

The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist: Robert Ballagh
Title: 3 No. *Proposed Murals (Map Series)* for Goulding Fertilizers Ltd., Wilton Terrace; also called *Map Murals Modelli*
Medium: acrylic on card

b. 1943, Dublin

After training as an architect, Ballagh served an apprenticeship under renowned Irish artist Mícheál Farrell. He has held many prestigious posts during his career, including Chairman of the Irish National Congress, President of the Ireland Institute, First Chairman of Aosdána and Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science. He has worked extensively as a graphic designer, producing over 70 stamps for An Post, and the Series C banknotes which were issued in Ireland just before the introduction of the Euro. Ballagh is also a skilled stage designer, devising schemes for the Gate Theatre, the Riverdance Company, and the Special Olympics (2003) and the Ryder Cup (2006) both in Ireland. This skill as a designer is, arguably, what enables him to produce striking images again and again, which appeal to a wide audience.

Major exhibitions of Ballagh's work have been staged internationally, at Lund, Warsaw and Sofia to name but a few. He has represented Ireland at graphic exhibitions in Florence, Ljubljana and Tokyo and at the Paris Biennale in 1969. His work has also been shown at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art, Rosc 1980, and the Irish Arts Centre New York (2002). In 2006, the Royal Hibernian Academy Gallagher Gallery held a full scale retrospective of Ballagh's work.

Ballagh's earlier work is heavily influenced by Pop Art, clearly visible in the prints after Delacroix, Goya and David which are held in the Trinity College Modern Art Collection. These works also illustrate Ballagh's tendency to reference works by other artists. Over the years, his work has moved out of this Pop idiom into a hyperrealist style that he applies to portraiture, modern genre and other subjects.

Always politically and socially aware, Ballagh has occasionally been the subject of controversy and intrigue. In 1972 he splashed animal blood on the floor of the Project Arts Centre, Dublin, for an installation about Bloody Sunday, and in an interview published in the Irish Times on the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, Ballagh related that his involvement with the 75th anniversary in 1991 had led him to be harassed by the Special Branch of the Garda Síochána.

Information contained in this article is from The Modern Art Collection Trinity College Dublin (David Scott 1989), www.royalhibernianacademy.com and www.visual-arts-cork.com

This information has been compiled by Art Collections assistants, interns, and volunteers
For further information please consult www.tcd.ie/artcollections