

The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist:	Alan Davie
Title:	<i>Bird Discovering a Temple</i> (1961)
Medium:	oil on paper
Notes:	signed: Alan Davie '61 exhibited: Federation of British Architects' Galleries, September 1962, illus. on cover; George Dawson's Collection, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Trinity College Dublin, 5-27 August 1983, cat. no. 22; Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, 30 June – 21 July 1985, cat. no. 12

b. 1920, Grangemouth, Scotland d. 2014, Hertfordshire, UK

Davie studied painting at the Edinburgh College of Art and Academy from 1937-41. He also trained as a silversmith. A meeting with Peggy Guggenheim in 1948 – after spells in the Royal Artillery (1941-46) and as a saxophonist (c.1946-48) - introduced Davie to early American Abstract Impressionism. Jackson Pollock, in particular, inspired the artist to return from the world of jazz to the world of painting.

Davie's work is distinguished by spontaneity, exuberant colour and improvisation. The artist, himself, however, says that his images are not pure abstraction but all have significance as symbols. He sees the role of the artist as akin to that of the shaman. He is well known for his combination of lyrical abstraction and expressionism which has made him a leading exponent of English pop art.

The artist had his first one man show at Grant's Bookshop in Edinburgh in 1946. A year later, he began a tour of Europe which lasted until 1949 and gave Davie the opportunity to study pre-Renaissance art as well as view a wide range of modern work. On his return to the UK, Davie returned to the world of exhibiting with a solo show at Gimpel Fils, London in 1950. He continued to exhibit widely and frequently throughout his subsequent career.

During the period 1953-56, Davie taught at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London. At this time he also began to develop an interest in African and Pacific art. Zen, too, became a significant influence on Davie's art from 1955 onward, particularly with regard to his automatic method, after he read Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1953). He adopted the belief that the spiritual path is incompatible with planning ahead and has attempted to paint as automatically as possible, which is intended to bring forth elements of his unconscious. In the 1960s automatism and Primitive art took hold of Davie's work, while the 1970s introduced many Caribbean influences to his work.

Information contained in this article is from The Modern Art Collection Trinity College Dublin (David Scott, 1989), www.hillsborofineart.com, and www.oxfordartonline.com.

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