

Dun Laoghaire County Hall & Art Collection

by Caroline Stone

Introduction

The home of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council is situated at the heart of the town, opposite the DART station, close to the Royal Irish and Royal St. George Yacht Clubs, and overlooking the harbour. Today, the Council's premises occupy three distinct structures, whose construction dates span from the mid nineteenth century to the late twentieth century.

The Council's headquarters, originally housed in the late nineteenth century Town Hall, have evolved to comprise this Victorian Town Hall building, renovated and restored in the 1980s and 1990s, the adjoining nineteenth century post office and a late twentieth century extension designed by McCullough Mulvin-Robinson Keefe Devane Architects.

These three separate elements function together to form a coherent whole, serving all the needs of a modern-day County Hall.

In addition to housing local government offices, the County Hall is also home to a significant collection of art, spanning a period of one hundred years or so, which comprises works created by twentieth and twenty-first century Irish-based artists, many of them enjoying a connection with the Dun Laoghaire locality. These works were acquired by the Council over a number of decades, and encompass a range of media and styles. The collection includes pieces by both emerging and established local artists, as well as a large number of works by historically significant and nationally renowned figures. Artists represented in the collection include Mainie Jellett, Nathaniel Hone the Younger, Basil Rakoczi, Patrick Hickey, Mary Swanzy and Edward Delaney as well as the French artist, Pierre Bonnard, one of the great masters of painting in the early twentieth century.

The collection is displayed throughout the County Hall complex. Larger, contemporary paintings and mixed media pieces are permanently displayed in the public entrance vestibule and adjoining atrium area, while the first floor gallery of the old Town Hall is home to a significant donation of early-to-mid twentieth century works. A number of paintings and prints are also on view throughout the County Hall's offices.

Much of the collection can be enjoyed by the public, and is an integral element in the public spaces of the County Hall.

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Hall

The Nineteenth Century Town Hall

Dun Laoghaire's original Town Hall was constructed from 1878 to 1880, and was designed by the architect J.L. Robinson.¹ The Town Hall was one of the last public buildings to be constructed in Dun Laoghaire in the nineteenth century. Many of the town's public buildings are in themselves notable for the very fact that they were constructed in the Victorian era, unlike a large proportion of Dublin's public buildings, such as the City Hall and Houses of Parliament, which were constructed prior to the 1800 Act of Union.

The Act of Union, which transferred Irish power to a centralised government based in London, is often identified as the origin of a subsequent decline in Dublin's architecture. However, in contrast to the declining city of Dublin, the town of Dun Laoghaire, or Kingstown as it was known from 1821-1920, came into its own in the nineteenth century. A new harbour was constructed in the 1820s and a railway connection to Dublin city was opened in 1834.² The need for a dedicated Town Hall became more apparent as the nineteenth century progressed. This need was first recognised in the 1860s, but construction of the Town Hall did not commence until 1878, to the plans of the architect JL Robinson.³

Robinson's design, comprising a two-storey, granite block, loosely based on the style of a Venetian palace, was chosen following an open competition, with entries being submitted by several architects.⁴

J.L. Robinson (c.1848-1894): The architect

The architect of the Town Hall, John Loftus Robinson, was born in Dublin, around 1848. By 1872 he had established his own architectural practice in Great Brunswick Street, Dublin. He was involved in the design of a large number of Dublin buildings and also participated fully in public life, serving on a number of community bodies, most notably enjoying the role of chairman of Kingstown Township Committee.⁵

In this role, he was involved in the creation of the People's Park in Dun Laoghaire. This park remains a valued amenity of the town and is depicted in several works held in the County Council's art collection. In addition to designing the Town Hall, he designed the town's St Michael's Hospital, Magdalen Asylum and the spire of St Michael's church.⁶ Robinson's contribution to the late nineteenth century public fabric of Kingstown was therefore quite significant.

Robinson died suddenly of typhoid fever in 1894.

The Town Hall Plan

Records suggest that the Town Hall, located at the junction of Marine and Crofton Roads, was to serve a number of purposes - not only official, but also social. As well as housing the town's courthouse and Council chambers, it often acted as a dance-hall.⁷ The cost of the building's construction totalled £16,000.⁸

The Town Hall plan comprises a rectangular, two storey, 50 foot long building, raised upon a podium and surmounted by a clock tower. The Town Hall's principal entrance is located on its east front, along Marine Road, and is approached by a short flight of steps. At the time of construction, this elevation faced a more open space, which would have afforded a broader view of the main façade of the building. A secondary entrance is situated to the north, on Crofton Road.

Upon entering from Marine Road via the main doorway, which is positioned on the central axis of the building, one finds oneself in a vestibule area, facing a grand stairway. This staircase leads to the first floor, where a gallery corridor, Council chambers and assembly room are located. Today, this doorway is used only on ceremonial occasions.

Rooms on the ground floor originally included the courtroom, witness and barristers' rooms, as well as the offices of the town clerk, surveyor, rate collector and sanitary inspector.⁹

Elevation

When viewing the building's exterior, one might notice that a number of the building's decorative features draw on medieval Venetian palazzo architecture. In its use of these sources the Town Hall differs from its nineteenth century neighbours, the more classical post office, railway station and yacht clubs. However, the Venetian design of the Town Hall is very much of its time and reflects the influence of a certain aesthetic popular during this period. This style was inspired by the principles espoused by the nineteenth century polemicist and theorist, John Ruskin and, as a result, is often termed 'Ruskinian Gothic'.

Ruskinian Gothic

One of the most noteworthy - and beautiful - buildings in this style can be seen several miles away on the grounds of Trinity College, Dublin. Designed by the architectural firm of Deane and Woodward and constructed from 1854-57, the university's Museum Building illustrates to great effect Ruskin's architectural principles. Ruskin believed that a building should remain true to its structure, its materials and its workmen. A building's façade must express its internal structure; its ornamentation should be based on natural forms and bear witness to the creative freedom of the building's workmen. He felt that Gothic architecture, in particular the medieval palazzo architecture of Venice, fulfilled these criteria and was morally superior to what he saw as the standardised, prescriptive classical system.

Ruskin greatly admired the TCD Museum Building, which embodied his ideas through its solid outline, its truth to structure, its proliferation of 'organic', free carving and its use of coloured marbles in the interior.

Robinson's building, designed two decades after the Trinity building, repeats many of the features of the Museum Building, such as its strong profile, its arched openings, its areas of carving and its use of polychromy, but does so in a less emphatic manner. Rather than constituting another faithful illustration of Ruskin's principles, the Town Hall uses the Venetian stylistic vocabulary of the Museum Building as a starting point only. As such, it demonstrates the extent to which Ruskin's theories influenced the choice of stylistic precedents in, and determined the aesthetic of, much late nineteenth century architecture in Britain and Ireland.

Arches:

One of the most noticeable features of the Town Hall is its use of single, double and triple arched openings across its façade.

The nine bay Marine Road façade features eight, evenly spaced single arches framing the wider central bay. This advanced, central bay is surmounted by a pediment, and is further accentuated by the contrasting use of a tripartite (rather than single) arch, on both ground and first floors. These features highlight this bay as the location of the main entrance into the building.

In contrast with the even, symmetrical rhythm of the Marine Road elevation, Crofton Road's asymmetrical façade features an irregular arrangement of single, double and triple arches. The building's secondary doorway is situated just off-centre and is surmounted by the Town Hall's prominent clock tower.

String courses & Carving:

The building's façade is further ornamented by a number of horizontal bands; simply carved string courses adorn the façade at several levels, while a wider sill course faced in yellow sandstone marks the division between the ground and first floor. This yellow sandstone is repeated in the building's cornice.

Additional visual interest is created by the areas of carving that embellish the façade. This includes the open carved stonework of the balconies above both entrances, which was repeated in the skyline balustrade that once ran above the cornice and which has since been removed. On the first floor of the building, too, stone surfaces have been carved decoratively; here we see elaborately carved yellow sandstone capitals, imposts and window sills.

Polychromy:

This yellow sandstone was used in a number of other areas of the façade: in addition to its use in the sill course and cornice, it accentuates the archivolts of the windows and is used in the 'Town Hall' and 'Courthouse' signs that mark the building's two entrances on Marine and Crofton Roads respectively.

Red sandstone is also employed. Firstly, above the building's windows, we see arches formed from alternating blocks of red and grey Scottish sandstone. Red sandstone is seen again in the colonettes that frame the building's first floor twin and triple-arched windows. The remaining single-arched windows make use of grey stone colonettes.

Along with the arched forms and areas of carving, this use of polychromous materials greatly enlivens the predominantly granite façade.

The building's sloped roof also makes use of a multi-tone effect, featuring horizontal bands of alternating darker and lighter tiles. Further colour is added by the stained-glass tympana of the arched windows.

Twentieth Century Renovations

The nineteenth century Town Hall, which was, as we have seen, very much of its time, may have originally satisfied all that was required of it.

Naturally, however, the demands on the Town Hall increased as the twentieth century

progressed, necessitating a number of alterations and additions.

Firstly, a certain amount of improvements were made to the fabric of the original building.

In 1981 the clock tower acquired a copper coating. Later on in the same decade a few changes were made to the interior of the building. Oak panelling was installed in the hallway and the building's original stencilled ceilings were uncovered inside the main entrance vestibule.¹⁰ These are still visible today.

However, it wasn't until 1989 that a more extensive programme to address modern needs was initiated. The need for a universally accessible structure, compliant with modern fire safety regulations, gave rise to this undertaking. The project, which was carried out by the Architects' Department of what was then Dun Laoghaire Corporation, involved the remodelling of the interior of the original Town Hall.¹¹ While some sections of the building were restored to their former glory, a number of alterations to the building's layout and fabric were also made.

The most major structural changes took place on the first floor. Here, to comply with fire safety regulations, it was necessary to construct a lobby outside the assembly room. To do this, the asymmetrical portion of the room, i.e. the area behind Marine Road's central tripartite window, was sectioned off and formed into a lobby and vestibule area. Victorian details were carried into these areas too, so that the old and new portions of the building's fabric might blend.¹²

In this area, the wall panelling, vaulted ceiling and cornice were restored and extended, while a new oak floor was installed.

In the gallery area, top lighting was installed, with a view to this area serving as an exhibition venue for the Council's art collection.¹³ A number of important paintings hang here today.

On the ground floor, a new reception area was created at the base of the grand staircase. New carpet was laid on the main staircase, while the various surfaces of the entrance hall (floor tiling, wall panelling, stained-glass etc) were refurbished.¹⁴

The Twentieth Century County Hall

However, following this project, additional space was still required, particularly following the creation of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council in 1994, the result of a reorganisation of Dublin's County Councils. A new county, rather than town, hall was envisaged, one that would incorporate not only the nineteenth century Town Hall, but which would also encompass the adjoining nineteenth century post office as well as a modern extension.

Today, the former post office acts as a public entrance vestibule into what is now the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Hall. This entrance vestibule leads into the twentieth century extension that sits behind the nineteenth century post office and Town Hall.

Post Office

By utilising the old post office as the public entry point into the building, the importance of

Marine Road as the site of the old Town Hall's main entrance is maintained. From this street, the two nineteenth century buildings, post office and Town Hall, still form the public face of the County Hall, whereas on Crofton Road, the twentieth century extension's façade sits next to that of the old Town Hall. From the exterior, the dual nineteenth-twentieth century character of the premises is evident.

Sources differ as to the architect of the post office, some naming JL Robinson, others an Enoch Trevor-Owen.¹⁵

In contrast to the Town Hall, the post office was built in a classical style. Although the buildings are distinct in style and form, and are today separated by an entrance passageway, there is a certain degree of continuity from one building to the other, particularly in the use of granite and through the prevalence of the arched form in both façades. In addition, string courses and cornices are carried over from one building to the next.

Twentieth Century Extension

The twentieth century structure which one enters after passing through the old post office was designed by McCullough Mulvin-Robinson Keefe Devane Architects. The extension occupies a site west of the original Town Hall, with its most visible elevations to the north and west, overlooking the harbour.

The firm's designs were selected following a competition organised by the RIAI, which attracted 37 entries at the first stage. These were then reduced to a shortlist of five designs, including the winning entry.¹⁶

The Brief:

The Council's brief stated that "the principal objective of this project is to build an architecturally appropriate civic centre which will enhance the Town Hall, its immediate urban context and Dun Laoghaire as a whole. The assembly the new building forms with the Town Hall shall be a coherent and unified element, and shall be a notable addition to the urban centre and shall reflect a vibrant and progressive community.

The new building shall be a fully functional headquarters for the local government. The design shall reflect and foster ease of communication between staff and the public at large. It shall reflect the public accessibility and accountability which is at the centre of the reorganisation process. It shall retain the dignity of its civic and democratic purpose."¹⁷

McCullough Mulvin's entry was chosen as the design that best fulfilled the criteria set out by this brief.

The winning plans were organised around a central, top-lit public concourse, which was surrounded by a glazed, atrium-like area. This central 'courtyard' was to be enclosed on the east by the original Town Hall and post office and on the three other sides by three new wings, themselves arranged in a pinwheel plan.

The Plan:

The public enters this extension via the former post office. In keeping with the design brief's emphasis on accessibility and transparency, the new heart of the County Hall, i.e. the central atrium, is visible through the post office's glazed front and through the passage-way that separates the post office and Town Hall.

While the main public entrance is located on Marine Road, a staff entrance is situated on Crofton Road, between the façades of the old Town Hall and the new extension. After passing through this entrance, staff can directly access both the nineteenth and twentieth century structures.

Whether entering via the main public or main staff entrance, the first area of the twentieth century extension that one passes into is the square, glass-roofed 'courtyard' or 'atrium' area situated at the centre of the complex. This courtyard consists of a circulation area, referred to as the 'winter garden' by the architects, surrounding a public concourse.¹⁸ One immediately experiences a great sense of light, space and openness.

The courtyard area as a whole incorporates natural ventilation systems while the extensive glazing allows daylight to enter this space.

The vaulted roof of the central concourse area is considerably higher than the sloped glass roofing of the surrounding 'winter garden' circulation area. Below this vaulted roof, large expanses of glazing allow natural light to enter the concourse, which is primarily used for art exhibitions and other cultural events. Situated at the heart of the County Hall complex, this space demonstrates the importance granted by the Council not just to cultural initiatives, but also to community involvement in the Council's activities.

The installation of sliding wooden doors to partition the concourse from the rest of the interior courtyard allows the degree of openness between the concourse and circulation area to be altered according to specific needs. Ordinarily, for example, the doors can remain open to contribute to a sense of spaciousness, while, in the event of an art exhibition, the doors can be closed to afford hanging space and to create the sense of a distinct display space. This device also allows the concourse area to be separately heated, lit and ventilated, if necessary.

The courtyard area as a whole is surrounded to the north, west and south by three four-storey wings, arranged in a U-shaped, pinwheel plan. The ground floor of these blocks is partly occupied by various public departments, including housing and planning offices, which open directly onto the glazed circulation area. These offices are separated from the circulation area by glass fronts, visually creating a sense of accountability and accessibility, two qualities emphasised in the Council's brief.

The upper floors of these blocks also house council offices, which can be accessed by either lift or spiral staircase, both located in the southwest corner of the winter garden.

These upper floors also enjoy a sense of openness and light; thanks to the central 'courtyard' area, each of these three wings receives light from two directions.

The Elevation:

The elevation of new building takes a number of cues from its nineteenth century neighbour. Its granite-clad façade continues the roofline and primary horizontal divisions of the old Town Hall. The new elevations also repeat the asymmetrical theme of the Town Hall's Crofton Road elevation; each façade demonstrates the building's pinwheel plan through the projection of its end bay, which, in each case, features an elevation that differs from the rest of the façade.

At the same time, the extension's many divergences from its older neighbour are also clearly expressed.

Firstly, the new extension consists of four storeys, in contrast to the two storeys of the older building. The new façade manages to suggest this differing interior arrangement through the use of a secondary set of horizontal divisions that mark the extra floors in the new building. For example, a canopy over the lowest level of windows marks the upper limit of the extension's ground floor; this canopy continues over to the old Town Hall façade, visually linking the two structures.

In addition, the visual language of the new building is clearly that of the twentieth century - each façade is dominated by glazed areas, in varying rhythms, with the pattern of glazing varying from one elevation to another. The sense of openness afforded by this glazing contrasts with the closed nature of the older Town Hall and reflects the Council's wishes to create a democratic, approachable space.

Cultural Significance

In its focus on public accessibility, openness and flexibility, the County Council can certainly boast that the County Hall forms "a notable addition to the urban centre" and reflects "a vibrant and progressive community".

As planned, the County Hall not only acts as an administrative centre, but plays a central role in the cultural life of the community it serves.

Today, the Council's activity in this field is visible on a wide scale, through the numerous cultural festivals it administers (such as the 'Festival of World Cultures' and the 'Poetry Now' festival) and through its existing plans to construct a new Central Library and Cultural Centre for the borough. This new complex is to incorporate galleries and performance areas as well as studios and workshops.

Within the County Hall, the provision of the concourse area, which regularly acts as a temporary exhibition area, has, to date, ensured that the visual arts enjoy a great deal of support from the Council.

As well as fostering these arts through the coordination of regular temporary exhibitions, the Council's commitment to the visual arts is also illustrated by its permanent art collection.

The County Art Collection

The Council's impressive art collection is on display throughout the County Hall: works are

exhibited in the nineteenth century Town Hall and post office as well as in public and private areas of the twentieth century extension. The collection encompasses a range of media, but consists primarily of painted works.

This collection was amassed through a number of channels, including one-off commissions, donations from charitable bodies and individuals, as well as purchases. As a result, it provides an overview of the Irish art world over the course of the twentieth century, with work of the 1920s-1950s, and of the 1990s, being particularly well-represented.

These diverse channels of acquisition have also resulted in a collection that includes works by artists of varying renown. Pieces by established, internationally recognised artists sit near works by artists active on a more local scale.

The single largest acquisition of works came with the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland Ralph Cusack donation. This consisted primarily of works by avant-garde artists working in Ireland in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Of the more contemporary works in the County Art Collection, many enjoy a connection with the Dun Laoghaire locality.

Firstly, a significant number of works depict scenes of the locality – these include streetscapes, several depictions of the nearby People’s Park, a number of paintings of the old Town Hall, as well as Desmond McCarthy’s *A View From the DART* pen and ink drawings.

Secondly, a number of the more contemporary works in the collection have been produced by artists, such as George Potter and Judy Hamilton, who have lived, worked or were educated in the Dun Laoghaire borough. Some of these artists, including Louise Meade, Joe Dunne and Marie McDonald, have previously worked with the County Council, participating in community art schemes, such as the Artists in Schools and Artist in Resident programmes.

The breadth of the Council’s art collection is therefore quite large, and features works of both national and local interest. A recent acquisition, a bronze piece by sculptor Edward Delaney, demonstrates these twin focuses superbly; not only was Delaney a nationally celebrated sculptor, who created some of the most well known sculptures adorning Dublin’s streets, but he also lived and worked in Dun Laoghaire, not too far from the County Hall’s premises.

The works can be divided into three main groups, according to their placement within the building. First are those works on display in the public reception areas of the County Hall, i.e. the post office and ‘winter garden’ areas. These are all recent, generally large-scale works. Then there is the collection of twentieth century paintings displayed in the first floor gallery of the old Town Hall. Finally, there are those prints, paintings and sculptures housed in a variety of offices throughout the twentieth century wings.

New County Hall – Post Office and Winter Garden

Many of the works displayed in the County Hall’s foyer area were acquired following the opening of the new County Hall. The focus here is on contemporary art works, in a range of media. Some works were commissioned under unique schemes; other works were purchased

by the Council after their creation. The scale of many of the works here is larger than that of those works displayed in other parts of the building. In this respect, they are well-suited to the large, open, airy space of these public reception and circulation areas.

Works are positioned throughout the public area, even within the floor surface. The public is invited to engage with the art works and to explore this area of the building, to make it their own.

Sadhbh O'Neill, 'Journey Through the Centre of the Earth', 1998

Having gained qualifications in the fields of art and interior design in the 1980s, Sadhbh O'Neill combined these two interests in her textile artworks of the 1990s. A number of these works were produced in conjunction with her husband, Sam Gaine, whose work is also included in the County Art Collection. O'Neill has received several public commissions for such pieces; textile hangings commissioned by the Office of Public Works can be seen in Muckross House, Co. Kerry and at the Brú na Boinne Visitor Centre, Newgrange, Co. Meath.¹⁹

The piece on display in the entrance vestibule of the County Hall consists of 12 textile panels and was commissioned as part of the Per Cent for Art, Dun Laoghaire Water Supply Improvement Scheme 1998.²⁰

In this unconventional 'landscape', the artist encourages us to consider the theme of water supply. The work takes the form of a cross section through a segment of the Earth's crust, on top of which sits a town surrounded by fields and trees. She allows us to 'journey into the centre of the earth', where we can witness the flow of bright streams of water enlivening more muted earth through which it travels. Our human settlements, seen sitting on the surface of this 'landscape', seem so miniscule and insignificant when compared with this vital, permanent force of nature, which we so often take for granted. The prevalence of spiral forms throughout this landscape evokes a sense of Celtic mysticism and emphasises the cyclical, permanent nature of our planet's age-old systems.

In recent years, O'Neill's work has changed direction; she now creates pieces in the medium of concrete and mosaic, allowing her to work outdoors on three-dimensional commissions. However, the theme of nature remains at the core of her work.

Marie McDonald, 'Rhapsody

This work was commissioned while McDonald was participating in the Council Parks Department's artist-in-residence programme over an eighteen month period from 1997-1999. At the close of the residency, in 1999, an exhibition entitled 'A Bee's Eye View' was organised to exhibit the resulting body of work. The work on display comprised six large canvases, a number of smaller pieces, a series of drawings and a video recording.²¹

Two of these works are now held by the Council. In addition to 'Rhapsody', which hangs in the foyer, a work depicting 'The Lodge, People's Park' is displayed within the Council's office area.

The subject matter of both works clearly draws on the artist's experience of the Parks Department residency scheme.

'Rhapsody', along with many of McDonald's other canvases, demonstrates a concern with the intricacies and intrinsic beauty of plants and flowers. Here, the artist grants us a close-up, or a 'bee's eye', view of densely-growing red and green leaves. The curved lines and contrasting areas of light and shade almost have the appearance of an abstract pattern.

By contrast, 'The Lodge, People's Park' employs a more traditional viewpoint. While the lodge is, nominally at least, the focus of the composition, the viewer cannot help but notice the abundance of brightly-coloured flowers and the dappled leaves of the tree occupying the foreground of the painting. Once again, the artist records, and indeed admires, the beauty of the park's natural forms and of course, the results of the labours of the Parks Department. The whole scene is rendered in bright colours, lending an air of gaiety and charm to the work.

Anita Groener, (b. 1958), 'Dawn', 1991

Anita Groener was born in the Netherlands, and moved to Ireland in 1982 after completing her art studies.²² She initially planned to stay here for one year, but soon settled in Ireland, making Dublin her home. She still lives here, lecturing in fine art at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Groener's work has always been concerned with an inquiry into the nature and identity of the self. Her early work drew on imagery inspired by children's drawings and was painted rapidly and spontaneously; these early works are often compared to that of the CoBrA group.²³

However, as she developed as an artist, her works became more considered and deliberate. She became more interested in the transient nature of being, as our sense of identity is weakened through geographical and social mobility and as we move through different passages in life.²⁴ This interest stems from Groener's own sense of displacement, her sense of being a "rootless" person, having been born in the Netherlands but having made Ireland her home for half her life. To allow her to express this concept of the fragmentation of one's sense of self, Groener began to make use of panelled compositions.

This device appeared in much of Groener's works of the early 1990s, including this piece, 'Dawn', which was created in 1991. At this time, unbeknown to her, the artist was pregnant. She believes that the symbolic fish, spider webs and embryonic forms depicted in this work are an unconscious allusion to pregnancy and childbirth.²⁵

The images seen in these fragments have since become common features in the artist's work and continue to act as hidden symbols, representing various human experiences and conditions.

Groener's more recent works, exhibited in the shows Heartlands (2000) and Crossings (2006), have examined the theme of place and home, and how this relates to one's sense of self.²⁶

Mary Fitzgerald (b.1956), 'Vinculum', early 1990s

Mary Fitzgerald is an established Irish artist who, after completing an undergraduate degree in the National College of Art and Design in 1977, travelled to Japan to pursue her studies further.²⁷

Over the course of her career, Fitzgerald's works have been included in a number of significant group exhibitions, including the Rosc exhibition of 1988 and several Living Art shows²⁸. In addition, she has received several large commissions, one of which was from the Irish Government. These included commissions for paintings as well as designs for large tapestries and carpets. In 1990 she was elected to Aosdana²⁹.

Fitzgerald's work, which is heavily influenced by her exposure to Japanese art, embraces a variety of media, including fabric, metal, glass and paper.

This piece, *Vinculum*, was created using oil, steel chains and steel bolts on canvas. The work was included in a one-woman show, entitled *Continuum*, held in New York's Jain Marunouchi Gallery in February 1993.³⁰

The ten pieces exhibited at this show were specially created for the space and continued to explore the themes of vulnerability and isolation that had inspired Fitzgerald in her earlier work.

The title of the work, the Latin word 'Vinculum', signifies a bond or a tie, anatomical or otherwise. This assumes a large significance in light of the serious spinal injury suffered by Fitzgerald following a car accident in 1986. The effect of this accident did not begin to visibly inform her work until the early 1990s, as she began to recover.³¹

In this particular piece, created around this period, the canvas is almost bound by two steel chains. These chains have clearly been repositioned by the artist and have left behind traces, or blemishes, on the areas of canvas to which they were once fastened.

These two chains, and the marks they have left behind, disrupt the sense of depth afforded by the carefully painted, layered blue background and limit the movement of the viewer's eye into the depth of the canvas. The viewer is obliged to read the canvas as a two-dimensional object; we are deterred from travelling further into the canvas.

The very physical nature of the work, its documentation of the creative process and its spatial relationship to its audience are all very important elements of the piece. As the artist explains:

"Art is an expression of thought and one gradually finds a voice which articulates your thoughts and emotions. The finished works embody this process but they also have a physical presence."³²

Kate Dick (nee Millar, b. 1979), 'Through the Great Palm House', 2003

Kate Dick is a young Irish painter living and working in Co. Wicklow, Ireland. In 2001, she graduated from Edinburgh College of Art with BA Hons in Drawing and Painting.

The work on display in County Hall is one piece in a series of paintings created by her between 2001 and 2003. This series, entitled 'The Palm House Series', was based on the various structures and effects of light found in the old Palm House at the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, Dublin. Dick gained access to the Great Palm House before the process of renovation began in 2002.

The paintings focus on the environmental structure and composition of the old and deteriorating Great Palm House. Using a combination of oils, wax, acrylics, varnish and cement, the paintings in this series of work are strong, monochrome, highly textural grid like abstract images on paper and canvas. The artist continued with this theme until 2003.³³

Dick's recent work, exhibited at her 2007 solo exhibition *Open Spaces, New Places* in the Mermaid Arts Centre, has focused on capturing the landscapes of her new home county, Wicklow.

In addition to painters, contemporary artists working in other media are represented in the Council's art collection, particularly in the 'winter garden' area.

Anna McLeod, 'Tierra del Fuego', 1996

Anna Macleod is a visual artist based in North Leitrim; she studied at the Dun Laoghaire College of Art from 1977-81 and currently lectures in the Fine Art department at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

This work, *Tierra del Fuego*, was first exhibited in 1996 during a joint show, 'And', with Joe Hanly at the Temple Bar Gallery and was purchased by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council in 1997.³⁴

The piece consists of 65 35mm glass-mounted slides, each held in a brass frame, which are hung together to form a large disc.

These slides chronicle a series of fires encountered by the artist in 1995 on the upland bogs in County Leitrim. Now a preserved 'area of special conservation', traditionally, these upland boglands were annually burnt by farmers to clear rushes and heather prior to the cutting of turf. The title of the work is a reference to *In Patagonia*, written by the travel writer Bruce Chatwin (1940-1989). In this book, Chatwin describes European sailors happening upon the coast of Patagonia, who see what they perceive to be a virgin 'land of fire', but which was actually managed land clearance as practiced by the native population of the coast.

At a time in Ireland when millennia of farming practices and land management are under review, *Tierra Del Fuego* captures the end of an era where burning of land was part of the annual cycle of farming practice. With the implementation of legislation to protect fragile ecologies such as boglands, ownership and usage of land is challenged and contested between environmentalists, semi-state bodies and local inhabitants.³⁵

The medium of the work invites the viewer to engage with it on a one-to-one basis as the small slide scenes are not visible until one approaches the work at a close range. Each viewer creates his or her own 'slideshow' or narrative from the piece, by choosing his or her

own journey through the slides. However, the consistent theme throughout the slides ensures that each viewer will be exposed to the same underlying message.

In recent years, McLeod has continued to create “visual interactions that try to enable diverse and broader interpretations of the spaces we create and inhabit”.³⁶ Her works has been exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally.

Fiona Murphy

Fiona Murphy is a glass artist who is inspired by the intrinsic qualities of her versatile medium.³⁷

Painted glass panels created by Murphy have been installed in the floor surface of the County Hall's atrium area. Mirrored surfaces have also been inserted next to each panel to enable the viewer to examine the work fully. Art does not just remain on the wall, at the periphery of the public space, but is brought right into the space of the passer-by, positioned literally beneath his/her feet. In this manner, the visiting public is very much invited and encouraged to engage with the art work and with its environment.

Nicos Nicolaou, 'Love and Liquid', 1997

Nicos Nicolaou was born in London, studied Fine Art at Falmouth School of Art and now lives and works in Dublin. He has exhibited in various group and solo shows in Ireland and France, has participated in several residencies and has received a number awards.

Love and Liquid is a triptych produced as part of the Artist and Industry Programme; involving the Arts Council, Artworking and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. Collaboration between the graphic design company, Language, and the artist, resulted in the creation of these electrostatic prints. The piece aims to discuss 'life's building blocks' and uses the medium of water throughout the work.³⁸

Old Town Hall

The Old Town Hall's first floor gallery area is home to some of the Council collections' most significant works. This gallery runs the length of the building; at its northern end, a full-length window faces onto Crofton road, affording views over the sea. This long window allows a good deal of light to enter the space. This is complemented by top-lighting via windows placed in the gallery's high ceiling and by a lighting installation, consisting of spotlights suspended on a track, designed to directly illuminate each of the works on display.

In its plan and its modes of lighting, the gallery area most closely resembles a traditional display space.

A large proportion of the works hanging in the first floor gallery were produced by significant figures of the early to mid twentieth century Irish art world and were donated to

Dun Laoghaire Corporation by the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland (FNCI) .

The FNCI was established in 1924 by Sarah Purser (1848-1943), a prominent Irish portraitist, who hailed from Kingstown. The aim of the society was, and continues to be, “to secure works of artistic importance and historic interest for the national or public collections by purchase, contribution, gift or bequest and to further interest generally in the arts in Ireland.”³⁹

These works were received in three separate donations.

The largest of these donations comprised works donated to Dun Laoghaire Corporation through the FNCI by Ralph Cusack (1912-1965). Cusack was a highly innovative artist in his own right, active in the mid twentieth century, but is also known as a cousin of the celebrated Irish artist Mainie Jellett, whose work is actually included in the donation.

A smaller collection of works was donated through the FNCI by Dr. Eileen Dixon in 1981. One of these works, a portrait by Grace Henry, hangs in the gallery area today.⁴⁰

Finally, in 2001, a work of Ralph Cusack’s was purchased by the FNCI and donated to the Council, with the view that it would be appropriate for this work to hang alongside the original Cusack donation.⁴¹

Most of the artists represented in the FNCI donations are notable for their activity in the non-academic, ‘avant-garde’ art world and were instrumental in the advancement of modern art trends and movements in twentieth century Ireland.

Several of these artists were born in the nineteenth century and travelled to Europe in the early 1900s to learn more about modern developments in art, such as the movements of fauvism and cubism. .

A number of other artists, some of whom actually travelled to Ireland from abroad, were active artistically from the mid-twentieth century onwards. These artists are notable for their involvement in the White Stag Group of the 1940s, with which Cusack himself was associated.

The FNCI Works:

Nathaniel Hone (1831-1917), 'Malahide Flats'

One of the oldest works in the County Art Collection was produced by the early twentieth century landscape artist, Nathaniel Hone.

This work, depicting the sands at Malahide, North County Dublin, is one of many landscapes painted by Hone that illustrate the locality where he settled in later life.

As a young man, in the mid-nineteenth century, Hone studied art in France, firstly under Thomas Couture (a well-known nineteenth century academic artist and teacher of such celebrated artists as Manet).⁴² Following this, he moved to the village of Barbizon, near the Fontainebleau forest, famed for its Barbizon 'school' of landscape artists, who gathered there to concentrate on painting the natural landscape, in situ, and as a subject in itself. At the

time, this realist approach to painting was quite fresh and daring, especially in a country where classical, academic conventions were dominant.

Hone spent approximately two decades at Barbizon; scenes of nature were to dominate his work not only during this period, but throughout his lifetime. Upon his return to Ireland in 1875, Hone settled in Malahide and continued to paint the natural landscape of the area, producing many works, including this painting held by the Council.

This work in oil is quite typical of Hone's extensive output. In common with much of his oeuvre, this painting depicts a natural scene, simply consisting of ground and sky, devoid of any human presence.

The scene features quite a low horizon line, with Hone's cloud-filled sky dominating the composition. The paint is applied quite loosely and the work was most likely created en plein air. While the range of colours employed is quite limited, the major focus of the work is on the subtle variations in tone, particularly in Hone's depiction of the sky and sands.

Grace Henry HRHA (1868-1953), 'Mrs Mary Dixon'

Grace Henry, born in Scotland in 1886, was the wife of the more famous Irish artist, Paul Henry, whom she met and married in 1903. While Paul Henry is renowned for his distinctive west of Ireland landscapes, Grace's output was more varied. She also depicted scenes of the west while living in Achill from 1912 onwards; however, her focus extended to the people of the area and not just to images of nature.

After spending several years in Achill, the couple returned to Dublin. Along with a number of other artists, they founded the Society of Dublin Painters in 1920. The society did not have one unifying aesthetic or manifesto; its aim was to provide an outlet where a less rigid, less academic definition of art could be encouraged. The premises occupied by the Society, at 7 St. Stephen's Green, was put to use as an exhibition venue for both group and solo shows.⁴³

In the mid-1920s, Grace Henry travelled to Paris, where, from 1924-25, she studied under Andre Lhote who also taught Mainie Jellett's; his Cubist style proved to be far more influential on Jellett than on Henry.⁴⁴

Following this stay in Paris, Henry continued to travel and paint in Europe, although she carried on exhibiting in Ireland throughout the 1930s and 1940s. She separated from her husband in the 1930, but they never divorced.⁴⁵ Her work is generally considered to be more experimental than that of her husband's, although it was he that was to gain fame and publicity. She died in Dublin in 1953.

The work held by the Council, a portrait of a Mrs Mary Dixon, was donated by the FNCI and had previously been in the possession of Dr. Eileen Dixon. Four bronzes, sculpted by Martin Dixon, were also donated at the same time.⁴⁶

This work of Henry's demonstrates an approach that drew on French early twentieth century artistic developments, in particular Fauvism. Throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century, such a manner would have been considered very avant-garde within the Irish art world, even though such styles quickly became accepted in mainland Europe, where

artistic developments were much quicker to evolve and where boundaries were pushed and explored much more readily.

This particular work is noticeable for its bold, confident use of complementary colours, green and red, a technique that can be traced back to the Fauvists.

Henry's palette here is dominated by varying shades of green, most noticeably in the sitter's dress and in the background; more unexpectedly, subtle green tones are also found in the sitter's skin tones, hair and eyes etc. Similarly, although the red and pink elements are most prominent in the skin tones of the sitter, they are also subtly carried through as contrasting touches in the green areas.

Mary Swanzy HRHA (1882-1978), 'Juliet'

Mary Swanzy, another early twentieth century Irish female artist, embraced modernist art in its various manifestations; she produced work in a number of idioms, including fauvism, cubism and surrealism.

Like her contemporary, Grace Henry, she spent time studying in Paris, from 1905-1906, where she was exposed to recent artistic developments and trends. She supported the Dublin Painters' Society, and in the early 1920s she exhibited at their St. Stephen's Green gallery.⁴⁷ In 1926, Swanzy settled in London, where she lived until her death in 1978.

From an early age, Swanzy had demonstrated an interest in drawing and an emphasis on draughtsmanship is quite evident in much of her painted work. Line plays a very important role in the work of hers held by the Council, which has the character of a coloured sketch.

In fact, the picture has been painted using oil on paper. It may therefore be one of the sketches that Swanzy regularly worked out on scrap paper, after a day's painting, so as not to waste any paint.⁴⁸

The painting, like Henry's, is a figurative work and portrays a young woman named Juliet. Although Swanzy did work in the vein of portraiture quite frequently, it is possible that this work depicts a figure drawn from her imagination or from literature (the Juliet in question could even be the title character of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*). This would not have been unusual for Swanzy, who often drew on literary or mythological subjects for inspiration.

Although the artist has made use of tones based on all three primary colours, it is the cool tones that dominate the work, lending it quite a melancholic air. Dark lines have been used to sketch out the form of the subject. The harshness of these dark lines contrasts with the softly painted facial features and the sad blue eyes that draw the viewer's gaze to the centre of the composition.

Mainie Jellett (1897-1944), 'Abstract Composition' x 3; 'The Oak Tree', 1939

The Council's art collection includes four works by Mainie Jellett, one of the most pioneering and significant artists active in Ireland in the twentieth century. Jellett is not only renowned for her own art work, but for her efforts in enlightening and educating the Irish public about Modern art.

Jellett was born into a well-off Dublin family in 1897. She began studying art in Dublin, under William Orpen, before moving on to London to study under Walter Sickert from 1917 until 1919. Her work of this period is Impressionistic in style.⁴⁹

In 1921 Jellett moved further afield, to Paris, and joined her lifelong friend Evie Hone in studying at the school of the painter Andre Lhote. Lhote was influenced by Cubism and by the work of Cézanne; his work and his teachings reflected a wish to represent three-dimensional objects whilst respecting the two-dimensional surface of the canvas. It was here that Jellett was first exposed to the Cubist principles that were to absorb and inspire her throughout her artistic career.

Driven by a desire to gain a deeper understanding of these Cubist values and to apply them on an abstract level, free from any representational aims, Jellett and Hone persuaded the cubist abstract artist and theoretician Albert Gleizes to act as their guide and tutor. The two friends left Lhote's academy and adopted Gleizes as their new mentor.

Albert Gleizes (1881-1953) had been one of Cubism's early innovators and proponents. In contrast to Lhote, he espoused a purely non-representational art, which did not attempt to deny the two-dimensionality of the canvas by imitating our three-dimensional world. In this, he rejected the concept of art dominant from the Renaissance onwards.⁵⁰

Throughout the 1920s, Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone worked with Gleizes, helping him to explore and define a set of coherent principles according to which abstract forms could be arranged on the two-dimensional canvas so as to result in a sense of life, rhythm and movement. The resulting conclusions were published in Gleizes' *La peinture et ses lois: ce qui devait sortir du Cubisme*.

In this work, Gleizes outlined the principles of translation and rotation that he and his students had been examining and applying in their abstract work. Gleizes believed that the shape and proportions of the canvas should decide the basic forms of a work. These planes were then to be superimposed over one another. This first step in the creation of the work was known as 'translation'.

These planes were then to be revolved around an axis, thereby creating a sense of rhythm and time. This second step was defined as 'rotation'. By following these two principles, the artist could create a fully abstract, yet dynamic, painting.⁵¹

Mainie Jellett's work from the early 1920s onwards demonstrates the result of the application of these principles. Her first experiments resulted in quite simple, yet striking, abstract compositions. As one might expect, these compositions became more complex as Jellett's career progressed.

The Irish public first encountered this pure abstraction in 1923, when Jellett exhibited a number of works at the Dublin Painters' Gallery. These were the first fully abstract works to be seen in this country and provoked a strong reaction, both positive and negative, and for the most part, confused. The Irish public found it difficult to comprehend such radically novel art; the Irish Times described her work as an "insoluble puzzle" and labelled one of her pieces, entitled 'Decoration', a "Freak Picture".⁵²

As the 1920s progressed, Jellett's compositions grew more elaborate, often featuring surface pattern (such as dots and dashes) applied to some planes. After this early exploration of pure abstraction, figurative elements, still treated in a Cubist manner, began to be introduced again. These later works were often based on religious or spiritual themes, although nude subjects also feature quite frequently among her output of this period. In the mid 1930s, Mainie Jellett visited an exhibition of Chinese art held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. This was to influence her subsequent works greatly: she began working in a more representational style, focusing increasingly on landscapes.⁵³

Four of Jellett's works are on display in the old Town Hall gallery. Although her first Cubist phase of the early 1920s is not represented here, the works do span quite an extensive period and represent various tendencies in her art. Her works usually bear generic titles such as 'abstract composition'.

Abstract Composition

Although this painting is undated, it is most likely the earliest of the four Jellett works in the Council's collection. In its use of dotting and strokes, it bears a resemblance to works produced by Jellett in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in which juxtaposed planes, of limited colour ranges, feature contrasting surface 'textures'. Cool greens, purples and blues dominate the canvas, enlivened by a few dashes of bright yellow.

Abstract Composition, 1932

This work has been signed and dated 1932 by the artist. It is noteworthy for its use of a wide variety of bright colours and for the dominance of curved forms within the composition. In these respects, this painting resembles other works produced by Jellett at the same time. In the 1930s, her palette became brighter, with many works embracing all colours of the spectrum. In this work, there is a progression from the cool end of the colour spectrum to the warmer. Arcs, rather than angular forms, also became more prominent, forming the basis of many compositions, such as this.

Abstract Composition, 1937

This work, created several years later, in 1937, draws on a more subdued palette, in which earth tones feature more prominently.

While curved forms are also seen here, there is a greater sense of elongation when compared with the squatter, rounder forms of the earlier piece. Such differing compositions stem from the contrasting shapes and sizes of these two works.

The Oak Tree, 1939

The latest of the Jellett pieces in the collection, a nude-in-landscape subject, demonstrates the influence of Chinese painting on Jellett's work. Traditional Chinese landscape painting, unlike much western representational art, does not simply aim to depict a material, physical likeness of a scene; instead, through brushwork, the artist endeavours to capture the true essence of the subject and to express the harmony and unity of nature. Consequently, traditional Chinese painting is not restricted by western conventions such as one-point perspective or single compositional focus

Jellett's study of Chinese art encouraged her to focus on representational subjects, in particular the landscape, once more, but without abandoning her search for pictorial rhythm and harmony.

In these works, including 'The Oak Tree', she draws inspiration from the external world, but simultaneously ensures that the subject is treated in a manner that creates a pleasing sense of surface pattern and rhythm through the disposition of line and colour on the canvas.

Mainie Jellett played a central role in the advancement of understanding and acceptance of modern art in Ireland, particularly of formal, abstract art. Throughout her artistic career she not only produced and exhibited works such as these, but she also delivered many lectures, broadcasts and lessons on art. Her final major contribution to the Irish art scene came in 1943, with her involvement in the establishment of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art. This was founded in response to the declining standard of the reactionary Royal Hibernian Academy shows and was to provide an opportunity for all veins of contemporary art, both avant-garde and academic, to be displayed and appreciated. The following year, 1944, Mainie Jellett died; sadly, she never had the opportunity to witness the first of these exhibitions.

Pierre Bonnard, (1867-1947), 'Interior'

This aquatint by the well-known French artist Pierre Bonnard depicts the interior of the artist's studio.

Bonnard was born in 1867 in the Parisian suburb of Fontenay-aux-Roses. Although he began studying law in 1886, he soon turned to the study of art.⁵⁴ While pursuing his art studies at the Académie Julian, Bonnard encountered some other young, like-minded artists. These young artists came together to form a group they called the 'Nabis', the Hebrew word for 'prophets'.

The Nabis were influenced by Gauguin's artistic theories and aimed to produce a decorative art, in which line and colour were used to create a patterned effect, emphasising the two-dimensionality of the canvas.

During this period, Bonnard also became involved in graphic arts, in particular, poster design. He is also celebrated for the intimate domestic scenes which came to dominate his oeuvre. These scenes are striking in their use of colour, their composition and their depiction of light.

The work held in the Dun Laoghaire collection was created after 1926, when Bonnard purchased a villa, which he named 'Le Bosquet', in the town of Le Cannet, situated close to Cannes in the south of France. This aquatint records a view of the studio that was built on the north side of 'Le Bosquet'.⁵⁵ The foreground of the work is occupied by the small studio's balcony while, behind this, as is so often the case in Bonnard's many interior scenes, we catch a glimpse of the external landscape through a large window.

The perspective of the scene has been somewhat skewed, with several planes being slightly flattened. Strong horizontal and vertical lines structure the composition; within this structure,

the detailing of certain areas creates quite a linear patterned effect. These more richly detailed areas are counterbalanced by plainer areas of the composition, such as the side and back walls and ceiling.

Bonnard spent much of his final two decades living at Le Bosquet, painting in this very studio. He passed away at Le Cannet in 1947.⁵⁶

Irish Art in the 1940s: The White Stag Group and the IELA

A number of the works included in the Ralph Cusack donation and on display in the gallery area were produced by contemporaries of Cusack's. These artists were all very active in the Irish art scene of the 1940s, and were associated with the White Stag Group. The White Stag Group was actually formed in London in 1935 by two Englishmen, Basil Rakoczi and Kenneth Hall. This group aimed to produce a 'Subjective' art, which was not so much unified by style as by approach and attitude. Members of the group moved to Ireland in 1939, at the outbreak of the Second World War, and came to constitute a significant presence in the art world in Ireland during the war period.⁵⁷

A number of notable Irish artists gathered around this group, and frequent exhibitions, both group and solo, were held throughout the early 1940s. The first group exhibition was held in April 1940 and included works by Rakoczi, Hall and Mainie Jellett. The group was not only noteworthy for its approach to art, but for its encouragement of an alternative, non-establishment Irish art scene through its organisation of these regular exhibitions.

In 1944, the group held its most important exhibition, the Exhibition of Subjective Art, at which 56 works by 13 artists were displayed.⁵⁸ The purpose of the exhibition was to provide an opportunity for artists to express themselves using whatever formal idiom or technique they might choose.

Of course, the White Stag exhibitions were not the only significant non-academic shows of the 1940s. Another extremely important force in the art world of the time was the Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA).

The first Exhibition of Living Art was held in 1943, and was organised in response to the growing conservatism of the Royal Hibernian Academy, whose recent exhibitions had seen the rejection of Modernist works, including pieces by the already established Louis le Brocquy. A large number of artists, including Mainie Jellett, Louis le Brocquy and Jack Hanlon, were involved in the organisation of this first exhibition. This was held on the premises of the National College of Art, which also served as an exhibition venue for the RHA. The scale of this show was clearly intended to equal that of the RHA. The stated purpose of the exhibition was to provide a "comprehensive survey of significant works irrespective of school or manner by Living Irish artists".⁵⁹ The exhibition received a generally positive reaction from the press, and continued to be held on an almost annual basis until the 1970s.

The war period, then, was a defining moment in the development of the Irish art scene. The early 1940s saw the invigoration of the Irish art world through the introduction of the White Stag Group into the country and the establishment of new major alternative exhibition opportunities. Awareness of an art beyond the nationalist realism supported by the

establishment began to grow, and conditions within the Irish art world began to become more conducive to the exploration of Modernist art.

Basil Rakoczi (1908-1979), 'Men at Work' ; 'Figure'

The County Council holds two works by Rakoczi, an English artist of Irish-Hungarian descent who was one of the founder-members of the White Stag Group.

Rakoczi's first interest lay in psychology; he was self-taught in this field and in 1935 he and a friend, Herbrand Ingouville-Williams (a Cambridge student of psychology at the time), founded the Society for Creative Psychology in London.⁶⁰ This group met regularly at 8 Fitzroy Street, London. It was through this group that Rakoczi met Kenneth Hall, another English artist represented in the County Art Collection. Together, Rakoczi and Hall began to experiment with psychoanalytical techniques and used the results of these experiments as a basis for paintings. These works, which they later termed 'Subjective' paintings, were exhibited under the collective title of the White Stag Group on the premises of the Society for Creative Psychology.⁶¹ The group took its name from Ingouville-Williams' family crest.⁶²

The Irish dimension to the story was introduced in 1939, when, following the outbreak of World War II, Rakoczi and Hall travelled to Ireland to practise their art in relative peace.

The artists first travelled to the west of Ireland, and then returned to Dublin, where they re-established both the Society for Creative Psychology and the White Stag Group. They held a number of exhibitions, and quickly became central figures in Dublin's non-academic art world at the time, associating with respected artists such as Mainie Jellett.

The subject matter of Rakoczi's pen and watercolour piece, *Men at Work*, suggests that the work was quite likely painted during Rakoczi's early sojourns in the west of Ireland in the early 1940s when Rakoczi regularly depicted such representational subjects. The composition of this work is dominated by strong diagonals; not only in the forms of the stooping workers who have been arranged to form a triangular composition on the right hand side of the canvas, but also through the hatched, ink-drawn diagonal lines that have been applied to the canvas.

While the subject matter itself is drawn from everyday reality, the artist moulds this to suit his own formal vision. This is not simply a descriptive piece, recording a scene of life in the west; the strong diagonal linear elements create a striking aesthetic effect.

The second work in the collection, by contrast, does not draw on such realistic subject matter. This piece depicts a bizarre figure in a limited range of bright colours and owes more to the imagination of the artist than any scene he may have witnessed. In both its content and its form, this could be termed a Subjective work. In a vaguely Cubist manner, we are presented with both profile and frontal views of the whimsical figure's head. Similar depictions of heads feature prominently among Rakoczi's increasingly Subjective post-1943 Irish output.⁶³

Again, this work was created using watercolour, pen and ink. As in 'Men At Work', there is a strong linear element to the painting. A pen has been used here to draw both curved and straight lines, defining and decorating certain sections of the figure and its backdrop.

Once the war ended, Rakoczi left Ireland, returning first to London, before travelling on to Paris, where he then settled. He continued to work in the fields of psycho-analysis and art and, over the following decade, he even carried on sending work to a significant number of Irish art exhibitions.⁶⁴

Rakoczi died in 1979, having suffered ill health for several years⁶⁵.

Kenneth Hall (1913-1946), 'Allegory'

Hall was another English artist who spent the period of WWII in Ireland. Like Rakoczi, he also had an Irish connection; his mother was born in Cork.⁶⁶

In 1935, after meeting Basil Rakoczi, he made the decision to paint full-time. Before coming to Ireland in 1939, he travelled around Europe with Rakoczi, where he was exposed to new movements in painting, particularly Surrealism, which was the dominant modern artistic movement at the time.⁶⁷ During this period he primarily painted landscapes, in which forms were defined with thin, black outlines.

Upon arriving in Ireland in 1939, he made his way to the west along with Rakoczi, before returning to Dublin where he held a number of one-man exhibitions and participated in a number of group shows.

In these shows he exhibited his increasingly Subjective art, an art that would have seemed quite novel in the Ireland of the period. He defined Subjective painting as that where the "subjective element predominates over the objective element", the 'subjective element' in question being "that which is contributed by the artist from the depth of his own nature", and the objective element being "that which is observed or drawn from the external world by the artist"⁶⁸.

The Subjective element certainly seems to be the forefront of the work here, in a composition dominated by a large grey hand within which we see the simplified and exaggerated outlines of a number of human figures. It is not only this surreal subject matter that appears to be 'subjective'; so, too, is the artist's depiction of the figures, the clouds and the sun, whose shapes are distorted to express his own personal vision. Similarly simplified and exaggerated forms are seen in other works created by Hall between 1941 and 1946, during his 'Subjective' phase.

The work is also notable for two formal devices commonly employed by Hall, namely his use of a thick black line to delineate certain forms and his use of a pencil to draw lines into wet paint (as seen at the bottom of this canvas). The latter technique was one that Hall shared with Rakoczi.⁶⁹

Hall, like Rakoczi, left Ireland after the Second World War drew to a close. Sadly, however, unlike his peer, who went on to enjoy a long career as an artist, Hall, who had always been prone to bouts of depression, took his own life in 1946.⁷⁰

Stephen Gilbert (1910-2007), 'Figure', 1941

Gilbert was yet another British expatriate who spent the war years in Ireland. Gilbert initially studied architecture, turning to painting in 1930. Gilbert and his Canadian sculptor wife, Jocelyn Chewett, left Paris for Ireland in 1940.⁷¹

Through Mainie Jellett, they came into contact with Basil Rakoczi and Kenneth Hall and became integral figures in the White Stag Group in Dublin.

Gilbert's paintings were expressionist in nature. At this time, in creating his art, he was inspired by the writings of Jung and Nietzsche. During the war years, he came to concentrate on images of insects and strange creatures, painted in a loose, bold, direct style.⁷²

The work held by the Council is dated 1941, so was produced while Gilbert resided in Ireland. Like much of his work, the piece was executed in pen and wash. The painting depicts human forms, rather than the insect-like creatures that were to become Gilbert's focus. However, like these later works, Gilbert's distorted forms seem to originate in a classical or mythical world, removed from everyday reality. Here, these exaggerated figures have been reduced to simple black outlines. Washes of paint have been applied to selected areas of the canvas, although the work is not as brightly coloured as Gilbert's later, more abstract pictures.

Gilbert left Ireland in 1946 and later became involved with the CoBrA group, which was founded in 1948. The CoBrA group was an avant-garde group of artists mainly from Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands that was active in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Its members produced spontaneous, child-like works, drawing on the unconscious, often depicting animals and fantastical creatures, much like those produced by Gilbert while in Ireland several years previously. Gilbert felt that a common Celtic cultural background may have unconsciously caused himself and the CoBrA group to produce such similar work.⁷³

In the mid 1950s, Gilbert began to work in sculptural and architectural modes, returning to painting in the 1980s. He died in England in 2007.⁷⁴

Thurloe Conolly (b. 1918), 'A Ship'

Thurloe Conolly, born in Cork, was an Irish contributor to the 1940s Dublin art scene.

Conolly was a self-taught artist. In 1941, having become unemployed, he began painting full-time, upon the encouragement of other artist friends including Evie Hone and Ralph Cusack.⁷⁵

In 1942, he became involved with the White Stag Group, participating in a poetry reading. Following this, he began to occasionally exhibit his art at White Stag shows, and sat on the committee of the 1944 Exhibition of Subjective Art.

He also exhibited at the Dublin Painters' Gallery (set up by Grace and Paul Henry in the 1920s) and at the first Irish Exhibition of Living Art, whose committee he joined in 1947.

Like other artists represented in the collection, he was also involved in stage design, and worked with Ralph Cusack and Anne Yeats on a set design for a 1942 Olympia Theatre production of a comedy entitled *The House of Cards*. Conolly, who had been unable to buy artists' canvas due to wartime shortages, for a short time actually made use of the set's

discarded canvas backdrops for his paintings.⁷⁶

Conolly underwent several periods of stylistic development throughout the 1940s and 1950s, moving from figure compositions and romantic landscapes to pure abstraction.

This work, depicting a sailing boat at sea and the nearby coastline, was most likely painted between 1942 and 1945. During this period, Conolly focused on landscape scenes, drawing inspiration from “the poetical way Christopher Wood handled his subjects”.⁷⁷ Christopher Wood (1901-1930) was an English artist who was known for his coastal scenes painted in a primitive style.⁷⁸ Echoes of this can be seen in this work of Conolly’s.

Here, Conolly has treated his subject boldly and confidently: expansive planes of a few strong colours, lacking in any real tonal variations, dominate the composition. This helps to create a flat, patterned effect. In addition, the paint has been applied quite thickly and heavily, resulting in a visibly textured surface.

Conolly's style continued to evolve, with his work becoming increasingly abstract in the 1950s. The following decade, in 1967, he emigrated to France and set up his own design and architectural practice near Bordeaux. In 1995 Conolly retired from this practice and once again concentrated full-time on painting.⁷⁹

Ralph Cusack (1912-1965), 'The Smoke Room'

This work by Ralph Cusack was donated to the Council in 2001 by the FNCI so that it might be displayed next to the Cusack donation that had been received several decades previously.⁸⁰

Like many of his artistic peers, Cusack was self-taught. He began to paint in the 1930s, after ill health caused him to move to the south of France, returning to Ireland at the outbreak of the Second World War.

Mainie Jellett was a cousin of Cusack’s and it may have been through her that he became involved with the Dublin Painters’ Society in 1940 or so. Cusack also sat on the executive committee of the Living Art exhibitions and contributed to the White Stag Group’s Subjective Art show of 1944.

In the 1940s, he also worked as a stage designer, collaborating with Anne Yeats and Thurloe Conolly, whose work is also represented in the County Art Collection.⁸¹

His paintings usually have a surrealist or symbolist element to them. This work, depicting meat hanging from the ceiling of a smoke room, possesses an almost dreamlike quality. The scene is overlaid with waves of smoke, blurring the distinction between wall and ceiling. The wave effect is also continued in the pattern of the wooden floor. Inconsistencies in line and in perspective contribute further to the surreal air of the scene.

In 1954, Cusack settled in France, where he wrote his only literary work, *Cadenza*. He died in 1965.

V. Nichols, Still Life

One of the works included in the Ralph Cusack donation, an oil on panel painting that depicts a still life scene, is the work of an unknown artist by the name of V. Nicholls. In contrast to many of the other works included in this donation, the representational subject and its treatment are quite conventional. However, the choice of subject, the brush-work and the slight tilting of the picture plane do suggest the influence of the late nineteenth century artist, Paul Cézanne.

Non FNCI Works

In addition to the works donated by the FNCI, a number of other pieces are displayed in the gallery area, many of which possess a degree of local significance.

J.L. Robinson (c.1848-1894), 'Dun Laoghaire Town Hall'

This watercolour perspective of the north front of the Town Hall was produced by the building's architect, J.L. Robinson. Although the work itself is undated, it is likely it was created in the late 1870s, before the building's construction (1878-1880); in a few minor respects, the façade depicted here differs from that which was eventually constructed. The most noticeable differences are in the chimney design, the absence of red sandstone above the courthouse door and the two-tone banded effect of the building's rusticated base.

Paul Daly (b. 1963), 'Dun Laoghaire Town Hall', 2006

Paul Daly, a self-taught artist, works in a variety of media, including watercolours, oils, pastel, and pen and ink, depicting various subjects, including portraits and Dublin street scenes.⁸²

This work depicts the Town Hall, as seen from Crofton Road. Unlike the other depictions of the Town Hall held in the Council's collection, this piece was created after the construction of the twentieth century extension, which is portrayed clearly in the painting. While the main purpose of the work is to record the appearance of the new County Hall complex, the artist enlivens the scene with figures going about their daily business. The work was commissioned by the County Council, which also had 130 prints of the painting published.

Daly took up sculpture in 2000 and is now perhaps best known for creating the Phillip Lynott Memorial statue in Harry Street, Dublin. He continues to work as an artist today.

Hugh McCormick (1943-99), 'Burren 11'

Hugh McCormick was born in Dublin in 1943, raised in Northern Ireland and studied art in Belfast and in London. He was involved in art education throughout his career: in 1969 he founded the Dingle summer school of painting, which ran until 1973; in the mid 1970s he joined Galway-Mayo Institution of Technology as head of the art department where he remained until 1997.⁸³

As an artist, McCormick is best known for his landscape painting, particularly for his scenes

of the west of Ireland, including the Burren, Connemara, the Corrib and the Galway docks.⁸⁴ In 1992, a number of McCormick's recent landscape paintings were exhibited in the Town Hall, as part of the Dun Laoghaire Arts Week celebration.

This particular painting depicts the scenery of the Burren, a recurring theme in McCormick's work. Individual brushstrokes of pure, bright colour have been applied side by side in diagonal lines to describe the rocky ground. These lines dominate the composition and provide the work with a strong sense of structure and direction.

Through his bold composition and use of vibrant colour, the artist expresses his own personal response to the landscape; this work is not an attempt to describe the landscape realistically and accurately. As McCormick has explained:

"I have a deep feeling for the Burren and am continually seeking ways of expressing that feeling. What appear at first glance to be illogical pictorial devices e.g. the horizontal and perpendicular lines, the disregard for "local" colour, are in fact methods of expressing this feeling in what I hope is a fresh and exciting manner."⁸⁵

This is clearly a landscape that captivated, inspired and invigorated the artist.

George Potter, RHA (b. 1941), 'Islington Avenue', 1998

George Potter was born in Washington DC in 1941. He studied painting at the Rhode Island School of Design from 1958-1962, and spent several years in Germany, from 1963-65 while on military service, and from 1967-71, as a painter.⁸⁶

In 1971 Potter moved to Ireland, settling in Dun Laoghaire, where he initially became well-known for his portraits of female figures. However, he expanded his subject matter in the 1980s and 1990s, when he began to concentrate on painting views of the locality, including this 1998 work depicting Islington Avenue in Dun Laoghaire. Many of these 'landscapes' were exhibited in Potter's numerous Dun Laoghaire Suite exhibitions.⁸⁷

Like much of Potter's work, this view of Islington Avenue is striking for its bold composition. One senses that the scene has been pared down to the essential shapes and lines that lend structure to the landscape. The composition is dominated by sharp, clear-cut angular shapes that describe both the solid, physical elements of the scene and the strong shadows cast by these objects. The artist's preferred device of a black, defining line accentuates this linearity and sense of structure.

This severity is offset by the more freely-described natural forms of trees, foliage and clouds. Similarly, the brighter colours of the warm-toned foliage and the blue sea and sky contrast with the larger expanses of black and grey tones, which are used to depict the surface of the street, walls, buildings, and the shadows thrown by these man-made structures.

In more recent years, Potter has continued to find inspiration in the townscapes of Dun Laoghaire. In 2003, he was elected Associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy.⁸⁸

Pierre Peron (1905-1988), 'Seascape'

This work depicts the northern French harbour of Brest, which is twinned with the town of Dun Laoghaire. The work was donated to the Council by the Brest Twinning Committee.

Peron, a Breton artist, was born in and worked in Brest. He worked not only as a painter, but also in other artistic fields, including illustration, sculpting and writing.⁸⁹

Peron's painted work is dominated by images of the sea. In this particular scene, we are presented with quite an impressionistic view - indeed, one might even call it a painted sketch - of Brest's harbour. Various landmarks in the background allow us to identify the location - here we see the Recouvrance Bridge, Brest's castle and the Tour Tanguy.

Peron painted many scenes like this, depicting his home-town and its harbour. In fact, in recognition of his devotion to marine subjects, he was accorded the title of 'peintre de la marine' by the French ministry of defense in 1942.⁹⁰

Private Offices

A variety of other works are held in non-publicly accessible areas of the building, namely in the County Hall's strong room and in a number of private offices. These works include several graphic pieces, as well as some small scale paintings and sculptures.

Graphic works:

Desmond McCarthy, 'A View from the DART', 21 pen and ink drawings

These twenty-one pen and ink drawings are the original illustrations to a book entitled *A View from the Dart*, by Vincent Caprani, published in 1986 on the occasion of the opening of the DART railway line. The drawings are the work of Desmond McCarthy who is best known for his drawings and prints of Dublin locations.

This collection of illustrations was kindly donated to the Council in 2006 by local resident Cartan Finegan, who was involved in the design and launch of the DART system and who, naturally, took an interest in Caprani's publication and the accompanying drawings.

As the title of the book suggests, these pen and ink drawings depict views of various landmarks along Dublin's coast, from Bray to Howth. The collection reminds us of the role played by the town of Dun Laoghaire in the development of Dublin's rail system. Long before the opening of the DART system, the Dublin-Kingstown railway line, opened in 1834, was Ireland's first railway system. Over a century and a half later, this was to form the basis of the new DART line, the route of which is illustrated in these drawings.

The collection is currently housed in the Cathaoirleach's Parlour.

Louise Meade (b. 1959), 'Kernal' (etching)

This etching was created by Louise Meade, who held the position of the County Council's Printmaker in Residence at Airfield House, Dundrum, from November 2003 until April 2004.

Meade studied Fine Art Printmaking both in Dun Laoghaire College of Art & Design and at the National College of Art & Design. She was also a print-maker with the Black Church Print Studio, based in Temple Bar.⁹¹

The imagery in Meade's prints is usually abstracted from nature, as her exhibition themes indicate. Her 2000 exhibition, 'Unchartered Waters', held at the Original Print Gallery in Dublin, explored nature's large bodies of water. This was followed by her 2005 solo show, 'Filament', which considered nature on a much more microscopic scale, evoking bodily fluids and tissues.⁹²

This work, 'Kernal', is reminiscent of the latter group of works in both its imagery and its title. The title brings to mind a kernel, that which is at the core and which is vital to life. The reddish marks on the pale canvas resemble a microscopic image of cellular material. At first glance, these marks appear to be quite simple in form; upon closer examination, however, their complexity and intricacy is revealed. The work holds a sense of delicacy, but also of potential, perhaps even evoking an embryonic form.

In the summer of 2008, Louise Meade held her third solo show, 'Dark Night' at the Original Print Gallery.

Patrick Hickey (1927-1998), 'The Sixth Day of Christmas, Six Geese A-laying', early-mid 1990s

Patrick Hickey, who was born in Pakistan (then British India) and schooled in England, worked in the fields of architecture, painting and print-making. He is perhaps best-known as a print-maker.

Hickey qualified from the UCD school of architecture in 1954. Two years later, in 1956, he began to work for the renowned Irish architect, Michael Scott.

However, not long after this, in 1957, Hickey was awarded an Italian State Scholarship and travelled with his wife to the Northern Italian town of Urbino to attend the town's 'La Scuola del Libro'. Here, over the course of eight months, from 1957-58, Hickey studied the arts of etching and lithography. Upon completing his studies in the field of print-making, Hickey returned to Ireland and decided to dedicate himself to the pursuits of print-making and painting.⁹³

In 1962, back in Ireland, where he was very conscious of the dearth of graphic printing, Hickey and others, including Anne Yeats (also represented in the County Art Collection), Liam Miller, Leslie McWeeney and Elizabeth Rivers, set up the Graphic Studio.⁹⁴ The purpose of this print studio was to teach the graphic arts to budding artists.

Hickey continued to work as a graphic artist himself, frequently producing works in series; he has explained that he has "*always felt and acted in the belief that prints lend themselves particularly well to being done in a series*".⁹⁵ His first such series was a set of prints depicting the Stations of the Cross. In 1974, he was also involved in the design of a very different sort of series, the new Irish currency notes.

Hickey also worked in other artistic fields: he taught at the UCD school of architecture for a number of years, completed a degree in the history of art and Italian in 1984, and was head of painting in NCAD's Fine Art faculty from 1986-90.

The colour etching held by the Council, 'The Sixth Day of Christmas, Six Geese A-laying', was created in the early 1990s and was exhibited at a 1995 show of Hickey's recent etchings, held in the Graphic Studio, Dublin. Like many of his works, this etching is one of a series. As the title suggests, this particular series is based on the Christmas carol, 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'.⁹⁶

The work is pared back to the essential elements of the scene and is quite typical of Hickey's style, often described as being influenced by Japanese art, in its refined simplicity and in its treatment of space. The six geese of the title, arranged in three groups of two, are depicted in profile against a bare ground; empty space is a very important factor in the work. The only element of colour is provided by the dark outlines of the birds' forms and the bright yellow of their beaks, feet and eyes. The overall effect is almost that of a flat pattern.

Hickey exhibited at the IELA on a number of occasions, held number of one-man exhibitions and represented Ireland at several International Biennales.⁹⁷

Paintings:

Anne Yeats (1919 -2001), 'Fantasy', 1948

Anne Yeats, daughter of W.B. Yeats and niece of Jack B. Yeats, was born in Dublin in 1919.

From a young age, she, too, expressed an interest in the arts. From 1933-36 she studied drawing at the Royal Hibernian Academy. Aged 17 she left the academy and travelled to Spain. Upon her return to Ireland, she began to work as a set designer and continued to do so until 1946. At first, she took up a position as assistant stage designer at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, but in 1940 she left this establishment to work on a freelance basis.

At the same time, she began attending night classes in the National College of Art and, in 1941, she took up painting, working in the media of water and wax. She contributed to the first Irish Exhibition of Living Art in 1943 and continued her involvement with this institution by exhibiting regularly and joining the committee in 1947. Anne Yeats held her first solo exhibition of watercolours in 1946 at another non-academic venue, the Dublin Painters' Gallery.

In the 1950s, following a trip to China, her work became bolder and more colourful; at this point, she began to paint in oils.⁹⁸

The painting in the County Art Collection seems to date to an earlier period; it was created using watercolour, pen and ink, and is similar in technique to many of her works of the 1940s. Like other works of this period, it is line rather than colour that is the dominant element in the composition. Here, the fantastical form is sketched out in black, red and yellow lines. In addition, the grainy finish of this piece is seen in some of Yeats' other works of the 1940s and 1950s.

From 1969 onwards, Anne Yeats lived in Dalkey, in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown borough.

She died in 2001.⁹⁹

Joe Dunne (b. 1957), 'Wedding Shoes', 1996

Joe Dunne was born in Dublin in 1957 and studied at NCAD from 1975-1978.

In 2004, as part of the County Council's Artists in Schools programme (initiated in 1994) Dunne was selected as artist in residence in Scoil Naithí Gaelscoil, Ballinteer.¹⁰⁰

Dunne's paintings encompass a range of subjects, from portraits to landscapes to abstract works. However, he always draws on the ordinary, often suburban, world surrounding him. Occasionally, he returns to what he describes as the more humble genre of still life.

This work, *Wedding Shoes*, was painted in 1996, before Dunne's involvement in the Artists in Schools scheme and before his movement into a more abstract style. In keeping with the tradition of the still life genre, Dunne has chosen to portray everyday objects. The work depicts, in a realist style, a seemingly mundane pair of men's shoes and a wash brush, sitting in a red basin. However, the title of the work, *Wedding Shoes*, endows these simple shoes with a special significance, adding an autobiographical element that may resonate with the viewer.

Dunne connects this work to vanitas paintings popular in northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, in which the viewer is encouraged to reflect on the transience of life and its pleasures.¹⁰¹

In addition to the associations created in the mind of the viewer by the objects depicted, Dunne places equal if not greater importance on the arrangement of these elements of the composition and the visual effect created by his depiction of forms, space, light and colour. While the traditional realist style of the work affords a sensual reading of the objects, the viewpoint and cropped composition give a slightly abstracted and more contemporary feel. As always, the viewer will bring their own associations and responses to the choice, arrangement and rendering of the objects in the painting.

Sam Gaine, 'Orange', 1992; 'Sycamore Leaves', 1997; 'Blue Leaf', 1997;

The Council possesses three canvases by Sam Gaine, a former architect.¹⁰² These are: *Sycamore Leaves* (1997); *Blue Leaf* (1997); *Orange* (1994)

These three works, all close-range depictions of natural forms - leaves, a piece of fruit - describe their subjects in meticulous, almost photographic, detail. In their subject and in their execution they demonstrate the artist's keen interest in and love of the natural environment and its intricacies.

The earliest work, *'Orange'*, was painted in 1994 and was exhibited at Gaine's first solo exhibition, entitled *'Still Life'*, which was held in the Old Schoolhouse in Dun Laoghaire.

Gaine's next exhibition, *'Leaves'*, was based on leaves in the garden of the Cheshire Home in nearby Monkstown, where his studio was located. *'Sycamore Leaves'* and *'Blue Leaf'* were painted during this period.

The artist's dedication to natural themes continues to this day. Inspired by Neolithic carvings, Gaine recently began to paint and carve on stone deposited by a small river in the garden of his Co. Clare home. He is currently working towards an exhibition of cityscapes of Dublin and landscape paintings of Kerry, Clare as well as Brazil. As Gaine himself explains:

"My artistic career has continued with Nature as I see it before me. I often tell my children that a few feet of hedgerow anywhere in Ireland is a masterpiece beyond compare."¹⁰³

Judy Hamilton (b. 1954), 'Abstract', mid-1990s

Judy Hamilton has studied at both the National College of Art and Design and Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design. She initially qualified from NCAD with a National Diploma in Art and Design (specialising in fashion, jewellery and sculpture) in 1975, returning to education in 1991, to study Fine Art at Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design. She has since taught at both primary and third level institutions.¹⁰⁴

In both 1995 and 1996 she submitted work to Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. In 1997 she held a joint show, entitled 'Close Connections', with Mary Brady at the County Hall. This piece was exhibited at this show and forms part of a series of work based on the artist's daughter, who is dyslexic.

In this painting, the artist looks into her daughter's bedroom and through her expressionistic depiction of this view – her daughter's chair, bed and christening dress – the artist represents her daughter's world and struggle.¹⁰⁵

The physicality and immediacy of the work is all important. Hamilton has explained that she delights "in the smells, textures and colours" of her media. Painting allows her not only to depict, but also to express:

"I have a great need to paint and express my feelings through the sensuously physical action of painting."¹⁰⁶

Hamilton, a keen sailor, now resides in Tipperary, where her Lough Derg studio has allowed her to attain a deep knowledge of the Irish landscape. She is now particularly well-known for her skilful renderings of the changing effects of the Irish light, weather and seasons on the waterways of Ireland.

Stephen Cullen (b. 1959), 'People's Park'

Stephen Cullen was born in Dublin in 1959. In 1982 he began to paint professionally, having worked as an advertising designer from 1977.¹⁰⁷

Many of Cullen's paintings, including this work, depict scenes of the Dun Laoghaire locality. His paintings are notable for their use of bright colour, applied thickly, often with a palette knife. Forms are described with large blocks of colour in quite a cursory, broad manner and the work leaves quite a strong overall impression of light and colour. The human figure is usually an important element in his scenes, tying the composition together. In this work, a woman jogs away from the viewer, drawing one's eye further into the light-filled park, where

more figures inhabit the space depicted by Cullen.

This emphasis on colour, light and the human presence ensures that Cullen's painting is full of life, capturing the atmosphere of the scene, and not merely describing it topographically.

John Coyle, RHA, (b. 1928), 'Town Hall'; 'People's Park/ The Park, Early Morning'

The figurative painter John Coyle was born in Scotland in 1928. His art education was gained at the National College of Art & Design in Dublin and the Glasgow School of Art. He also studied in Paris, Florence and Madrid. He first exhibited in Cork in 1948 and has exhibited in most public exhibitions in Ireland since then.

Over the years, Coyle has been very involved in art education; He was head of the Art Department and subsequently Vice-Principal of Blackrock College in Dublin and has lectured in the National College of Art & Design and Dun Laoghaire School of Art.

He was elected an Associate Member of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1979 and a full Member in 1982.¹⁰⁸

Coyle has painted many scenes of the Dun Laoghaire locality; two of these scenes of local interest are in the possession of the Council.

One of these depicts the People's Park, and is one of several works to do so among the County Art Collection. In this painting, Coyle captures the park on what appears to be a crisp winter's day. The scene seems starker than that depicted by either Marie McDonald or Stephen Cullen; in place of McDonald's bright flowers and Cullen's active figures, we are presented with bare trees and a solitary seated figure.

The other work by Coyle portrays the Town Hall. Similarly, this subject is depicted in a number of art works owned by the Council. However, unlike the works of Robinson and Daly, in which the northern façade of the building is depicted, here we are presented with a view of the east front of the old Town Hall, as seen from the corner of Marine Road. This work was presented by an Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Margaret Waugh on the centenary of the Town Hall, 14th October 1980.

Sculptures:

Martin Dixon (1863-1938), 4 bronze busts: 'Old Man'; 'Head of an Irish Man'; 'Eileen my Wife' (1928); Young girl'.

In 1981, four bronze busts by Martin Dixon were donated to the Council by Dr. Eileen Dixon, via the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland.¹⁰⁹

Martin Dixon, a resident of Sandycove, worked as a building contractor. However, in later life, following a long-held ambition, he turned to the art of sculpting. He proved to possess genuine talent in this field and received a number of awards in recognition of this: two busts produced by Dixon were awarded prizes by the Louvre and the French Salon.¹¹⁰

Edward Delaney RHA (b. 1930), 'Girl Standing'

In 2008 the Council purchased a bronze work by Edward Delaney, one of the most renowned Irish sculptors working in the latter half of the twentieth century, who has represented Ireland on the international stage on a number of occasions and whose public works are familiar Dublin landmarks.

Delaney came from a rural background, growing up in Claremorris, Co. Mayo. He studied at the National College of Art and Design before moving to Germany to study casting in the 1950s. The sculptor later settled in Dun Laoghaire, establishing his foundry in the town.¹¹¹

Several well-known works by Delaney are situated in Dublin's city centre. His best known and most prominent works include the Thomas Davis memorial (1966) located at College Green and his Wolfe Tone statue and Famine Memorial (1967) situated at the north-east corner of St. Stephen's Green.¹¹² These works were very novel for their time; their expressionist style had not been seen before in the public, monumental sculpture of the city.

The work acquired by the Council is on a much smaller, more intimate scale (it is 9.5 inches in height). However, in common with the artist's other works, this piece treats a traditional subject, the standing human figure, in an expressionistic manner. Although the subject is recognisable as a human figure, this is by no means a naturalistic depiction of a young girl. Instead, the girl's form has been distorted and elongated; thin, straight, angular legs contrast with the more rounded forms of the arms, shoulders and head.

While Delaney is perhaps best-known for such expressionistic, bronze, figural sculptures, his later work is quite different in style. His more recent pieces, tubular stainless steel constructions, are much more abstract.¹¹³

Other artists:

A number of landscape works by several other artists are displayed in the Council's private offices. These include oils by Brian McSweeney and watercolours by Robert L. Leinster, as well as a number of brightly coloured gouache scenes of Doogga village, Co. Mayo by George Corcoran.

Conclusion

The County Art Collection is of great value on both a national and local level. It contains a considerable number of works of historical interest, which represent various avant-garde tendencies in the twentieth century Irish art world. Many of these works have been donated to the Council, in recognition of its role as a conservator and protector of local and national heritage.

This is complemented by a large number of more contemporary pieces, which have been produced by living, often local, artists at various stages in the development of their careers. This aspect of the collection is a testament to the Council's commitment to the nurturing of the present-day art scene in the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown borough.

Similarly, the County Hall complex combines a sense of tradition and history with a concern for progress and modernity. The old Town Hall is a longstanding landmark within the town's streetscape; its attractive Venetian-derived design makes for a charming, yet striking, presence among its more classical neighbours.

This fine Victorian building has been married with a manifestly modern, late twentieth century extension whose extensive areas of glazing offer the passerby many glimpses into the interior space of the County Hall. This has created a sense of transparency, accessibility and connectedness that is continued within the building's open, flexible public interior spaces, spaces that are enlivened by the County Art Collection.

Truly, both the County Hall building and the County Art Collection represent valuable assets to the community of Dun-Laoghaire-Rathdown.

¹ Pearson, Peter, *Dun Laoghaire Kingstown* (Dublin : O'Brien Press, 1991), pp.107-108

² O'Dwyer, Frederick, 'Dun Laoghaire Town Hall Refurbishment: Critique', *Irish Architect*, v. 83, Mar/Apr 1991, p.15

³ Pearson, Peter, *Dun Laoghaire Kingstown* , p.107

⁴ 'Robinson, John Loftus', *Dictionary of Irish Architects*, Irish Architectural Archive <
<http://www.dia.ie/architects/view/4608>>

⁵ 'Robinson, John Loftus', *Dictionary of Irish Architects*

⁶ 'Robinson, John Loftus', *Dictionary of Irish Architects*

⁷ Walsh, Pat, *Images of Ireland: Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown* (Dublin: Nonsuch Publishing 2005), p.40

⁸ Pearson, *Dun Laoghaire Kingstown* , p.107

⁹ Pearson, *Dun Laoghaire Kingstown* , p.107

¹⁰ O'Dwyer, Frederick, *Irish Architect*, p.15

¹¹ 'Dun Laoghaire Town Hall Refurbishment: Architects' Account', *Irish Architect*, v. 83, Mar/Apr 1991, p.13

¹² 'Dun Laoghaire Town Hall Refurbishment: Architects' Account', *Irish Architect*, p.13

¹³ O'Dwyer, Frederick, *Irish Architect*, p.16

¹⁴ Dun Laoghaire Town Hall Refurbishment: Architects' Account', *Irish Architect*, p.14

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- ¹⁵ Pearson attributes the Post Office to Robinson (Pearson, *Dun Laoghaire Kingstown*, p. 109), whereas the *Dictionary of Irish Artists* refers to Trevor Enoch Owen ('Co. Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Marine Road, Post Office', <<http://www.dia.ie/works/view/39411>>)
- ¹⁶ 'Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Competition', *Irish Architect*, v.102, Jul/Aug 1994, p.7
- ¹⁷ 'Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Competition', *Irish Architect*, p.7
- ¹⁸ 'Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Hall: Architects' Account', *Irish Architect*, v.125 March 1997, p.15
- ¹⁹ O'Neill, Sadhbh, Email to the author, 26th January 2009
- ²⁰ Per Cent for art is a scheme whereby a figure equalling up to one per cent of a public construction project's budget is set aside for the purchase or commissioning of suitable art works or for the organisation of appropriate cultural events.
- ²¹ McDonald, Marie, *A Bee's Eye View: A Celebration in Paintings and drawings of the work of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Parks Department*, Exhibition invitation, press release and catalogue (Dublin: 1999)
- ²² Pontzen, Rutger, *Anita Groener*, Ed. John O'Regan (Dublin : Gandon Editions, 1995), p.29
- ²³ Pontzen, Rutger, p.16
- ²⁴ Groener, Anita, Email to the author, 13th June 2008
- ²⁵ Groener, Anita, Email to the author, 13th June 2008
- ²⁶ *Crossing*, Exhibition catalogue, (Dublin: RHA Gallagher Gallery, 2006)
- ²⁷ Woolf, Felicity, *Mary Fitzgerald*, Ed. John O'Regan (Dublin : Gandon Editions, 1992), p.29
- ²⁸ Walker, Dorothy, *Modern art in Ireland* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1997), p.138
- ²⁹ 'Mary Fitzgerald - Current Member | Aosdana', 9th November 2008
<<http://aosdana.arts council.ie/Members/Visual-Arts/Fitzgerald.aspx>>
- ³⁰ *Continuum 2nd-20th February 1993*, Exhibition catalogue (New York: Jain Marunouchi Gallery, 1993)
- ³¹ Woolf, Felicity, *Mary Fitzgerald*, p.22
- ³² Woolf, Felicity, *Mary Fitzgerald*, p.18
- ³³ Dick, Kate, Email to the author, 31st October 2008
- ³⁴ McLeod, Anna, Email to the author, 8th July 2008
- ³⁵ McLeod, Anna, Email to the author, 8th July 2008
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<http://interface.dit.ie/drawinglab/index.php?option=com_comprofiler&task=userProfile&user=72&Itemid=36>
- ³⁷ 'Fiona Murphy - Registered Craftsperson', 8th November 2008
<http://www.ccoi.ie/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=detail.php&reference=891&It>

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³⁸ Nicolaou, Nicos, Email to the author, 10th December 2008

³⁹ ‘Welcome to the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland.’ 9th November 2008
<<http://www.thefriendsofthenationalcollectionsofireland.ie>>

⁴⁰ Handwritten note dated April 1981 describing gift to Dun Laoghaire Corporation from Dr. Eileen Dixon: two portraits by Grace Henry and four bronzes by Martin Dixon of Dalkey, FNCI/02/01/44, Correspondence 1968-1982, Records of The Honorary Treasurer, Friends of the National Collections of Ireland Archive, National Irish Visual Arts Library

⁴¹ Minutes of the Council meeting of the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland held at the Irish Architectural Archive, 73 Merrion Square on Monday 3rd September 2001. Friends of the National Collections of Ireland Archive. National Irish Visual Arts Library.

⁴² Bodkin, Thomas, *Four Irish landscape painters : George Barret, James A. O'Connor, Walter F. Osborne, Nathaniel Hone* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1987), p. 50

⁴³ Kennedy, S.B., *Irish art and modernism 1880-1950* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1991), p.20

⁴⁴ Kennedy, S.B., *Irish art and modernism 1880-1950*, p.24

⁴⁵ Kennedy, S.B., *Irish art and modernism 1880-1950.*, p.25

⁴⁶ Handwritten note dated April 1981 describing gift to Dun Laoghaire Corporation from Dr. Eileen Dixon: two portraits by Grace Henry and four bronzes by Martin Dixon of Dalkey, FNCI/02/01/44, Correspondence 1968-1982, Records of The Honorary Treasurer, Friends of the National Collections of Ireland Archive, National Irish Visual Arts Library

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⁵⁰ Arnold, Bruce, *Mainie Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland*. p.58

⁵¹ Arnold, Bruce, *Mainie Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland.*, p.63

⁵² Arnold, Bruce, *Mainie Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland*. p.80

⁵³ Arnold, Bruce, *Mainie Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland*, pp.150-153

⁵⁴ Fermigier, André, *Pierre Bonnard* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p.9

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⁵⁶ Terrasse, Michel, p.27

⁵⁷ Kennedy, S.B., *The White Stag Group*, Exhibition catalogue (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2005), pp. 14-20

⁵⁸ Kennedy, S.B., *The White Stag Group*, p.33

⁵⁹ Kennedy, S.B., *Irish art and modernism 1880-1950*, p.119

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- ⁶⁰ Kennedy, S.B., *Irish art and modernism 1880-1950*, p.91
- ⁶¹ Kennedy, S.B., *The White Stag Group*, p. 153
- ⁶² Kennedy, S.B., *The White Stag Group*, p. 16
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