

The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist: Mainie Jellett
Title: *Four Elements (sketch)* (1928)
Medium: gouache on paper
Notes: exhibited: The College Gallery, The Ulster Museum, Belfast, 20 March – 17 April 1963, cat. no. 40

b.1897,Dublin d.1944, Dublin

Jellett began studying art in 1914 with Drawing and Fine Art Painting at the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin, and later under Walter Sickert at Westminster Technical Institute, London. She then went on to study in the studios of André L'Hôte and Albert Gleizes in Paris (1920-21). In addition to being an artist, she was an art writer, and an art teacher and lecturer in Dublin and Cork during the 1930s. Jellett is particularly important in the history of Irish art, along with Mary Swanzy and her close friend, Evie Hone, for being one of the earliest practitioners of abstraction in Ireland. In 1923 Jellett staged an exhibition of modern art at the Society of Dublin Painters. In spite of the critics' horror at the show, later art critics acknowledge the importance of such a show in developing the link between Irish and European art.

In addition to Irish exhibitions, Jellett showed her work in Paris, Versailles, Brussels, London and Amsterdam during the 1920s. She exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1930-37, and with the Water Colour Society of Ireland from 1931-37. Jellett remained resilient against detractors, with this toughness perhaps stemming from her firm Christian beliefs. Even though a number of her works are abstract, they have religious titles and are similar to icon paintings in tone and palate.

Bruce Arnold has described Jellett's abstracts as being "built up from a central 'eye' or 'heart' in arcs of colour, help up and together by the rhythm of line and shape, and given depth and intensity – a sense of abstract perspective – by the basic understanding of light and colour." (Irish Art, a Concise History, Bruce Arnold)

The other area in which Jellett's contribution was pivotal was the establishment of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art in 1943 with Hone, Louis le Brocquy, Norah McGuinness and Jack Hanlon. One year later, she died. Her work hangs in the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork; Niland Art Collection, Sligo; Butler Gallery Collection, Kilkenny, The Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery, Dublin; The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, and The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

Information contained in this article is from The Modern Art Collection Trinity College Dublin (David Scott, 1989), www.visual-arts-cork.com and Bruce Arnold 'Irish Art, a Concise History' (1969).