

Bryan O'Brien in focus



Viewing life from behind a lens and capturing succinct moments of historical significance or life's daily simplicities is part of the everyday routine of *Irish Times* award-winning photographer Bryan O'Brien, writes Áine Kerr.

As the first Irish-based photographer to win the Picture Editors' Photographer of the Year award in London recently and the four-time recipient of the Press Photographers Association of Ireland (PPAI) award, Bryan O'Brien is now to the fore of Irish photographic journalism. Competing with emerging young photographers and meeting new and refreshing personalities is what sustains his enthusiasm for photography.

"Photojournalism is all about people. I love any photo that can tell a story – that can pull

something out of nothing. When you photograph the weather, for example, it's like stealing something in a way," says Bryan.

"When you look back at the year calendar of photographs, sometimes a photograph will be special to you because of the particular circumstances surrounding its creation and because it holds certain memories."

What began as a childhood pastime of collecting *National Geographic* magazines and taking wedding photographs during his summer holidays, eventually led to his application to DCU, where a three-year communications degree offered a photography module. There he spent many laborious hours in the university's dark room developing photos for the college magazine, *Niche*.

"When I graduated, I knew photography was what I wanted to do, so I went off and contacted every major newspaper in Ireland and the UK, telling them that I was ready to begin work ... of course, no one contacted me," recalls Bryan.

Realising that the national and international scene was not quite his scene yet, Bryan purchased a motor-bike and moved to Longford to begin working with the *Longford Leader*. It was there that he learnt most of the 'skills pertinent to journalism' and begun his ascent to national photographic standards.

After three years in Longford, and a year in London, Bryan returned in 1989 to work with the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press*, before beginning his ultimate job in 1998 with *The Irish Times*. Since then, he has received numerous prestigious awards but it is the recent Picture Editors' Photographer of the Year award that is particularly special to him because it was voted for by his peers.

"Unless you do good work, I don't believe in entering a competition just for the sake of it. When I have won an award, I take it with a grain of salt ... at the end of the day you have to be your own best judge," says Bryan.

The profession which he likens to that of a foot soldier is unlikely to lose its appeal any time soon. "I love being my own boss when it's just you and the camera and the laptop. At the end of the day, people make my job. They are what it's all about."

BRYAN O'BRIEN



*Paul Iwala from
Cabra busking
at Coppinger
Row in Dublin.*



*Members of the Irish Modern Dance
Theatre Jeanine Durning, John Scott
and Taryn Griggs during outdoor
rehearsals in Dublin of their production
'RrrrrrrrKillkillkill...to infinity!'.*

*US President Bill Clinton with
Taoiseach Bertie Ahern
and Chelsea Clinton in Dundalk .*



PHOTOGRAPHY



A change in the weather in Dublin's city centre.



'Part of a series of photographs shot for the Irish Times Saturday magazine before the launch of the Luas to illustrate fashion 'on the go' for the trendy young commuter'.

Patrick Collins (64) prays for Pope John Paul II at the Papal Cross in the Phoenix Park Dublin the morning after his death. He had seen the Pope at that very spot in September 1979 during the Pope's historic visit to Ireland.



A cyclist on Clanbrassil Street, Dublin battles against the elements when the east coast of Ireland was hit by blizzard-like conditions of sleet and snow showers in February 2005.