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Connacht Tribune Lifestyle

New book exudes a love for landscape

By **Judy Murphy** - September 28, 2017

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Holding on, Lettermullen

Lifestyle – Stunning photographs of Connemara and Aran are a fitting legacy to Walter Pfeifer who died before seeing the fruits of his labour in published form. Judy Murphy tells the story.

The launch of Walter Pfeifer's stunning photography collection *Connemara & Aran* at the Clifden Arts Festival was a bittersweet occasion for his many friends. None of them could have expected that the man responsible for this handsome book would not be alive for the occasion.

Walter died unexpectedly in April, so the launch of the publication, produced by Letterfrack publishers Artisan House, was as much a commemoration of this life as it was a celebration of this collection of pictures and complementary poetry that pays homage to Connemara and the Aran Islands.

German-born Walter Pfeiffer fell in love with Galway and Aran when he first visited here as a student in 1964. In a CD of poetry to accompany the book, he explained that nowhere else has ever had the same hold on him.

A year later, after finishing college, he moved to Ireland, becoming one of this country's leading fashion and food photographers. Living in Wicklow, he travelled extensively, but the West called him constantly and led to his 2005 book *Connemara and Beyond*.

Connemara and Beyond was indirectly responsible for the establishment of Artisan House, which has produced some of Ireland's most gorgeous books – including this one – since it began in 2013.

It was at the launch of *Connemara and Beyond* that Letterfrack woman, Mary Ruddy – co-founder and first manager of Connemara Community Radio – hit it off with Cork-man Vincent Murphy. Mary, who has a Master's degree in rural development and one in International Human Rights Law, was working in Dublin at the time, as was designer Vincent. Their paths had crossed previously but Walter's book brought them together. And they went on to set up Artisan House, which has since produced some of the finest nature and food publications to be found anywhere.

Vincent had first become friendly with Walter as a young man in Dublin.

"I was working in an advertising agency in Dublin 25 years ago," he explains. "We worked on a lot of shoots together and he became a father figure to me."

Walter subsequently worked on several of Artisan Houses's cookery books and was a perfectionist.

Mary laughs as she recalls how particular he was when photographing each dish for *Celebrating Irish Salmon* by well-known cook and food writer, Máirín Uí Chomáin, adding and subtracting garnishes such as basil leaves until his eye was satisfied.

For more, read this week's Connacht Tribune.