

Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist:	Gerda Fromel
Title:	Mobile Shape 1972
Medium:	aluminium alloy
Location:	Hamilton Building, TCD (east end of College, beside the O'Reilly Institute)
Notes:	Exhibited at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art in 1972.

b. 1931 Czechoslovakia; d. 1975 Co Mayo

Born to German parents just before the outbreak of World War Two, her family returned to her parents' homeland after the war had ended. It was here, in Germany, that her artistic passion developed. Her skill and talent were quickly spotted, and she received a scholarship to Stuttgart Art School. Here she began to study sculpture, and later pursued her education at Darmstadt and Munich during a four year period from 1948 until 1952.

In 1953 she moved to Dublin for the first time and spent one year there. In 1954 she then married fellow sculptor. She returned to Munich that same year, and then made a permanent move to Dublin in 1956. She exhibited in the Irish Exhibition of Living Art in 1957. Her work continued to be shown at this exhibition until her death in 1975. In 1960 her work was shown at the Salzburg Biennale and in 1962 and 1963 her work was shown at the Independent Artists Exhibition. Exhibiting at the Dawson gallery by herself in 1964, and then with Michael Scott in 1967, ensured her position in the Irish art market.

In 1966 Schurmann returned to Germany, leaving Fromel to raise four children, and from this moment on, her work naturally became less of a priority. In 1969 she exhibited *Moon and Antimoon* (granite) and *Animal* (bronze) at an exhibition of Contemporary Irish Artists at the Cork Sculpture Park. Then in 1970 she won the Waterford Glass Company Award at the Oireachtas Exhibition. That year also saw the completion of her largest and most widely-known work, *Sails*, for P.J Carroll and Son in Dundalk. In 1972 she began showing at the Royal Hibernian Academy, at which she exhibited a total of six works during her time there. In 1973 she won a second award at the Oireachtas exhibition, a gold medal for sculpture.

In 1975 her career was cut short as she died when one of her sons fell into difficulty whilst swimming during their family holiday in Co Mayo. Art critic, Brian Fallon, said of her *Marble Head*,

Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

it should serve as a “standing reminder of how good she was and how much we lost by her drowning while in her middle forties”. <http://www.normangallery.com/gerdafromel.htm>

Her work receives little attention in the current art scene, as it rarely comes up for auction and has not been included in any considerable manner in recent exhibition history. In 1976, one year after her death, the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art held a major retrospective of her work which was organized by the Arts Council and the Goethe Institute. Some argue the absence of her work from the art market speaks volumes for the regard for her sculpture held by those lucky enough to have collected it while she was alive.

Her work was influenced by contemporaries such as Brancusi and Giacometti, yet her feminine touch shines through as her pieces have an innate calm and gentleness to them. She was greatly concerned with technique and finish. Her work is emotional and yet refined. It has been noted for its sensitivity and individuality. Yet it is also varied in both style, scale and medium. Our own *Mobile Shape* boasts very little in common with the enormous *Sails* in Dundalk. Fallon noted “Stylistically she was not an innovator – in fact she was rather eclectic, but her debts to Lehmbruck, Giacometti and others are cancelled by her perfect craftsmanship and her gift of poetic understatement. Nuance, rather than power or energy, was Gerda Fromel's particular strong point”. <http://www.normangallery.com/gerdafromel.htm>

Other works by the artist can be found in:

Collections of the Bank of Ireland

Kildare Cathedral (stained glass)

Irish Museum of Modern Art

Arts Council, Dublin

Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane