

IMMA
MAIN GALLERIES - EAST WING
13 OCTOBER 2017 – 16 SEPTEMBER 2018

IMMA Collection: Coast-Lines



Drawing on the paradox implicit in the word 'coastline' - for never has a coast followed a linear course - the title of this exhibition throws a line around a 12 month programme (to Sept 2018) of changing displays of artworks and archival material that will explore our sense of place, perception, representation and memory. Works by Dorothy Cross, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Clare Langan, Richard Long, Anne Madden, Anita Groener, Michael Mulcahy, Donald Teskey, Tony O'Malley, Alexandra Wejchert, Bridget Riley and others variously explore pattern and line, surface, folds, enclosures, erasures, borders, terrain, the inherent coastal tensions between motion and stillness and any attempt to map what our senses perceive. Others such as Brian O'Doherty, Hamish Fulton, Tim Robinson and OMG collective variously engage photographic, linear, linguistic and coded systems to invoke a mind/body relationship.

The 1960s as a decade gets particular focus in the current displays. On the international art scene it was a time, much more than any other decade, that was highly energised. Each year saw a new movement surface: Pop, Op, Kinetic, Minimalism, Conceptual art and so on. In Ireland at that time we saw the emergence of the first *Rosc*, in 1967, a series of 6 major exhibitions of international art that had a significant impact on contemporary art developments here. While *Rosc '67* was indeed a major showcase it was less about contemporary developments of the time than it was a catch-up survey of 20th century master works for the benefit of Irish and visiting international audiences. IMMA has been re-examining *Rosc* across the programme this year, and *Coast-Lines* provides glimpses of some concurrent moments in the art world of the 1960s

and '70s with artworks and archival holdings that draw on the Gordon Lambert and Timothy Drever/Robinson archives in the IMMA Collection. A number of displays will include Irish artists who were working internationally in the late '60s and '70s such as Brian O'Doherty, Noel Sheridan and Anne Madden.

A timeline spanning the 1940s to the 1970s contextualises the pre and post *Rosc* art scene in Ireland, highlighting key moments and exhibitions. These include the *Irish Exhibition of Living Art* (IELA), an annual exhibition of Irish modernist developments initiated by Mainie Jellett; to the establishment of the Hendriks Gallery in 1957; the Project Arts Centre in 1967 and other significant events. Archive material related to the short-lived but seminal Signals Gallery, London, has particular significance in any account of Optical, Kinetic and Conceptual Art developments of the 1960s. Examples of such works were introduced to Irish audiences of the day through the vision of the Hendriks Gallery and many are now in the IMMA Collection due to the philanthropy of Gordon Lambert. Video footage from The Roland Collection, the Cruz-Diez Art Foundation, Joe Lee and the RTÉ archives is available to view.

Room 1

Recognising the inner geometry of nature, Victor Vasarely, a founding figure of the Op Art movement, transposed forms from nature into purely abstract elements in his paintings. Op Art, is a style of art that uses optical illusions, creating a perceptual experience related to how our vision functions and the tension that is created between the

foreground and background. Vasarely's conviction that the completion of the painting is in the eye and mind of the spectator echoed Duchamp and anticipated Conceptual Art.

This room includes Op and Kinetic works by Alexandra Wejchert, Bridget Riley and Peter Sedgley. Wejchert often produced large-scale sculptural works in innovative materials including steel, coloured perspex, plexiglass and neon in architectural contexts, which became emblematic of the new spirit of progress in 1970s Ireland.

British artist Bridget Riley's practice explores the dynamic potential of optical phenomena using repeating patterns of squares, rectangles, ovals, circles and wave-like shapes positioned according to precise mathematical formulae to create a sensation of movement in her work.

Fellow British Op artist Peter Sedgley initially investigated optical and spatial phenomena through the use of line. *Study (Colored Circles)* (1970) is indicative of Sedgley's luminous circle paintings which were developed to incorporate video, light and sound elements.

Room 2

This room presents work by a number of South American artists who were influential in the development of Op and Kinetic Art. While Op Art uses optical illusions to create perceptual experience of movement, Kinetic artworks use actual moving components or that are capable of movement.

Curvas Inmateriales (1966) by Jesús-Rafael Soto is a classic example of both. Here movement is generated by air currents so delicate that the presence

of a moving spectator is enough to activate it, giving the viewer an active role in the artwork. Gordon Lambert bought *Curvas Inmateriales* directly from the artist's Paris studio in 1967. It was the only artwork from an Irish collection to be included in the first Rosc exhibition held in Dublin the same year.

Argentinian artist Julio Le Parc is also prominently associated with both movements and his work *Untitled (Multiple Mirror)* (1968) produces the effect of constantly shifting reflections and shadows. Le Parc intended the destabilising effects of his artwork to symbolize a call for social change.

Carlos Cruz-Diez has, throughout his career, investigated the nature of colour as an autonomous reality and the active participation of the viewer in visual art. He has applied his knowledge of the physics of colour and vision to produce numerous *Physichromies*; artworks whose colours appear to change when viewed from different angles.

Gertrud 'Gego' Louise Goldschmidt turned to art in the '60s and '70s in the midst of the Kinetic and geometric Abstract Art movements in Venezuela. *Movement and Vibration in Space: Sculpture by Gego* (1959), a film directed by Carlos Cruz-Diez, documents the artist's framing and the movement of sculptures.

Relating to the classic Op and Kinetic works in this room are *Center Decenter* (2016) and *Tender Divisor* (2016), recent lenticular prints by musician and sound installation artist, Brian Eno, who attended Winchester College of Art in the 1960s.

In an effort to escape the Greenbergian obsession with flatness in abstract painting, Margaret Benyon patented

special glasses with differently coloured lenses through which the anaglyph paintings she created look three-dimensional. Often called 'the mother of British holography', she was one of the first artists to use holograms in her work in the early 1960s. *Squares 1, 2 and 3* was part of her solo exhibition *Holography* at Lisson Gallery in 1970.

Room 3

Painter, writer and designer Patrick Heron was an important figure in post-war painting. Living in Cornwall for most of his creative life he was one of the group of 'St Ives' artists which also included Ben Nicholson, Roger Hilton and, later, Irish artist Tony O'Malley. Obsessed by colour and light, Heron's work focusses on the effects of the juxtaposition of pure colour on the eye's retina.

John Hoyland emerged in the 1960s as another of Britain's leading abstract artists. His work is celebrated for its high key colour, quasi architectural forms, texture and exuberance of effect that coalesce into evocative images.

American artist and gallery owner Betty Parsons was one of the pioneers of the 'found object', using driftwood found on the beach to make colourful formal arrangements that can be considered both painting and sculpture. Parsons was introduced to the Irish art scene through her connection with Irish artist Brian O'Doherty whom she represented in her gallery.

Room 3a

Noel Sheridan represented Ireland at the Paris Biennale in 1960. His painting *Blue Office* (1967) reveals his preoccupation with paint, despite his equal position

as a Performance and Conceptual artist. Sheridan was director of the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide, Australia from 1975 to 1980 and won the Emeritus Medal for cultural contribution from the Australia Council for the Arts in 1994. He was also Director of the National College of Art & Design, Dublin from 1980 - 1999.

Room 4

A key work of the period is the ground breaking *Aspen 5+6* (1967), a double issue of the experimental New York magazine, assembled, curated and edited by Brian O'Doherty. Known as 'The Minimalism Issue' it comprises a multimedia exhibition in a box, consisting of artworks, recordings and theoretical writings and is recognised as the first conceptual exhibition that did away with the gallery space.

Delivered to subscribers in a two-piece white box containing 28 items, *Aspen 5+6* includes contributions by artists such as Robert Morris, Robert Rauschenberg, Mel Bochner, essays by Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, sound recordings by Marcel Duchamp, William S. Burroughs, Jack McGowan's recording of a text by Samuel Beckett, as well as music scores and DIY miniature cardboard sculptures.

Invited to respond to *Aspen 5+6*, the Orthogonal Methods Group (OMG) is a group of artists and non-engineering researchers based at CONNECT, Ireland's research centre for future networks and communications based at Trinity College, Dublin. Here OMG draw together two projects from 1967: *Experiments in Art and Technology* (E.A.T.) founded by Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Klüver and *Aspen 5 + 6* edited by Brian O'Doherty. *Aspen's* three essays become source

material for parallel Twitter feeds displayed in the room. Also featured is video footage of Julie Martin, co-founder of Experiments in Art and Technology, 'unboxing' *Aspen 5+6*. This event, called 'A Conversation with Julie Martin: The History Of E.A.T.', took place at IMMA in December 2017.

Room 5

Anita Groener is concerned with ideas of journey and the road as a symbol of contemporary culture. *Frequency* (2004-2005) was created during a time when the artist travelled long journeys by car, back and forth between Ireland and the continent, an experience which triggered her thinking about temporality and relationship with place.

Often merging photography and text, Hamish Fulton's walks, undertaken since the late 1960s, originate in a concern for the land and the landscape - what today is referred to as 'environmental concern'. Fulton presents the increasingly difficult possibility of a human connection with nature, made actual by the walk. Works on display are typical of Fulton's documentation of his progression through the landscape.

Born in Czechoslovakia of German parents, Gerda Frömel moved to Ireland in 1956. She worked in bronze, marble, alabaster and stainless steel. Frömel made use of simple forms such as circles, lines and spirals to communicate her observations from nature and the celestial. In particular, the moon and its reflection were denoted with the simplest of visual codes.

Room 5a

Concepts of Irishness were immortalised in John Hinde's emblematic postcards of the West of Ireland including the iconic *Collecting Turf from the Bog, Connemara, Co. Galway, Ireland*. All of Hinde's images were heightened for effect, in conception, composition and often involved collage and colour saturation.

Room 6

Land artist Richard Long's sculptural methods, choice of materials and use of form are remarkably individual. His art - typically walks, sculptures and mud works - are often in isolated landscapes. Land art, known also as environmental art, emerged in the 1960s and '70s and expanded boundaries of what art is by taking it into remote locations and using materials of the earth such as rocks, water, vegetation. Often such works only survive as photo documentation. *Kilkenny Limestone* (1991) was commissioned for IMMA's inaugural exhibition in 1991.

Nature and history also form the essential themes in Tony O'Malley's highly distinctive work. His paintings, on everything from scraps of recycled paper and canvas to the discarded hoops of an old Guinness barrel, celebrate the medieval and Gaelic associations of such places as Callan, Jerpoint, and Kells, Co. Kilkenny, as well as his ancestral roots in Clare Island on the west coast of Co. Mayo.

Michael Mulcahy is most prominently associated in Ireland with the emergence of a highly expressionistic turn in painting internationally from the early 1980s. *The Navigator* (1982), like much of his earlier work, expresses

brooding sexual desire and reflects the artist's nomadic travels in diverse coastal locations.

Room 7

Initially gaining recognition for his skill as a draughtsman, since the 1990s Donald Teskey has taken the Irish landscape, particularly the western coastline, as the subject of his work. Reflecting on his work, the artist commented, "it's only in the last few years that I've come around to the idea of the free landscape. It took a while because I think when it came to landscape, it was a question of finding an organic structure that allows the paint to speak."

Northern Irish painter T.P. Flanagan developed a distinctive body of landscape painting, memorably along the shores near Lissadell House, Co. Sligo, home of the Gore-Booths with strong links to W.B. Yeats and the Irish literary revival. Of his Lissadell Series the artist commented: "I have tried to record impressions of light in the western sky, to evoke the sound of the sea... and used space, shapes and colours that seemed to me essential to what I was trying to say".

Room 8

Fifty-two works by British painter Lucian Freud (1922-2011) are on long-term loan to IMMA as part of *IMMA Collection: Freud Project* (2016-2021). Three paintings and a copper plate from this loan are on display here, while many of the remaining works can be viewed in the Freud Centre as part of *The Ethics of Scrutiny*, Curated by Daphne Wright.

Pat Doherty is the sitter for Freud's *Donegal Man* works. Shown together,

the three paintings and copper etching plate demonstrate the artist's analytical approach to his subjects. In *Portrait of Donegal Man, Fragment* (2006) we can see how Freud built up the sitter's facial features in small painted sections. The way that he made these portraits is reminiscent of early landscape paintings by Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) that were made by building up small individual sections of flat colour.

Nick Miller's *Whitethorn, truck view* (2001) is part of a series of paintings and drawings by Miller produced under the banner of *Trucksapes*. The landscape is painted from a converted truck used by the artist as a mobile studio from 1997 to 2013. Referring to the work on display here, Miller stated "I painted this small tree many times, but in this work encountering it like a person's physical presence for the first time, through the truck door, I really began to understand landscape in terms of portraiture".

Helena Gorey's highly abstract artworks attempt to find a visual expression for the scientific laws governing natural phenomena such as the wind's movement or changing light conditions. Her film *Red 1* (2002) pays homage to the endless diversity hidden in the overall order of the universe.

Room 9

Clare Langan evokes feelings of nostalgia, loss, and isolation in her atmospheric films. *Forty Below* (1999) depicts a world where the delicate balance of nature has been upturned and submerged in water, where there is weightlessness, a lack of gravity; where time and place merge and the division between earth and sky become unclear.

Room 10

Scaled to fit the floor of the gallery and providing a distinctive ground for other artworks present, this iteration of Tim Robinson's *Map of Aran* echoes Robinson's earlier environmental/Land artworks of the 1960s that invite the spectator's physical engagement. The map includes all the place names replete with the history and lore of the Aran topography. A mathematician by training, Timothy Drever/ Robinson became a visual artist, producing abstract paintings and then environmental and conceptual works in the 1960s. In 1972 the artist moved from London to the Aran Islands, shifting his attention to writing and cartography.

Sean McSweeney's work, such as *The White Road to the Sea* (1965), reveals in an abstracted mode the artist's fascination with the changing nature of light on the mountains, shoreline and boglands.

Belfast born painter Paul Henry has been credited with the creation of a particular notion of Irish identity in the 20th century, based on the landscape and lifestyle of the West of Ireland. Our universal attachment to a sense of place underpins Henry's deceptively simple images.

Anne Madden's painting *Mountain Sequence Red Quadripartite* (1967) is a large-scale fluid abstraction of The Burren's rock and land; a response to the calciferous and glaciated terrain. Madden uses processes of flow and sedimentation with paint and sand that are poured layer-upon-layer onto horizontally laid canvasses.

Working in bronze, marble, alabaster and stainless steel, Gerda Frömel's early symbolist sculpture developed towards

pure abstraction, capturing light and movement through the materials and simplicity of form.

Room 11

In this section we find *Tabernacle* (2013), a monumental work by Dorothy Cross in which a life-size currach forms the roof of a hut-like structure that opens towards a projection of her video *Sea Cave* (2013), shot near the bottom of her land in Connemara, only accessible a few days a year due to tides. Cross previously used the Currach as part of her set design for the English National Opera's 2008 production of J.M. Synge's haunting play 'Riders to the Sea', (1903) directed by Fiona Shaw.

Encouraged to go to the Aran Islands by his friend W.B. Yeats, John Millington Synge made photographs of the Aran Islanders during his visits there between 1898 and 1902. His writings were impactful on many including filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty who shot 'Man of Aran' in 1934 and the anarchic French writer and theatre visionary Antonin Artaud who came to Aran in 1937.

Limited Editions

Four limited edition prints by Tim Robinson are available to purchase at the IMMA shop.

IMMA would like to thank the artists and the artists' estates.

Thanks to the Orthogonal Methods Group (OMG) at CONNECT.

IMMA wishes to thank those who have generously donated artworks to the IMMA Collection and acknowledges the valuable contribution they have made to the development of the National Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art.

We would also like to sincerely thank our invaluable IMMA Patrons and Members.

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For a full programme of IMMA talks and events relating to *Coast-Lines*, please see the IMMA website. Please note advance online booking is essential. www.imma.ie

Have a question about an artwork? Want to know more? Ask any member of our Visitor Engagement Team, easily identifiable through their blue lanyards.

Front Cover

Hamish Fulton

Fourteen Coast to Coast Walks. British Isles
from 'Fourteen Works' 1971 - 1987

Lithograph

98.3 x 70 cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Loan, Weltkunst Foundation, 1994

Photograph by Olive Barrett

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