



Drawn *to* *the* Page

IRISH ARTISTS & ILLUSTRATION
ca 1830–1930

24 October 2012 – 21 April 2013

The Long Room, Trinity College Library Dublin

This exhibition is devoted to the period known as the heyday of European book and periodical illustration and emphasises the important contribution made by Irish artists

The exhibition includes a wide variety of different types of publication, from poems and novels to broadsheets, travel books and national school primers that have been selected exclusively from the holdings of Trinity College Library. The images on display show how artists related creatively and sympathetically to the printed word, increasing the reader's pleasure and understanding by visualizing episodes in the text or by supplying decorative elements such as borders or head- and tail-pieces to enhance the visual appeal of a publication.

A highly innovative and productive period in European publishing began around 1830. A combination of factors contributed to this period of unprecedented growth, including technological changes such as the development of steam-powered printing machinery and the industrial-scale production of inexpensive paper. On the other hand there were social factors such as the progressive rise in both spending power and literacy, leading to new demands for



Robert Goff, 'Sunset over Monte Oliveto', in C. and R.C. Goff, *Florence & some Tuscan cities* (London, 1905)



George Petrie, 'Giant's Causeway', in George Petrie, *Ten views of picturesque scenery in the north and north-west of Ireland* (Dublin, 1830)

printed material. Publishers catered for an ever-widening market, supplying rough-and-ready penny journals and cheap editions as well as luxurious productions comprising high quality materials, attractive type-faces elegantly set, specially commissioned illustrations and colourful, decorative bindings. Illustrators were generally of a lower status than artists, but by employing artists to produce designs there were advantages to artists and publishers alike. Not only did illustration provide the former with a source of income, but it also allowed for self-promotion among the general public. By investing in artists to design for their publications, publishers benefited from their superior design skills and the marketability of their reputations. One example of this is the collaboration between Daniel Maclise and Charles Dickens.

In the early 1900s, publishers connected with the Irish Literary Revival led a new impetus in Irish commercial publishing. Among the artists who provided illustrations were Jack Yeats, Beatrice Elvery, Joseph Campbell and Katherine McCormack. Through visual representations of Ireland, its literature, landscapes and people, book illustration played a distinct role in the era of Irish national and cultural awakening.

In presenting a hundred years of published designs, the exhibition demonstrates the range of techniques and processes employed by artist-illustrators. Up to the 1880s, illustrations were printed from plates or blocks usually executed by

professional engravers rather than the originating artist. By the end of the nineteenth century, technology existed to allow the artist's original drawing to be photographically transferred to a metal block which was then mechanically processed. Artists such as Harry Clarke embraced this new technology, but others, such as Robert Gibbings, argued it was necessary for artists to engage directly with traditional block cutting processes to retain the integrity of the design and medium. For Robert Goff and F.S. Walker new chromolithographic processes allowed their richly coloured paintings to be reproduced with revolutionary vivacity.

The exhibition shows the stylistic development of nineteenth- to twentieth-century Irish art, from the precise, detailed and idealised forms of Maclise, to the symbolic, fluid motifs of Clarke, to the bold expressive, modernist forms of Annesley. This exhibition aims to introduce viewers to 'new' artists and to unfamiliar aspects of familiar artists' work, as well as stimulating the continued study and appreciation of Irish artists and illustration.



Charles Shannon, from *The Dial* (1898)





Above: Daniel Maclise, 'Arthur obtains Excalibur', in Alfred Tennyson, *Poems* (London, 1857)

Left: Mabel Annesley, 'On Slieve-na-Man' in Richard Rowley, *County Down songs* (London, 1924)

Front Cover: Harry Clarke, frontispiece to *The history of a great house...* (Dublin, 1926)



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