

CELEBRATION of ST DAVID'S DAY

IWAN BALA *at* National Botanic Gardens



Iwan Bala at the exhibition opening, National Botanic Gardens
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March the first – St David's Day – saw the opening of Iwan Bala's new exhibition, aptly named 'Our Nature'. The sun shone and Spring flowers welcomed visitors to this lovely space (see www.gardenofwales.org.uk for information on exhibitions and events).

Born in Sarnau near Y Bala in 1956, Iwan was winner of the Gold Medal for Fine Art at the 1997 National Eisteddfod for Wales. He is currently Senior Lecturer at The School of Humanities and Creative Arts, University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Carmarthen.

Iwan's creativity reaches across many disciplines: he writes extensively on contemporary art in Wales in books, articles and essays, and presents and researches television programmes alongside his teaching and curating work.

He is a member of the Beca group, founder member of The Artists' Project and has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad, participating in several international site-specific art events.

His 'Ein Natur' ('Our Nature') exhibition explores 'the conflicts and conjunctions that exist at the well-spring of creativity where human beings are themselves natural yet attempt to control nature'. Culture grows in organic ways, settling the geographic landscape between rivers and mountain ranges. Iwan says: 'Language develops like plant life: words grow from seeds of creation into poetry – irregular, uncontrolled and then "cultivated". Drawing is the same: partly spontaneous, wild and unconscious and again partly "cultivated".'

The works on show here involve wall-hung painting, drawings and words: two pieces express the feelings which surfaced around the death of people he knew well. One piece, *Daw eto Haul ar Fryn* explores the memories and feelings of a young woman called Angharad Jones who committed suicide, leaving feelings in others left behind of sadness, loss and regret. A second piece, *Tai Unnos*, is created around Iwan's response to the death of a poet and friend, Iwan Llwyd, who was found dead in his flat whilst still relatively young. These powerful works address death chosen in the midst of creative life and as an expression of what it is like to be fully human and yet reject that humanity, leaving behind the 'unfinished business' of living for others to try and resolve.

The exhibition will be on until 1 May 2011 at the National Botanic Garden of Wales/Gardd Fotaneg Genedlaethol Cymru. If you are unable to get there in person, do visit www.iwanbala.com to view this complex and fascinating body of work.