

Artist Ciarán Lennon
Title Autochthone IV MM (2014)
Medium sanded aluminium block and acrylic medium
Dimensions 49.5cm x 40.6cm x 3.8cm
Notes Donated March 2017 by the Estate of Rodney Beresford Dockrell through Derek Dockrell, facilitated by Ciarán Lennon, 'In honour of Mary Elmes who saved countless children from the Nazi Concentration Camps'



b.1947, Dublin

Ciarán Lennon is an abstract, minimalist painter living and working in Dublin. Lennon's passion for art was evident from a young age and did not go unnoticed; in a 2012 interview with Brian McAvera, he describes the memory of one particular schoolteacher calling him up to the blackboard, introducing him as the 'artist' of the class and requesting that he draw something in chalk for the other children to see. He was just five years old at the time and had been so small that he needed to stand on a chair to complete the task; his portrait sketch remained on the board for the rest of the year. As an adult, Lennon enrolled at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin (NCAD) with the aim of becoming an art teacher, this profession was a means to an end for him as it seemed the most secure way to earn one's living as an artist.

After some time spent teaching part-time, and a period working as a graphic artist for the Irish broadcasting network, Radió Teilifís Éireann, he returned to NCAD in the mid-seventies, graduating with a Distinction in Painting. Teachers such as Maurice MacGonigal, Seán Keating, Charles Brady and William Scott offered varied and valuable instruction to Lennon who began exhibiting his work regularly from 1972 onwards. In 1993 he represented Ireland at the São Paulo Biennial in Brazil and this same year, he was elected a member of the Aosdána, an affiliation of creative artists in Ireland who have made an outstanding contribution to the arts.

Recent solo exhibitions have seen Lennon paint on the unusual support of aluminium, often on a large scale. The potential for visible layers of representation is what particularly interests him; the reflective aluminium carries its own weight and dimension, its surface shows through the swathes of paint allowing the viewers to glimpse themselves in the work. Using this material, the artist has found that he can portray the figure, foreground, medium, support and observer, all at once, without conventional perspectival devices. Lennon has described such works as being "addressed to the unknown lone viewer/observer, the sole subject and centre of [his] art.'

This piece belongs to a series of works on aluminium named 'Autochthones', similar to the French *autochtone*, which is commonly translated to mean 'native' or 'indigenous'. An excerpt from the artist's notebooks, elucidates these mysterious paintings; "Autochthones are an aspect of my response to the Holocaust. From the point of view of its victims, there was no single Holocaust. The first person experience of the event was to wipe out individual uniqueness as much as it was out to destroy an entire people...I think of these things (Autochthones) and their place in the field of appearances as being what full stops are to writing...I see them as wounds or lacerations that make appearances nuanced and complex, they banish banalities." [Lennon, 2015]

The artist's work has been collected by public and private institutions worldwide, including the Ulster Museum, Belfast; the Irish Museum of Modern Art; Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane; the National Gallery of Ireland; the Fogg Museum of Fine Art, Harvard University, Boston; the Kamarsky Collection, New York and Trinity College, Dublin.

The information in this article has been taken from an interview between the Artist and Brian McAvera, published online at www.ciaranlennon.com/excerpts/interview-brian-macavera-2012/ , along with further information from www.ciaranlennon.com and from www.aosdana.artscouncil.ie/Members/Visual-Arts/Lennon.aspx