



West of Ireland
Paintings at the
National Gallery of Ireland
from 1800 to 2000

GAILÉARAÍ
NÁISIÚNTA^{na}
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Marie Bourke

With contributions by
Donal Maguire And Sarah Edmondson

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Foreword

Sean Rainbird, Director, The National Gallery of Ireland

The National Gallery of Ireland houses the national collection of Irish art, including the national portrait collection and the Yeats archive. This publication focuses on over thirty images of the West created by Irish-born artists or of Irish descent between 1800 to 2000. It has been written to draw attention to the range and variety of works in the collection that bear testament to the enduring attraction of the West of Ireland.

The introductory essay provides an overview of what constitutes the appeal of the West, starting with curiosity about the more picturesque areas of the country, which is what traditionally attracted artists and travellers to Ireland. This includes maps, together with guide books and travel memoirs, that not alone provided information, but many were illustrated by artists providing early topographical views of the country. This area of Ireland was remote in the nineteenth century and it took initiatives such as the construction of roads and railways to augment early travel by foot, horseback, carriage and boat. In spite of this there was considerable interest by Irish and overseas painters in the West, including those who came from Britain and America. The reaction of artists to the unspoiled Western landscape and lifestyle is what forms the subject of this book. The essay concludes with an exploration of concepts of national identity and the 'Irishness' of the landscape noting how artists have continued to look afresh at this subject to find contemporary relevance in the West. There is a useful timeline of dates in Irish history and culture and information on the training of Irish artists and exhibition venues, to help provide a framework for the book.

Included are nineteen individual entries looking at Western paintings from between 1818 to 1985 created by artists from James Arthur O'Connor and George Petrie to Mainie Jellett and Robert Ballagh, with contributions by Donal Maguire. A section devoted to guidelines for teachers has been compiled by Sarah Edmondson. The book is available as a downloadable pdf on the NGI website @ www.nationalgallery.ie/learning, providing an accessible resource for schools, as noted in *The Arts in Education Charter* (2012).

I am indebted to the following for their assistance on this project: Marie Bourke, Head of Education who has written the book with contributions by Sarah Edmondson and Donal Maguire. My thanks also to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Education and Skills for their assistance, and to Matheson for its support of Children's and Family Programmes at the National Gallery of Ireland.

I hope that visitors from near and afar will enjoy this book about the West of Ireland – which forms a source of inspiration for so much of the art and literature about this country – illustrated in the paintings, drawings and prints from the National Gallery of Ireland.

Depicting the West of Ireland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Dr Marie Bourke, Keeper, Head of Education

Introduction: The Lure of the West

The West of Ireland's enduring attraction for artists is partly due to the fact that traditional customs and ways of life were visible there long after they had disappeared elsewhere. Similar to France in the later nineteenth century, when painters flocked from Paris to Brittany to record an ancient yet declining Breton culture and lifestyle, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, artists travelled to the West of Ireland to immerse themselves in an unspoiled landscape inhabited by people who spoke Irish, wore their own style of clothing and lived off the

land and the sea. These artists were inspired by the wildness of the remote unfamiliar landscape and the life of the Irish rural communities. They found every place had its traditions, every name its local history and poetry, and every townland its archaeology and folklore with the people themselves bearing testament to the richness of this inheritance. The imagery that these artists produced, depicting the way people lived, often came with an implied sense of authenticity that reflected the artist's own personal impressions of rural Ireland. The West portrayed in this book encompasses counties Clare

to Sligo, including Connemara. The earlier paintings illustrate people who were poor and survived through fishing, farming and domestic spinning, and were entertained by music and dance, at a time when society was largely divided by class, religion and politics. The paintings they inspired offer a glimpse into the social life, history and folklore of pre- and post-Famine Connacht.

The West was a remote place in the nineteenth century and its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean meant that there was extensive use of the sea. The countryside and mountainous tracts were stony, difficult to harvest, and often lonely places in which to live, until the area was opened up to transport and communication. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Jack B. Yeats was among a new generation of artists who hoped that a newly independent Ireland would develop a modern culture that respected traditional music, art forms and literature.¹ *Saorstát Éireann*, published as the official handbook of the Irish Free State in 1932, was symbolic of this vision. The handbook included fourteen images of the West by artists, including Seán Keating and Maurice MacGonigal.² Recent writers like Tim Robinson, who mapped the geography and topography of the Burren, Connemara and the Aran Islands and met the people of the countryside, described Connemara as a 'land of "dappled things" – complicated skies, rippling water-surfaces, tussocky hillsides'.³ During the twentieth century, despite political upheavals, Ireland became more prosperous and urbanised, society less stratified and more focused on income, and the quality of life for many people improved, including those living in the West.

The concept of national identity, the exploration of what is unique about the West of Ireland and what constitutes the 'Irishness' of the landscape continues to interest artists in the twenty-first century, many having looked at this subject afresh through photography, installation, video, digital media and film. These visual interpretations reflect new ideas and concepts for 'imagining' a place that continues to be an enduring source of inspiration. Thus, for a variety of reasons and for a cross-section of people in a range of disciplines, the West has come to be regarded as representative of a place that retains a sense of an authentic way of life from an earlier time. The West of Ireland, which forms a source of inspiration for so much of the art and literature about this country, is discussed here, illustrated through the work of Irish-born artists or artists of Irish descent in paintings, drawings and prints from the National Gallery of Ireland.



George Petrie (1790–1866), *Dún Aonghasa, Inishmore, Aran Islands, c.1827*. Watercolour and graphite on paper, 29.8 x 46.4 cm. Provenance unknown. NGL.7481

The Fort of Aengus is the largest of the promontory stone forts and one of the most important archaeological sites on the Aran Islands. Situated one hundred metres above the Atlantic Ocean, it is enclosed by three concentric stone walls and a *chevaux de frise* defence of upright stones set in the hard ground. Petrie was one of the first artists to paint on the Aran Islands in 1821.

Timeline: Key Dates in Irish History and Culture, 1800–1999

- 1800 The Act of Union. Maria Edgeworth's (1768–1849) novel *Castle Rackrent*
- 1803 Unsuccessful Rising organised by Robert Emmet (1778–1803)
- 1824 Ordnance Survey, Ireland established
- 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act
- 1830 William Carleton's (1794–1869) novel *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*
- 1831 Establishment of the National School elementary education system
- 1831 Belfast Natural History Museum opened
- 1838 Education Acts enacted in Ireland. Poor Laws for Ireland enacted
- 1838 Father Mathew Temperance Movement
- 1842 Young Ireland Movement
- 1843 *The Nation* founded by Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, John Blake Dillon
- 1845 The Famine (1845–1850)
- 1845 Geological Survey Act. Queen's Colleges set up in Cork, Belfast and Galway
- 1849 Encumbered Estates Act facilitates sale of land
- 1853 Dublin International Exhibition of Art-Industry, Leinster Lawn
- 1854 Act to establish National Gallery of Ireland (opens 1864)
- 1854 Establishment of the Catholic University of Ireland
- 1857 Establishment of the Dublin Natural History Museum
- 1857 Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891) elected MP for Meath
- 1870 Gladstone's 1st Land Act
- 1877 Act to establish Museum of Science and Art, and National Library (opens 1890)
- 1879 Land League founded by Michael Davitt (1846–1906)
- 1884 Gaelic Athletic Association founded
- 1887 Light Railways Act enacted
- 1890 Establishment of Belfast Art Gallery and Museum
- 1891 Congested Districts Boards set up to alleviate rural poverty in agriculture, fisheries and domestic industries in the Western counties
- 1893 Gaelic League founded by Eoin McNeill and Douglas Hyde
- 1895 Oscar Wilde's (1854–1900) first performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- 1898 Irish Literary Theatre founded, 1904 becomes the Abbey Theatre
- 1899 Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Ireland established
- 1907 Rioting at J. M. Synge's (1871–1909) *Playboy of the Western World*, Abbey Theatre
- 1902 Land Conference followed by Wyndham's Land Purchase Act
- 1908 Municipal Gallery of Modern Art founded by Hugh Lane (1875–1915)
- 1910 Lord William Carson becomes leader of the Irish Unionists
- 1913 Irish Volunteers and Cumann Na mBán founded. Dublin Strikes and Lock-Out
- 1914 First World War (1914–1918). America enters 1917. Home Rule Bill suspended
- 1916 Easter Rising
- 1919 War of Independence (1919–1921)
- 1920 Government of Ireland Act. Six-county parliament/administration in Northern Ireland
- 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty
- 1921 James Craig first Prime Minister and, in 1922 Special Powers Act – Northern Ireland
- 1922 Provisional Government formed
- 1922 James Joyce's (1882–1941) novel *Ulysses*
- 1922 Civil War (1922–1923). Irish Free State
- 1923 W.B. Yeats (1865–1939) Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1925 G.B. Shaw (1856–1950) Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1925 Remaining tenanted land vested in Land Commission
- 1926 Rioting at Seán O'Casey's (1880–1964) *The Plough and the Stars*, Abbey Theatre
- 1929 Belfast Municipal Museum and Art Gallery opens (1961, The Ulster Museum)
- 1932 Economic Tariff War between Britain and Ireland (1932–1938)
- 1935 Irish Folklore Commission is established
- 1938 Douglas Hyde (1860–1947) becomes President of Ireland
- 1939 Second World War (1939–1945). State of emergency declared, Ireland neutral
- 1942 Patrick Kavanagh's (1904–1967) epic poem *The Great Hunger*
- 1949 Ireland Act passed in Britain in response to the Republic of Ireland Act (1948). Máirtín Ó Cadhain's (1907–1970) novel *Cré na Cille*
- 1951 Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon is established
- 1951 Minister for Health resigns over rejection of Mother & Child Scheme (enacted 1953)
- 1955 Ireland admitted to United Nations
- 1958 T.K. Whitaker's (b.1916) *Economic Development* is published
- 1958 First programme for Economic Expansion (1963–1944 and 1969)
- 1960 Radió Teilifís Éireann RTÉ is established
- 1962 Arts Council of Northern Ireland is established
- 1963 Introduction of Patrick Hillery's plan for universal secondary education
- 1969 Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1972 'Bloody Sunday', and start of Direct Rule in Northern Ireland
- 1973 Irish Republic joins EEC
- 1973 Northern Ireland Assembly, power-sharing executive founded
- 1980 Brian Friel's (b.1929) *Translations* performed by Field Day Company, Derry
- 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement
- 1990 Mary Robinson elected first woman President of Ireland
- 1991 Irish Museum of Modern Art opened
- 1993 Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht is established
- 1995 Seamus Heaney (1939–2013) Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1995 Heritage Council becomes statutory body
- 1997 Establishment of the National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts and History, and The Hunt Museum, Limerick opened
- 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Formation of Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland



Curiosity about Ireland: Guide Books, Travel Memoirs

Curiosity about the picturesque areas of the country is what traditionally attracted artists and travellers to Ireland. Topographical views of places like Powerscourt Waterfall, Co. Wicklow and the Lakes of Killarney, Co. Kerry existed, together with a body of fine late eighteenth-century landscape paintings. The West was very remote at this time. Gradually, through practical activities, such as the archaeological survey of Connacht undertaken by the antiquarians Gabriel Beranger and Angelo Maria Bigari in 1779, artists were drawn to the area.⁴ Travel was aided by new guide books and direc-

tories, including the *Antiquities of Ireland 2 Vols* (1791 and 1797) a collaboration between Francis Grose and Edward Ledwich, with drawings by a variety of artists; Cromwell's *Excursions through Ireland* (1820); and George Newenham Wright's guides published in the 1820s and 1830s. As Irish authors and writers with Irish connections, including Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, Thomas Maturine, the Banim Brothers, Thomas Moore, William Carleton, Thomas Crofton Croker and the artist Samuel Lover, gained public reputations, attention was drawn to Irish history and folklore. Anne Plumtre (1760–1818), an early nineteenth-century English visitor, noticed the difference between the landed estates and wilder parts



James Arthur O'Connor (1792–1841), A View of Lough Mask. Oil on canvas, 42 x 71 cm. Purchased 1970. NGI.4013

This panoramic view of Lough Mask and surrounding countryside is one of four paintings of Ballinrobe c.1818–19, that illustrate O'Connor's self-taught style of finely painted picture surface and precise brushwork. It is one of a number of works that show O'Connor's early appreciation of the wild beauty of the West of Ireland.



Frederic William Burton (1816–1900), Paddy Conneely, (d.1850), a Galway Piper. Graphite and watercolour on paper, 34.3 x 26 cm. Bequeathed, Miss Annie Callwell, 1904. NGI.6036

The pipes, fiddle and flute overtook the harp as a popular instrument by the early nineteenth century. Music was played everywhere: public houses, fairs, farm kitchens, crossroads and the best drawing rooms. Burton painted Paddy Conneely, the celebrated piper, about 1840, at the time that Petrie was meeting the piper to transcribe his music. Conneely may be in his late 30s or early 40s and he plays a set of Uilleann pipes. While editor of *The Irish Penny Journal*, Petrie featured a leading article on 3 October 1840, entitled 'Paddy Conneely, The Galway Piper', which was illustrated by an engraving of this watercolour.

of the country: 'Ireland abounds everywhere with noble men's and gentlemen's seats; but these did not excite my curiosity like the natural beauties and wonders of the country'.⁵ Her experience was echoed by the American traveller Asenath Nicholson (1792–1855), who walked through Connemara in 1844, 'My journey lay through a wild mountainous country'. The writings of these visitors illustrated the fact that the more curious travellers managed to make their way to the remoter parts of Ireland.⁶

New guide books and travel memoirs encouraged English travellers to journey across to Ireland during the nineteenth century, when for social and political reasons there was much contact between the countries. New illustrated guidebooks, such as Henry D. Inglis's (1795–1835) *A Journey through Ireland throughout the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834* (1835), contained maps to help the visitor. John Barrow's (1808–1898) *Tour Round Ireland, through the Seacoast Counties, in the Autumn of 1835* (1836) is considered the first travel narrative illustrated by a professional painter, Daniel Maclise (1806–1870). *The Scenery and Antiquities of Ireland* (1840) by N.P. Willis and J. Stirling Coyne contained over one hundred and fourteen images of antiquities and town views illustrated by William Henry Bartlett (1809–1854). One of the most well-known books was the comprehensive three-volume travel narrative by Mr and Mrs Samuel C. Hall, entitled *Ireland: Its Scenery, Character Etc.* (1841–1843). The Halls were accompanied by the English draughtsman, Frederick William Fairholt (1814–1866) on their tour. They employed eighteen artists to illustrate their guides, from which the National Gallery of Ireland holds nine engravings. Photography in the late nineteenth century also formed an important record of views created for the commercial postcard market. The Lawrence, Eason, Valentine, Poole and Wynne collections (National Library of Ireland), with photographs for postcards, includes a collection of colour photographs by Mmes Mespoulet and Mignon from Paris showing the impoverished living conditions in the West in 1913.⁷

Transport and Communications

Travel through the West of Ireland in the early nineteenth century was limited by the lack of roads. People journeyed through the rough terrain on foot, on horseback or by boat. In 1813, the Scottish engineer Alexander Nimmo (1783–1832) began working in Connemara, and from 1820 he managed a range of famine-relief schemes that involved building piers around the Galway coastline, founding the village of Roundstone and developing carriage roads from Oughterard to Clifden and from Maam Cross to Leenane, thereby opening up the area to transport and communication. From the early to mid-nineteenth century, Bianconi's regular horse-drawn coaches carried passengers all over the country, including a route from Galway to Clifden. Other factors that opened up the area included the mapping undertaken by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (1824), the activities of the Board of Works/OPW (1831) and the explorations of the Geological Survey of Ireland (1845). George Petrie (1790–1866) was a pivotal figure in his role as head of place names and antiquities at the Ordnance Survey. Petrie was appointed head of the topographical section between c.1833–1846 and ran his office from his home in Great Charles Street, Dublin. A team of scholars and artists translated and recorded the geology, place names and archaeology of Ireland, with illustrations of the landscape by Andrew Nicholl, Francis Danby, George Victor du Noyer and W.F. Wakeman. Maps were also important in navigating routes. The topographical maps (6 inches to 1 mile, 1:10,560) completed by the Survey, county by county, between 1832 to 1846, were notably attentive to antiquities.

The railway network was another major development. Following the opening of the first railway in 1834 from Dublin to Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire), different companies opened up lines and it was a great bonus when the Great Midland Western Railway line to Galway was extended in 1895 to Clifden, and in 1895 from Westport to Achill.⁸ The publication of *The Nation*, a weekly newspaper founded by Thomas Davis and fellow Young Irelanders in 1842, may have widened interest due to the paper's coverage of literature and cultural events. Pet-



Nathaniel Hone II (1831–1917), *The Cliffs of Moher, County Clare, c.1890*. Watercolour with white highlights. Bequeathed, Mrs Hone, The Artist's Widow, 1919. NGI .3374

It is likely that Hone toured the remote areas of counties Sligo, Mayo and Clare by train. His only employment was for a short time as an engineer on the Midland Great Railway. Having undertaken landscape and sea studies on a visit to Co. Clare c. 1890, this watercolour shows his fascination with the Atlantic Ocean, in a dramatic portrayal of the famous cliffs of Moher.

rie was a contributor to the paper and Frederic Burton completed the frontispiece for *The Spirit of the Nation* in 1845.⁹ Prints, broadsides, journals and newspapers kept people informed and could be spotted on the walls or on dressers in the interiors of many Irish cottages. The late nineteenth-century poet and folklorist Seumas MacManus (1869–1960) noted, 'They were the everyday reading of Donegal'.¹⁰ The mid-century impact of the Great Famine (1845–1850) changed much in Irish life through death and emigration. It was recorded by the artists Aloysius O'Kelly and James Mahony (1810–1879) for the *Illustrated London News*. The construction of roads as a famine-relief measure was also undertaken during this time. Mounting the Dublin International Exhibition of Art-Industry in 1853 was an initiative to try to improve the economy and restore the confidence of the people.



Paul Henry (1876–1958), *Launching the Currach, 1910–11*. Oil on canvas, 41 x 60 cm. Purchased 1968. NGI.1869.

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An early Achill scene painted at a time when figures were his main preoccupation, Henry observed the difficult life of the fishermen heaving their currach, heavy with fishing nets, into the oncoming tide. Achill was the defining moment of his career and his portrayal of the Western landscape came to represent the image of the West of Ireland.

Interest in the West: Irish and Overseas Painters

Although the nineteenth century was a period of unrest and turbulence on the Continent, arising from the impact of the French Revolution and other conflicts, it was a time of relative political stability in Ireland, despite the recent Famine. Since the foundation of the Old Watercolour Society in London in 1805, English painters had been avidly exploring the landscape of England, Scotland and Wales, and travelling to Ireland seemed to be a natural progression. There had been earlier visits by British artists to Ireland: Cornelius Varley (1781–1873) came in 1808 at the invitation of Lady Olivia Sparrow of Tanderagee Castle, Co. Armagh (see NGI.19624), and he may have visited on other occasions; George Fennell Robson (1788–1833) painted in County Kerry between 1828 and 1832, and was in contact with Petrie; while Maria Spilsbury (1776–1820), who married John Taylor in 1809, moving to Dublin in 1810,



William Evans (1798–1877), *Buttermilk Lane, Galway, 1838*. Watercolour and graphite with white highlights on paper, 58.8 x 43 cm. Purchased 2008. NGI 2008.36.25

Evans' watercolour studies of 1835 and 1838 describe an area not well represented at that time by drawings. The English artist's second trip found him in Galway on 17 August 1838. Evans depicts a city where the late fifteenth-century lane still survives, preserving much of its medieval plan and buildings, showing a colourful lively scene of women selling produce in the busy lane.

documented rural and domestic life in early nineteenth-century Ireland.¹¹ James Arthur O'Connor painted in the West of Ireland, and from the 1820s, Petrie was a constant presence in touch with artists, including Samuel Lover and Frederic Burton. Petrie showed numerous

Western subjects at the RHA between 1827 and 1858. This brief outline does not include all the artists who painted in the West.

The Irish artist Samuel Lover (1797–1868) visited the West between the 1820s and 1840s painting scenes of rural life, including the kelp gatherers in Connemara. His antiquarian landscapes published in the *Dublin Penny Journal* were reprinted as *Ireland Illustrated* in 1845. Lover would become a successful figure in London. The English drawing master William Evans of Eton (1798–1877), visited Ireland in the summer of 1835, and may have used Inglis's *A Journey through Ireland* to plan his trip, filling his sketchbook with West of Ireland scenes. He subsequently showed these at the Old Watercolour Society's annual exhibition, all of which sold. In 1835, during the same summer that Evans visited Ireland, the Scottish artist David Wilkie (1785–1841) toured the country between August and September, using Dublin as a spring board to travel from Mayo through Connemara to Kerry, visiting Marie Edgeworth en route in Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. While interested in the artistic potential of the West, he was shocked by the poverty. The outcome of his trip was a number of works, including *The Sleeping*



Harry Clarke (1889–1931), *Landscape by the Coast, 1910*. Oil on panel, 14 x 35 cm. Purchased 1982. NGI.4358

Clarke first visited the Aran Islands in 1909 inspired by the writings of J.M. Synge. Over his following five summer trips, he stayed with the Conneely family on Inisheer. In August 1910, he did a number of landscape studies, this one seemingly taken from the island, looking towards Fanore on the north-east coast of County Clare.

Whiteboy (1835–36), also entitled *The Peep-o'-Day Boys' Cabin* (Edgeworth expressed mixed views over the interpretation of this work), and *The Irish Whiskey Still* (1836 and 1840). Both works, exhibited at the Royal Academy, would have served to draw attention to the West of Ireland. In 1836, encouraged by the sales of his paintings, Evans exhibited other works in London developed from sketches made in Connemara around Maam, Renvyle and Killary. Evans returned to Ireland in 1838 to gather material for exhibitions, continuing to take care to depict the local people and their landscape with sensitivity, and showing his work at the Old Watercolour Society. A number of these drawings were used by the Halls to illustrate their 1843 guide book. The portfolio of forty-one watercolour drawings by Evans, relating to his 1838 Connemara trip, was purchased by the National Gallery of Ireland in 2008, from a descendent of Thomas Gambier Parry (1816–1888), who acquired them from the artist. Evans's awareness of contemporary artists may have been due to his knowledge of Petrie, Lover or Burton, who sketched in Connemara between 1838 and 1840, and whose *A Clare Peasant* was exhibited at the RHA in 1838.

The mid to later nineteenth century witnessed an increase in overseas painters visiting Ireland, who may have been influenced by travel guides or the Irish subjects exhibited at the Old Watercolour Society and Royal Academy among other venues. These stimulated further incursions by British artists in the 1840s, including Frederick Goodall (1822–1909), Alfred Downing Fripp (1822–1895) and Francis William Topham (1808–1877), three artists, who each in his own way, depicted with realism the tough lifestyle of the people. Many of the visiting artists, while interested in genre subject matter, particularly if it elicited sympathy, avoided depicting issues such as poverty, destitution or agrarian conflict. This is understandable within a nineteenth-century search for picturesque imagery, when artists were concerned with painting subject pictures and landscapes that would appeal to the expanding nineteenth-century art market. The Scottish artist Erskine Nicol (1825–1904), journeyed to Ireland regularly from



Sadbh Trínseach (1891–1918), *Claude Chavasse Teaching an Irish Class on Achill Island, Co. Mayo, 1913–14*. Charcoal on paper, 55.7 x 77.3 cm. Presented, Mrs D. Coffey, 1966. NGI.3812

Francis Trench was born in Liverpool of Irish parents and educated on the Continent. A fervent nationalist, she was known as Sadbh Trínseach when she became an artist. In 1911 she attended Irish college in Keel, Achill. This charcoal drawing shows Claude Chavasse, who had learned the language, teaching Irish on Achill. Preserving the Irish language would become important in the new state. Trínseach died aged twenty-four from the great flu.

1846 onwards and had a studio in County Westmeath. He visited the West in the mid to late 1850s painting a range of figurative subjects in Galway and Connemara. Although known for his humorous themes and Irish genre scenes, intended for a broad commercial appeal, his portrayal of serious political and topical subjects provided an enduring presence in the Edinburgh, London and Dublin art scene.

The English painter George Washington Brownlow (1835–1876), travelled to Connemara in the 1880s, including a trip to the Aran Islands, the results of which he showed at the RHA, Royal Society of British Artists, and



Gerald L. Brockhurst (1890–1978), *Irish Peasants*, 1916. Pen, brush and ink, 54 x 36.8 cm. Presented, Friends of the National Collections, 2013. NGI.2013. © The Artist's Estate.

The English artist visited Ireland in the early twentieth century where he created images of rural people, this one dated 1916. The central figure looks directly out while the woman in a black shawl casts her eyes down. The graphically defined portrait is an unsentimental image of Western people with weathered faces set against the landscape of Galway and Connemara.

the British Institution, promoting awareness of the aesthetic potential of Ireland. The American painter Howard Helmick (1845–1907) who was in Ireland in the 1870s and 1880s, settling in Galway for a time, was fascinated with Irish country life, which he portrayed in rural subjects and detailed interiors of modestly comfortable people. Contemporary with him was Josephine Lizzie Cloud (fl.1870–1880s), an American artist and writer based in Galway, who travelled in Connemara between the 1870s and 1880s sketching to illustrate articles that she wrote.¹² The English painter Ernest A. Waterlow (1850–1919) jour-

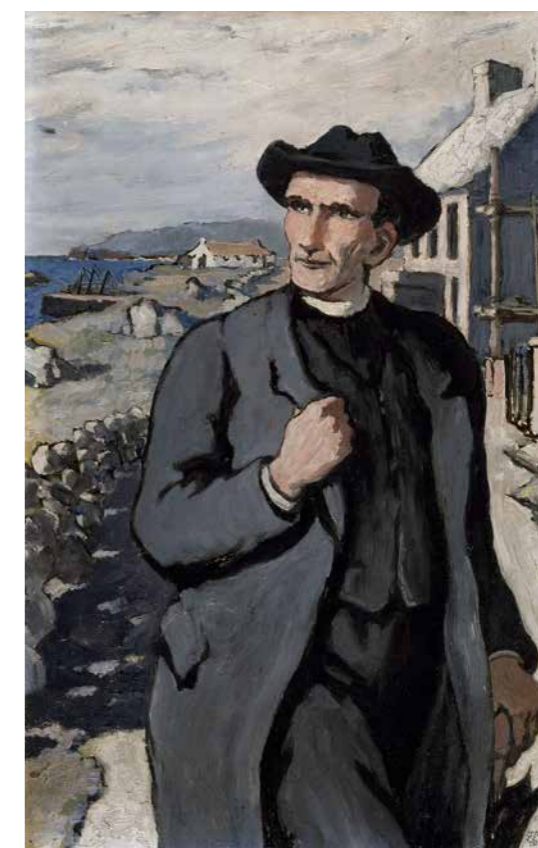
neyed to the west coast in the 1880s painting a number of important Connemara scenes, including a picture of a pilgrimage to St MacDara's Island to mark the saint's feast day. William Henry Bartlett, who illustrated Willis and Coyne's *Scenery and Antiquities of Ireland*, spent a considerable time in Ireland painting in Connemara and County Mayo between the 1870s and 1890s. His genuine interest in the people was illustrated in his careful portrayal of aspects of their hard lifestyle. In the later nineteenth century, a host of artists showed an interest in Western subjects, including Patrick Vincent Duffy, Stanhope Forbes and Harry Jones Thaddeus. In 1889, Cork-born Thaddeus (1860–1929) produced a scene of *An Irish Eviction, Co. Galway*, viewed from an unusual perspective – that of the inhabitants being attacked prior to eviction. While remarkable for its emotional and descriptive power, it conveys a sense of empathy with the victims who are defending their own home. This was very different to the society portraits for which Thaddeus was so well known. It was exhibited at the RHA in 1890, not long after the establishment of the Land League. Graphic images of evictions from the late 1880s in photographs and in prints illustrated in journals also reflected concerns over land ownership and tenancy, highlighting casualties of the land wars during a century of trauma in the Irish countryside.¹³

In 1905, the artist Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957) accompanied John Millington Synge (who had visited the Aran Islands in 1898 and 1899) on a tour of the Congested Districts area of south Connemara and Mayo making illustrations for Synge's articles for the *Manchester Guardian*. Yeats's first work exhibited at the RHA was the watercolour *The Strand Races, West of Ireland* (1895). His first exhibition of Irish imagery, *Sketches of Life in the West of Ireland*, was in 1899. That year he visited Coole Park, the home of Lady Gregory, and met key figures of the Irish Literary Revival. Paul Henry (1876–1958) developed an individual style of landscape painting that also became emblematic of the West of Ireland. However, Yeats's extensive output portrayed the situation of most Western people, who lived a difficult existence with large families surviving on small holdings by farming or fishing.

Their sports and entertainment included horse racing, hurling and Gaelic football, and listening to the seanchí telling stories, and singing and dancing to musicians at local ceilí. While people spoke Irish, attended religious services and passed their customs from one generation to the next, his paintings show how they were constantly challenged with the only alternative being emigration. Yeats's portrayal of this lifestyle and record of some political events illustrated the transition from the late nineteenth century through to the new state, as the pattern of interest in the Western lifestyle continued into the twentieth century.

Issues of National Identity and Identities

When the Literary Revival emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, poets and playwrights such as George Russell, W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge looked towards native themes for inspiration as they were considered important to those involved in Irish cultural life. By the turn of the century, the West and its traditional culture formed an expression of a national identity that had rural, pastoral and ancient Celtic overtones. The early twentieth century, however, was a time of political unrest in Ireland. The Easter Rising (1916) began a chain of events that culminated in the creation of the Irish Free State and the state of Northern Ireland.¹⁴ The brilliant Irish draughtsman William Orpen (1878–1931) viewed Western subject matter from a more ambiguous perspective. His *The Holy Well* (1916) (NGI.4030) portrays a traditional 'pattern day', when people gathered to pray at a holy site associated with a local saint; in this instance, the location is an island off the West of Ireland. The painting is full of incongruities and was one of three pictures created by Orpen between 1913 and 1916, to express his complex feelings about Ireland and its association with Western culture. The American painter Robert Henri (1865–1929) visited Achill Island between 1913 and 1928, creating a series of accomplished Western portraits. Another visitor was the English painter Gerald L. Brockhurst (1890–1978), who lived in Ireland between c.1915 to 1920, when he painted a series of fine portraits set in the background of Connemara. The pattern of



Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957), *A Cleric*, 1913. Oil on board, 36.3 x 23.3 cm. Presented, the Executors of the late Mr W. Cadbury, 1966. NGI.1804. © Estate of Jack B. Yeats. All rights reserved, DACS, 2014

An early oil by Yeats, this is one of twelve portraits painted to illustrate George Birmingham's book *Irishmen All* (1913). The cleric, a man of authority and compassion with a sympathetic air, walks the roads of his parish, noting building works, observing activity on the quay with Ben Bulbin in the background. Artist and author had a similar approach, which accorded with Yeats's illustrations rooted in the West of Ireland.

emigration continued into the twentieth century and featured in social realist paintings by Keating, MacGonigal and in works by Lamb and Dillon. The English artist Elizabeth Rivers (1902–1964) lived on the Aran Islands



Seán Keating (1889–1977), *A Seascape with Figures*, 1930s. Oil on board, 46 x 62 cm. Presented, Haverty Trust, 1956. NGI.1330. © Estate of Seán Keating. All rights reserved, IVARO, 2014.

In 1914, Harry Clarke suggested that the Limerick artist visit the Aran Islands, as a result of which the people of Aran and the western seaboard featured in his work for the remainder of his career. The isolation of the islanders is emphasised by the lone figure of the woman who gazes towards Galway. Their lifestyle is seen in the fishing boats, called hookers, moored alongside the pier that were used for fishing and transporting turf to and from the islands.

intermittently between 1935 and 1943 and her *Stranger in Aran* was the last book published by the Cuala Press (1946).¹⁵ Her stay coincided with the Second World War (1939–1945), when Ireland remained neutral, although it impacted on the country. While the works she produced illustrate her affection for the West, Rivers was conscious of her status as an outsider. The sense of awareness of being different and apart, looking at the West from another perspective, was experienced by many of the

artists in this book, including Henry, Lamb and Gerard Dillon (1916–1971), who illustrated his distinctive impression in *The Little Green Fields* (c.1946–1950).

The West became a place symbolic of the essence or soul of Ireland. This concept helped to shape popular views of an idyllic, pastoral and wholesome country matching the political construct of the government in the newly independent state, even as new developments were impacting on rural households and lifestyles. The iconography of Western landscapes – blue skies, white-washed thatched cottages, green fields, stone walls and the sea – became emblematic of the new state’s cultural identity. This inspired a view that became recognised as ‘the’ image of rural Ireland, promoted by successive governments, at home and abroad. The advent of modernism in art only gained momentum here in the mid-twentieth century. In 1943 the Irish Exhibition of Living Art was set up to address the need for a wider exploration of contemporary Irish art and it involved the modern painters Evie Hone (1894–1955), Mainie Jellett (1897–1944), Norah McGuinness (1901–1980) and Louis le Brocqy (1916–2012).¹⁶ Modernism gradually overtook this view of rural Ireland and many of the Western life-

styles depicted in this book disappeared. In many ways, the earlier paintings capture the atmosphere and sense of a place experiencing a rapidly vanishing world. In spite of this, a deep rooted conviction continues to linger that the West is associated with concepts of Irish authenticity and identity. This vision remains central to the response of many artists who find new ways to invest their work with a contemporary relevance that is testimony to the ongoing attraction of the West of Ireland.

- 1 H. Pyle. *Jack B. Yeats: Life in the West of Ireland – as it Was*. Dublin 2003.
- 2 B. Hobson (Ed.). *Saorstát Eireann, Irish Free State Official Handbook*. Dublin 1932.
- 3 T. Robinson. ‘A Connemara Fractal’ in *Decoding the Landscape*, by T. Collins (Ed.). Galway 1994, reprinted 1997.
- 4 P. Harbison. ‘Our Treasures of Antiquities’, *Beranger and Bigiari’s Sketching Tour of Connaught in 1779*. Bray 2002.
- 5 A. Plumtre. *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland during the Summer of 1814 and that of 1815*. London 1817. p.215
- 6 A. Nicholson. *Ireland’s Welcome to the Stranger*. London 1847. p.371
- 7 For information on Irish art contact the NGI Centre for the Study of Irish Art: csai@ngi.ie. For information on the National Gallery of Ireland’s collection see www.nationalgallery.ie/collection.
- 8 Bicycles provided useful transport in the early twentieth century.
- 9 Ballads and songs written by writers of *The Nation* were republished as *Spirit of the Nation* in 1845. At the request of Thomas Davis (1814–1845), Burton undertook the frontispiece.
- 10 S. MacManus. *The Rocky Road to Dublin*. New York 1938. pp.141–42.
- 11 The NGI Prints and Drawings Room houses sketchbooks by Maria Spilsbury Taylor among its collections.
- 12 Josephine Lizzie Cloud (signing herself as Miss or Mrs) seems to have been the nom de plume of Mrs Elizabeth C. Waters from Philadelphia, an artist and publisher of illustrated articles.
- 13 The Lawrence Collection: 400,000 glass plate negatives dating 1870–1914, by William M. Lawrence of Sackville Street, Dublin. His photographer Robert French took pictures of evictions, which were packaged as 60 glass lantern slides in 1890.
- 14 The First World War (1914–1918) affected Ireland in a major way.
- 15 In 1902, Evelyn Gleeson established a craft studio at Dundrum near Dublin, called Dun Emer Press-Industries (c.1902–1908) specialising in printing and other crafts and invited Elizabeth and her sister Lily Yeats to join her. In 1908 the Cuala Press-Industries was set up (following a split from Gleeson) by Elizabeth Yeats together with Lily Yeats, heavily supported by their brother William Butler Yeats.
- 16 The Irish Exhibition of Living Art Archive was donated in 2001 by the family of artist Anne Yeats, daughter of W.B. Yeats, to NIVAL, National College of Art and Design. It documents Yeats’s time as secretary for the IELA (1947–1971).
- 17 Marie Bourke in conversation with the artist, July 2014.



Niall Naessens (b.1961), *Rain over a Bog, after Emil Nolde*, 1997. Etching on velin arche blanc paper, Sheet 65.5 x 50 cm (plate 29.3 x 29.6 cm). Commissioned, National Gallery of Ireland, 1995. NGI.20883. © Niall Naessens.

This print, inspired by Nolde’s watercolour *Rain over a Marsh* (NGI.7767), was commissioned as part of a series for an NGI exhibition *Art into Art* (1998), created by invited artists and members of Graphic Studio Dublin, inspired by the NGI collection. In the 1990s, Dublin artist Niall Naessens often drew in the area between Roundstone and Clifden. Fascinated by the ever-changing Western skies, the key to the success of this work, he visualised this scene taking place in a bog of inner Connacht.¹⁷



The West as a Significant Place for Irish Artists

The following series of paintings illustrate how the West became a significant place for Irish artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Nineteenth-century painters, such as James Arthur O'Connor, George Petrie, Frederic William Burton and Bartholomew Colles Watkins, wanted to capture a landscape and a way of life that was new to their eyes and needed to be recorded. Later painters, including Nathaniel Hone, Augustus Burke, Aloysius O'Kelly, Walter Osborne and Harry Clarke, recognised that this lifestyle was rare enough in a European context; it was disappearing fast, and they saw its visual qualities from the perspective of realist painters. Sadbh Trínseach, Paul Henry, Jack B. Yeats, Seán Keating and Charles Lamb sought to capture the essence of a way of life that they perceived was closer to an authentic Irish identity. Gerard Dillon and Maurice MacGonigal felt nostalgia for a pattern of life defined by the climate and the seasons that was in contrast to the increased industrialisation of the period. Lilian Davidson, Kitty Wilmer O'Brien and Mainie Jellett used different styles and techniques to convey its specialness, just as it became the authentic setting for a portrait of Noel Browne by Robert Ballagh and a particular place for Niall Naessans.

James Arthur O'Connor (1792–1841), *The Mill, Ballinrobe*, c.1818

George Petrie (1790–1866), *Pilgrims at Saint Brigid's Well, Liscannor, Co. Clare*, c.1829–30

Frederic William Burton (1816–1900), *In Joyce Country (Connemara, Co. Galway)*, c.1840

Frederic William Burton (1816–1900), *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child*, 1841

Augustus Burke (c.1838–1891), *A Connemara Girl*

Bartholomew Colles Watkins (1833–1891), *A View of the Killaries, from Leenane*

Aloysius O'Kelly (1853–1936), *Mass in a Connemara Cabin*, c.1883

Walter Frederick Osborne (1859–1903), *A Galway Cottage*, c.1893

Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957), *The Country Shop*, c.1912

Paul Henry (1876–1958), *The Potato Diggers*, 1912

Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957), *Before the Start*, 1915

Charles Vincent Lamb (1893–1964), *Loch an Mhuilinn*, c.1930s

Lilian Lucy Davidson (1879–1954), *Fashions at the Fair*, c.1940s

Mainie Jellett (1897–1944), *Achill Horses*, 1941

Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957), *Men of Destiny*, 1946

Gerard Dillon (1916–1971), *The Little Green Fields*, c.1946–50

Kitty Wilmer O'Brien (1910–1982), *Near Westport, Co. Mayo*

Maurice MacGonigal (1900–1979), *Early Morning, Connemara (Mannin Bay)*, c.1965

Robert Ballagh (b.1943), *Portrait of Noel Browne (1915–1997), Politician*, 1985



**James Arthur O'Connor (1792–1841),
The Mill, Ballinrobe, c.1818**

Oil on canvas, 42 x 71 cm. Purchased 1970. NGL.4011.

The artist visited Westport in 1817. In 1818–19 he was commissioned to paint four aspects of the Bridge House, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo for the owner, Courtney Kenny. They fit into his early Western topographical landscapes that included Westport, together with Ballinrobe house, the pleasure grounds, its mill, Lough Mask and the demesne. O'Connor's method throughout his life was to do detailed drawings on the spot. This painting shows Ballinrobe mill and surroundings located on the edge of the River Robe, in front of which is a wooden footbridge. The right side of the picture appears in shadow with dark clouds, trees and foliage, in contrast to the left, which is bathed in light, picking out O'Connor's trademark small figures sailing a punt across the river. Finely painted Gothic ruins and a church steeple are visible on the horizon, with the mill located on the river edge, forming part of a structure of buildings with white roofs. An

atmosphere of calm pervades the scene enhanced by the reflection of trees and Gothic ruins on the water, serving to convey the impression of nature in harmony with the elements. While one of a number of paintings and drawings executed in County Mayo, a decade later, about 1828, O'Connor would paint in Connemara illustrating his early appreciation of the rugged landscape of the West of Ireland.

James Arthur O'Connor (1792–1841)

Born in Dublin, O'Connor was mainly self-taught. He became friendly with the artists George Petrie and Francis Danby and they went together to London in 1813. O'Connor returned, remaining in Ireland working as a landscape painter over ten years. In 1822 he moved back to London exhibiting at the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists. In 1826 he travelled for a year to Brussels. In 1832 he went to Paris and travelled throughout Germany the following year. O'Connor's finely painted landscapes and topographical views developed into the newer taste for Romantic landscape painting.



**George Petrie (1790–1866), Pilgrims at
Saint Brigid's Well, Liscannor, Co. Clare,
c.1829–30**

Watercolour on paper, 18.5 x 26 cm. Bequeathed, Miss M. Stokes, 1900. NGL.2381.

St Brigid's Well at Liscannor, Co. Clare is one of a number of Irish holy wells associated with St Brigid of Kildare, one of Ireland's patron saints. The well is a popular site of pilgrimage with great numbers travelling from across Clare and the Aran Islands to participate in the traditional Lughnasa festival on the last Sunday of July (or first Sunday in August). Petrie shows the well from across a narrow stream. A number of pilgrims perform the various stages of the Rites associated with the well; some kneel in prayer while others circle the well, which is marked by a standing stone inscribed with a cross. The well is depicted in its original location before being moved to a more convenient site in 1853, where it remains today. Petrie was one of a circle of scholars, antiquarians and artists who, fascinated by Irish history and folklore, toured the country studying and documenting

its scenery and antiquities. This is one of his many watercolours depicting locations of Irish cultural significance and is a typical example of his approach to painting. Although romantic and sentimental in style, his work was accurate in its representation of the subject matter.

George Petrie (1790–1866)

Born in Dublin, he was the son of James Petrie, portraitist and miniature painter. Trained at the Dublin Society Drawing Schools, he was attracted to landscape painting and went on his first sketching tour in Wicklow in 1808. He was fascinated with Irish history and antiquity, which became the predominant subject matter of his watercolours. He published collections of drawings and prints, and illustrated guidebooks promoting Ireland's cultural history. As a member of the Royal Irish Academy and one of the founders of its museum, he helped to form the historic collections that would constitute the core of the Irish Antiquities Collections at the new National Museum (1890). In 1828 he became the first watercolourist to become a Royal Hibernian Academician and later President of the Academy. DM



Frederic William Burton (1816–1900), *In Joyce Country (Connemara, County Galway)*, c.1840

Watercolour on paper, 25.3 x 36 cm. Bequeathed, Miss Annie Callwell, 1904. NGI.6034.

A cluster of cottages embedded in the Connemara landscape is shown surrounded by trees at the edge of Lough Corrib with blue mountains and a cloudy sky in the distance. Joyce Country lies between Maum and Leenane, the Maumturk Mountain range to the south and Lough Corrib at the lower end. A young girl in a red petticoat rests, while leaning her turf creel against a stone wall, before winding her way home. In 1838, George Petrie, the antiquarian and topographical painter, brought Burton around the West of Ireland, following routes travelled by other artists, leaving him with an abiding love of the Western landscape. Large stretches of the Connemara coast were densely populated at this time although the mountains kept it isolated from the rest of the country. Burton travelled via Maam Cross to Achill, making drawings, notes and watercolour sketches en route. He lightly outlines this watercolour in pencil, rapidly painted with diluted washes of colour, applying stronger colour to draw out the features, demonstrating

his understanding of light and sensitivity to the nuances of colour, particularly the sky, which he paid particular attention to in his landscapes. His Connemara studies are considered some of the finest ever produced of the Western landscape.

Frederic William Burton (1816–1900)

Born in Corofin, Co. Clare, although records suggest Burton may have been born in Wicklow (Census Returns 1871, 1891, Public Record Office, London). His father was an amateur painter who encouraged his son. Burton trained at the Dublin Society Drawing Schools and was apprenticed to Samuel Lover (1797–1868) before beginning his career as a miniature portrait painter. George Petrie encouraged his involvement in the Royal Irish Academy. In 1839 he became an RHA. Following travels in Germany, he settled in London establishing himself as a painter of subject pictures and portraits, his best known work *The Meeting on the Turret Stairs* (1864). In 1974 he was appointed Director of the National Gallery, London (1874–1894), acquiring significant works for the Gallery.



Frederic William Burton (1816–1900), *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child*, 1841

Watercolour on paper, 88.4 x 78.5 cm. Bequeathed, Miss Annie Callwell, 1904. NGI.6048.

Burton's time in the West of Ireland (1838–1841) resulted in drawings and paintings, including *The Blind Girl at the Holy Well* (1839), and *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child* (1841). He executed over fifty studies for the *Aran Fisherman* together with a preliminary watercolour sketch showing the father in a more natural pose. Although there is no record of his visiting the Aran Islands at this time, he may have done so with Petrie. This finely painted watercolour depicts a haunting scene of sorrowful parents, who are gathered around the figure of their dead child. In the background the keeners can be seen beginning the pattern of mourning. As the artist was an antiquary serving on the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, he gave careful consideration to the accuracy of the costumes, furniture and setting, drawing on his interest in the customs and traditions of the west of Ireland. The cabin is large and tidy in the manner of the Claddagh area of Galway. Light in this dramatic scene is

focused on the figure of the distraught father and family. Burton's refined sense of colour picks out details like the women's shawls and madder-red petticoats richly painted in overlapping layers of watercolour. The subject is in keeping with mid-nineteenth-century romantic painting in Europe.

Frederic William Burton (1816–1900)

When the Royal Irish Art Union (1839–1847) selected *The Aran Fisherman* to be engraved by Frederick Bacon in London in 1843, it became the most popular print the Union ever published, establishing Burton's reputation. The work reflected the artist's study of the Western people and his knowledge of the Old Masters. The first engraving of Burton's *Blind Girl* printed by the Royal Irish Art Union was presented to Queen Victoria in 1841, and his *Aran Fisherman* was noted 'by the admiration it elicited' at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, London (University Magazine, 1842). In 1863, Burton became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries in London and in 1886, an honorary member of the Old Watercolour Society.



**Bartholomew Colles Watkins (1833–1891),
*A View of the Killaries, from Leenane***

Oil on canvas, 32 x 50 cm. Bequeathed, F. Moore, 1909.
NGI.636.

In 1875, Watkins made his first sketching tour of Connemara. Over the next fifteen years he returned regularly, documenting the rugged mountain scenery. He painted numerous pictures of the Connemara landscape including this view of Killary harbour, an eight-mile long fjord surrounded by mountains, which lies on the border of Galway and Mayo. Viewed from the small village of Leenane, Mweelrea looms large to the left with clouds clinging to its peak as it overlooks the entrance to the fjord. It is the highest mountain in Connacht. Fishing was important to the local way of life and Watkins includes a fleet of fishing boats moving across the calm waters of the fjord towards the open sea. In the foreground, men load nets onto a wooden boat as they prepare to depart to catch herring. Highly finished and minutely detailed, Watkins' pictures show the influence of earlier Irish artists such as James Arthur O'Connor and Francis Danby.

However, unlike his Romantic predecessors, Watkins was motivated by an impulse to paint more serene and peaceful representations of the Irish landscape, typically depicting it in tranquil weather conditions. He was highly skilled at capturing the subtle effects of light on the landscape, exemplified in this work by the varying tonal effects and the reflection of the mountains on the surface of the water. The stillness and sense of serenity achieved counter the imposing presence of landscape and convey a sense of harmony between the fishermen and their surroundings.

Bartholomew Colles Watkins (1833–1891)

Born in Dublin, Watkins entered the Royal Dublin Society Drawing Schools in 1847. He developed a career as a landscape painter, devoting himself to the depiction of mountain scenery. He was a regular exhibitor at the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1860 and took an active part in Academy affairs. In 1891, while on a sketching tour in an isolated area of Kerry, he contracted a severe cold and died before help could reach him. **DM**



**Augustus Nicholas Burke (c.1838–1891),
*A Connemara Girl***

Oil on canvas, 63 x 48 cm. Presented, Mrs I. Monahan, 1951.
NGI.1212.

Burke portrays a young Irish colleen who gathers heather on a hillside overlooking the sea in Connemara. Walking barefooted across uneven terrain, she clutches her bundle tightly as she gazes, wide-eyed but with a look of calm determination, towards the viewer. The evenly balanced composition and central placing of the figure gives both a forcefulness and serene quality to this image of a young girl on a rugged headland. Burke first visited Connemara in the 1860s and was familiar with the landscape and its people. The inclusion of a pair of mountain goats alludes to the strong connection between rural communities and their environment. The girl's home-spun clothing and red shawl are typical of West of Ireland costumes, and the everyday subject matter lends a sense of realism to the picture. It is, however, a decidedly sentimental portrayal and typical of a genre that was popular with urban audiences in the mid-

nineteenth century. The picture also displays the artist's keen interest in landscape painting. The range of colours employed and the lighting are certainly evocative of the western landscape and atmosphere of the Atlantic coast.

Augustus Nicholas Burke (c.1838–1891)

Born in Galway, Burke attended school in England and studied painting in London, where he remained for a number of years. In 1869, he returned to Dublin developing a reputation as a landscape and subject painter. His travels in Belgium and the Netherlands had some influence on his painting style, although his trip to Pont-Aven in Brittany (c.1875–1876) was more significant. His experience in France informed his approach to teaching young artists at the RHA schools, where he instructed Walter Osborne and Joseph Malachy Kavanagh (1856–1918) among others. In 1883 he left Ireland following the assassination in the Phoenix Park of his brother Thomas Henry, Undersecretary for Ireland. He settled in London before moving to Italy where he remained for the rest of his life. **DM**



**Aloysius O'Kelly (1853–1936),
Mass in a Connemara Cabin, c.1883**

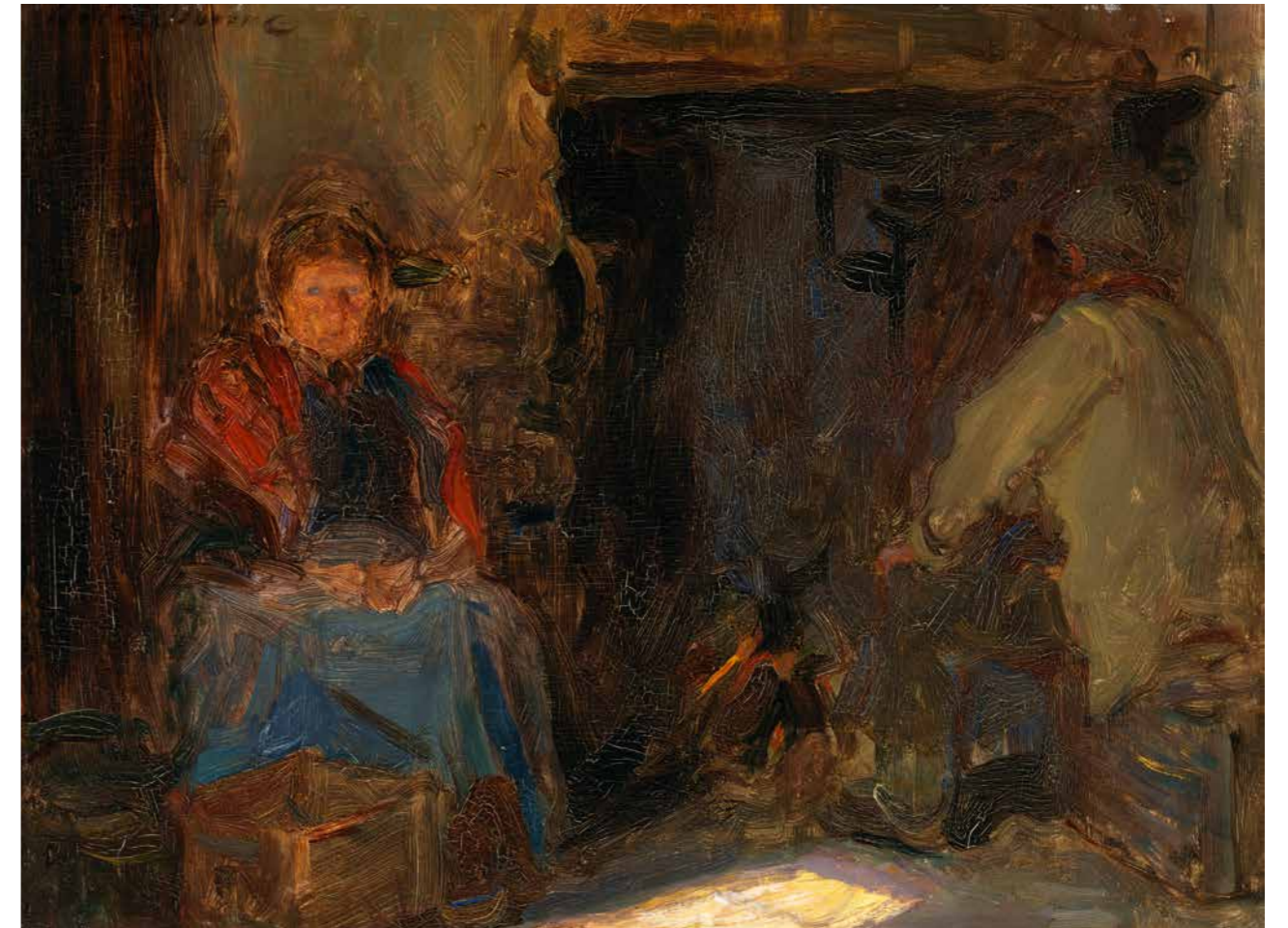
Oil on canvas, framed, 171 x 217 x 13 cm. On loan from the people of St Patrick's, Edinburgh and the Trustees of the Archdiocese of St Andrew's and Edinburgh. NGI-L.14780.

The image of a priest saying mass for a gathering of people in a cottage depicts an Irish custom known as The Stations, which was a way for Catholics to practise their religion at times of oppression, when they were forced to meet in secrecy. The laws preventing Catholic worship were repealed in the late eighteenth century, yet, The Stations continued as a common religious and social practice. O'Kelly may portray a new priest, groomed to assume his role in the Catholic Church, returning home to say an Ordination Mass for his family and neighbours, his Chesterfield coat and silk top hat on a súgan chair. It is one of a series of pictures by O'Kelly depicting the everyday life of rural communities in Connemara. Rather than conveying the harsh realities of existence, a healthy dignified community is shown, dressed in their finest clothes, strongly connected to their traditions. A colourful dramatic scene, the girls are shown in white

as the women wear plaid shawls with red petticoats, each figure depicted individually. Care was taken preparing the house for the priest and this room is tidy and well-furnished. The furniture is represented accurately revealing the artist's keen interest in domestic life, as in the case of the red dresser with rope moulding. Some objects, including the strainer and dash churn for making butter, reflect the working life of the people.

Aloysius O'Kelly (1853–1936)

Born in Dublin, O'Kelly attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1874. He exhibited at the Royal Academy, London between 1874 and 1895, and the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1878. In 1876 he visited Pont-Aven, becoming influenced by the plein-air style of Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884), visiting again in the 1870s and 1880s. On his return he painted rural scenes in the West of Ireland. His illustrations for the *London Illustrated News* depicted the plight of those struggling with evictions, Land League agitation and social injustices. In 1895, he emigrated to the United States becoming an American citizen in 1901. In 1926, he visited Ireland, before returning to America where he died. **DM**



**Walter Frederick Osborne (1859–1903),
A Galway Cottage, c.1893**

Oil on panel, 30 x 38 cm. Purchased, 1903. NGI.554.

Osborne's dark cottage interior shows an elderly couple warming themselves by a hearth. The woman, in her red plaid shawl and blue skirt, faces the viewer, a wooden box at her feet, busy with a domestic chore. Meanwhile, her male companion tends to the fire. The darkness of the shadows contrasts with the brightness of daylight outside, which enters the room through a window. Sunlight illuminates a section of the floor providing a sense of the outside world in an otherwise shadowy interior. The picture is one of a series of paintings by Osborne that capture aspects of life in Connemara, which the artist visited between 1892 and 1899. In Connemara he found an Irish version of the simple Breton rural lifestyle whose visual qualities had attracted him when working in Brittany. His realistic portrayal of this Irish interior scene conveys a sense of his curiosity and interest in the local people and their lifestyle. The absence of children

in this scene may be the result of emigration. His use of broad brushstrokes and natural colours reflects his experience of French realist painting and familiarity with modern European aesthetics.

Walter Frederick Osborne (1859–1903)

Born in Dublin, the son of the animal painter William Osborne, Walter attended the Royal Hibernian Academy schools in 1872. He won numerous prizes, including the Royal Dublin Society Taylor Scholarship in 1881 and 1882, enabling him to study at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts, Antwerp. In 1883 he painted in Brittany. In 1884 he moved to England, spending nine years painting rural and coastal scenes. He returned to Ireland in 1893, following the death of his sister. A regular exhibitor at the RHA, he became a member of the RHA in 1886, and taught at the Academy schools. From the early 1890s, his success as a portraitist grew, though he continued to paint urban and rural life scenes. He travelled to France, Spain and Holland. He died prematurely in 1903. **DM**



**Jack B Yeats (1871–1957),
The Country Shop, c.1912**

Pen, ink and watercolour on card, 26.6 x 19.5 cm. Presented, the Executors of W. A. Carbury, 1966. NGL.3829. © Estate of Jack B. Yeats. All rights reserved, DACS, 2014.

The artist enjoyed illustrating this shop, which he saw as a small social centre similar to a post office, placing the drawing the first in his book *Life in the West of Ireland* (1912). It is a fascinating focus of activity with everything stocked on shelves, in drawers and hanging from rafters forming a vital centre in providing people with the essentials, from hob-nailed boots, ropes and lanterns, to wall-paper, fabric and food. The owner, based on the figure of a Mrs Jordan from Belmullet, North Mayo, is a tough looking proprietor, who Yeats and Synge had encountered on their Congested Districts tour in 1905. She controls the situation from a tall stool behind the counter. A country woman is in the process of negotiating with her, earnestly looking at her face, as she is probably illiterate, trying to understand what is being discussed about her account. The harp positioned behind the owner's head

alludes to a form of Irish nationalism that does not show mercy to a fellow citizen. To reinforce this point about the twisted nature of human character, Yeats positions a man leaning against the counter, with his back to the figures, listening to what is being discussed, his mind on the world beyond. This is alluded to on the mirror hanging in the roof which depicts the street outside. The man's costume of woollen jacket, trousers and gansey is topped with a wide brimmed hat at a jaunty angle as he assumes the role of someone removed from the sordid business of the shop.

Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957)

Jack returned from Sligo to live with his family in London in 1887 and began attending Art College. Working as an illustrator in ink and watercolour taught him to convey a story successfully, and when he progressed to oils his style gradually expanded into a more expressive aesthetic. As a commercial artist he provided illustrations for forty different journals, including the *Illustrated London News*. He illustrated many books and broadsheets, including several for his family.



Paul Henry (1876–1958), The Potato Diggers, 1912

Oil on canvas, 51 x 46 cm. Purchased, 1968. NGL.1870. © Estate of Paul Henry. All rights reserved, IVARO, 2014.

Achill is an island off County Mayo, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and separated from the mainland by a narrow sound. Living among the islanders and observing their way of life enabled the artist to create a new pictorial language. Figures dominate his early Achill pictures, including *The Potato Diggers*, in which Jean-François Millet's (1814–1875) influence is seen in the woman bending to gather newly dug potatoes. The composition is divided between the foreground brown earth and background blue mountain, with a cloudy sky dominating the picture and creating atmosphere. The palette limited to strong blues, reds and browns, is enriched by the red petticoats painted by Henry in carefully applied brushstrokes. The artist depicts the landscape and the people with a degree of realism that is devoid of any kind of romanticism. In balancing the figures with the landscape, Henry conveys the universal relationship of ordinary people working in a contest with nature that is never ending. His portrayal

of Connemara became synonymous with the West of Ireland and his reputation was hugely enhanced when one of his Western landscapes was acquired in 1922, by the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris.

Paul Henry (1876–1958)

Born in Belfast, Henry attended the Belfast School of Art. In 1889, he went to Paris to train at the Académie Julian and at Whistler's Académie Carmen. Following a decade in London (1900–1910), where he worked as an illustrator, and married fellow artist Grace Mitchell (1868–1933), the couple travelled to County Mayo where they painted on Achill and in Connemara between 1910 and 1919. Henry was captivated by Achill and the life he found there; however, Grace found life difficult and it contributed to the break-up of their marriage. One of the founders of the Society of Dublin Painters, he exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy between 1910 and 1958 and several of his pictures were reproduced as travel posters. He later moved to Dublin, then Wicklow, and after the death of Grace, he married the artist Mabel Young and wrote two autobiographical books.



**Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957),
*Before the Start, 1915***

Oil on canvas, 46 x 61 cm. Bequeathed, Mrs J. Egan, through the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland, 1960. NGL1549. © Estate of Jack B. Yeats. All rights reserved, DACS, 2014.

Yeats had a great passion for horses, and Irish racing was an important source of subject matter for him. In this small oil painting of jockeys on their mounts, he focuses his attention on a specific moment, recording the acute tension and high emotion attending the start of a race. The three jockeys exude different behaviour; the figure in green is concentrated on the task ahead, his competitor in blue, lips pressed together, directly returns the gaze of the viewer, while the jockey in the centre is nervous by comparison. The sense of tension is further emphasised by the tightly packed crowd gathering around the horses, the jockeys silhouetted against a large pale sky, and the isolation of a flag flapping in the wind. By elevating the jockeys and placing them against an empty sky, Yeats affords them a heroic position

among the people. The impression that the viewer is at the level of the spectators is exemplified by the way in which a single figure looks directly out. The areas of thick impasto and broad brush work in the painting show the artist's confidence in using oils.

Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957)

Born in London, the son of the artist John Butler Yeats (1839–1922) and brother of the poet William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), Jack was sent to Sligo and raised by his grandparents. In 1887, he returned to London to train as an artist and began working as an illustrator for the popular press. In the 1890s, he began to establish his reputation and held his first exhibition of watercolours in 1897. Following regular trips to Ireland, his first *Life in the West of Ireland* exhibition was held in 1899. In 1910, he settled in Ireland having started working in oils. His technique and style evolved from its early graphic origins to a more expressionist aesthetic employing heavy impasto and a bold use of colour. His output included drawings, paintings, illustrations and cartoons, several plays and novels. **DM**



**Charles Vincent Lamb (1893–1964),
*Loch an Mhuilinn, 1930s***

Oil on board, 51 x 41 cm. Presented, Lallí Lamb de Buitléar, the artist's daughter, 1999. NGL4670. © The Artist's Estate.

Loch an Mhuilinn illustrates a mill lake located between Cora na Móna and Sruthán in Carraroe, a small peninsula off the Connemara coast, where the artist and his family spent their lives. The scene is taken from the artist's boat, where he often fished while observing the local people, including the custom of washing clothes in the lake. Having come from a Northern industrial town, Lamb was captivated by the ever-changing Western skies, and influenced by John Constable's (1776–1837) studies of sky and cloud formations. The composition is divided between the lake in the foreground, a deep blue hill, and a heavy overcast sky in the background. The cottage is prominently placed with a brown turf stack leaning against a stone wall in front of which is placed two boats. The figure of a woman washing creates a focus of activity. The palette is limited to fairly neutral tones enlivened by yellow, white and deep blue, and enriched by the woman's red petticoat. The picture is painted in a

variety of techniques, including carefully applied brushstrokes and flat areas of colour, at a time when Lamb was experimenting with a more stylised approach to his work. While the scene is typical of a picturesque view of Connemara, in reality the artist's sympathies lay in depicting the harsh lifestyle and landscape of the West of Ireland.

Charles Lamb (1893–1964)

Born in Portadown, Lamb studied at Belfast School of Art (1913–1917), winning a scholarship to the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (1917–1921). He settled in the Irish-speaking district of Carraroe in Connemara, where the idea for his early major work originated, *Dancing at a Northern Crossroads* (1920). He visited Brittany in 1926 to 1927 and Germany in 1938 until 1939. From 1936 in Carraroe, he hosted an annual exhibition and summer painting school for young artists. Known for his genre scenes, landscapes and seascapes painted mainly in Connemara and Northern Ireland, he undertook commissions for University College Galway, did book illustrations, and exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Royal Ulster Academy, and overseas.



**Lilian Lucy Davidson (1879–1954),
*Fashions at the Fair, c.1940s***

Oil on canvas, 71 x 92 cm. Purchased, 2003. NGL.4719.

Throughout her career, Davidson returned to the subject of fairs and market scenes. Their colourful appearance and lively atmosphere were suited to her style and technique, characterised by a bold use of colour, sense of design, and fluid application of paint. Markets and fairs were common across Ireland and important for commercial transaction and social exchange. Davidson travelled throughout the country and this work may be set in Westport, Co. Mayo, illustrating a busy scene with local people drawn to the stalls by the goods and produce on offer. The influence of the early work of Jack B. Yeats is evident in her use of broad brushwork, thickly applied paint and flat areas of colour. Davidson's family was not as comfortable as those of other women artists, and this may have caused her to be particularly sympathetic to the hard-working country people. The busy market scene forms a tapestry of texture and colour reflecting her natural impulse for pattern making and strong

contrasts of colour and tone. The brilliant canopies and white-washed cottages contrast with the dark shadowy stalls and black and brown calves seated on the ground, illustrating dramatic tonal effects that enhance the atmosphere of the scene. The elevated viewpoint reduces the sense of space and flattens the composition, allowing the market to fill the picture and draw the viewer in.

Lilian Lucy Davidson (1879–1954)

Born in Wicklow, Davidson attended the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (1895–1905). In 1920 she held a joint exhibition with Mainie Jellett. Davidson spent time in Paris, exhibiting at the Salon de la Société and Salon des Beaux Arts. A respected teacher, she provided drawing classes at her studio and taught at various Dublin Schools. A popular figure in the Dublin art world, she was a member of the Society of Dublin Painters and exhibited regularly at the RHA and other Dublin galleries. An occasional portraitist, she painted some of her contemporaries, including Jack B. Yeats and Sarah Purser (1848–1943). DM



**Mainie Jellett (1897–1944),
*Achill Horses, 1941***

Oil on canvas, 61 x 92 cm. Bequeathed, Miss R. Kirkpatrick, 1978. NGL.4320. © Heirs and Successors of Mainie Jellett.

The Western landscape and lifestyle provided the subject matter for a series of works by Jellett, following a visit to Achill Island in 1936. She was struck by the colouring and atmosphere of the West. This came a year after viewing a Chinese Art exhibition at the Royal Academy. She began experimenting with interlocking circles, influenced by Chinese art, using serpentine shapes in waves to portray the landscape. In 1937 she was commissioned to paint two murals on Irish rural, industrial and cultural life for the Irish Pavilion at the British Empire Exhibition in Glasgow (1938). The government used these murals for the Irish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair (1939). *Achill Horses* is one of her late studies, in which the paint is applied in a fluid manner with soft shading in the colouring of the horses, as they appear to gallop through the sea with the serpentine waves providing the underlying

structure. It illustrates a new phase of expressiveness employing more colour and natural forms that gives an organic feeling to Jellett's paintings. The fact that Jellett's work represented Ireland at an international forum showed a degree of acceptance of the modern movement in Ireland. As taste changed, the Western paintings that were used to illustrate a new rural nation were overtaken by Modernism.

Mainie Jellett (1897–1944)

Born in Dublin, Jellett trained under William Orpen, and Walter Sickert at the Westminster School of Art in London. In 1921, she and Evie Hone (1894–1955) studied in Paris with André Lhote (1885–1962), and Albert Gleizes (1881–1953), who introduced her to cubist abstraction. In 1923, Jellett's paintings (e.g. *Decoration*, NGL.1326) were condemned at a Society of Dublin Painters exhibition and she was not favourably reviewed until 1928. A dynamic figure who devoted her life to promoting art, she was elected the first president of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art (1943), and became the central figure of the modern movement in Ireland.



**Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957),
Men of Destiny, 1946**

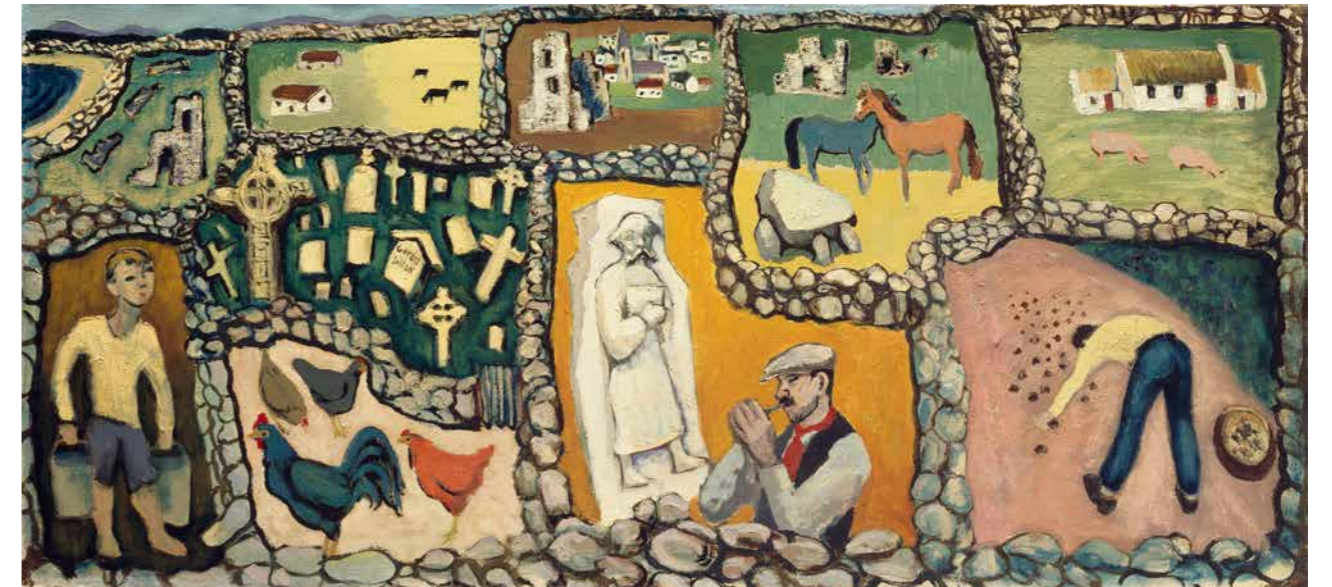
Oil on canvas, 51 x 69 cm. Presented, Jack B. Yeats Loan Committee, 1946. NGL.1134. © Estate of Jack B. Yeats. All rights reserved, DACS, 2014.

Men of Destiny was painted thirty years after the 1916 Rising, a year after the Second World War, and two years before the establishment of the Irish Republic. Yeats draws on his memory of Sligo fishermen disembarking from their boat with its mast and oars, surrounded by the sea at Rosses Point. He would have been familiar with the dark blue of Drumcliff Bay to the left and Coney Island on the right, bathed in a blaze of gold reflecting the rays of the setting sun. As the title suggests, Yeats uses this image from his youth to draw attention to the many young men who left their homes to lead the fight for freedom. The figures are painted in thick expressive brushstrokes of royal blue, vibrant orange and gold with the colours echoed on the rough headland. The rich blues and greens of the sky and sea merge as the

eye is caught by the brilliant yellow and white light on the horizon. The artist considered these young men as both heroes and brave warriors. It may have caused him to reflect on the fact that the future of Ireland and of Europe rested on the shoulders of such 'men of destiny'.

Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957)

Born in London, the youngest child of John Butler Yeats and Susan Mary Pollexfen, Jack was raised by grandparents in Sligo between 1879 and 1887. Following training in London at South Kensington School of Art, Chiswick School of Art and Westminster School of Art, he started working as an illustrator. In 1894, he married the artist Mary Cottenham White and they moved to Surrey, and Devon in 1897, when he concentrated on watercolour painting. In 1910 he moved to Ireland, where he began painting consistently in oils, his preferred medium. He lived in Greystones, then Donnybrook, before settling in Fitzwilliam Square. His wife died in 1947, and in 1955 he moved to a nursing home in Portobello, where he passed away in 1957.



Gerard Dillon (1916–1971), *The Little Green Fields*, c.1946–50

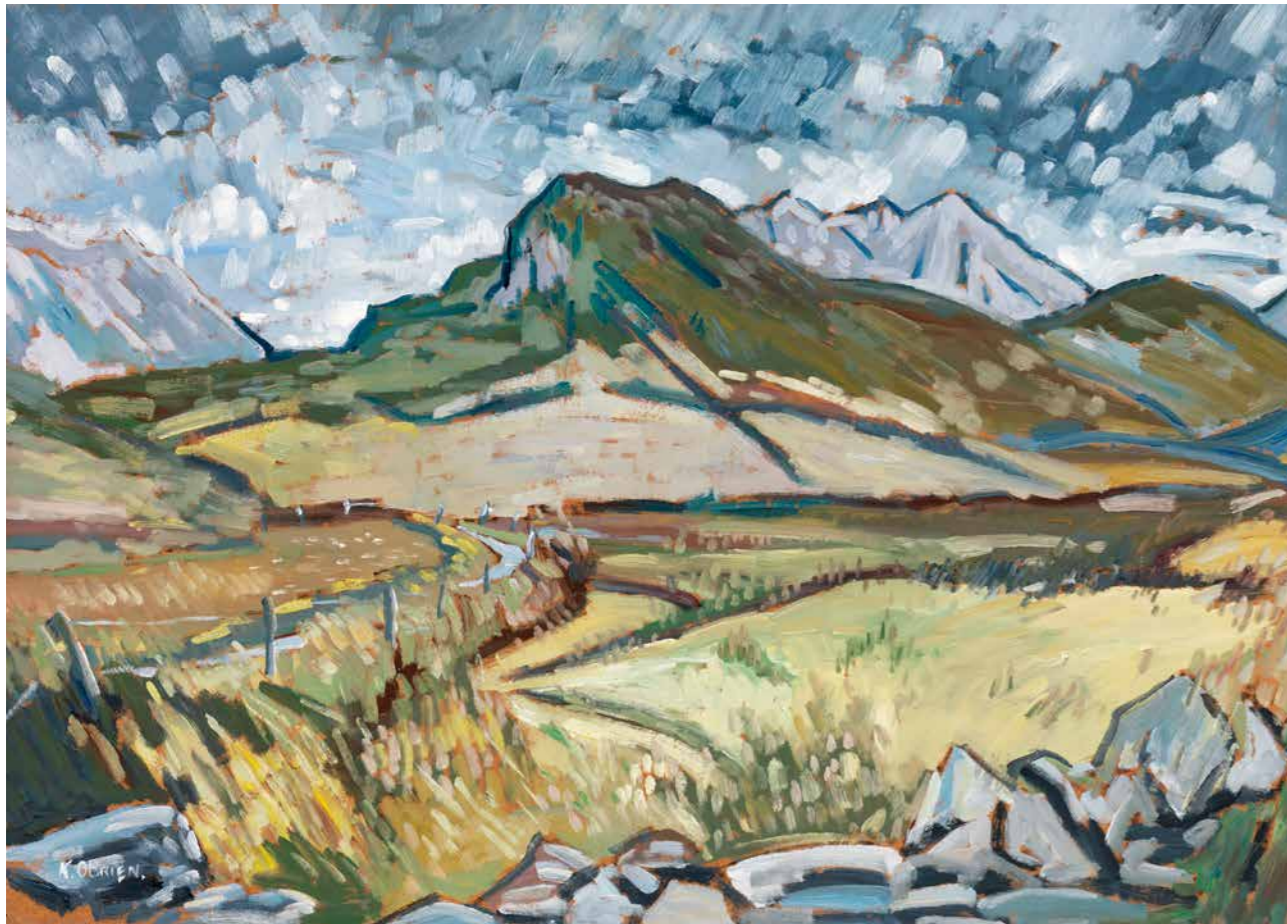
Oil on canvas 40.5 x 89 cm. Máire MacNeill Sweeney Bequest 1987. NGL.4520. © The Artist's Estate.

In 1939, following the outbreak of the Second World War, Dillon discovered the West of Ireland. Its remoteness from London became important to him. He rented cottages, staying on Inishlackan, a small island in Roundstone Bay in a scenic part of Connemara, where he painted *The Little Green Fields* between 1946 and 1950. Connemara presented a contrast to urban life and, like many artists before him, he was attracted by its unique rugged landscape, the people and their simple lifestyle. He portrayed the West as he saw it with small farms and white thatched cottages bound by dry stone walls. Inishlackan was one of the last areas in the country to gain electric power. In this work, Dillon illustrates the relationship between the past and the present in each of the fields. The past is alluded to by ancient ruins, megalithic tombs, high crosses and a graveyard with a white monastic figure

carved in stone. The link to the present is seen in the sowing of potatoes, pigs in front of cottages, hens being fed, cows and horses grazing, and, in the foreground, a farmer lighting his pipe in front of a stone figure. The scene is conveyed in a direct unsophisticated manner, appropriate to the subject matter and suited to Dillon's style, largely the result of being a self-taught artist.

Gerard Dillon (1916–1971)

Born in Belfast, Dillon became apprenticed as a painter and decorator. Following studies at Belfast School of Art, he moved to London in 1934. From 1939, he travelled regularly to the West of Ireland, making extended trips to Dublin and Belfast. He joined the White Stag Group, exhibiting at the Royal Hibernian Academy and the Irish Exhibition of Living Art. He returned to teach in West London between 1945 and 1968, visiting Italy in 1947, Spain in the 1950s, and touring Denmark and the United States. In 1968 he settled in Dublin and, following his death, was buried in Belfast. His versatility extended to etchings, stage sets and designs for murals and tapestries.



**Kitty Wilmer O'Brien (1910–1982),
Near Westport, Co. Mayo**

Oil on board, 50.8 x 70.8 cm. Presented, Dr Brendan O'Brien, in memory of his wife, the artist, 1983. NGL.4469.

© The Artist's Estate.

The two striking landscapes in this book display the artist's affection for County Mayo, including *Clew Bay from Murrisk* (on the cover), painted in the 1950s, and *Near Westport*, possibly also from this period. From the 1930s, the artist holidayed regularly in the West of Ireland, recording in oils, watercolour and gouache the local landscape and seascape. While the bulk of her Western work, comprising thirty-six paintings of County Mayo, was exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy between 1946 and 1979, from 1950 she showed further scenes of Co. Mayo at the Watercolour Society of Ireland. The cover image depicts the area around Murrisk between Croagh Patrick and the shores of Clew Bay, where on the last Sunday in July pilgrims climbed the reek of Croagh Patrick. O'Brien also painted numerous views around Westport, such as this one, drawing on her preference for bright colours, bold outlines and strong brushwork,

influenced by the work of Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) that she saw in Germany in 1936. This landscape is defined by the foreground stone wall and narrow road winding its way through the windswept fields, as it disappears into strongly outlined mountains that are topped by a cloudy sky hinting of rain. Both paintings of fresh colourful scenes with cloudy skies are executed in the artist's decisive fluid style.

Kitty Wilmer O'Brien (1910–1982)

Although born in India, O'Brien grew up in her mother's city of Dublin. She attended the Royal Hibernian Academy schools, where she was encouraged by Dermot O'Brien (1865–1945), and the Metropolitan School of Art, where she befriended Maurice MacGonigal. She obtained a scholarship to the Slade School of Art in London. In 1936 she married Dr Brendan O'Brien, the son of her former tutor. In 1951 she went to Paris to study with André Lhote. Her active career included her election as president of the Watercolour Society (1962–1981), and council member of Friends of the National Collections of Ireland. She became an RHA in 1976.



Maurice MacGonigal (1900–1979), Early Morning, Connemara (Mannin Bay), c.1965

Oil on board, 55 x 75.5 cm. Presented, James Nolan, in memory of the artist, 1983. NGL.4461. © National Gallery of Ireland.

Early Morning, Connemara is a later work by the artist, who maintained that despite living in Dublin, the West of Ireland provided an enduring inspiration for his work. While MacGonigal's early figurative paintings followed an academic pattern, similar to Seán Keating, his later style showed the influence of more modern techniques. In this late Western landscape, he employs a fluid style, experimenting with different brushstrokes and a light palette, to evoke the atmosphere of a fresh breezy day. He worked outdoors when painting landscapes, making drawings and watercolours for use as a reference in the studio. This scene depicts an unspoilt panorama of Connemara; white cottages are scattered on the seashore with its inlets and Mannin Bay with its jutting headland is in the distance. A man crosses a stony field with sheep, his dog at his heels. The smoothly executed early morning sky with pink clouds on the horizon sets

the mood in this painting of a warm fresh day, augmented by the white boats on a vivid blue sea. The rapidly painted overlapping green and yellow brushstrokes create the effect of a spontaneously painted scene. The artist is buried in Roundstone, Co. Galway.

Maurice MacGonigal (1900–1979)

Born in Dublin, the son of a Sligo-born painter-decorator, he was apprenticed in the stained-glass studio of his uncle, Joshua Clarke. His involvement in the War of Independence resulted in internment and release in 1922. These years helped to form his artistic vision. He resumed training with his cousin Harry Clarke, with whom he produced stained-glass designs. He won a scholarship to the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (1934–1936), was awarded the RDS Taylor prize and silver medal for landscape painting. A regular exhibitor at the Royal Hibernian Academy, he became its President (1937–1969) and Professor of Painting. Although he taught at the National College of Art and Design (1937–1969), holidays were spent in his beloved Connemara. His output included stage designs, posters and book illustrations.

Robert Ballagh (b.1943), *Portrait of Noel Browne (1915–1997), Politician, 1985*

Oil on canvas, 183 x 137 cm. Purchased, 1991. NGL.4573. © Robert Ballagh.

Dr Noel Browne is portrayed at his home in Baile na hAbhann, where he retired after a career in politics. As a child, he had tuberculosis, a disease to which he lost his parents. He studied medicine at Trinity College Dublin and during his early career as a doctor, witnessed the effects of TB. He entered politics, was appointed Minister for Health in 1948 and fought to eradicate the disease. His progressive policies and liberal attitude brought him into conflict with the Catholic Church, which operated most hospitals. The Church opposed the introduction of his Mother and Child Scheme, intended to provide free state-funded healthcare, forcing him to resign in 1951.

The cruciform shape of the portrait evokes both Browne's difficult relationship with the Church and his own personal sacrifice. Portrayed wearing an Aran jumper and set in Baile na hAbhann, west of Galway, between Inverin and Costelloe, the image conveys his passion for Irish history and culture. His erect pose and determined yet reflective expression, illustrates the individuality and strength of character for which he was known. This is further suggested by the inclusion of books by Karl Marx and Samuel Beckett. The composition's clean lines and meticulous attention to detail are typical of Ballagh's mature style, demonstrating the influence of photography in his practice. At the base, stones appear to spill out of the picture forming a small pile of real stones, creating visual connections between the image and reality. Signed at the foot of the painting is 'Doctúir Nollaig de Brún/Roibárd Ballagh'.

Robert Ballagh (b.1943)

Born in Dublin, Ballagh studied architecture at the Dublin Institute of Technology. In 1967 he met the artist Michael Farrell (1940–2000) who hired him as an assistant. He soon developed his own style and technique, influenced by photography and design. He contributed to the Irish Exhibition of Living Art and ROSC. His early works referenced the Old Masters, Goya, David and Delacroix. By introducing elements of social and political wit, he merged social realism with the clean lines and glossy finish of the advertising world. He has portrayed many significant figures, designed stage sets for *Riverdance*, Irish postage stamps and the last series of Irish bank notes. **DM**



The Training of Irish Artists and Exhibitions

The later nineteenth century saw the pattern in the training of Irish artists change from initial studies at Irish art institutions (listed below), some artists attending English art schools (Yeats and Clarke), to a gradual shift to travelling and training on the Continent.

Following his Irish training, Nathaniel Hone looked directly to France, as others travelled to Antwerp (Osborne), to Paris (Henry and Jellett), and an increasing number went to paint in Normandy and Brittany (Osborne, O’Kelly, Lamb and Jellett). These artists sought out new subject matter and a wider artistic environment in which to learn about painting in the open air (*en plein air*) directly from nature. They were inspired by the wild picturesque scenery in Brittany and the simple unspoiled Breton way of life. Many of the artists in this book travelled elsewhere e.g. Burton painted in England and Germany as did Hone and Lamb; Hone went further to Holland, Italy, Greece and Egypt, likewise Aloysius O’Kelly, who painted in France, England, Italy, North Africa, Egypt and the United States; Osborne worked in England travelling also to Spain and Holland; Clarke painted in France, travelling also to Scotland, Spain, Switzerland and Tangiers, while Jellett, who painted in England and France, travelled also to Lithuania, Belgium, Scotland and Holland – to name but a few. At different times in their careers, many of these artists turned to the West of Ireland seeking new subject matter and producing scenes in which light and atmosphere seemed fresh from nature.

The Dublin Society Drawing Schools and the National College of Art and Design

In 1746, the Dublin Society (1731) set up a drawing school that emerged out of the private academy of Francis West (1743). By 1750, the Dublin Society Drawing Schools were starting to develop four schools in one (figure drawing, landscape & ornament, architectural drawing & design, modelling & sculpture). The Royal Dublin Society also provided an exhibition space in the early nineteenth century. In 1849, it became a School of Design (when women were admitted), transferring in 1854 to the Department of Sci-

ence and Art. In 1877 it became the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art with the curriculum controlled until 1899 by the Department of Science and Art in South Kensington. Renamed the National College of Art in 1939, it became the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in 1971.

Royal Hibernian Academy and Gallery

Incorporated by charter in 1823, the Royal Hibernian Academy aimed at fostering appreciation of the fine arts, holding annual exhibitions (from 1826), and providing instruction for artists. The RHA lost its premises in Lower Abbey Street in the Easter Rising of 1916. In the interim, the RHA schools took place at 6 St Stephen’s Green (1916–1939) and 15 Ely Place (1939–1942), with annual exhibitions held at NCAD (1917–1969) and the National Gallery of Ireland (1971–1984). With the acquisition of 15 Ely Place (1939), and supported by Matthew Gallagher in 1970, the RHA reopened in 1984, and provides programmes of annual exhibitions, events and studio-schools.

Crawford College of Art and Design

Developing out of a series of fine art societies and associations, it emerged as a School of Design in 1850, which was extended through the support of W.H. Crawford, and renamed the Crawford Municipal School of Art in 1885. It has had a long-time association with the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery (1885). The School relocated to Sharman Crawford Street in 1980, becoming the Crawford College of Art and Design in 1985.

Belfast School of Art

In 1850, a School of Design opened in Belfast, which after a time reconstituted as a college, becoming the Ulster College of Art and Design in the 1960s. Since 1982, it has become a Faculty of Art and Design in York Street as part of the University of Ulster.

Water Colour Society of Ireland

Founded in 1870 (first exhibition 1871), it changed its name to the Water Colour Society of Ireland in 1888. It has held exhibitions in Dublin since 1891. The Society’s

collection of watercolours (1993) is now on permanent display at the University of Limerick.

Dublin Sketching Club

Founded in 1874, the sketching club has held annual exhibitions in Dublin since 1876. In 2000, it changed its name to the Dublin Painting and Sketching Club.

Royal Ulster Academy

Founded in 1879 as the Belfast Ramblers Sketching Club, it became the Ulster Academy of Arts in 1930 and the Royal Ulster Academy of Arts in 1950. As the oldest exhibiting society in Northern Ireland, it provides an important forum for painters, sculptors and architects to exhibit annually.

Oireachtas Festival and Art Exhibition

Founded to help integrate art with the Irish language movement, the first festival was held in 1897. Exhibitions took place at intervals in 1905, 1906, 1907, 1911 and 1920 until it became an annual event in 1941. Since 1943, it has become an important open submission exhibition selected by a committee of artists.

Society of Dublin Painters

It was founded in 1920 by Paul Henry, his wife Grace, Jack B. Yeats, Mary Swanzy and other artists, joined shortly after by Harry Clarke, Mainie Jellett and Charles Lamb. It represented the progressive face of Irish art. The heyday of the Society was the 1920s to the 1940s; it declined in the 1950s and ceased to function in 1969.

Ulster Society of Painters

In 1920, the Society was founded by a group of Northern artists to stimulate painting in Northern Ireland. It was officially formed in 1934. A number of the artists modelled it on the London-based group Unit One, and this evolved into the short-lived Ulster Unit (1933–1934), which was disbanded.

Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA)

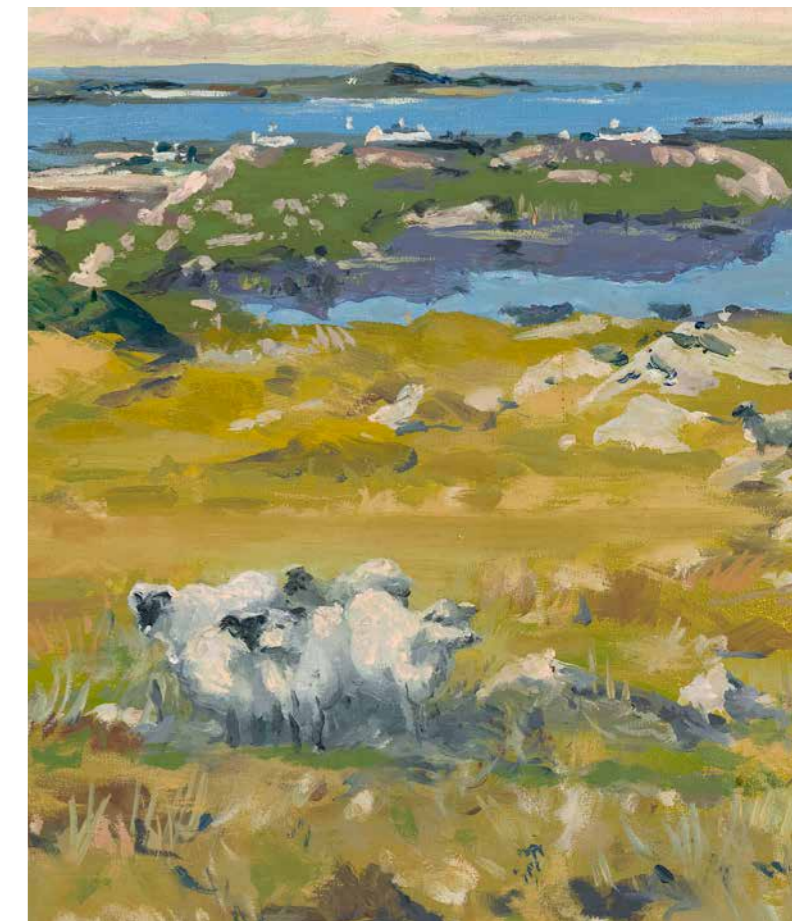
In 1943, the Irish Exhibition of Living Art was set up by

a group of artists, led by Louis le Brocqy, Mainie Jellett and Norah McGuinness, in response to the need for a forum to exhibit modern art and to explore contemporary Irish art. It declined over time as their exhibitions lost their vitality. The group disbanded in the early 1990s.

Other Schools of Art

Other nineteenth-century Schools of Design included Limerick, Clonmel, Waterford and Derry, not all of whom survived. In the twentieth century, Limerick School of Ornamental Art (1852) developed into the much expanded Limerick College of Art and Design. Waterford School of Practical Art and Design (1852) with time became part of the Waterford Institute of Technology. Dún Laoghaire College of Art and Design moved to a new campus in the 1980s, and gradually developed into the Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology in 1997. It is one of thirteen Institutes of Technology.

The academies, societies, art schools and institutes listed above (not including art history at third level colleges) form part of the framework of art education in Ireland.



Suggestions for Further Reading

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Guidelines for Teachers

Sarah Edmondson

West of Ireland Paintings at the National Gallery of Ireland from 1800 to 2000

See also pdf @ www.nationalgallery.ie/learning

This publication exploring West of Ireland images is based on paintings from the National Gallery of Ireland's collection created between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, during a time of change and upheaval in Irish history, when issues of subsistence, famine, emigration, customs and traditions and national identity were important. Looking at paintings created during this period can assist in the understanding and appreciation of Irish history.

This resource can be used at different levels to enhance the student's learning opportunities with visual imagery so as to encourage engagement with art-making and draw links and connections between art and the curriculum. It is possible to discuss queries with the NGI Education Officer responsible for teachers and schools at education@ngi.ie. Since publication of *The Arts in Education Charter* (2012), we look forward to seeing schools visiting the National Gallery of Ireland on guided tours each year. For bookings: tour@ngi.ie.

Primary School: Teachers know that the Primary School Visual Arts Curriculum encourages the use of appropriate visual vocabulary, which is best achieved by looking and reacting to works of art. Looking and responding involves students looking at artworks to encourage all levels of ability. As children don't need to be able to read to understand paintings, responding to an image provides an opportunity to develop language skills. Teachers could ask students to describe what they see and help them with suitable words (under 'art terms'). Encourage them to name colours (e.g. yellow), describe them (e.g. bright), identify where objects are situated in the picture (e.g. the girl is at the back on the right), gradually introducing concepts, such as perspective, light and shadow. As practical art is increasing in museums and galleries, encourage them to be creative in their art-making. The curricular links and projects will assist students to make imaginative connections and to express their ideas and feelings through drawing, painting, constructing and

inventing. This helps them to assimilate and respond to experience and to make sense of it. Use the images to talk about the scale, technique and paint texture of works of art. Explain that an original painting is unique and precious. Visit the National Gallery of Ireland on a pre-booked Discovery Tour.

The Primary School Visual Arts Curriculum draws relationships between making, looking at and responding to art, and suggests six areas by which children can interpret the world: drawing, paint and colour, print, clay, construction, fabric and fibre. These can be used for discussion, to make cross-curricular links, and to try out the projects with each age group.

Applicable to All Levels of Teaching

In teaching history consider:

- The year of the creation of one of the paintings. Plot the date on a timeline.
- Discuss key events in national or European history around the date of the artwork and make links between these events and the theme of the painting.
- Note the type and nature of the work/activity depicted in the painting.
- Discuss the figures and clothing and if it has changed over time?
- What are the main modes of transport in three of the works?
- Discuss one of the landscapes depicted – what are its main features? Is it rural and/or remote, and how might that landscape have changed or stayed the same over time?
- Make deductions regarding the children, the people and the society in which they lived. Ask questions – why, what if, and how do we know?
- Create a close-up drawing of one or two of the children in a painting.
- Discuss the landscape/seascape settings, the building's interior/exterior, their features, and how they might have changed?
- Paint or draw a scene from Irish history during the nineteenth century.

- Write a letter to a person in the painting from the perspective of a character in nineteenth-century Ireland, telling them about your life. Interview the person, asking them to tell you about life in their country at that time.

Integrate geography and the visual arts by drawing on mapping skills using these points:

- On a map find a county e.g. Mayo, or a region e.g. Joyce Country, or a province e.g. Connacht, depicted in several of the paintings.
- Discuss the relative locations of two places and the distances between them e.g. Co. Clare and Co. Sligo.
- Map the province of Connacht and name the main towns in each county.
- Use maps to locate and name the main geographical features in these paintings e.g. Burton's *In Joyce Country*, Colles Watkins' *A View of the Killarney*, MacGonigal's *Early Morning, Connemara (Mannin Bay)*, and O'Connor's *The Mill, Ballinrobe*.
- Discuss bordering counties and the influences they have on a county e.g. Sligo.

Encourage interaction between music, drama and the visual arts:

- In drama, look at activities that involve a role-play or improvisation on a scene in a painting, or between two children e.g. O'Kelly's *Mass in a Connemara Cabin* or characters in a painting e.g. Yeats' *Before the Start* or *The Country Shop*.
- Explore a scene in a painting, and use it as a pretext e.g. Burton's *Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child*. Encourage the students to dramatise the imagined prior scene or next scene. Drama techniques, such as still-life, thought-tracking and freeze-framing, could be drawn into this work.
- In music, consider composing activities based on some of the paintings e.g. Petrie's *Pilgrims at Saint Brigid's Well*, Dillon's *The Little Green Fields*, Davidson's *Fashions at the Fair*, O'Kelly's *Mass in a Connemara Cabin* and use a range of sound sources

to invent and perform pieces inspired by these works.

Junior and Senior Cycle: Junior and Senior Cycle can use these images in support studies for the painting section, using the information to explain aspects of their work. See information on Junior Certificate and short courses below. It is important that Junior and Senior Cycle art students visit the National Gallery of Ireland on a pre-booked Structured Tour and bring drawing materials to sketch from the paintings. On arrival at the Gallery, ask the guide to encourage discussion and interaction in order to understand that paintings involve a world of people and places, history, real and imagined events, nature and still-life. Draw comparisons with other works of art, including those from earlier and more modern periods. This might involve telling the story of an artist's life or form part of their own research. Sketching in the Gallery can be used as part of support studies, projects, cartoons and storyboards.

The Junior Certificate

A Framework for Junior Cycle (2012) includes 'creativity and innovation' amongst eight principles, together with eight key skills. The learning that students experience in Junior Cycle is described through twenty-four statements of learning, which include the need for students to 'create, appreciate and critically interpret a wide range of texts' and 'to create and present artistic work and appreciate the process and skills involved'. As History students study art-related themes, such as the Art of the Celtic monasteries, and the Renaissance, and are encouraged to use visual stimuli (including paintings) for historical comprehension tasks, many of the paintings in this book could provide material for second and third-year lessons in nineteenth and twentieth-century rural and urban life (work, housing, leisure, etc.).

Short course

Short courses are concerned with creating, appreciating and interpreting a range of texts, and making and presenting artistic work, while understanding the pro-

cesses involved. They offer the opportunity of devising and delivering new ways of learning. The framework for Junior Cycle will offer the option of school-developed Art History 'short courses' for which this book is ideal. It could be used by teachers to form a mini course drawing on Irish history and the Arts, looking at art and literature created in Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the national events that informed and inspired them. Subjects involved are Art, English, History and Business Studies. The students can be encouraged to present the results of this research in a visually interesting way as part of the short course demonstrating an understanding of the history and development of the West of Ireland. It can form a mini course, drawing on other themes, including war, poverty, famine, emigration, costume, education, music, oral history, travel and transport, and customs and traditions, drawing cross-curricular links with music, literature, design, film and the social and cultural history of the period. National Gallery of Ireland downloadable pdfs are being provided as resources for short courses, which we hope will connect to the lives and learning of 12-15 year olds. Refer to the NCCA for guidelines on statements of learning, links to key skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy), learning outcomes, strands, in-school assessment etc.

Learning aims and outcomes: Use the NGI website to look at the collections online. Try placing them in a wider art historical context by describing the social context and comparing and contrasting the works according to their subject matter and formal qualities. See these as new ways of learning. The discussion points and projects address some learning outcomes:

- Understanding Irish national identity/identities – what it means and how this is formed.
- Irish history – key events and figures.
- Key literary figures – their life and work.
- Key painters – their life and work.
- The West of Ireland as the true Ireland?
- The changing landscape (agricultural to scenic to urban).
- The loss of the Irish language.
- Postcard Ireland – what does this mean?

- Explain the terms 'landscape painting' and 'portrait painting'; how do they differ?
- Describe some of the medium and techniques used by the artists in this book. Name a number of artists involved in landscape painting and its development.
- Discuss the differences, styles, content and techniques between an early work e.g. O'Connor, a late nineteenth-century work, e.g. Osborne, an early twentieth-century work e.g. Henry or Yeats, and a modern painting by Jellett or Ballagh.
- List and describe four subject paintings illustrating ordinary life – what is the subject matter and what distinguishes these paintings from the other works in the book?
- The lure of the West.
- The West as a significant place for artists and writers.
- Travel and the training of Irish artists.
- The 'Irishness' or distinctiveness of the Irish landscape.
- Access to the West of Ireland in the nineteenth century.

Transition Year: Images on screens are part of everyday life – encourage students to articulate their views about the paintings in this book. Their critical sense can be developed by asking them to discuss what they see and avoiding details about artists' lives, as it has little to do with the looking experience. Introduce points about the artist when they are exploring why a painting was made, the source of inspiration, and how the artist achieved certain effects. This book forms a compact module for theme work and as almost all TY students study either Art or History in the Junior Certificate, they will be familiar with basic art terms and descriptions. Themes that can be explored include: portraying life in the West from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, depicting family life, the move from picturesque scenes to more realistic landscapes, the role of women and the place of people in the landscape. Tailor discussion points and projects. Trace the changing history of the west of Ireland by drawing on the Gallery's collection

in paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture using the online collection at www.nationalgallery.ie. Transition Year is an ideal opportunity to organise a guided tour and workshop exploring the collections of the National Gallery of Ireland.

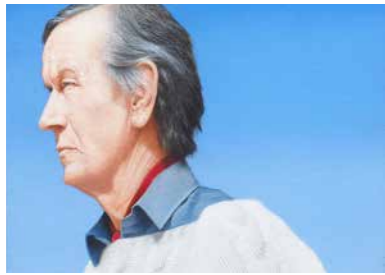
Leaving Certificate: This publication is directly linked to the Leaving Certificate Art History syllabus. The range of media and techniques, the subject pictures, the landscapes and seascapes, the portrayal of people and the settings are all relevant to Senior Cycle art education. The introductory essay can be combined with details of the paintings, the artist's life, the timeline and the social history of the period. History students can undertake special research studies on the life and works of artists, especially if they can link the topics to meaningful social and cultural historical themes, such as those listed in this book. Use the NGI exhibition notes and Leaving Certificate Art information, and organise a structured visit to the National Gallery of Ireland to view the original works of art. The process of investigation and development is essential in order for students to be able to create the best possible artwork. Students and teachers can seek support from the NGI's Schools Office with the new Coursework Workbook in researching initial themes using a variety of relevant media and materials, investigating possible routes to take with coursework, developing ideas and proposals, and sketching pieces of art in real time. See information on NGI collections at www.nationalgallery.ie.

Themes

The paintings have been grouped under six specific themes in order to demonstrate how paintings can be used to understand complex concepts in history and society. Discussion points and projects are aimed at encouraging active learning and participation:

- A Visual History: Ireland in the 1900s.
- Irish Traditions, Culture and Heritage.
- Romantic Ideals and Notions about the West.
- Poverty and Emigration.
- Religion in Ireland.





Portrait of Noel Browne p.41



Claude Chavasse Teaching Irish p.15



Fashions at the Fair p.34

A Visual History: Ireland in the 1900s

Use these paintings to understand the social and political situation of Ireland in the 1900s.

Cross-curricular links: Art, History, Geography, English and CSPE

Robert Ballagh, *Portrait of Noel Browne, (1915–1997), Politician, 1985*

Discussion points:

- What style is this portrait painted in?
- Why do you think this painting is cruciform in shape? Do you think it would look better if it was rectangular?
- What is placed at the foot of Noel Browne? Are these real objects? Why did the artist place them there?
- Where is Noel Browne in this painting and how do you know?

Projects:

- Research and discuss a new proposal or legislation undertaken by a specific group or a politician in Ireland in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, or create your own proposal. Organise a debate (based on evidence) in order to discuss this.
- Paint or draw a portrait of an inspirational character. Include clues in your portrait to tell us something about the character and why they have inspired you. Enclose your portrait in a different shape, like Ballagh, or include some real objects in your artwork.

Sadbh Trínseach (1891–1918), *Claude Chavasse Teaching an Irish Class on Achill Island, Co. Mayo, 1913–14*

Discussion points:

- What is happening in this image? What age are the children? Who is the teacher?
- Is this classroom different to your classroom? What is different about it?
- Describe the medium, marks or technique used in the execution of this image.

Projects:

- Research and discuss the prohibition of the Irish language in the 1900s. Make a list of ways in which the Irish government has tried to salvage the Irish language. Should we try to save the Irish language? What else could we do to save it?
- What initiatives could be implemented in your school to highlight the declining use of Irish, e.g. make school signs in Irish, design posters promoting the Irish language, etc.
- Analyse Trínseach's style. Make a similar charcoal drawing of your classroom.

Irish Traditions, Culture, and Heritage

Use these images of the West in order to explore what it means to be Irish and to find out where these notions of 'Irishness' came from and how they developed.

Cross-curricular links: Art, History, CSPE and ESS

Lilian Lucy Davidson, *Fashions at the Fair, c.1940s*

Discussion points:

- The farmers market or fair is a common activity. Have you ever been to a fair or market and could you describe the experience?
- What is being sold at the fair? What time of year do you think it is and why?
- Note how people dressed in the 1940s. Has fashion changed since then? Why does the nature and style of clothes change?

Projects:

- A flea market is where people sell old belongings rather than throwing them away. Is this a good idea? Organise a flea market in your school. Donate the money to charity or use it to buy materials for the art room. What to do: get permission from the school principal, design posters seeking good quality, unwanted items, collect the items, design a poster advertising the market and set up and organise the stalls.
- Write an imaginative story about a character in this painting.



Aran Fisherman p.25



Paddy Conneely p.11



Before the Start p.32

Frederic William Burton, *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child, 1841*

Discussion points:

- Discuss this western pre-Famine painting showing customs and traditions.
- Do you think the traditions or customs of death since pre-Famine Ireland, 1850s, have changed? If so, what has changed and what has largely remained the same?
- Is the drowned child from a wealthy or working-class family? How do you know?
- What is 'keening' and can you identify the keeners in this painting?
- What kind of cross is above the door. What is it made from and what does it symbolise?

Projects:

- Research different types of crosses or religious symbols from around the globe and different religions (Christian/Maltese/St Brigid's/The Star of David). Draw and make crosses using different materials. Research their meaning and display in the school.
- Research and discuss the notion of fairy kidnapping and other superstitious beliefs.

Frederic William Burton, *Paddy Conneely, (d.1850), a Galway Piper, c.1840*

Discussion points:

- Music is a big part of Irish culture. Name traditional Irish instruments?
- What other area of the Arts or art form is Ireland known for?
- What material did Burton use and is it a formal or informal portrait? Why?

Projects:

- Make a drawing of a musical instrument using watercolour or inks.
- Position a model on a chair holding an instrument. Sketch them from observation using the correct proportions of the figure. Note the position of Paddy Conneely on the page – he is not in the centre and he is cropped. Create an interesting

composition on your page by placing the figure in the bottom right corner or the bottom left.

Jack B. Yeats, *Before the Start, 1915*

Discussion points:

- Jack B. Yeats loved race meetings. Can you think of any other typical Irish sport?
- The Yeats' family were important for Irish culture and heritage. Who was Jack B. Yeats' brother and what is he famous for?
- Have you attended a race meeting? Describe the atmosphere and people and what they wear. What is a bookie and what do they do? What is a race card used for?

Projects:

- People often wear a hat to the races. See in Yeats' *Before the Start, 1915*, a number of hat styles. Design and make a hat from coloured paper and card for 'Ladies Day at the Races'. What happens on 'Ladies Day' at the races?
- Why do jockeys wear bright costumes? Design a colourful jockey's top and cap.

Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957), *The Country Shop, c.1912*

Discussion points:

- Jack B. Yeats was fascinated by places like shops, circuses, fairs, harbours, races and funerals, where people gathered to socialise, do business or to relax. Discuss.
- Memory exercise. Look carefully at the picture. Close your eyes and list everything.
- Yeats was an illustrator – describe what this means using examples of his work.

Projects:

- Write an imaginative story about the life of the country woman in this picture.
- This country shop is set in the West in 1912. Draw the interior of a shop that you might find in the West of Ireland in the 2000s. How is it different?



Loch an Mhuilinn p.33



Connemara Girl p.27



Seascape with Figures p.18

Romantic Ideals and Notions about the West

Is the West of Ireland different; why did artists go there to paint the people and the landscape; did visiting artists integrate or did they feel like outsiders? Explore these themes.

Cross-curricular links: Art, History, Geography, Science and English

Walter Frederick Osborne, *A Galway Cottage*, c.1893

Discussion points:

- Discuss what is happening in this painting – the people and what they are doing.
- Describe the painting technique and colours used and the atmosphere it creates. Does it make you think of old Ireland? Explain why. Why are there no children?
- Would you like to live in a cottage without water, electricity, toilet, a mobile phone?

Projects:

- Research and write a story about life in Galway c.1893. Describe the cottage, its rooms, who lives there, what they do – work on a farm, where do they collect water?
- Source images of and draw Western cottages and make miniature models of them.

Charles Vincent Lamb, *Loch an Mhuilinn*, 1930s

Discussion points:

- Describe the style of this painting. Is it realistic?
- What is happening, where is Loch an Mhuilinn, and what is the woman doing?
- What is the roof made from? Why are very few contemporary roofs made from this material? Do any environmentalists use this material today?
- Lamb paints an idyllic image of life in the 1930s. Was it easy then, and did he think so?
- Images such as these have been used to sell Ireland to tourists. Explain and discuss.

Projects:

- Design a set of Irish postcards for Ireland; use the paintings of Lamb, Yeats, Keating, MacGonigal and Henry as inspiration.
- Think about the past and how people washed their clothes and themselves, cooked food, and boiled water. What do we use today to aid us with these tasks? e.g. kettle, washing machine, shower etc. Design a future product to help with a daily task.

Augustus Burke (c.1838–1891), *A Connemara Girl*

Discussion points:

- What age is the girl in this painting and what is she collecting?
- Does this painting accurately record what life was like for this young goat herder?

Projects:

- Burke visited Connemara and was interested in drawing and painting local people and scenery, having painted realistic subjects like this in Brittany. Make a painting, drawing or photograph of a person in your local area. Capture the role of this person by placing them in a specific location (e.g. the local butcher outside of his shop etc.).
- Research the native flora of the Burren, Co. Clare – does it differ to Connemara, Co. Galway? What conditions enable the flora to thrive in either of these environments?

Poverty and Emigration in Ireland

Many Irish families lived in poverty during much of the nineteenth century, especially those living off the land, and they suffered further hardship after the Great Famine (1845–1850). The harsh living conditions caused people to emigrate, a pattern that continued in the twentieth century. Use paintings to discuss poverty, emigration and its effect on Ireland.

Cross-curricular links: Art, History and Geography

Seán Keating, *A Seascape with Figures*, 1930s

Discussion points:

- Is the lady seated in the foreground rich or poor? Why and what is she thinking about?



Galway Cottage p.29



St Brigid's Well p.33



Mass in a Connemara Cabin p.28

- Why did Keating paint her? Has he witnessed or imagined this scene?
- Did he spend time on the Aran Islands? What are the men in the background doing?
- What transport did people use to travel in the 1930s? How do people travel today?

Projects:

- Write a poem about this lady on the island and her thoughts.
- Do a project on emigration, comparing the 1930s to the 2010s. Do the students know anyone who has emigrated? Where to? Where did people emigrate to in the 1900s? What transport did they use? Look at different countries on maps and use the internet to visualise the Irish diaspora. Films, paintings, photographs and books have been based on Irish emigrants to the USA, Australia etc. Use as support studies.

Walter Frederic Osborne, *A Galway Cottage*, 1893

Discussion points:

- How many people are in the cottage? Are they rich or poor? Elderly or young?
- Do they live alone? If so what do you think happened to their children?
- The lady in the foreground looks very sad. What do you think she is thinking about?
- Do you think it is warm or cold in the cottage? How does this painting make you feel?

Projects:

- Parents find it hard when their children emigrate or go away to gain new experiences. Is it easier to cope with this in the twenty-first century through mobile phones, internet, Skype etc.? Imagine you have gone to America in 1893. Write a letter to your family describing the experiences – how and who you travelled with, how long it took, the people you met.
- Make a close-up painting or drawing of this woman's face. Try to show her sad expression and her age. Include her hair and shawl.

Religion in Ireland

Use these images to explore the rituals, practices and representation of Catholicism in early twentieth-century Ireland.

Cross-curricular links: Art, History and Religion

George Petrie, *Pilgrims at Saint Brigid's Well*, Liscannor, Co. Clare, c.1829–30

Discussion points:

- What a pilgrim is and why do people go on pilgrimages to places like St Brigid's Well.
- Would people go on a pilgrimage now or do you know anybody who has gone on a pilgrimage – what was their experience like?
- When did Christianity come to Ireland? When did the festival of Lughnasa take place?

Projects:

- Write out and illustrate the story of St Brigid.
- Paint a landscape scene that contains water from observation or from your imagination. Observe how the river in Petrie's painting zig-zags into the distance.

Aloysius O'Kelly, *Mass in a Connemara Cabin*, c.1883

Discussion points:

- Why was the practice of conducting sacraments in people's houses rather than in chapels common in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland?
- What does the picture on the wall tell you about the owners of the house?
- Describe the atmosphere in this painting – calm, quiet, warm, spiritual, homely, pious.
- Note the space in the roof made from timber. What was it used for?

Projects:

- Observe the flickering of a candle and try to record the light using oranges, yellows, reds and white. Try using oil pastels on grey sugar paper.
- Research the ornate robes of the Catholic clergy or the robes of any religious person. Describe the colours and patterns used on the robes and garments.



A Cleric p.17



Potato Diggers p.31



Little Green Fields p.37

Jack B. Yeats, *A Cleric*, 1913

Discussion points:

- Where is this priest based and how do you know? Note the environment around him.
- What do you think is Yeats' opinion of this man? Does he think highly of him?
- What medium is this image painted in? Describe the colour theme.
- The priest had an important role in Ireland in the 1900s. How has this changed?

Projects:

- Yeats painted this image of a cleric to accompany a passage in George A. Birmingham's book *Irishmen All*. This book was a mildly satirical, humorous study on the main characters of a provincial town. Name the main characters of a small town in Ireland? Write about a main character from your town or school.
- Provide an illustration for your descriptive passage (Research *Irishmen All*. Read the passages and enjoy Yeats' illustrations of the different characters).

Agricultural Ireland

Ireland has a significant reputation as an agricultural country due to the high quality of Irish farmed, fished and packaged foods. Use these paintings to discuss and explain this long-standing tradition. Discuss how this tradition might be developed in the twenty-first century.

Cross-curricular links: Art, History, Geography and Home Economics

Paul Henry, *The Potato Diggers*, 1912

Discussion points:

- What are these people digging for and do you think it is easy work?
- In the nineteenth century many families struggled to survive. Conditions were tough and many farmers had less than 15 acres. Artists, such as Henry, Yeats, Keating and Lamb, portrayed these workers in a heroic manner. Why?
- Describe the composition and Henry's style of painting.

Projects:

- Draw a person at work or doing exercise.
- Henry was good at painting clouds giving them volume and mass. Look at clouds and make a detailed study using different tonal variations to create the illusion of form.
- The ever-changing sky is the key to Western landscapes. Discuss.

Gerard Dillon, *The Little Green Fields*, c.1946-50

Discussion points:

- Where is this painting set and how do you know? Describe the flat, colourful, simple style.
- Discuss what is happening – does the picture describe rural Ireland (the cottages, high crosses, dolmen and ruins) and portray an ancient country with a rich heritage?

Projects:

- Dillon's painting is like a map of the West. Draw a bird's eye view of your area.
- This painting does not contain perspective. Explain what one point perspective is and use this painting to show how you can distort perspective to create an image.

Irish Landscape Painting

The Irish landscape is attractive to tourists and it reflects certain characteristics, e.g. wild, rugged, lush, green, hilly, stony and coastal. What other features can you suggest? Learn about how this image was created and whether it is a true depiction of the country or not.

Cross-curricular links: Art, History, Geography and Science

George Petrie, *Dun Aonghasa, Inishmore, Aran Islands*, c.1827

Discussion points:

- The Aran Islands are off the Galway coast. Inishmore is the largest. Petrie shows a man with his daughter on the edge of the island. They are very small in comparison to the cliff edge and waves. How does this make you feel?



Dun Aonghasa p.6



Near Westport p.38



Cliffs of Moher p.12

- Are there other people on the island? Do you think there is a storm coming?
- Would you like to visit the Aran Islands? Do you think they are the same as they were in the 1900s? What do you think might have changed?

Projects:

- Ireland is an island with the Irish Sea on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other. There are many small islands off the coast of Ireland. Look at old maps of Ireland and see how the shape of the country has changed. Explain coastal erosion.
- What shape will Ireland have 10,000 years from now? Draw an aerial view of Ireland.

Kitty Wilmer O'Brien, *Clew Bay from Murrisk, Co. Mayo*, 1950s

Kitty Wilmer O'Brien, *Near Westport, Co. Mayo*

Discussion points:

- Describe the landscape in O'Brien's paintings? Does her work look like Ireland – why?
- Describe her painting technique. Examine how she has treated the sky.
- The West is often believed to be the truer more authentic Ireland. Do you agree? Does the scenery match our vision and is that used to promote Ireland to tourists?

Projects:

- Paint a landscape in a similar style as O'Brien, using bold colours and brushstrokes.
- Describe what you might see walking on the path in the painting *Near Westport, Co. Mayo*.

Nathaniel Hone II, *The Cliffs of Moher, County Clare*, c.1890

Discussion points:

- The Cliffs of Moher are a major tourist attraction. Name another tourist attraction.
- Would you visit Ireland as a tourist? Would you see it differently if you were not Irish?
- Do you like the colours in this painting? Describe the brushstrokes.

Projects:

- Make a watercolour painting of a natural or popular tourist attraction.
- Examine and analyse tourism campaigns. How is this country promoted and sold to tourists? Generate your own opinion about these adverts and campaigns. Are they truthful? How could they be improved?

Compare (Similarities) and Contrast (Differences) Project

Learning how to observe and improving visual literacy can be achieved by comparing and contrasting two different paintings.

Compare (similarities) and contrast (differences) according to:

Subject matter Style Technique Artist Date

Some examples:

1) Compare two different paintings by the same artist:

- **Frederic William Burton (1816–1900), *In Joyce Country (Connemara, Co. Galway)*, c.1840**
- **Frederic William Burton, *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child*, 1841**

artist	title	date	Subject matter	style	technique
Burton	In Joyce Country	c.1840	Connemara, Galway, landscape, stone wall and cottage, young girl with shawl and basket, life in the country, dress and fashion	sketchy, pale earth tones	watercolour
Burton	The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child	1841	death, countryside, family, old traditions, genre scene, life in the country, dress and fashion	finished painting, realistic, light shining through the house, highlights and shadows	watercolour using overlapping layers to achieve richer colours



2) Compare two different paintings with somewhat similar subject matter:

- **Bartholomew Colles Watkins (1833–1891), *A View of the Killarries, from Leenane***
- **Seán Keating (1889–1977), *A Seascape with Figures* or Paul Henry (1876–1958), *Launching the Currach*, 1910–11**

artist	title	date	subject matter	style	technique
Watkins	A View of the Killarries, from Leenane		Connemara, the West, Killary harbour, men at work in the evening, going out to sea, mountains and mist, landscape, a genre scene	very finished, realistic, atmospheric, dusky purples and pinks	oil paint, atmospheric and linear perspective
Keating Henry	A Seascape with Figures Launching the Currach		The Aran Islands, Connemara, Achill Island, the West, harbour, the sea, men at work in the day, observer, coming home, genre scene and land/seascape	earth colours, highlights, some bright colours, areas rapidly painted, areas more smoothly painted	oil paint, different planes to show perspective horizon line foreground detail background detail



3) Compare two different paintings from the same era or painted in a similar style:

- **Mainie Jellett (1897–1944), *Achill Horses*, 1941**
- **Gerard Dillon (1916–1971), *The Little Green Fields*, c.1946–50**

artist	title	date	subject matter	style	technique
Jellett	Achill Horses	1940s	Horses on Achill Island	modern, flat, cubist, geometric, complex	oil paint
Dillon	The Little Green Fields	1940s	Farm, West of Ireland	modern, childish, flat, playful, colourful	oil paint



Left Centre Right



Paul Henry's *The Potato Diggers*, 1912 (p.33). Perspective is created by overlapping.

The figures are in front of the mountain because they overlap the mountain. The mountain is in front of the sky because it overlaps the clouds. Atmospheric perspective is when things in the background or middle ground turn a shade of blue e.g. like the mountain in this painting.

Visual Literacy and Art Terms

Visual literacy is learning how to read and discuss a painting. It is trying to figure out what the painting is about, or what the artist is trying to say, by solely looking at the painting or object. Being able to talk about art is an important part of both active learning and the enjoyment of art. This material is helpful in the development of general literacy skills, just as concepts, like scale, size, perspective, proportion etc., can be used in support of artistic numeracy. Use the painting structured with words to help discuss and describe paintings.

Art terms and descriptive language

Category:

Landscape	Seascape	Genre scene	Historical	Narrative
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Descriptive words: Use these words to help you discuss/describe works of art:

Rugged	Barren	Wild	Windy	Coastal
Rich	Earthy	Dangerous	Bleak	Dry
Rocky	Idyllic	Beautiful	Peaceful	Empty
Crowded	Dull	Grey	Cloudy	Overcast
Stormy	Sunny	Bright	Dark	Unspoiled
Agricultural	Painterly	Pattern	Shape/form	Rural
Features	Mood	Imaginative	Evocative	Portray
Shadows	Shade	Movement	Sketch	Rustic
Fresh	Warm	Solitary	Free	Isolated
Landscape	Seascape	Misty	Stony	Open-air painting

Painting style/techniques:

Messy	Neat	Rigid	Expressive	Impressionistic	Impasto
Flat	Realistic	Controlled	Outlined	Defined	

Mood:

Sad	Sentimental	Lonely	Happy	Energetic
Childish	Mysterious	Moody	Atmospheric	

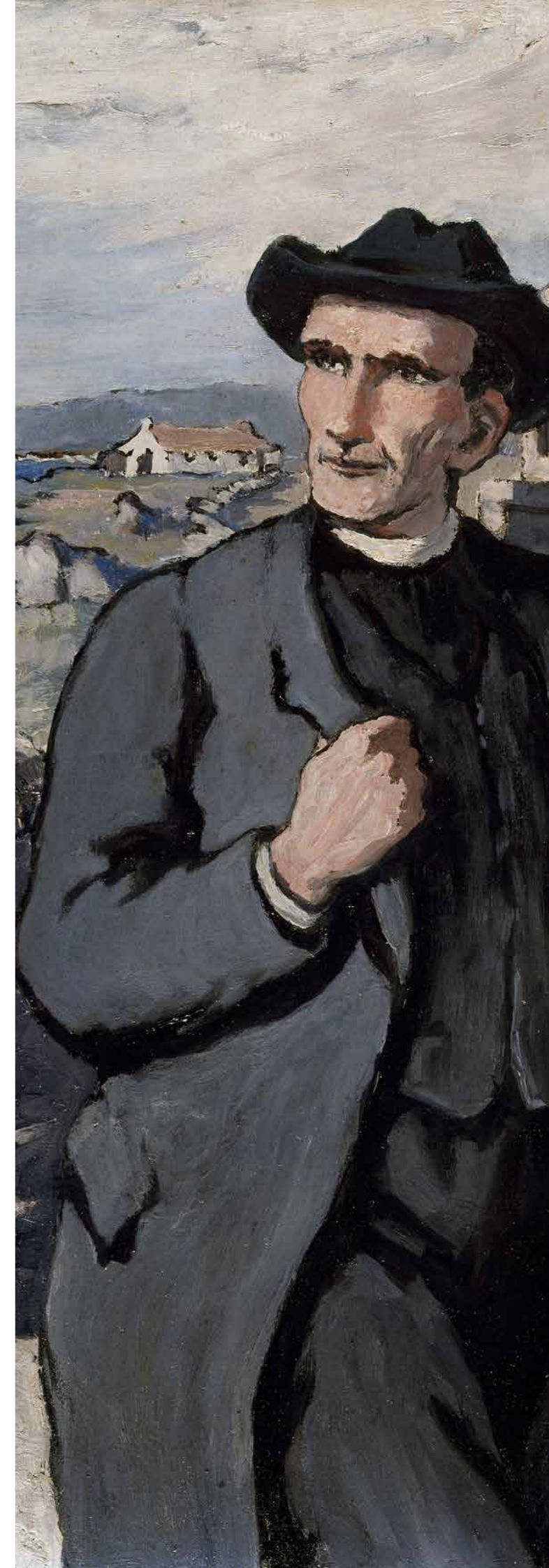
Painting materials:

Oil	Watercolours	Charcoal	Pencil	Chalks	Inks
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Visual Literacy Project

Use some of these art terms to discuss and describe paintings:

- Photocopy some of the art terms as 'flash cards'.
- Cut up the words and use them in individual projects and/or in a group work.
- Display the art terms around on the wall of the classroom so the students have the opportunity to study them. Place the student-made responses with each art term.
- Give the students a theme for a collage using art terms e.g. a windswept landscape on a stony outcrop. Select the words carefully so the theme of the collage can be understood. Allocate time for this project. When completed, ask the students to describe and explain their collage.
- Circulate the series of art terms with images of the paintings. Ask the students to select whatever words best describe each of the artworks. Allow every student the opportunity to discuss and describe an artwork to the class.
- Suggest making an artwork, using only two colours in response to an art term. Exhibit all the works in the classroom so the different responses can be seen. Ask each student to discuss their choice of art term, why they selected those colours and what do they feel is the effect or benefit of painting in just two colours?



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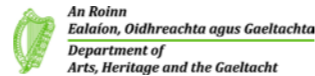
Cover: Kitty Wilmer O'Brien (1910–1982), *Clew Bay from Murrisk, County Mayo*, 1950s. Oil on board, 36 x 71 cm. Purchased, 2000. NGI.4682
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The West of Ireland





K. OB.

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