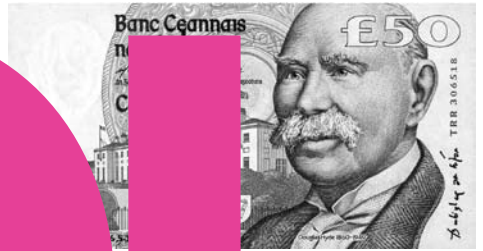
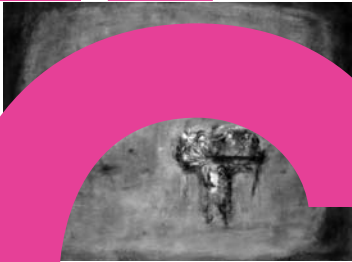


IN



COLOUR



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# Introduction

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**In Colour** is an exhibition featuring work by some of Ireland's most prolific 19th and 20th century artists, studied on the leaving certificate art history syllabus. Programmed by Fingal County Council in partnership with Draíocht, the show hosts works borrowed from the extensive collections of AIB, the Arts Council and Limerick City Gallery. An education programme accompanies the show and aims to bring the leaving certificate art history syllabus to life by showing these key works and providing students and teachers with the opportunity to engage in a variety of educational events. We are delighted to have artists Alice Maher, Robert Ballagh and Martin Gale visit as part of this programme and give personal insight into their practice. In Colour recognises the benefit of working in partnership with collections representing the wealth of Irish art history. We endeavour to explore the full potential of In Colour as an educational concept, and welcome feedback from programme visitors.

This educational resource catalogue focuses on five artists featured in the show, Martin Gale, Robert Ballagh, Alice Maher, Mainie Jellett and Patrick Collins. To maximise learning, it should be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition, and focused tour where possible. You will read a short biography on each artist, an analysis of their artwork, their style, processes employed and influences throughout their career. Questions highlighted throughout the text, the student response task, and a list of other available resources, have been designed to allow interaction with the information and encourage looking at the work anew. We invite all visitors to use the exhibition and resource catalogue as an access point for further investigation and discussion on the artists and their work.

Julie Clarke  
Youth & Education  
Fingal Arts Office

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Public Art  
Fingal Arts Office

# Mainie Jellett

Mary Harriett (Mainie) Jellett was born in 1897 into a distinguished middle-class family on Fitzwilliam Square in Dublin. The eldest of four daughters, she demonstrated a prodigious talent in both music and art, becoming an accomplished pianist. Academic achievement, independence and creativity were fostered in the Jellett household, and Mainie demonstrated a strong intellect to match her creative talents. She was home-schooled along with her sisters, during which time they received drawing and painting lessons from Elizabeth Yeats, sister of the artist Jack B. Yeats and poet William Butler Yeats.

In 1914 Jellett attended the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. On completing her studies and on the advice of a family friend, she moved to London at the age of 18 to study under the painter Walter Sickert. This marked the beginning of Jellett's journey to source and work under several influential tutors who would advocate modernist principles and ideals.

In 1920, while returning to Dublin for a brief period to paint, Jellett's talent and determination were recognised when she won the Taylor Art Prize and Scholarship. That same year, she exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy and the Oireachtas Exhibition, establishing herself as a professional artist.

In 1921, growing restless with the lack of vision that characterised the conservative Irish art scene, Jellett moved to Paris to join fellow Irish artist Evie Hone to study under the cubist painter André Lhote. This was her first introduction to cubism. Cubism was one of the most influential art movements of the twentieth century. Its inception evolved through the initial advice of Paul Cézanne, to explore *'nature in terms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone'*. The artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were two of the leading figures in the development and practice of cubism during its early stages.

After a year of attending classes in Lhote's studio, Jellett and Hone were ready to move on to pursue their exploration of non-representational art. They sought out Albert

Gleizes for his advice and tuition. Gleizes was the co-author of the seminal book *Du 'Cubisme'*, which detailed his early theories relating to the movement. This association would mark the start of a collaborative engagement between the three artists to study, research and establish principles and laws that would underpin a radical form of cubism.

In the early twentieth century, Irish artists and critics had limited exposure to art movements that were explorative and avant-garde in their focus and direction. Therefore, Jellett endured endless dismissive and severe criticism from her peers and critics in Ireland, who did not understand the histories, theories and rationales that underpinned her work. As an artist and a dedicated art educator, Jellett tirelessly *'lectured, taught, campaigned, argued and explained the principles of modern painting'*<sup>1</sup>. In her teaching of art, she remained objective and open, thereby facilitating her students to develop their own styles of painting.

Jellett believed that the artist was, first and foremost, a crafts person whose skill and creative talents could be utilised for the benefit of society. She was a prolific artist influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Her creative talents and skills diversified into many areas. These included theatre set design and cubist rug design. Jellett was commissioned by the Irish government to create and paint murals for the British Empire Exhibition in Glasgow in 1938 and the New York World's Fair in 1939. The designs demonstrated a unification of her fine-art and craft-based skills.

In her search for truth and vision as a painter, Mainie Jellett became a seminal figure and leader of the Irish modernist movement. In her lifetime, she exhibited extensively throughout Europe, where her work was highly respected and well received.

The Irish Exhibition of Living Art was founded in 1943 with a remit to liberate the visual arts in Ireland and promote modernist ideals. A year before her death, Jellett became its first chairperson.

**Abstract art is complex and often difficult for the viewer to understand. Consider your first reaction and opinion from a purely aesthetic response, examining the artist's use of line, colour, shape, pattern and texture.**

**Detail the words and descriptions that come to mind.**

**Why was white chosen to illuminate the central shape?**

**What do you think this shape might suggest?**

**Could a story unravel to tell us what the painting is about?**

**How are areas of the painting separated?**

**What element is introduced by the artist to connect the picture plane as a whole?**



**Title:** Composition with 3 Elements  
**Size:** 75 x 90 cm  
**Media:** Oil on canvas  
**Date:** c1935  
AIB Art Collection

**Artist's Comment:**

*'I believe that a work of art is something that is born in the mind and in the innermost emotions; it may lie dormant in the deep recesses of the artist's consciousness till the moment strikes for its release and realisation in material form...'*<sup>2</sup>

## AESTHETIC RESPONSE/ IMPACT

Jellett believed that the essence of art is born from an innate need to create. In abstract art, this could be realised through utilising the elements of colour, form and rhythm.

## FORMAL ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

**Composition with Three Elements** (c.1935) marks a period of time when Jellett practised synthetic cubism. In contrast to analytical cubism, synthetic cubism promotes a constructivist approach, whereby the artist builds up the image through elements of shape and form. Even though the subject matter is non-representational, the artist still adheres to a complex set of theories, rules and laws that govern its practice. Synthetic cubism was an experimental, decorative and textural exponent of cubism, through its use of collage and materials.

In analytical cubism, the artist views a subject from multiple angles and records each angle, as if you were to rotate around a head, documenting it from every position, placing each viewpoint side by side. The three-dimensional viewpoint is presented on a two-dimensional surface, hence the distortion of a realistic presented form.

Jellett described the division between the two forms of cubism as '*Cubists who work from natural forms as their basis and those who work from form born in their own mind*'<sup>2</sup>.

In **Composition with 3 Elements**, geometric patterns and dotted surfaces break up angular and linear shapes. Cubism rejects the traditional, formal elements and principles of perspective and composition. Shapes overlap and seem to pivot and rotate. As you explore the painting, your eye is directed back to a central shape.

Jellett also believed in the spiritual power and essence of colour. Her selection of colours was chosen with meticulous precision to ensure a harmonious flow and symbolic resonance within her work.

## SUBJECT/THEMES/ CONTEXT

Throughout her life as an artist, Mainie Jellett always emphasised the importance of observing and understanding nature. Even when her work was non-representational, the patterns and colours that she used within her compositions sought to replicate the harmony, balance and rhythm of nature.

As a young art student, the subject matter that Jellett explored was predominantly figurative painting – portraits and studies of family members. Under the tuition of the painters William Orpen and Walter Sickert, she progressed to concentrating on large-scale nude painting, demonstrating mastery in both draughtsmanship and composition.

In her later years, Jellett detailed how her work had evolved to focus on three specific areas. Firstly, there was a concentration on non-representational painting, derived from an emotional connection with nature or an experience. Work such as **Sea Rhythm** (1939) exemplifies Jellett's ability and skill as a colourist. Tonal swirls of blues and greens interspersed with white emulate the rhythmic pattern of water in perpetual motion.

Secondly, Jellett's work was based on biblical themes, as she herself was a religious and spiritual person. She was influenced by the work of the early Renaissance artist Fra Angelico, celebrated for his beautiful frescos, which gave an emotive and serene quality to religious themes. Jellett's 'compositions', as many of her religious paintings were entitled, contain figurative elements, often presented in ambiguous, non-representational, symbolic ways, such as **Abstract Composition** (c.1935), housed in the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.

**Although Jellett's subject matter is abstracted, can you make a connection to how she may have been influenced by the stylised way in which the figures are presented in the illuminated manuscripts?**

**Recall how biblical figures are presented in *The Book of Kells* or *The Book of Durrow*.**

**Abstract Composition** is one of Jellett's religious works. The title gives you no information as to the narrative of the painting.

Finally, Jellett's work focused on landscape, although this marked a return to a semi-representational style. The subject matter was stylised, influenced by the artist's interest in Oriental art.

**Examine the painting closely. Can you identify the figures within the composition?**

**What colours do your eyes focus on first?**

**Why do you think that specific colours were chosen in certain areas of the painting?**

**What do you think the linear arcs, seen in the centre and to the right of the composition, might signify?**



Title: **Abstract Composition**  
Size: 104 x 81.5cm  
Media: Oil on Canvas  
Date: 1935  
Presented by the friends of the National  
Collection of Ireland; Collection of  
Crawford Art Gallery, Cork

## STYLE/ DEVELOPMENT

In *Mainie Jellett—The Artist's Vision*, she recalls how her painting style evolved throughout her artistic career<sup>2</sup>. Each stage of development was connected to the influential tutors who she sought out to work alongside.

While attending the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, Jellett was tutored by the renowned Irish artist William Orpen. His reputation, stature and experience as one of the leading Irish artists of that time shaped the direction, style and teaching of the school. Orpen instilled a mastery of draughtsmanship in his students' work, evident in Jellett's early style of painting.

## PROCESS/MATERIALS/ TECHNIQUES

As an artist, Mainie Jellett excelled in her technical ability and use of media, which included watercolours, gouache and oils. The starting point for her early representational work always derived from observational studies – recording objects and people from life. This was a process of working to which she adhered throughout her artistic career, even when her work was predominantly abstract.

When entering the beginning of her cubist phase, Jellett worked directly from a combination of observing a model and studying classical works of art. Through observation and intense examination, she studied the ways in which the subject matter was presented and composed on a canvas along geometric lines.

Under the direction of André Lhote, Jellett applied a process that reinterpreted and dismantled academic convention, documenting the subject matter from just one viewpoint. In the final stage, she applied experimental techniques to redefine how she presented the subject matter, simplifying its form into cubes, cylinders and cones.

Sketches and drawings created prior to a resolved painting document the meticulous process that Jellett undertook to gradually render a representational image into an abstract presentation of the subject matter. Her drawings of the Crucifixion, which later influenced *Abstract Composition*, demonstrate her exhaustive study of the subject matter. Her drawings experiment with composition, colour selection and where to position areas of light and dark. The first drawing, a representational study of the Crucifixion, is laid over the final abstract drawing to ensure that it remains true to the original composition.

## INFLUENCE AND INFLUENCES

Jellett's '*first revolution*' – a statement that she used to describe defining shifts in the direction and style of her art – began under the tuition of Walter Sickert in London. She stated that '*for the first time drawing and composition came alive to me*'<sup>2</sup>. The use of rapid brush strokes characterises this phase, in contrast to the controlled precision of her earlier style of painting. The watercolours produced during this period are experimental and fluid, capturing a gesture or an expression injected with a sense of immediacy.

Jellett's '*second revolution*' came as a result of her quest to understand and practise abstract art, beginning with the cubist painter André Lhote<sup>2</sup>. The cubist ideal and style to which Lhote adhered was analytical cubism. Although it was a conservative form of cubism, it gave Jellett her grounding and initial understanding of non-representational art. While working with Lhote, she was exposed to a more explorative environment and painting style than those of her past experience and teachings in Ireland and England.

Following on from this, Jellett entered her '*third revolution*' under the direction of Albert Gleizes<sup>2</sup>. This period of time defined her most radical exploration, in terms of stylistic development and practice, of non-representational art through the theories of synthetic cubism.

In her journey to fully comprehend non-representational art, Jellett often referenced early Irish-Celtic art as a defining influence. In her search for rhythmic harmony in her paintings, she made the connection between the Celtic arts' non-representational style, rhythmic linear elements and use of abstract shapes and forms.

In 1935 Jellett visited an exhibition of Chinese art at the Royal Academy in London, studying and observing its stylised calligraphic rendering of landscape. This had an influential and profound effect on her treatment of subject matter in later works. Jellett was impressed by the Chinese's fluid use of pattern and rhythm in their compositions. The Chinese artist's philosophy connected with Jellett's own thoughts on how rhythm is created and developed in a painting from the artist's direct observation and understanding of the laws of nature. A series of paintings entitled *Waterfall and Waves*, created around this period and exhibited in 1937 in the Dublin Painters' Gallery, demonstrates this stylised Oriental influence.

## PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE/ AUDIENCE

Cubism is a movement that compels its practitioners and audience to search for rhythmic patterns through the use of form, colour and composition. Mainie Jellett believed that rhythm is one of the basic principles underlying all the arts.

When she spoke of rhythm, Jellett was not referring to capturing the rhythm and movement of subject matter, she refers to how the artist composes the space so that the viewer's eye moves rhythmically through the picture plane, how the artist composes the idea and how that concept flows through the piece.

## STUDENT RESPONSE / TASK

The element of colour is of particular significance in Mainie Jellett's work. She spoke about the importance of colour in her painting and its ability to create harmony and rhythm.

- **This exhibition is called 'In Colour'. Why do you think that this title was selected?**
- **How do you think colour can create movement?**
- **What other artist in this exhibition uses colour in an interesting way?**
- **Detail the effect that the colour has on the mood and atmosphere of the painting that you choose.**

## LINKS

Look at the work of Alice Maher, which often focuses on identity and issue-based themes, concepts that were rarely explored in the work of her predecessors, like Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone.

- **Why do you think that the focus has shifted to explore work that is more personal and subjective, examining issues that specifically relate to women?**
- **Do you think that the same issues may have been of interest to Jellett and her contemporaries?**
- **How did Jellett push the boundaries within the context of the time that she practised as an artist?**

## GLOSSARY

**Arts and Crafts Movement:** This movement originated in England in the late 1800s and its influence spread throughout Europe. William Morris was one of the main figures associated with the movement, which advocated social reform, truth to materials and traditional craftsmanship. It stressed the importance of craftsmanship and skill in an effort to counteract the mass production of manufactured goods that were poor in quality and design.

**avant-garde:** In terms of art, this term refers to artists or work that is radical, innovative and experimental.

**modernism and modern art:** These terms encompass a wide variety of movements and theories that reject traditional, historical or academic styles of art. Modernism spans from impressionism to such movements as cubism, surrealism, pop art and abstract expressionism. Modern art refers to art created between the 1860s and 1970s.

## REFERENCES

1. Tipton, G. (ed.) *Mainie Jellett 1897–1944*. Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1991.
2. MacCarvill, E. (ed.) *Mainie Jellett—The Artist's Vision*. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press (W. Tempest) Ltd, 1958.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Crawford Art Gallery, Cork  
[www.crawfordartgallery.ie](http://www.crawfordartgallery.ie)

Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane  
[www.hughlane.ie](http://www.hughlane.ie)

# Patrick Collins

Patrick Collins was born in Dromore West, Co. Sligo, in 1910. The second of four children, Patrick's early life was characterised by several traumatic events, including the death of his brother, sister and father over a three-year period. Due to the ensuing financial pressures on the family, Collins was sent to the St Vincent De Paul Orphanage in Glasnevin, Dublin, at the age of 11 for the remainder of his schooling. On completion of his education, he took a position with the Irish Life Insurance Company, remaining there for 20 years.

Collins had originally hoped to pursue a career as a writer, turning his creative energies to writing poetry and articles that were published in the *Independent* newspaper. In his quest to tell his story, drawing and painting began to dominate his artistic output – the written word replaced by visual endeavours. Collins was a self-taught artist, having received limited formal training, including two sessions of evening classes at the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) and a brief period of study under George Collie of the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA).

A bohemian and charismatic character, Collins' obsession and drive to paint often led to a nomadic existence, searching for a studio in which to paint and relying on the generosity of friends and patrons. While working as an insurance clerk, he immersed himself in Dublin society, playing for Clontarf Rugby Club and riding horses on Dollymount Strand. It was through Collins' love of horses that he became acquainted with Mrs St Lawrence of Howth Castle, who offered him an opportunity to take up residence in the castle in order to enable him to paint. Collins settled in the turret of the castle and remained there for 11 years, a time characterised by a period of exploration. He created a large body of work that demonstrated his struggle to develop a cohesive and distinct style as a painter. The castle also became renowned as a haunt for a creative and bohemian set of writers and artists, who would party into the early hours of the morning.

In 1950 Collins exhibited three paintings in the Irish Exhibition of Living Art, marking the beginning of his career as a professional artist. In 1956 he had his first one-man show at the Ritchie Hendriks Gallery, exhibiting 30 paintings completed over a six-year period. Two years later, Collins' painting *Liffey Quayside* (1958), currently housed in the twentieth-century room of the National Gallery of Ireland, received the prestigious Guggenheim National Section Award for Ireland. He also exhibited with the RHA and in the Oireachtas Exhibition, where he received the Irish Landscape Prize.

Collins' lifelong partner and muse, Patricia, daughter Penelope and brother Vincent maintained a stable presence in his life, but at the age of 60, Collins made a bold and adventurous move to France without any personal or financial support.

The first few years in Paris were traumatic. The life of the starving artist became a reality. With the arrival of Patricia and Penelope two years later, Collins moved to Orne, in Normandy, affording him a more stable and focused environment, conducive to creating work. The resulting paintings were exhibited at the Tom Caldwell Galleries in Belfast and Dublin. In 1977 Collins returned to Ireland, and in 1981 he became a member of the Artists' Association of Ireland (Aosdána). He later received the accolade of Saoi, in 1987, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the visual arts in Ireland.

Several retrospectives took place in Cork, Belfast, Dublin and Collins' native Sligo, celebrating this seminal and influential painter during the last few years of his life. In 1988, Collins received an honorary Doctorate of Literature from Trinity College Dublin.

Patrick Collins is recognised by the public and critics alike as one of the greats of Irish painting. His work is instantly identifiable. His paintings record a landscape that documents the poetic, visceral imaginative quality, rather than the physical reality of the scene.

**Consider your first reaction and opinion on viewing the painting.**

**Detail the words and descriptions that come to mind.**

**If you did not read the title, what would you think the painting is about?**

**What compositional device has the artist used to draw you into the painting?**

**Where is the focal point in this painting?**

**Compare this painting to representational depictions of landscapes by artists in this exhibition. Which do you prefer and why?**



**Title:** Rain on the Moon  
**Size:** 81 x 88cm  
**Media:** Oil on canvas  
**Date:** 1981  
Arts Council Collection /  
An Chomhairle Ealaíon

**Artist's Comment:**  
*'You don't believe in the thing you are painting,  
you believe in the thing behind what you are  
painting; you destroy your object, yet you  
keep it.'*<sup>1</sup>

## FORMAL ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Take the time to look, examine and respond to the painting. Your initial focus may be on the scale (size) and medium (oil paint, watercolour, etc.) of the piece. The visual narrative (story) of the painting will unravel through your observation and inquiry of the artwork. Examine all the formal elements, such as composition, line, shape, colour, texture and form.

The subject matter that Collins depicted is often difficult for the viewer to identify, due to its abstract treatment. The viewer struggles to make out the image – it is not instantly understood. A prompt may be given by the title of the painting.

In *Rain on the Moon*, Collins captures the greyness and stillness of a scene through a muted colour palette: tinges of pinks and blues appear through the opaque white surface. Shapes and linear elements are placed along the horizontal and the vertical to compose the scene and direct the viewer. Through his unique treatment and understanding of the changing characteristics of Irish light, Collins creates an atmospheric, timeless quality in the scene. He records how the hazy and unpredictable nature of Irish light veils the landscape.

## SUBJECT/THEMES/ CONTEXT

Patrick Collins' landscapes are primarily influenced by his childhood memories of the rural surroundings in Co. Sligo. He approaches the landscape in a philosophical, ethereal way. He is not just depicting the land – he is also searching to capture the emotive memory and experience of a place. The landscapes go beyond the literal to present a dreamlike vision, an illusive quality, recalling how Collins felt as a child inhabiting the landscape. *'In Collins's work there is [a] constant and ambiguous shift between what is seen and what is known, what is present and what is absent, what is felt and what is remembered.'*<sup>2</sup>

The young Collins, according to his brother Vincent, was a wild, adventurous child, with a deep love of the unspoilt rural land. From an early age, he demonstrated an interest and fascination in observing and studying the surrounding countryside for hours on end. This sustained ability to observe and investigate the landscape, and the wildlife that inhabited the area, created a memory bank for the artist to utilise. Ultimately, it influenced the direction and subject matter of his paintings.

As an artist, Collins was constantly influenced by the fields, fishing harbours, stones, trees, animals and wildlife of the rural enclosures that were intrinsic to the Sligo landscape. He created a series of paintings focusing on the Irish blanket bogs.

**Why do you think the artist was drawn to create a series of work about the bogs?**

**Bogs often act as chambers to contain things. What might be found in a bog?**

In *Bogland* (1970) and *Bog Country* (1970), Collins explores their unique physicality through his application of paint. He captures their layered, smothering terrain with muted browns juxtaposed against shimmering yellows and greens. There is no sky or distant mountain visible. Collins has omitted all other aspects from the landscape to focus on the land itself.

In 1971 Collins left Ireland for France. His rationale was twofold: to escape Ireland and the insular atmosphere that prevailed, but also to be able to document the Irish landscape from an outsider's perspective.

Collins had a fascination with birds, a recurring subject matter to which he endlessly returned, identifying with their freedom. As a child, he observed birds for hours on end. He had a natural empathy and affinity with wildlife. He documented the birds as he had observed, experienced and remembered them, depicting them as living entities, caged, flying, feeding, nesting and hunting.

**Would you describe this painting as abstract or semi-abstract?**

**Can you locate the figures in the composition? Describe them.**

**Where do you think their journey may take them?**

**Is there a character from a story, song or poem that you would like to document in a drawing or painting?**

**How might you visualise that person?**

**In what way have they influenced you to create a piece of work around them?**



Birds had a metaphorical resonance for Collins. His daughter, Penelope, recalled his description of his experience at the St Vincent De Paul Orphanage – a suppressive, disciplined environment – likening it to a bird fed in a cage, but not allowed to fly<sup>3</sup>.

During the 1950s, Collins' paintings focused on religious themes, affording him the opportunity to bring figurative elements into his work. He embarked on a journey from Dublin to Donegal to study the depictions of the stations of the cross in various parish churches. The paintings are simplistic and childlike in their treatment of the figure, telling the story of the crucifixion of Christ. Once again, Collins focuses on the emotive element of the story through compositional devices, isolated figures, sparse backgrounds and limited colour to create an atmosphere and mood. One of his paintings, entitled *Crucifixion (After a Child's Drawing)* (1964), was a direct response to viewing his daughter Penelope's drawing of the scene, capturing a child's feelings and interpretation of the story.

Collins did a series of paintings focusing on the Travelling community, a subject matter that also preoccupied other Irish artists, such as Jack B. Yeats and Louis Le Brocqy. In *Travelling Tinkers* (1968), the figures are barely identifiable, emerging from a dewy mist on a horse and cart.

Collins had a particular affinity with the writer James Joyce. His painting *Stephen Hero* (1950) is a direct reference to Joyce's character Stephen Daedalus in *Ulysses*. This painting is not just a depiction of the character – as always, Collins goes beyond the literal interpretation. He brings Joyce's description of the scene and the character's inner thoughts alive in the viewer's mind. Like Joyce's writing, Collins' painting seeks out the hidden story. It is a complex study of the subject matter, bringing Joyce's language to life.

Title: *Travelling Tinkers*  
 Size: 60 x 75cm  
 Media: Oil on Board  
 Date: 1968  
 AIB Art Collection

## STYLE/ DEVELOPMENT

We follow the development of Collins' style of painting over his lifetime as an artist, evolving from a purely representational treatment of subject matter to an abstract one.

The year 1960 marked the beginning of a short-lived expressionistic phase, characterised by Collins' fluid, gestural application of paint. This was followed by a period of transition in which his style became more contained, controlled and less expressive. During this time, Collins' work focused on figurative elements, exploring biblical, literary and mythological themes.

By 1965, Collins' work demonstrated a clarity and maturity in style, a time when the artist entered a romantic phase. Art critics recognised how his work, similar to that of his predecessor Jack B. Yeats, had developed from its representational origins to take the viewer beyond the surface of the painting. In doing so, Collins directs the viewer to identify the buried histories of the Celtic imagination that underpin the work. Through his innovative use of light and colour he searches for, and encapsulates, the truth of the Irish landscape.

Dr Frances Ruane, the author of *Patrick Collins*, a book documenting his life and work, describes him as an individualist<sup>1</sup>. His work is instantly identifiable.

## PROCESS/MATERIALS/ TECHNIQUES

Patrick Collins could be described as a *'painter's painter'*, recognised and admired for his technical mastery of oils. His daughter, Penelope, described his process of working as explorative, hands-on, experimenting with materials and implements with which to paint<sup>3</sup>. Essentially, Collins honed his craft through this experimentation. In his studio he worked obsessively and meticulously for hours, pacing up and down, stepping back and forth, examining the painting and applying layers of dry, grainy paint in his process of working. He often made reference to the fact that there were many paintings underneath the surface that veiled the final painting.

Collins painted predominantly in oils on board, changing to canvas when he moved to France, as this material was easier to ship home. Constantly aware, observing his surroundings, the paintings that Collins executed were his way of communicating and connecting with his surroundings.

## INFLUENCE AND INFLUENCES

Patrick Collins never alluded to being stylistically influenced by any other artist. The writer Aidan Higgins, a friend and confidant of Collins', explained the artist's connection to other painters as a *'philosophical rather than a stylistic influence'*<sup>1</sup>. Collins had no interest in trying to recreate and apply the techniques of a particular artist in the use of composition, colour, line or shape.

Collins did admire and respect a diverse selection of artists, such as Paul Cézanne, Jackson Pollock and Wassily Kandinsky. Within an Irish context, he was inspired by the work of Paul Henry, Jack B. Yeats and his contemporaries Nano Reid and Camille Souter. Collins viewed these artists as courageous and pioneering in their search to push the boundaries of what can be defined as art. By viewing the work of these artists, Collins gained a sense of hope and encouragement to pursue and create work that was inspirational and, above all, specific to him as an artist.

Collins' early schooling, at the Model School attached to Summerhill College in Sligo, fostered and nurtured in him a love of literature. Through his painting, Collins strove to celebrate Ireland's literary tradition, to be as visually innovative in his painting style and treatment as Irish writers were with the written word. He hoped to create a visual narrative within his paintings that would connect with the viewer in the same way as writers such as James Joyce, William Butler Yeats and John Millington Synge had captured the public's imagination.

In the documentary *Patrick Collins: Through Sligo Eyes*, Dr Frances Ruane speaks about how Collins' art drew from an innate local Irish context of landscape and people, but the work could also be received on an international level<sup>3</sup>. The documentary also provides us with anecdotal recollections. Architect Joan Trimble describes how her husband brought the writer Brendan Behan, his father and Collins back to their house. Collins made a sketch of Behan sleeping. Drawn in a matter of minutes, it aptly captured Behan's distinctive character and mannerisms. Collins threw it aside on completion – a moment captured.

## In Rain on the Moon:

Describe the surface quality of Collins' landscape. How is this achieved?

What alternative materials/implements can you use when applying paint to a canvas?

Can you recall images of places that you have visited or are significant to you?

Can you remember the colours, smells and sounds associated with those places?

How could you visually describe these memories?

## PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE/AUDIENCE

Collins shows his mastery in his ability to evoke a feeling of what the subject may be. He does this through the use of formal elements such as colour, shape, form and textural marks. His painting absorbs the richness and physicality of the land. Viewing his paintings is a highly sensory experience. In his landscapes he captures what it is like to touch the ground, the grass, the stones and trees. Above all, Collins captures the feeling of discovery. He affords the viewer with an experience, to feel the mist, the damp, and the cold of the surrounding scene through his textural application of paint and use of colour.

*'He feels his country deeply, its loneliness, its eeriness, its constant motion through changing light.'*<sup>2</sup>

## STUDENT RESPONSE/TASK

When creating a piece of artwork, an artist often draws heavily on his or her memory (as opposed to drawing from life), documenting the experience and emotive element of being within a space through this recall.

- **Use your memory:** first observe a painting of your choice, then turn around with your back to the painting, and visualise what you have observed through a quick sketch.
- **Compare your drawing with your friend's.** Did you record the same things?

## LINKS

Landscape is a recurring theme in many of the works exhibited in the 'In Colour' exhibition. Both Patrick Collins and Mainie Jellett have explored landscape in an abstract, non-representational way, but their treatment of the subject and painting styles differ greatly. Compare and contrast their different approaches and working methods: Collins' starting point is emotive and expressive; Jellett, in contrast, could be seen as strategic and technical, yet she speaks of the importance of rhythm, harmony and movement. Compare and contrast their colour choices, use of media, compositions and what types of landscape were of interest to them.

## REFERENCES

1. Ruane, F. *Patrick Collins*. Dublin: The Arts Council, 1982.
2. O'Doherty, B. *'Ambiguities: The Art of Patrick Collins'*, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 50:197 (1961), 51-6; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30099164>.
3. *Patrick Collins: Through Sligo Eyes*, Sean O'Mordha, dir. (RTÉ, 10 March 2009) [film].

## GLOSSARY

**abstract art:** This term refers to art that has no representational pictorial reference. The artist Wassily Kandinsky created the first abstract work of art in watercolour.

**expressionistic phase:** Expressionism relates to a style of art, as opposed to a movement, originating in Germany at the start of the twentieth century. Subject matter was presented in a very subjective way that expressed the artist's innermost experiences, as opposed to the pure representation of the object. The artist exaggerated the use of colour or distorted the subject matter to create an emotive mood or atmosphere.

**juxtaposed:** To place side by side, often to contrast and compare.

**retrospective:** In terms of art, this term relates to an exhibition that celebrates and looks back on an artist's career through a varied selection of his or her work. Often the work is presented in chronological order (a timeline) to demonstrate changes in styles and themes.

**romantic phase:** Romanticism began in the late eighteenth century in Europe. It was a movement that valued emotions as an important source from which to create artwork. Themes focused on the human experiences of tragedy, horror and awe, which promoted the imaginative, irrational presentation of subject matter. Romanticism is closely linked to, and supportive of, nationalist ideals.

**Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA):** An artist-based institution. The members of the RHA are elected by their fellow academicians, becoming associate members before they receive full membership. It holds a prestigious annual exhibition and is primarily funded by the Arts Council. The academy possesses a large and extensive collection of artwork showcasing an amazing 'who's who' in Irish art.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA)  
[www.royalhibernianacademy.ie](http://www.royalhibernianacademy.ie)

Tom Caldwell Gallery  
[www.tomcaldwellgallery.com](http://www.tomcaldwellgallery.com)

Higgins, A. *Balcony of Europe*. London: Calder and Boyars, 1972.  
*The author, Aidan Higgins, draws on his lifelong friendship with Patrick Collins in creating the fictitious character Dan Ruttle, who is the narrator of the novel.*

# Martin Gale

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Born in England in 1949, at the age of one Martin Gale's family moved to Ireland. His father was a jockey, and so the family moved around the country, depending on his work. They always lived in rural settings, which may explain Gale's fascination with the rural landscape. He was exposed to art at a young age: his father painted well as a hobby, as did his grandmother. The Irish artist Charles Lamb had stayed with Gale's mother's family in Galway on many occasions to paint, and a number of his paintings have remained in the family.

During the 1950s, Gale and his brother attended Newbridge College, where he was taught by the sculptor Henry Flanagan. Gale described it as a '*colourless*' boarding school, and so the rebellious spirit of the 1960s came as a welcome release to the teenager, who decided that the most fun place to be would be art college <sup>1</sup>.

Gale attended the National College of Art & Design (NCAD), in Dublin, from 1968 to 1973. However, Gale was disappointed with how conservative the college's approach to art education was, with emphasis being placed on an academic style and traditional Irish landscape artists. It was at this time that Gale became interested in the styles and techniques of pop art, while retaining respect for the skill and discipline required to produce more academic style, figurative work or landscapes. He is still an advocate for the discipline of drawing as the foundation of the artist's skill set.

Gale represented Ireland at the Paris Biennale in 1980. He became a member of the Artists' Association of Ireland (Aosdána) in 1982 and an associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) in 1992. He has had numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout Ireland, Europe and America, and his work is collected internationally. Gale lives in Co. Kildare, where he also has a studio. He is represented by the Taylor Galleries in Dublin.

**What is your first reaction to the painting?**

**Consider what you are thinking as you see the work for the first time and make a note of the words that come to mind.**

**Does the work make you feel a certain way? Why?**

**What is the tone/mood of the work and how does the artist create this?**

**Is this a real or imagined place?**

**What do you think of the title? Is it too obvious, or might the artist be trying to suggest something else?**

**If every painting tells a story, what do you think is happening in this particular piece of work?**



**Title:** Glass House  
**Size:** 92 x 95cm  
**Media:** Oil on Canvas  
**Date:** 1981  
AIB Art Collection

**Artist's Comment:**

*'Before I left college, I had developed a kind of vision, a hand-writing of my own so to speak, which made my paintings immediately recognisable as mine. I would not like to lose that personal quality.'*<sup>2</sup>



Title: **Waking Up**  
 Size: 122 x 152cm  
 Media: Oil on Canvas  
 Date: 1986  
 AIB Art Collection

## FORMAL ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Painted in 1981, **Glass House** demonstrates Gale's linear style of depicting detail. Much attention is paid to surface quality and texture, and his technique results in a smooth finish. Gale's careful observation of tone creates dramatic, almost cinematic, light and shadow, which often results in a dreamlike or romantic atmosphere. The artist presents us with a version of reality, we often see elements of decay in his work, his scenes are not idealised.

Within Gale's work, we see an exploration of pictorial space. Often, elements are placed directly in the foreground of the composition so as to connect immediately with the viewer. Slowly we notice more intriguing details, drawing us further into the picture plane and off into the distance.

In **Glass House** we are drawn into the composition with the placement of vertical linear shapes on the left, on to the structure in the centre of the picture plane. We cannot see inside the green house, as we might expect. The door is boarded over and the interior is obscured by the overgrown plants inside. Adding to the air of mystery, the female figure in the background gazes out of the composition at something in the distance. Like a good story, our attention is first caught with an interesting setting or character whose journey or story we are compelled to follow to the end. Gale sets the scene and suggests the starting point, but leaves enough mystery to allow the viewer to complete the story.

## SUBJECT/THEMES/CONTEXT

*'All painting is autobiographical, really. A good painting will always tell you something about the person who painted it'<sup>2</sup>.*

Gale often uses his family, friends or neighbours as subjects in his paintings out of practical necessity, but also because some aspect of their character, costume or stance catches his interest. His children and their changing personalities as they grew up became powerful forces within his work, so memory and perception are a common theme. **Waking Up**, painted in 1986, is a large-scale piece and one of Gale's most famous works. We see a dark, dense forest in the fore and middle grounds. Through a gap in the trees, we are drawn to a green, sunlit landscape in the distance.

### Could this be a symbol or metaphor?

Within the forest are Gale's two children. The girl moves away from us toward the light, but the boy looks directly out at us from the foreground. Some would say that the image is creepy or has an uneasy atmosphere.

This work was painted after Gale's marriage broke up, and may reflect his uncertainty about raising two children alone.

By the 1980s, Gale really began to explore the personalities of his subjects and their personal stories. The human figure is one of his major themes, but by the mid-/late 1980s, he wanted to move away from these intensely personal subjects, fearing that his work had become too introspective.

**Are we seeing how unsettled and anxious the artist was in the child's face?**

**Is his expression a mirror to how the artist was feeling?**



How has the artist's surroundings influenced his subject matter?

Have you ever been anywhere, where there is absolutely no trace of man or anything man made?

## STYLE/DEVELOPMENT

Gale says that his work has loosely fallen into three periods so far. While in college, he was mainly interested in figurative painting. After leaving college, in 1973, he recalls painting '*urbanised landscapes*' until he moved to Co. Wicklow, when he really began to understand the rural landscape, explore its complexities and observe its constantly changing state <sup>2</sup>.

During his time in Co. Wicklow, Gale began to use the landscape as a place to create narratives. He brought together his two interests, the figure and the landscape, by focusing on the relationship between man and his environment, how we exist within the landscape, and what impact we have upon it. Note that we almost always catch a hint of human presence within Gale's landscapes – if not by the inclusion of a figure itself, then with some piece of machinery or architecture. Man's footprint on the land is always visible.

In 1980 Gale moved to Kildare. Again, his work began to focus on the human story.

Gale's work is in a constant state of change and development. He always tries to introduce new elements into his work and explore new techniques and subject matter. By the 1990s, Gale felt that he was being pigeonholed simply as a landscape artist who had nothing else to say. He began to explore the still-life genre. This, of course, meant completely rethinking his style of composition, with clearly defined areas of fore-, middle and backgrounds. Close-up subjects often need to be considered in a much smaller pictorial plane.

Gale's style of painting is often referred to as photorealist, but he refutes this categorisation of his work. He is not interested in simply reproducing an illusion of a scene, and is instead more interested in presenting a version of a scene to the viewer, who can fill in the blanks or read between the lines. Gale feels that his depiction of a scene is far more emotionally connected than that of photorealism, which he describes as '*a very unemotional, disengaged way of working*' <sup>2</sup>.

Gale's style is much more dynamic, with layers of composition that draw the viewer in deeper and deeper to discover what is at the heart of the work. He has described the process of painting each piece as a new journey.

Title: *Hardlands*  
Size: 122 x 183cm  
Media: Oil on Canvas, Triptych  
Date: 2002  
Courtesy of the artist



## PROCESS/MATERIALS/TECHNIQUES

Gale's process, like that of many artists, is rooted in the tradition and discipline of drawing. He believes that *'great painting comes from great drawing'*<sup>2</sup>.

As part of his process, Gale also relies on the camera when researching and investigating subjects and landscapes. He can take up to 20 photos of a site or source. He photographs anything that interests him, from a derelict house to a farmer in a field. These images may be used immediately or stored away for years, referred to if they suit a particular composition. He sketches and *'doodles'* constantly, and then he builds a narrative around those elements<sup>1</sup>.

Gale's still-life works are drawn from real life. His process involves careful planning and preparation before he begins painting: choosing, arranging, editing and then lighting the objects suitable for inclusion. Interestingly, he is often unsatisfied with his paintings when he looks back at them.

As part of his problem-solving process, Gale often uses watercolours to complete small-scale versions of a composition. He uses the medium to work out colour and composition, and once satisfied, he draws a detailed sketch on the canvas. Sometimes his watercolours end up being finished pieces in their own right.

Many of Gale's paintings begin by underpainting the canvas in yellow or burnt sienna, which gives a depth and richness to the colours layered on top. As he completes his large oil works, he constantly makes decisions about composition and scale, editing as he works. Gale usually works in a square format, about three-foot

**Do you think that artists are always looking for ideas and subjects?**

**When it comes to your own work, are you ever critical in positive or negative ways?**

Title: **Rook**  
Size: 25 x 25cm  
Media: Charcoal on paper  
Date: 2009  
Courtesy of the artist

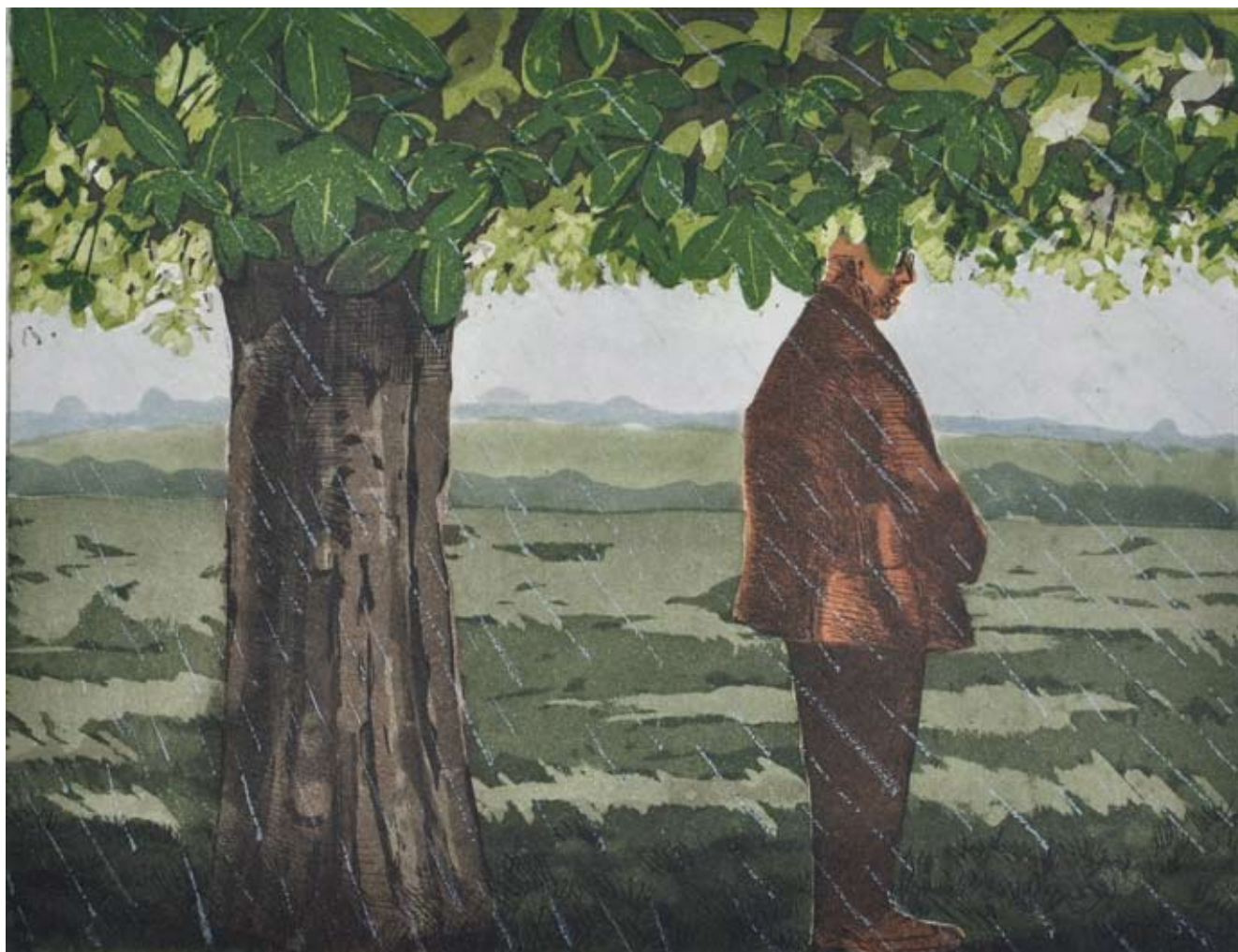


**Do you look around  
your environment  
for inspiration? What  
influences you?**

square, and can take anything from one to three weeks to complete an oil painting. Gale has a studio beside his home in Kildare, and while he sketches on site/location, he always returns to the ordered environment of his studio to begin a painting. His precise organisation and set-up is reflected in the careful and highly finished quality of his work. A work is only finished when he puts his signature on it.

Gale is constantly attempting to move his work in new directions, whether that be stylistically or technically. He is quoted as saying, '*I believe my best work is ahead of me*'<sup>2</sup>. More recently, he has experimented with the discipline of fine-art printing as an expressive technique.

Title: *Walking in Clouds*  
Size: 40 x 50cm  
Media: Watercolour on Paper  
Date: 2006  
Courtesy of the artist



## INFLUENCE AND INFLUENCES

While at the National College of Art & Design (NCAD), Gale shared a studio space with some of the most well-known Irish painters of our time. Brian Maguire, Charles Tyrell and Mick Mulcahy were his classmates. The creative atmosphere of the group instilled a drive in all of them to succeed as working artists. The 1970s were a very tumultuous time in NCAD, with students rebelling and striking over the outdated traditions being forced upon them, and this period was a major turning point in Irish art.

The pop-art movement has also clearly influenced Gale. There is a graphic quality to the way he depicts his subject matter. Elements appear in sharp focus, and while at first glance they appear photorealistic, there is a stylised aspect to his imagery. Strong outlines, highly saturated colours and often-dramatic light give his work a dreamlike quality. Gale admires the work of American realist painters, such as Edward Hopper and

Andrew Wyeth, and comparisons can be drawn between their styles and Gale's. His recent still-life works share similarities with the iconic images of pop artists like Andy Warhol: simple everyday items depicted as important objects, centrally placed within the composition, become larger-than-life icons. Gale has also cited the British artists David Hockney and Lucian Freud as those by whom he has been influenced.

Gale draws on some of the great realist painters of the past for inspiration. He admires Rembrandt's portraits and Velázquez's eye for detail, showing his interest in traditional historic artists and their skill in representation.

It seems that Gale's painting is instinctual and an intensely personal response to the world around him. This is how so many artists work – they are simply inspired by what they see, feel and experience, and they want to capture that moment or comment on it. This instinctual response is evident in Gale's own words about becoming an artist: *'I think art picks you, rather than you picking it'*<sup>1</sup>.

Title: **Sheltering Man**  
Size: 18 x 23cm  
Media: Etching & Aquatint  
Date: 2009  
Courtesy of the artist

Do you think all artists consider their audience when creating a work of art?

Does your age, nationality, and background determine how you view and respond to a piece of art work?

## PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE/ AUDIENCE

The viewer's perception is the essential, final component to Gale's work. We complete the story as we view the painting. He has said that he is interested in people's responses to his work. He cares what they say or think about it.

## STUDENT RESPONSE/ TASK

Using *Glass House* as a starting point, draw from your own personal experiences, memories, ideas and feelings, and write an original essay/story inspired by the painting. The best-selling novel and film *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was a fictional story inspired by Jan Vermeer's famous painting of the same name.

## LINKS

Look at the work of Martin Gale and compare it to that of Robert Ballagh. While both artists create narratives within their work, they do it in very different ways. Gale subtly suggests a story and allows the viewer to interpret it, while Ballagh presents us with a language of symbols that we must decipher. Look around the 'In Colour' exhibition and read the narratives/stories of the other paintings that catch your attention.

## GLOSSARY

**biennale:** This term is Italian for 'every other year' and can be used to describe any event that happens every two years. It is most commonly used within the art world to describe an international exhibition of contemporary art.

**figurative:** This term particularly refers to paintings and sculptures that are clearly derived from real-object sources and are, by definition, representational. The term 'figurative art' is often taken to mean art that represents the human figure, or even an animal, and though this is often the case, it is not necessarily so. Since the arrival of abstract art, the term 'figurative' has been used to refer to any form of modern art that retains strong references to things as they appear in real life.

**genre:** This term is derived from the French word meaning 'kind' or 'sort'. It is the term for a category of art in which the works are all based on the same set of criteria.

**photorealism:** The term refers to a style or movement that originated in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This genre of painting is based on using the camera and photographs to gather information to create paintings that appear to be very realistic, like the original photographs.

**pop art:** An art movement that emerged in the mid-1950s in Britain and in the late 1950s in the United States, characterised by themes and techniques drawn from popular culture, such as advertising, comic books and ordinary everyday cultural objects. Andy Warhol is one of the most famous artists of the pop-art genre.

## REFERENCES

1. Martin Gale/ *Artist Stories* (Fingal County Council Arts Office, 2009) [film]; [vimeo.com/6302001](https://vimeo.com/6302001).

2. O'Regan, J. (ed.) *Martin Gale*. Gandon Editions, 1995.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Fenton Art Gallery  
[www.artireland.net](http://www.artireland.net)

Martin Gale's Website  
[www.martingale.ie](http://www.martingale.ie)

Taylor Galleries  
[www.taylorgalleries.ie](http://www.taylorgalleries.ie)

# Robert Ballagh



Robert Ballagh was born in Dublin in 1943. He is an only child. He attended school in Blackrock College, where he often found himself in trouble for his failure to conform to the social conventions as set out by the school's ethos. He went on to study architecture in DIT Bolton Street and worked as an engineering draughtsman.

Ballagh became disillusioned with architecture in Ireland. He felt that the focus of the industry was on financial gain and that no consideration was being given to the terrible living conditions of many people throughout the country at the time.

After three years in college, Ballagh dropped out to become a full-time musician. He was the bass guitarist with the band The Chessmen. He identified strongly with the rebellious spirit of the new rock-and-roll music movement. During the 1960s, the band travelled all over the country, north and south, playing in small town and village venues. This is when Ballagh became interested in the divisions and inequalities that he saw throughout the country, especially in rural areas and in Northern Ireland. These issues and themes frequently resurface in his artwork.

After a short time as a postman, Ballagh began painting in 1967, and was chosen to represent Ireland at the Paris Biennale in 1969. He also had his first exhibition in 1969, in the Brown Thomas Gallery.

Due to the limited art market and patronage in Ireland in the late 1960s and 1970s, Ballagh found it difficult to sell his paintings. He preferred to work in large scale, and at the time, most of the buyers were private individuals looking for smaller-scale works for their homes or domestic settings. With his marriage in 1967 and the birth of his daughter in 1968, the need to earn a living was very important, so he began accepting work as a graphic designer.

Ballagh is very comfortable with his dual roles as artist and designer. He believes in the artist's right to work and earn a living, and seems less concerned with the stereotype of the struggling, genius artist. This stance reflects his socialist political beliefs. Ballagh has also expressed his interest in experiencing the very different processes of working in the two disciplines: as a painter, he works alone in his studio from 8.30 a.m. to 6 p.m., while as a designer, he often has to work in a collaborative way.

Over the 40 years of his career, Ballagh has exhibited all over the world, including New York and Japan. He has produced over 70 stamps for An Post. He also produced the final series of Irish banknotes before the introduction of the euro, and has completed numerous murals, posters and prints.

Ballagh's portfolio of work has broadened to include the design of various theatre sets, most notably for Riverdance in 1994, and productions of Samuel Beckett's play Endgame in 1991 and Oscar Wilde's play Salome in 1998, both at the Gate Theatre in Dublin. In 2003 he designed the stage for the opening ceremony of the Special Olympics in Croke Park.

Ballagh was the first chairman of the Artists' Association of Ireland (Aosdána) when it was founded in 1981. He is insistent that the artist should be, or could be, an ordinary man, not a privileged individual separate or above society, and he says that his biggest concern is that of conveying or communicating ideas.

The year 2003 saw a major retrospective exhibition of the artist's work in the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA), in Dublin.

Title: Fifty Punt Note  
Date: 1996  
Courtesy of the artist

Describe what you see.

Consider your first reaction/opinion to the painting.

Does the piece remind you of anything?

Consider photographs, theatre sets, posters or book covers.

Now reflect on the sensory experience of viewing the artwork in the exhibition.



**Title:** Sheridan Le Fanu  
**Size:** 177 x 116cm  
**Media:** Oil and Acrylic on Canvas  
**Date:** 1976  
Arts Council Collection /  
An Chomhairle Ealaíon

**Artist's Comment:**

*'I plan a painting quite like how an architect designs a building. I use tracing paper, drawing boards and set squares ... you put your heart and soul and creative energy into it, but you are always riddled with self-doubt.'*<sup>1</sup>

## FORMAL ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Consider all the decisions that the artist made in order to create **Sheridan le Fanu** (format, scale, medium, technique, composition, colour, line, subject matter and imagery).

**How do these formal elements impact upon your experience? Consider them one by one.**

Look at the artist's choice of colour palette: muted tones are used in the foreground of the painting to create a sombre atmosphere, in contrast to the interior landscape, which is light and inviting. The old mansion on the distant horizon is brightly depicted, drawing our eye inwards, however, when we look closely, we can see the house is in ruins.

**How does Ballagh draw us into the painting?**

Look at the composition. Ballagh utilises many visual devices (clear eye lines, perspective and scale) to encourage the viewer to look right into the image.

**What does an open window symbolise?**

**Are we spying on the subject or is he spying on us?**

**Who is the man in the painting?**

**What can we guess about him by looking at this painting?**

The Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–73) was a reclusive and secretive character. He wrote psychological mystery novels, or horror novels, from his Georgian house in Merrion Square, and he always wrote at night by candlelight. Le Fanu was one of the first and most successful horror writers of the Victorian period. His most famous novel, *Uncle Silas*, was published in 1864.

## SUBJECT/THEMES/CONTEXT

Robert Ballagh has always been concerned with social and political issues, in particular that of inequality, violence and terrorism in Northern Ireland. He seems compelled to paint about these concerns. He considers himself a republican, but does not support violence or terrorist activity. He is keenly concerned with injustice.

As a comment about war, violence and conflict, Ballagh produced a remarkable series of pop-art-style paintings based on famous European masterpieces. In 1969–70 he produced a large acrylic canvas inspired by Eugène Delacroix's famous 1830 painting of *Liberty Leading the People*, a comment on the French Revolution. Ballagh's painting is an eight-foot by six-foot monochromatic statement: all the figures are outlined with harsh black lines and the paint is applied to the canvas with a very opaque and flat technique, making the image almost comic-book in style.

Ballagh's most famous painting in this series is based on the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya's powerful painting *The Third of May 1808*, about the killing of innocent people during the Spanish Civil War. In Ballagh's five-foot by six-foot painting, from 1970, we again see the artist reducing the colour palette to black, white and grey, with the three primary colours used to create a strong graphic effect and pop-art style. He also introduces tertiary browns to this work. All the shapes are simplified, made graphic and flat, and the central figure has his arms outstretched, in cruciform.

Ballagh says of the series, *'I decided to paint some pictures that would directly comment on the Northern situation ... and started to research historically to find artists who had tried to do the same sort of thing. ... I felt that their pictures were so strong, so real that I didn't want to interfere with them in any structural way. I wanted, however, to reinforce the content. So I adapted them the way I did into what looks almost poster style, simplified the images but didn't stray very far from the composition of the originals. ... The lines that I drew were kept a constant thickness so that they would not have any personal expressive quality. In other words, could never be gestural or in any way romantic.'*<sup>2</sup>

By utilising this pop-art style, Ballagh hoped to highlight the issues of war, violence and injustice to the younger generation, and to make his statements accessible to the general public.



Title: **The Third of May – After Goya**  
Size: 165 x 220cm  
Media: Acrylic on Canvas  
Date: 1970  
Courtesy of the artist

## STYLE/DEVELOPMENT

Robert Ballagh's interest in politics and social reform is well known, and it has often influenced the subject matter and imagery of his work. In 1979 he produced a set of stamps, one of which commemorates Pádraig Pearse and features imagery from Ballagh's version of *Liberty Leading the People*.



*Padraig Mac Piarais (Patriot, Rebel & leader of the 1916 rising), 1979, centenary commemorative stamp, courtesy of the GPO.*

Ballagh's style has been described as photorealistic. We can also see how he has been influenced by the styles and techniques of pop art. Often, when we look at his work, we can see a coming together of his skills and interests in the various art disciplines that he has explored. When we consider his training as an architect and work as a set designer, it is not surprising, then, that Ballagh often uses architectural or decorative features within, or to frame, his compositions. His work is representational – that is, we can clearly see and identify the subjects and objects within the piece.

Ballagh's interest in film, photography and literature is evident in so many of his works. He often paints writers and thinkers who he admires, and almost always includes narrative elements – his pictures can be read to reveal their stories.

Throughout his career, Ballagh's style moved from pop art towards photorealism. We can see this in his series of portraits of Irish literary and musical figures, like in *Sheridan Le Fanu*. In the 1979 painting *Portrait of Bernadette Greevy*, Ballagh creates a shrine to the singer. A red velvet curtain is drawn back to reveal the composition, which contains her photos, music-hall programmes and records. It could also be considered somewhat of an installation piece, as the image contains a tape recorder. When the viewer stands in front of the picture, a sensor is activated and a Bernadette Greevy song plays out loudly, filling the gallery space with music.

**What do you think about a painter using sound or other sensory effects within a work?**

## PROCESS/MATERIALS/TECHNIQUES

Ballagh almost always uses the camera as part of his process. He doesn't make any decisions about composition on the spot. Instead he gathers as much reference material as possible, then sketches from his photos, images and gathered resources. Sometimes he sketches on acetate so he can manipulate and rearrange the composition until he is satisfied with the arrangement of imagery.

Recently Ballagh has experimented with using the camera not just to document and research, but to produce finished work. In 2003 he created the photomontage *Still Crazy after all these Years*, which he used to develop a rotund oil painting of the same title in 2004.

Ballagh draws on his training as an architect when planning and executing a work. He often uses materials and techniques more associated with design disciplines than fine-art painting, like tracing paper, drawing boards and set squares. These techniques produce his distinctive precise style. He often uses house-painters' rollers or sponges to apply the paint to the canvas to achieve visual texture, using tape to mask the edges of shapes. This meticulous planning and preparation can result in a very tedious process, and Ballagh can take up to two months to complete a piece.

One of Ballagh's early jobs in the art world was to assist the Irish artist Michael Farrell with a large-scale commission. Because of this experience and the lengthy technical processes he employs, Ballagh advocates a return to the tradition of the artist's apprentice. He used two students from the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) as assistants while painting *Sheridan Le Fanu*, which took a lot of trust. His wife, Betty, also often assists him in his studio.

**Would you consider a job as an artist's assistant?**

**What kind of tasks do you think that would include?**

Ballagh, like many contemporary artists, experiments with a variety of media and techniques. In his paintings he mostly works on canvas, often on a number of smaller canvases arranged together to create an overall format. This is most notable in his seminal painting of the socialist politician Dr Noel Browne, painted in 1985. In this work, we see Ballagh bringing elements from within the painting out into the gallery space, placing pebbles and books in front of the work so as to blur the lines between the viewer and the subject. Ballagh arranges six square canvases in a crucifix shape to create a life-sized tribute to Dr Browne.

**Do you think the crucifix shape is symbolic?**

This technique may also be a reference to Gothic and early Renaissance artists who worked in triptych or multi-panel altarpieces. Ballagh uses both oil and acrylic paints, depending on the subject matter and desired effect, with acrylics giving bolder, more opaque tonal qualities. He has been paying homage to the great masters of Western art throughout his career. We can see how he painstakingly creates perspective and visual illusions, influenced by the images of the great Renaissance paintings that he saw in art books as a student.



When you look at  
a piece of art, can  
you see elements  
of the artist's life  
within the work?

Title: *Still Crazy After All These Years*  
Size: 122cm diameter  
Media: Oil on Canvas  
Date: 2004  
Image courtesy of the artist

## INFLUENCE AND INFLUENCES

Ballagh loved movies from an early age. *'I must have seen at least six pictures a week throughout my childhood.'*<sup>2</sup> It is clear to see the influence that this popular cultural medium has on his work. His work also often employs many cinematic devices and styles.

Much of Ballagh's early literary interest was also visual, in the form of comics. This may explain why he was drawn to the pop-art style and was strongly influenced by the American artists Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol.

Because of the influence of international pop art, Ballagh executed a series of photorealistic paintings of contemporary artworks being viewed by anonymous observers. They are a comment on how paintings were becoming commodities, or products. Ballagh painstakingly reproduced the famous paintings and then depicted them in a gallery setting, complete with decor and a parade of viewers.

*Two Men and a Roy Lichtenstein*, painted in 1973, is a witty comment on art itself. Again, Ballagh uses a number of small canvases placed together to create the whole. This technique further reminds us, the viewers, that we are looking at something artificial and man-made. This series also included pastiches of one of his own works, *Marchers*, and works by Andy Warhol, Cecil King and many other famous/well-known artists. These life-sized paintings gained Ballagh international recognition.

While studying architecture, Ballagh became interested in the modernist style and the design principles of the Bauhaus School: that form should follow function. It may explain why he has such a practical attitude to his art. He believes strongly in the craft and skill involved in creating a piece of work. *'The precise way of doing things has been a constant in my life.'*<sup>2</sup>

Through his work in Aosdána and the Arts Council, Ballagh has been a huge advocate for young Irish artists, and his work has a great influence on the graphic-design industry in Ireland.

## PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE/ AUDIENCE

Robert Ballagh is always aware of his audience. He often works on commission, and so has to consider the patron, but more importantly, he understands the communicative power of an image. This, of course, explains his success as a graphic designer. His works are often full of signs and symbols (iconographical), containing both obvious and hidden meanings and messages. This is part of the artist's language. Ballagh has said that he *'is mainly interested in communicating ideas'*<sup>1</sup>. He does this through the references, objects and imagery that he decides to include in his compositions.

**In Sheridan Le Fanu:**

**What do you think the candle symbolises?**

**Look at how the artist has signed the work. Do you think it is unusual?**

## STUDENT RESPONSE/TASK

Ballagh is a master of creating visual texture in his work. To explore texture, do a number of rubbings of textured surfaces using pastels, pencil or crayons. Use the actual colours of the surface and try to recreate the illusion of the texture. The technique can be more effective than trying to paint or draw texture accurately. Run your hand over the surface of the object(s), and you can feel the texture (tactile texture). When you do the same to your rubbing, you feel nothing, but trick the eye into seeing texture (visual texture).

**Think of the style of the imagery and colour used in comic books. Can you see the connection with Ballagh's work?**

**Do you think a piece of artwork is a commercial product like any other object?**

## LINKS

Look at Robert Ballagh's style and painting technique, and compare it to Mainie Jellett's work. Both artists use clear linear elements to demarcate space and draw the eye into the composition. Colour also features strongly in their work.

- Can you draw similarities between the flat surface quality and finish in Ballagh's and Jellett's painting styles?
- While looking around the 'In Colour' exhibition, do you find yourself drawn to some colour palettes more than others?
- Why do you think colour has such an influence on us?

## GLOSSARY

**Bauhaus:** The Bauhaus was a school of design established in Germany (c.1919–33) that aimed to combine crafts and fine-art disciplines. The style advocated simplified forms, above all, functionality and the belief that mass-produced objects could be desirable as well as cheap and practical. Bauhaus philosophy influenced many fields, including art, architecture, graphic design, interior design, industrial design and typography.

**pastiche:** This term refers to a work of art that mimics the earlier works of other artists, often with satirical or mocking intentions.

**patronage:** This refers to the support, encouragement or financial aid that an organisation or individual gives to an artist. In the history of art, patronage refers to the support that kings or popes provided to musicians, painters and sculptors, allowing them to create their work.

**photomontage:** This is the process of making a composite photograph by cutting and pasting a number of other photographs or images together to create a new image. The artist might then scan or photograph his or her new image so that the final piece looks like an original photographic work.

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2. Carty, C. *Robert Ballagh*. Dublin: Magill, 1986.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Gorry Gallery – Robert Ballagh Catalogue  
[www.gorrygallery.ie/catalogs/ballagh.pdf](http://www.gorrygallery.ie/catalogs/ballagh.pdf)

Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA)  
[www.royalhibernianacademy.ie](http://www.royalhibernianacademy.ie)

# Alice Maher

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Alice Maher was born in Co. Tipperary in 1956 and brought up in the countryside. She undertook European studies at Limerick University, but it was not until her mid-twenties that she realised her interest in art. She completed a Diploma in Fine Art at the Crawford College of Art, Cork, and went on to obtain a Master's Degree in Fine Art from the University of Ulster, Belfast.

From 1986 to 1987, Maher studied at the San Francisco Art Institute, USA, and from 1988 to 1993 she was a lecturer in fine art at the National College of Art & Design (NCAD), in Dublin. In 1993 she left NCAD to become a full-time artist, and in 1994 she was chosen to represent Ireland at the São Paulo Biennial. Maher has had many group and solo exhibitions all over the world, and she is a member of the Artists' Association of Ireland (Aosdána). She is an extremely prolific artist, and her work is represented in many prestigious public and private collections.

Alice Maher is represented by the Green on Red Gallery, Dublin.

## AESTHETIC RESPONSE/ IMPACT:

Maher's work often challenges all our senses. We can see, touch and smell the materials used, and the way that they are used is often so extreme or unexpected that it catches us off guard and makes us feel disgust or curiosity, or both.

How do you feel when viewing this work?

Do you think by looking at an artists work we can guess their gender, or anything else about them like their religion or nationality?

Can you imagine how many times you would be stung while picking and stitching the nettle leaves?



**Title:** Nettle Coat  
**Size:** 70 x 60cm  
**Media:** Nettles, pins, hanger  
**Date:** 1996  
Arts Council Collection /  
An Chomhairle Ealaíon

**Artist's Comment:**  
*'If you use a material like a nettle or something that hasn't been used before or is not normally used as an art language, that gives you a head start in a way, because the history of it isn't there in the art world, so they can't own it.'*<sup>1</sup>

## FORMAL ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

**Nettle Coat** is a miniature or child-sized garment, meticulously constructed with real nettle leaves.

**Like some magic cloak from a fairy story, can you imagine the coat bestowing special powers, possibly invisibility, upon the wearer?**

Maher used nettles as a reference to the Irish mythological tale of the Children of Lir. In the story, the wicked stepmother turns the children into swans, and they only return to their human form when their sister makes nettle cloaks for them.

On the surface, we could see this item and the imagery used as a symbol of penance – the maker must endure pain and hardship for the greater good. However, Maher has warned about reading her symbols simply in religious terms. There is much more happening beneath the surface.

**Take your time and consider what this piece could represent to you or to different audiences.**

**What could the child's coat or the use of nettle leaves symbolise?**

Within this series, Maher also produced **Berry Dress** (1994) and **Thorn House** (1995). The theme of memory is especially at play in these works. Most of us have childhood memories of picking berries, getting stung by nettles or pricked by thorns. Also, the shapes of the garments and objects may remind us of our own childhood, our clothes, or those of our favourite dolls or toys. Just like our memories, though, nothing is as it seems; objects have metamorphosed into other-worldly items. The concept of transformation often features in Maher's work.

## SUBJECT/THEMES/ CONTEXT

While studying in Belfast, Maher steered away from political or nationalist agendas in her work because she felt little connection to the Northern Irish situation at that particular time. Instead she was interested in religious themes and imagery, often exploring subjects used in Renaissance paintings. Around the late 1980s, she completed a series of mixed-media and collage works with titles like **Icon and Annunciation**.

Maher's collage pieces were created by tearing up images from magazines and then reconstructing multilayered expressive works based on biblical themes. These works should not, however, be seen as the artist paying homage to religion. The opposite is true: the works were a release of the anger that the artist felt about the way the Catholic Church was treating women in Ireland at the time.

Maher's work often bravely explores controversial issues around female identity and the depiction of the female body in art and religion. She has looked at Catholic depictions of female characteristics, exploring biblical female figures from the unrealistic perfection of the Virgin Mary to her direct opposite, Mary Magdalene.

Maher also looks back to classical representations of women, drawing on ancient myth and legends. She is deeply interested in the heroic female figures and dark imagery of the medieval period, and has made a number of references to chain-mail throughout her work, drawing similarities to a knitted garment or a magical protective cloak.

**Could Nettle Coat represent a type of chain-mail?**

The way in which Maher deals with ideas of land and the landscape in her work is quite unique. For example, her use of the forest as a mysterious place, where danger and the unknown are lurking, reminds us of dark tales. Around 1990 she completed a series of large charcoal and chalk drawings. **Gathering Cippeens** is part of this series.

Here we see Maher's process and technique of layering and rubbing out her lines and marks, and how she plays with the scale of the objects in the composition.

**What do you know about the rights and roles of women in Ireland in the 1980s?**

**How has the female figure been represented here?**

**What features from the landscape can be seen?**



Look at the image of **Gathering Cippiens**. Consider the artist's use of all the art elements: format, line, shape, tone, colour and composition. Often Maher's work brings together the themes of the female body and its relationship to the landscape or its environment.

Title: **Gathering Cippiens**  
Size: 113 x 149cm  
Media: Charcoal & chalk on paper  
Date: 1990  
Fingal County Council,  
Public Art Collection

## STYLE/ DEVELOPMENT

Maher began working as a painter in a neo-expressionist style, which was popular in the 1980s in Ireland. This was a very emotive time to be in Belfast, with its atmosphere of anger, aggression and fear.

In 1995 Maher took up a residency at the Centre d'Art d'Ivry-sur-Seine, Paris, and began working in completely new ways. She undertook a number of site-specific outdoor works. Creating exterior works forced her to find new materials and to increase the scale of her pieces, so as to suit their expansive environment. Maher looked to sculpture as the most suitable discipline in which to work. Her piece *Les Filles d'Ouranos* took the form of 15 massive sculptural female heads submerged in a lake, based on the Roman goddess Venus.

Maher's work is constantly developing and evolving with new styles, materials, techniques and processes. Some of her work could be described as surrealist in style, but she rejects this kind of labelling and prefers to be seen as an individual artist working in her own way, as opposed to being part of any art movement.

Like many artists, Maher believes in the importance of drawing as a discipline. In 1999 she undertook a project in The Hugh Lane Gallery in order to explore its collection of drawings. The result was a book presenting Maher's selection of drawings from the collection, her thoughts on them, and a series of her own drawings made in response to these works, called *Knot*. This project illustrates Maher's deep interest in drawing and her skills not only as an artist, but also as a curator and writer.

Throughout her career, Maher has explored a variety of disciplines and themes. She does not believe that art is a linear process, but instead revisits subjects and ideas, both from her own past and from distant history. We see this type of approach culminating in the 2005 installation piece *Rood*, created specifically for the Green on Red Gallery in Dublin. Maher fills every corner of the gallery space with her imagery. Mysterious, sinister shadows are cast by a suspended upside-down forest. Four precious-looking globes are presented on plinths, however, on closer inspection, we see that they are balls of snail shells. A double-headed statue of Venus is presented within Maher's fantastical garden, and thousands of snails draw their uncontrolled pictures over the gallery windows.

What was Venus the goddess of?

Can you think of other famous images depicting Venus?

How are they different from Alice Maher's presentation of this famous female form?

Why do you think that an artist creates large-scale installation works?

Consider how different it would be to be in this installation space, as opposed to looking at a single work of art on a gallery wall. How might you feel? What would the experience be like?



Title: **Rood**  
Size: Dimensions variable instalation view  
Media: Snail shell, beech trees and bronze  
Date: 2004  
Green on Red Gallery, Dublin,  
courtesy of the artist

## PROCESS/MATERIALS/TECHNIQUES

In the series of works that includes *Gathering Cippeens*, Maher draws onto paper, but rubs out and attempts to erase areas of the image as part of her process. She says, *'In rubbing at the surface, you're struggling to get into another space, erasing the unnecessary and exposing the core.'*<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, Maher likes to work in charcoal and chalk, but she has also created many drawings using pen and ink, a more *'unforgiving'* medium<sup>3</sup>. In the series *Celebration Robes*, she uses her own body print to create the female form, which is then drawn and layered over.

Maher's processes and materials are often closely linked to her subject matter. For example, in the installation piece *Keep*, the labour-intensive task of weaving and knotting human hair onto long strands of wire created an enormous pillar of hair. This process could be seen as a comment on the laborious skills often associated with traditional female crafts, like knitting and weaving. The hours of work are often unseen in the finished items. Maher has likened her process of drawing to that of knitting, in that each line or mark put down hangs on the previous line, building up the drawing like constructing a garment. This laborious technique is not one in which the artist can lose herself. Instead it presents a difficult physical challenge: to keep going in order to finish the intricate piece.

Apart from drawing and using found and gathered materials, Maher has also used traditional materials and techniques in her work.

In the piece *Gorget* (2000), bronze-casting was Maher's chosen medium, used to create a 'necklace', or 'miniature stone circle', of heads. In making *Gorget*, each head form was first carved in wax and then dipped into molten wax before being cast in bronze and coated in chrome to make the surface reflective. This process had the effect of slightly melting and covering the original carved facial features so they look worn away, like ancient stone carvings. Maher also cites her interest in time-worn Norman effigy figures.

We could say that Maher has worked in almost every medium and scale. She has described her work as ranging from *'monumental to miniature'*<sup>1</sup>. This constant playing with scale may have something to do with Maher herself. She notes being the tallest in her class and always being aware of her height, maybe a little like Alice in Wonderland, always being the wrong size for her surroundings.

### Can you think of stories in which the characters are of unusual size for their environment?

In the 2003 series *Portraits*, Maher introduces the medium of photography into her process. We see large colour self-portraits of the artist wearing (or being worn by) her fantastical or grotesque sculptural forms. Maher often uses everyday, familiar or found materials, like snail shells, leaves or berries. These are not precious or rare, but the ways in which she uses them are new and surprising. Bringing together the man-made and natural worlds, these objects are transformed into objects of beauty that seem precious. It has been said that Maher's work has a childlike quality, and that her use of materials seems playful.

Maher's work is sometimes a collaborative process, utilising the skills and craftsmanship of others – for example, working with composers for her films' soundtracks.

Have you seen pre-Christian and early Christian artefacts in the National Museum? Which is your favourite?

Look at the Anglo-Norman period in your art-history book and find carved effigy figures.



Title: **Gorget**  
Size: 8.5 x 10.2 x 7.5cms largest head  
Media: 9 pieces chrome plated cast bronze  
Date: 2002  
Private collection courtesy  
of the artist

## INFLUENCE AND INFLUENCES

Even though Alice Maher grew up in a rural setting, she rejects the romantic style of traditional Irish landscape painting. This sentimental view of rural life and landscape holds no interest for her, however, she is influenced by many aspects of Ireland and its history. The bronze piece *Gorget* is based on the dimensions of a pre-Christian neck adornment from the National Museum, however, Maher is not interested in creating these small sculptural objects to be purely decorative. She is much more focused on the underlying issues that they attempt to explore. In *Thorn House*, for example, the small scale and simple form is offset by the choice of thorns, an object with many religious and mythical associations, as the medium.

**Where do we find the use of thorns in the Bible?**

**Are there any other stories or myths in which thorns feature?**

**Consider how symbols mean different things in other cultures and faiths.**

Maher's work often explores the ways in which we adorn ourselves, particularly our use of clothing or jewellery to display some part of ourselves. In *Necklace* (2003), we could say that this is Maher literally expressing herself, with the tongues representing our language of display. Similarly, in *Collar* (2003), we see the artist *'turning the body inside out'*, like wearing a locket on a chain to express love, but here, instead of the heart being made of silver, real lambs' hearts are used <sup>2</sup>.

Maher's pieces often tell, or at least imply, a story or tall tale. Her interest in fairy tales is evident in much of her work. Maher has cited Louise Bourgeois as an artist who she admires, referring to her use of unusual materials and processes as an influence on her own practice.

Often, Maher is directly influenced by the place in which she works, creating site-specific or installation pieces that respond directly to some aspect of the environment in which the work is to be placed. She researches the area and often draws on some aspect of its history or landscape. She has been quoted as saying, *'Inspiration isn't the word. It's more like a dialogue you have with your materials. Your work is the history of yourself.'* <sup>4</sup>

**How do you feel about using animal organs in artwork? Why?**

**What do you think the artist is trying to make us feel by using these objects?**

**Consider what influences an artist as they create an artwork.**



Title: **Necklace**  
Size: 610 x 610cm edition of 4,  
photo Kate Horgan,  
Media: Lambda Print  
Date: 2003  
Courtesy of the artist

## PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE/ AUDIENCE

**Do you think that girls will see or experience Alice Maher's work differently to boys? How? Why?**

How different audiences respond to various works is of concern to many artists. Maher addresses the issue of audience in relation to where her work is shown. Passers-by encounter her site-specific pieces, not only people who choose to go into an art gallery to specifically see art. Therefore, the works need to speak to a wider audience.

Maher's choice of materials also relates to audience. Different people will have various feelings or associations with different materials, like human hair, thorns or nettles.

**Are these materials something from a fairytale, beautiful and magical, or from a nightmare, dark and threatening?**

Because of Maher's choice of materials and processes, her artwork is often delicate or transient. The works are not always intended to last forever, to be too self-important or seek a place in art history. This reflects Maher's rejection of the male-dominated Western tradition of art history.

**Open your art history book and count the number of female and male artists represented. Compare your findings. Why do you think that there is such a difference?**

## STUDENT RESPONSE/ TASK

- Can you remember using found objects to create things or play make-believe when you were a child?
- Try to remember what you played/made, describe it in detail, and make a sketch from your memory. Consider all the details that come back to you. How does it feel to remember?

## LINKS

When you look at the themes in the work of Alice Maher and compare them to those of one of the other artists in the exhibition, Mainie Jellett, note the use of religious imagery. While these artists have worked in very different styles, media and techniques, at times, their work shares similar subject matter.

**Can you find other artwork in the 'In Colour' exhibition that explores religious themes?**

## GLOSSARY

**classical:** This term is generally used to describe the art, architecture, thinking and literature of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, which dominated Europe from roughly the eighth century BC until the sixth century AD, or for about 1,300 years.

**installation art:** This term describes a type of site-specific, mainly three-dimensional, often sculptural work designed to transform the perception of a space. Installation pieces can be temporary or permanent and are mainly placed in interior settings. Sound and moving images are often part of the work.

**medieval period:** This period (the Middle Ages) of history can be seen as spanning almost 1,000 years, from about the fifth century to the fifteenth century AD. In Irish history, it runs from the early Christian periods through the Viking invasions and Romanesque and Gothic periods, and ends with the Anglo-Norman period.

**mythological:** Inspired by or based on myths or legends.

**neo-expressionism:** (c.1970–90) Developed as a reaction against conceptual art and minimalism, it draws its inspiration from the abstract-expressionist movement of the early twentieth century. The style is characterised by a rough, vigorous approach to the application of paint and often incorporates found materials into the composition. Artists of this style usually work in large format and are mainly concerned with emotional responses to their subject matter, which can be both abstract and figurative.

**Norman effigy figures:** Carved stone figures, often created in the likenesses of the dead and placed on their tombs, as if sleeping, The Anglo-Norman period in Ireland was from c.1169 to c.1600 AD.

**Renaissance:** From the word 'rebirth', this term refers to a period of great revival in the arts, architecture, literature and music. Spanning the fourteenth century to the seventeenth century AD, Florence was its centre. The arts in northern Europe also flourished during this period.

**site-specific:** This term refers to artwork created to exist in a certain place, either interior or exterior, which became popular in the 1970s. Typically, the artist takes the location into account when planning and creating the artwork. The piece may be permanent or temporary.

**surrealist:** Surrealism developed from the post-World War I Dada movement. From the 1920s onward, surrealism spread from France, eventually influencing the visual arts, literature, film, philosophy and music of many countries. The manifesto of the group was written by the poet André Breton in 1924. Salvador Dali was one of the most famous surrealist artists.

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## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Alice Maher's Website  
[www.alicemaher.com](http://www.alicemaher.com)

Green on Red Gallery  
[www.greenonredgallery.com](http://www.greenonredgallery.com)

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LCGA LIMERICK CITY GALLERY OF ART



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