

The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist: Patrick Scott
Title: Kite! (1974)
Medium: acrylic on cotton canvas
from V'soske tapestries, 622x622cm
Location: Luce Hall – Upper, TCD



b. Kilbrittan, Co. Cork, 1921

Based on the 1972 cartoon for the tapestry 'Blaze', created for the Kilkenny Castle artists' Kite Exhibition, 1977, Patrick Scott explains how the work came about:

"I had the cartoons – they were just rolled up and I was going to burn them actually.. which I did finally burn them, but I traced it onto this bit of fabric. And the fabric I got from V'Soske – it's big course cotton weave, it's what they use for their tufting, they tuft onto it. They just gave it to me and I ... it's quite big but I traced it through the holes made by the cutting wheel. So it came out like this. Except then I got friends to come up to the mountains to a house I have in Wicklow up in the hills. We had it all spread out there and these friends just crawled all over it painting it with an acrylic. It's virtually the same as the tapestry [Blaze] except the middle is just blank. There was a kite exhibition in Kilkenny one arts week and we were all invited to make kites, so I thought I'd make that into a kite. Then I had to work out how many people it would take to launch it and I discovered it would take 30 people. I went ahead with it and I put all the fixings on it – all the wires and hooks and things. There were strings coming from it, masses of them. There were all these people running across the castle garden. It was just a joke really because there is no way you could ever fly it! We never tried to fly it but it hung in Kilkenny, in the Castle." Interview with Patrick Scott*

Scott embarked on a full-time artistic career late in life in 1960, having first worked up to the position of partner at the renowned architecture firm, Scott Tallon Walker (STW), after qualifying in architecture in UCD. During the course of his career, he also worked as a textile designer for Brown Thomas in Dublin, Tabard Frères et Soeurs, Aubusson France, and with the village weavers of Oaxaca, Mexico; as a graphic designer for Coras Iompair Éireann; and as a carpet designer for Kilkenny Design Workshops.

Scott began exhibiting with the White Stag Group in 1941, with his first solo show at their gallery in 1946. In 1960, the year he left STW architectural firm, he represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale. Between 1966 and '79, the artist collaborated with Francois Tabard, an important French weaver. During this time, he produced one of his many masterpieces, Blaze, in 1972. In 1980 Scott exhibited at Rosc, with an important retrospective in the Douglas Hyde Gallery the following year.

Scott's art is notable for its pared back structure and the minimal yet beautiful materials which he uses. There is a zen-like meditative quality to all of his work. Circle and square are his fundamental units of form. In 1964 Scott began to use gold leaf and to a lesser extent palladium (silver). 'In Western and Byzantine art the use of gold is charged with Christian connotations...Yet by appealing to a cooler, Eastern aesthetic, related specifically to Japanese screens and interior design, Scott simply and effectively negated the potential complications of interpretation and meaning',

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notes Aidan Dunne in the catalogue essay for Scott's 2005 exhibition in the Fenton Gallery, Cork.

Scott developed his unique, semi-abstract style in the '60s in his bog paintings and the Device series, in which paint was stained or dripped onto unprimed canvas. He subsequently incorporated more geometrical or architectural forms, using gold leaf or thinly applied white tempera. Scott's sustained focus on the circle is one of the most striking features of his lengthy career; in fact, it has been suggested that he has done for the circle what Albers did for the square. It thus comes as no surprise to find that the earliest and most enduring design motif in the tapestries is the circle.

Information contained in this article is from The Modern Art Collection Trinity College Dublin (David Scott, 1989), www.whytes.ie, www.artireland.net, www.irish-architecture.com, and www.irishartsreview.com, and from an interview between the artist and Catherine Giltrap, Curator of The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections, 1st September 2010.*