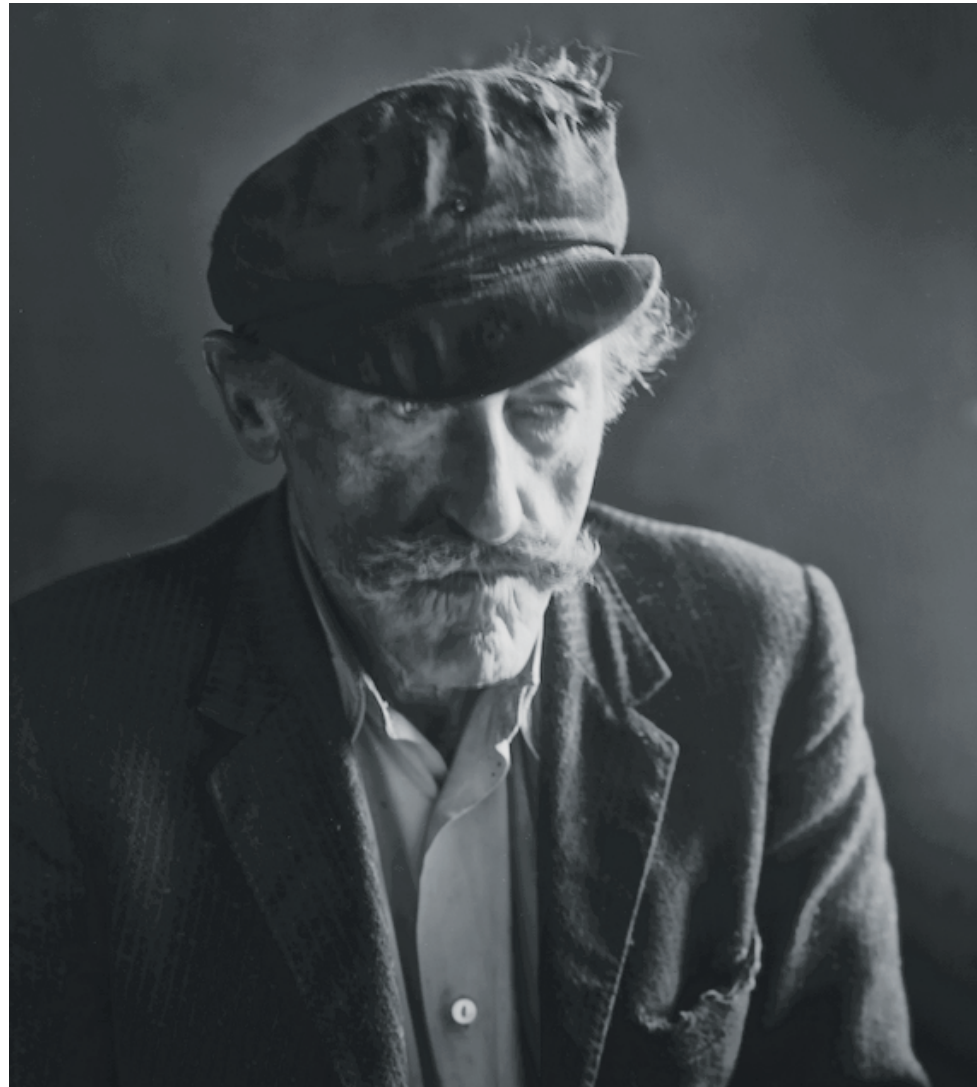




Pic: Michael McLaughlin



▲ **MICHAEL JOE O'MALLEY** "I made this image about 1979 in his house on Clare Island. It was a ten second exposure but he didn't realise I was photographing him because a poet, from Inishturk, came on the radio and Michael Joe was in deep concentration. I just removed the lens cap from my large 10 x 8 view camera and exposed one sheet of film."

got a 'National Endowment of the Arts' grant, one of the biggest arts subsidies in the United States.

"I wound up in Westport because it was winter time and there was nowhere opened along the west coast. I ended up at the tourist office, which was down on the Mall, and met Mary McGreal. She told me there was a very nice B&B called Barley Hill House opened. It was run by Mary and Doug May who later bought the Sheebeen."

Well, that famous hostelry soon became his local where he often joined regulars Dick Gannon (who used to travel around in his tractor) and Norman Hewetson for a pint.

Around this time he stayed at the nearby Rath-a-Rosa B&B, which was near the Sheebeen and owned by Mary and John O'Brien.

"I clearly remember, after the first trip, I thought I would never be returning and I felt so depressed on that Aer Lingus flight back to Boston.

This was not like me, so I said to myself: "Dummy, just come back."

And that was the beginning of a 45-year.... and counting.... odyssey introducing American photographic students to the secrets of the byways and boreens of the wild west...

... As well as the beats and the riffs of traditional Irish ceol agus craic, to which Rosenstock often adds the percussive of his bodhrán, alongside old friends like Connie Cullen and Olcan Masterson.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ODYSSEYS

SO he returned to Westport twice a year between 1971 and 1975 and then led his first tour in 1976 after some of his students asked could they come along on his trip.

"Over those years, we led small groups, in the beginning staying at Rath-a-Rosa and, then, at a stone house called Peace View in the Westport House estate, and then at Summerville: I think it was an old dowager house, then owned by Kitty and the late Wayne Harlow."

Eventually, when Hillcrest House, Kilmeena, came on the market in 1982 - although hesitant because he did not have the money - Ron applied for a business loan from the Bank of Ireland and bought it.

Owning the house afforded more opportunities for his wife, Cathy, daughter, Elise, and their adopted Korean-born children, Juliet and Nathan, to come along on the trips.

Over the decades Ron's nine-day tours have ensured he is more familiar with the many oases in County Mayo.

From an early morning shadow over Ballintubber Abbey and Castleburke to a shimmering sunset at Rosnarubble framed by the islands of Clew Bay, Ron Rosenstock's sensitive lens has captured a lifetime's gallery of unique photographs.

The first photograph in his beautiful book 'The Light of Ireland', is a haunting picture entitled, 'Three Trees, Doolough, County Mayo, 1975'. At the launch of an exhibition in his home city at the Worcester Art Museum, a man walked up to him and said: "I was the ganger when they were making the road through the Doolough Valley."

MORE

www.ronrosenstock.com



MAYO SUNSET "Sunset at Rosnarubble, made one week ago. It's just five minutes from Hillcrest in Kilmeena, a magnificent overlook out on to Clew Bay."

BETH MORAN, BALLYTOUGHY LOOM, CLARE ISLAND

"I met and studied photography with Ron Rosenstock at the Crafts centre in Worcester Massachusetts. As a participant on his first workshop to the west of Ireland where he had personally been coming to for a number of years I can honestly say he touched so many lives through the generosity of his spirit. We were introduced to the local people and the culture in a very personal and integrated way. From 1977 to 1981 I was a regular on his many workshops to Ireland and finally moved here in 1982. Ron and the groups continue to come and I am sure will continue to provide a positive influence wherever he goes."