

## ART COMPETITION: Emigration illustrations

The Irish Times invites Irish children aged 12 or under who have recently moved abroad to create a painting or drawing based on the experience. It could be a picture of your new home, or of the friends, family or place you left behind. Or anything else inspired by the change of scene.

### HOW TO ENTER

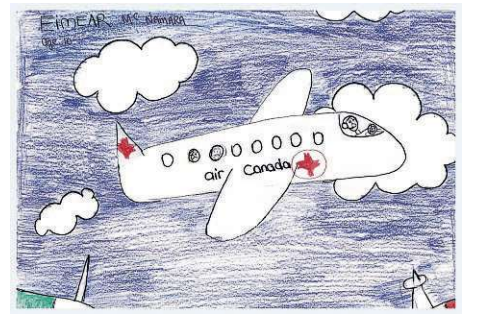
Scan or photograph your picture and email it to [mypicture@irishtimes.com](mailto:mypicture@irishtimes.com) (this wasn't working at first, but it is now, apologies if you had a problem). Please include your name, age and a few sentences about the picture, what it shows and why you drew it. Send it by noon next Friday, April 27th.

### TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Format: entries should be high-quality jpegs.  
File size: Each image should ideally be 1mb or larger and not smaller than 500 kilobytes.  
**TERMS AND CONDITIONS**  
Available from [marketing@irishtimes.com](mailto:marketing@irishtimes.com)

### THE PRIZE

The creators of our 10 favourite pictures will win International book vouchers, which allow you to order a book online and have it posted to you in your new home.



# I've made a life abroad, but it isn't 'home'

CEIRE SADLIER

I've just returned to Zambia after a trip back to Ireland, and while my life is now "abroad", it's hard to imagine anywhere else will ever replace Ireland, with all its familiar sights and sounds, as my home



**S**OMEONE RECENTLY asked me, "Where's home to you?" It was a simple question but I had to think about it for a minute. I've been in Zambia for four years now... home isn't Zambia, is it? Oh, I don't want this to be home. Nor do I want to be constantly pining after Ireland when I don't know when I'll be living there again, and never to think of the place that I am as home.

"Wherever my husband is," I told her, leaving us both confused and unsatisfied.

That was only a few days before I made my latest trip to Ireland after 15 months of being deprived of it. "Heading home for your holidays, are you?" people asked.

Heading home. It makes me feel like years are anchored around trips to Ireland, like an oil-rig worker who is just getting through each day until the next time he can go home. It makes me feel very far away, unsettled, temporary.

Of course, this is the talk of a woman who has a case of the post-holiday blues having been greeted by a storm of albeit minor problems on her return to Zambian soil. Within a few weeks, when the problems start to seem a normal part of everyday life here, I won't feel so far away and I'll stop counting the days until our next trip home. I don't want to feel like I am just getting on with it, as though all this time "away" has been some sort of purgatory. I want to enjoy being here, living here – but just not quite enough so that it becomes my home.

I do admit that, having been away from Ireland for over a year, I was overly starry-eyed and sentimental about our recent visit there and how much I wished we weren't only going for a couple of weeks.

Obviously, the 24-hour-plus journey is a bit of a pain, but I do love the part when you get to the last airport departure gate for Dublin. I love seeing the big Irish heads on people, hearing the accents. In Amsterdam this time I watched an old-ish man sit up on a high table, hands curving around the edge, his short legs flopping back and forth like a bored but happy child.

I love to spot someone in the Heathrow terminal reading *The Irish Times* and see the familiar sights of dozens of pairs of Uggs, pink

skin, bad hair, tracksuits with T-shirts tucked in, flat caps, GAA jerseys and fake tan. I love to earwig on the Oh. Moy. Gourd. stories and listen to an irate mother trying to punish her rowdy child. Even though some of it is cringe-worthy, it just all feels so familiar.

If you're lucky, you'll fly in over Howth Head. And everything is green and green and green and grey. And that's when I start to feel that I'm very nearly home.

Everything seems comfortable and familiar. The streets, the beaches, the wind, the water, the pub fronts, the signposts, the churches, the trains. The Five Lamps, Grafton Street, the Ring of Kerry, the thatched cottages of Adare village, the red and white pillars off Sandymount Strand. They are not just sights the way things are in Zambia to me; I feel a connection to them, a sense of ownership and they make me feel like I belong there.

Even the weather didn't bother me on my most recent trip. The air was cool and fresh and the sudden splatters of icy cold rain were just part of the place. The seasonality was refreshing.

Most of all, I loved being surrounded by Irish people. I loved to be able to overhear and understand what people were saying, both in terms of actually comprehending the words as well as being interested in and identifying with their conversation. Tall, barrel-chested men drinking 7UP out of tiny glasses and small, busy women scurrying through their days.

I was acutely aware of the claustrophobia, the recession, the thieves, the greyness, the dampness, the darkness, the tax, the scowls, the bitterness, the work, the depression. But it wasn't all-encompassing. It still felt like home and it felt like the place I'd rather be.

"This isn't the real Ireland," people told me when I lamented about being so far away. "You're only saying that because you're on holidays."

"It's not always like this. This is holiday Ireland. You don't really want to move home, you're better off where you are."

I do wonder if they are right. Are we better off here in Zambia? Employment and good weather, yes. But home? No.



Above, Ceire Sadlier with the Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, and left, with husband Maurice and daughter Juno in Howth, Co Dublin

**“You don't want to move home, they say, you're better off where you are”**

**Share your views and experiences with Generation Emigration, The Irish Times forum by and for Irish citizens abroad, curated by Ciara Kenny**

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## Readers' comments: Where is home?

This week, Generation Emigration asked readers to reflect on their concept of "home". Here is a selection of comments that were posted on the blog

It really annoys me whenever I am visiting Ireland I get asked: "When are you moving home?" What home? Galway, where my wife is from, a city that I love but I have never lived? Cork? The city I grew up in but feel increasingly alienated from each time I go back? I find that question an insult to the life that my wife and I have built together here – home at the moment is our apartment in Madrid. That will one day change, but it is our home.  
– Jonathan

Home is London. I have friends, some family, a flat, pets. I have an established job and I'm studying too. I love it here. I like that you don't have to be British to be a Londoner. I don't feel particular affection for Dublin any more. A bit of nostalgia for when I was younger, that's all. If I were to move again, it wouldn't be to Ireland.  
– Kelly Carroll

Home is: where you hang your hat, its where the heart is, where the job is, it's where you know you will be secure and accepted. Home is where you don't have to translate yourself continually. Home is a place within a place, with its colours, sights, sounds, smells and topography; home is people, their history, their stories, humour, the tone and sound of their voices. Home is a place that we don't know until we leave it  
– PatM

Home is where my Family are. Just because I can't be there doesn't make it any less of a home to me, it's where I know I can always come back to and know that I'll be greeted with a smile and a tear (from mum) and where I can always stay in times of need. I've been living in Australia for two years now. I'm sure I will call this place home someday and hope that the family I build will always think of it that way too.  
– Michael

I'm German, have lived in Ireland for the best part of nine years, currently live in London but will return to Ireland in a couple of

months. Germany stopped being "home" when I moved away, it's now the place I was born, grew up, where my family lives and where I go to visit old friends – nothing more. Ireland is where my strongest ties are at the moment, it's where I'm happy to live, it's home.  
– Claudia

Home is where your parents live when you're younger and where your children live when you're older.  
– BB

True home will always be Ireland. It is a country that let me and many in my generation down; it is too much of a struggle to try and live there now just because it is my home.

So although it has become like an annoying family member who I only need see on rare occasions; despite it helping me grow into the person I am with the outlook and attitude I have; as blood is thicker than water, I think Ireland will always be home.  
– ManchesterIrish

To read more comments or post your own, see [irishtimes.com/generationemigration](http://irishtimes.com/generationemigration)

## SMALL PRINT

### The VVIP awards: How to create a celebrity monster

MOST AWARDS CEREMONIES are self-congratulatory, sycophantic, boring affairs. In 2010, some friends and I, in trying to come up with a way of getting people to go out on Holy Thursday, and in particular to a club we were running, decided that the format was ripe for parody.

The South William Street VVIP Awards were born.

Good jokes work only when they're taken seriously. The VVIP Academy members (there are six of us) have backgrounds in event management and are also pretty adept at bringing ridiculous ideas to life.

Year one, in a crowded room upstairs in Spy, we awarded prizes in the categories of "best haircut", "most dubious club-night name", "ride of the year" and more. A "those who are sadly no longer with us" montage showed friends who had emigrated and places that had closed.

The awards ceremony was a product of a Z-list celebrity culture that was eating itself, the recession, and an ability to take a joke and run with it. Hilariously, someone from *EastEnders* turned up, misinformed that it was a serious award ceremony.

The following year, with two of the organisers Anthony Mooney and Brian Spollen now running Andrews Lane Theatre, we held a sit-down affair, which saw presenter Buzz O'Neill enter

the room on a motorbike to the strains of *I Drove All Night*, and an interpretive dance interval titled *Black Eyed Swan*. The tables were covered with fake money; an ice sculpture of David Guetta glistened on the bar. The category for best venue not in receivership, examinership or liquidation was crowded. Sinéad Burke, who stands at three feet five inches (and went on to win Alternative Miss Ireland this year) dressed as Lady Gaga and opened the doors of dispatched SUVs. Models termed "Ornaments" greeted patrons.

Then this year, something happened. Tabloids rang to see if we would leak the winner of "ride of the year". TV3's *Xposé* wanted to film interviews. Entertainment.ie sent a camera crew. A TV production crew was shooting a "behind-the-scenes" documentary. Our questlist grew: Bressie, Rosanna Davison, Glenda Gilson, Pippa O'Connor-Ormonde, Liam Cunningham, half of the cast of *Fade Street*, Melanie Morris, Ray Foley (who wasn't invited, but turned up anyway), Lisa Cannon.

We realised we actually had a guest list to rival a real awards ceremony, full of people whom the Irish celebrity media deem to be "names". Newspapers and photo agencies were sending photographers. Twitter was clogged with the #VVIPS12 hashtag. PR companies were ringing to reserve tables. Brands were offering free



Brian Spollen and guest with (front) Sinéad Burke and Chris Burke at the VVIPs 2012

products for goodie bags, which up until now had contained pregnancy tests and instant noodles. We had created a monster.

On the night, awards for "ligger of the year", "party girl of the year", and a restaurant category made up solely of Joe Macken's enterprises were added. We talked pop band LMFAO's dancers into performing an interpretive piece called LMFWarhorseOff, which featured them dancing in first World War costumes wearing horse heads.

What the VVIPs show is that if you take a joke far enough, you'll get somewhere. In the same way the Razzies in LA have become a legitimate part of the film industry, or the music industry pays attention to Popjustice's £20 Music Prize, the VVIPs flip celebrity media on its head.

At a meeting the following week, we discussed killing it. Two years ago we thought it would be hysterical if people on the Irish social circuit turned up. Now they were getting dressed to the nines and hopping into limos. Job done. But when you have a good gag, it's hard to let go.

One of the suggestions that stuck with me at our debrief was this: a giant Mount Rushmore-style sand sculpture of the *Xposé* team. One more year is worth it for that alone. Roll on #VVIPS13.

– Una Mullally

### 'Adam and Paul' ride again

AS PART OF the Homeless Film Festival 2012, Dublin's Irish Film Institute will screen *Adam and Paul*, Lenny Abrahamson's 2004 tale of two luckless Dublin drug addicts.

The screening will be followed by a Q&A session with Abrahamson, who retains a special interest in homelessness.

The festival, which has been touring the UK in recent months, seeks to generate a greater awareness of homelessness. The festival has also presented documentaries made by people who have been homeless, offering them a chance to tell their own stories through the medium of film.

The screening in the IFI is presented in partnership with Stepping Stone, an organisation that seeks to eradicate homelessness through inclusion. Stepping Stone is working in Dublin to create community housing for people who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes, attempting to build a bridge between "them" and "us", and forming a vital reintegration support for marginalised homes and individuals.

The screening and Q&A should shine a little light on a problem that is so often seen but not heard.  
– Roisin Agnew



The late Tom Jordan Murphy and Mark O'Halloran in Lenny Abrahamson's *Adam and Paul*