

Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist:	Robert Ballagh
Title:	Three People with Jackson Pollock (1973)
Medium:	Acrylic on canvas
Location:	The Lecky Library entrance, Arts Building, TCD (located beside the Nassau Street entrance to College)

b. Dublin, 1943

After training as an architect, Robert Ballagh served his apprenticeship under renowned Irish artist Micheal 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, appealing to a wide audience.

Major exhibitions of his work have been staged internationally, including Lund, Warsaw and Sofia. 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, 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.