

The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist: Micheal Farrell
Title: *Douglas Hyde Gallery Retrospective 20 April – 26 May*
Medium: lithograph
Edition: 4 of 50

b.1940, Kells, Co. Meath d. 2000, Cardet, France

Micheal Farrell studied Drawing and Fine Art Painting at St. Martin's School of Art, London, from 1957 to 1961 and also studied at Colchester College of Art in England. From 1971, until his death in 2000, he mainly lived in Paris, settling at the La Ruche studios, though he spent some time in Australia in the 1980s. When he returned to Ireland following his training in Britain, he painted mainly abstract works often based on Celtic motifs. Later, in part as a reaction to the violence in Northern Ireland, he turned to figurative art as a more relevant genre in which to express his feelings artistically.

In the introduction to Farrell's retrospective at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Trinity College of 1970 Cyril Barrett wrote that the events that occurred in Northern Ireland from 1969 led Farrell's work away from abstract formalism to a politicised work of symbols. While living in France he adopted a more detached perspective on his Irish nationality and identity. One of the foremost contemporary painters in the world of visual art in Ireland, Micheal Farrell's range takes in both abstract and figurative works which involve issues of nationalism, colonialism, sexuality, modern mythology and politics. In 1960 he exhibited as part of the Young Contemporaries as a 'hard-edge' abstract painter.

He made his name in the 1960s with this distinct style, incorporating swirling 'Celtic' motifs, James Joyce was an influence during this period, and later during the 1990s, Farrell renewed his obsession with Joyce in the *La Rencontre* canvases (1994; Dublin, Taylor Gals). In 1970 Farrell commenced his most dramatic group of paintings, the *Presse* series (in which two hatchet shapes meet and squirt out what might be wine or blood), seven examples of which are in the College Collection. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Farrell returned to a figurative style in which the themes of self-questioning and of the Irish abroad became prominent. His powerful '*Madonna Irlanda*' series of 1976-77 portrayed Ireland in the role of a mistress based on Louisa O'Murphy, the 18th century mistress of Louis XVI.

Farrell exhibited extensively and won many prestigious awards throughout his career, including the Prix de Rome, Brittanique (1964), the Carroll Prize at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA) (1964, '67, '69, '74), the Macauley Fellowship (1966), the Laureat at the Biennale des Jeunes, Paris (1967) and the gold medal at the Third Graphic Biennale, Florence (1972) to name a few.

Micheal Farrell's paintings and artworks have been exhibited at a large number of solo shows worldwide, including: Dawson Gallery, Dublin (1966,96,70,72,75,77); Retrospective 1953-1978, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (1979); Taylor Galleries, Dublin (1979,81,84,86,87,91,96); Foire International d'Art and Atelier Champfleury, Stockholm (1981). Other works by the artist can be found in the Irish Arts Council, Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane and the Contemporary Arts Society, Ireland.

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

This information has been compiled by Art Collections assistants, interns, and volunteers
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