploration of the subtleties of ritual and imagination.

The *Fine Silver Exhibition* at the Slidell Cultural Center will mark the premiere of O’Dwyer’s “Party Teapots: The Mardi Gras Series,” which, the artist says were inspired by his visit to New Orleans and created especially for the debut.

Both artists will attend the show’s opening reception on Friday, March 5, from 7 to 9 p.m. The Slidell Cultural Center is located at 444 Erlanger Street in Slidell, Louisiana, just 30 minutes north of New Orleans. The gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, contact the City of Slidell’s Department of Cultural & Public Affairs at (985) 646-4375.



*Photos: top row, left to right, O’Dwyer’s “Gold & Silver Teapot,” Fraher’s “Books,” O’Dwyer’s “Architectural Coffee Service,” Fraher’s “John Gallagher,” O’Dwyer’s “Patterned Vessel,” Fraher’s “Standing Stone Circle.” above left, Kevin O’Dwyer’s “Rocking Teapot;” above right, James Fraher’s “Robbie Matthews.”*