

Associated Talks and Events

Curator's Talk & Exhibition Preview Thurs 12 Oct, 6pm / Lecture Room

Seán Kissane, Curator, Exhibitions, IMMA, introduces the retrospective of William Crozier. Kissane considers the darker impetus behind Crozier's early works that continued throughout Crozier's career. Admission is free but tickets must be booked in advance from www.imma.ie

Curator's Lunchtime Talk / William Crozier: *The Edge of the Landscape* – Drop In Friday 19 January 2018, 1.15pm / Meeting Point, IMMA Main Reception

Join Seán Kissane for a gallery walk through of William Crozier: *The Edge of the Landscape* where a selection of artworks and key exhibition themes will be explored in the galleries. Spaces are limited.

Lecture / Sarah Victoria Turner *Savagery, just beneath the surface:* *William Crozier's early work* Wednesday 14 March 2018, 6.30pm, Johnston Suite, IMMA

William Crozier's early work bursts across the canvas with an intensity of purpose and a raw energy, capturing something of the fear, anxieties, and also the ambitions, of the post-war period. Returning to the London art world into which Crozier arrived in 1957, this talk will situate Crozier's painting within the artistic and intellectual circles which shaped Crozier and his early work. Crozier was not part of any one group, rather his early career was shaped by a diverse and international constellation of characters and relationships. By following Crozier to London in the 1950s and early '60s – a journey which takes us via Glasgow, Paris, Dublin, Folkstone and Essex – we can map something of a more expansive history of post-war painting and connections to the work of other artists such as Lucian Freud and Frank Bowling. For a full programme of talks and events and for booking visit www.imma.ie

For further information contact
talksandlectures@imma.ie

Exhibition curated by Seán Kissane,
Curator: Exhibitions

IMMA wishes to thank those who have generously lent to the exhibition: Ruth Borchard Collection; Piano Nobile, Robert Travers (Works of Art) Ltd; Flowers Gallery, London; Hillsboro Fine Art, Dublin; Crawford Art Gallery, Cork; Katharine Crouan and the Estate of William Crozier. Our thanks to the many private collectors who lent to the exhibition.

Special thanks to Katharine Crouan for her invaluable support for this exhibition, along with Ann Davoren at Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre.

This exhibition is generously supported by the Crozier Circle: Mareta and Conor Doyle, Celtic Ross Hotel, Kelly's Resort Hotel and the donors that wish to remain anonymous.

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

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

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(front cover)
Self Portrait, c.1961, Oil on canvas
76 x 53.5 cm
Ruth Borchard Collection

Catalogue

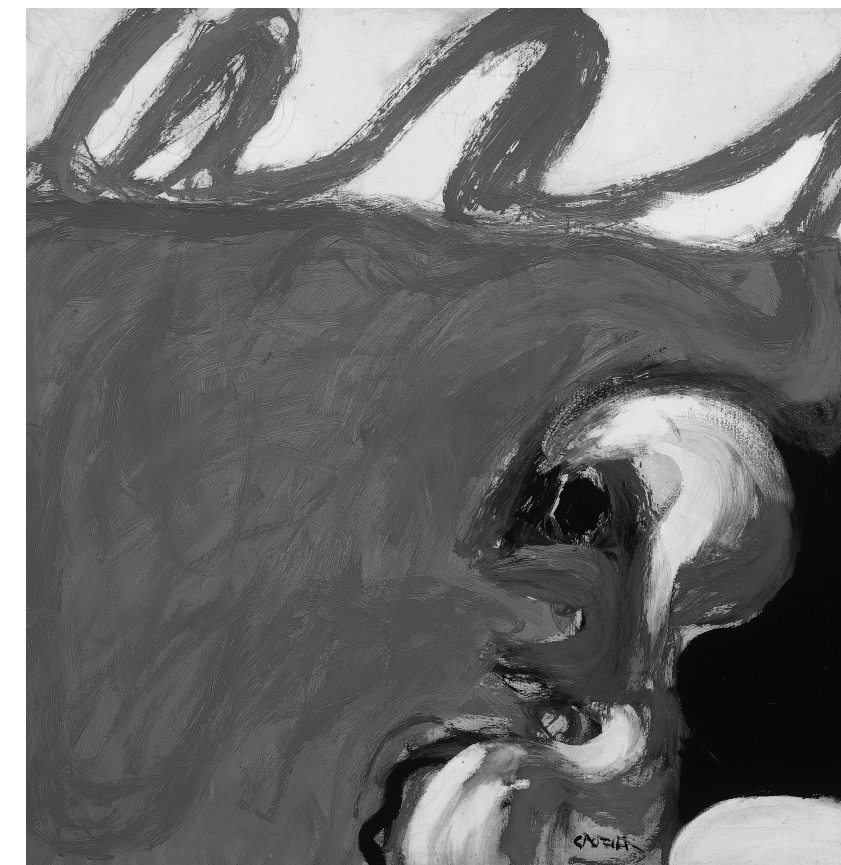
The Edge of the Landscape is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue with texts by Riann Coulter, Curator at the F.E. McWilliam Gallery and Studios, County Down, Katharine Crouan, art historian and former Head of Winchester School of Art and wife of the late William Crozier, Mark Hudson, writer, journalist, and critic for The Telegraph, Enrique Juncosa, poet and former Director, IMMA, Seán Kissane, Curator, Exhibitions, IMMA and Dr Sarah Turner, Deputy Director for Research at the Paul Mellon Centre. Available from the IMMA Shop €30.00.

Limited Edition

An edition by William Crozier *Untitled, Kilcoe Strand* is presented by IMMA in association with the Artist's Estate and The Graphic Studio, Dublin on the occasion of *William Crozier: The Edge of the Landscape*. Photo-intaglio on archival etching paper, *Untitled, Kilcoe Strand* is a Limited edition of 120, each stamped and signed by the William Crozier Estate. Price: Unframed: 38.5 x 30.5 cm – €95.00

IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
EAST WING
13 OCTOBER 2017 – 08 APRIL 2018

William Crozier: The Edge of the Landscape



Exhibition kindly supported by:



We are delighted to present the first major presentation of William Crozier's work in Ireland since the retrospective held at Crawford Art Gallery, Cork and the RHA, Dublin in 1991. The first part of this exhibition was held at *Uillinn* West Cork Arts Centre in July and August of this year.

Although best-known here for the lyrical landscapes he made close to his home in West Cork from the mid-1980s, William Crozier (b. Glasgow 1930 d. Cork 2011) built his reputation on bleak views of the British landscape that he began to exhibit in London the 1950s and which are imbued with the darkness and pessimism of the period. Crozier's time spent in Paris in the 40s and 50s, and his encounter with the Existential writings of Jean-Paul Sartre gave a voice to this post-war feeling. In the early 60s the human figure entered the work, but it is often interred in a blasted landscape. Later in the 70s, reference is made to contemporary political events such as The Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the body is shown flayed and skeletal, weaving together concerns with religion, violence and society. This exhibition presents an overview of his work and aims to show a continuum in his practice. The paintings are loosely arranged in reverse chronological order.

1950s

The First and Second World Wars directly inspired many artists like William Orpen and Paul Nash whose images of the horrors of trench warfare came to symbolise the wanton destruction of that period. William Crozier was fifteen years old when WWII came to an end – he was too young to be conscripted, but old enough to be deeply scarred by its effects. He began to exhibit these paintings in London in the late 1950s. These are cold and anti-Romantic, slicing through the land to see what is underneath its skin. The use of household paint is an anti-art statement and a rejection of his fine-art training.

These are bleak views of the British landscape, dark and pessimistic and the cloud forms can reference the constant threat of nuclear war in the 50s and 60s. His friend the poet Anthony Cronin wrote about this period thus: “It is difficult to describe it now and to describe the kind of malaise that hung on the air; difficult also to decide on the reasons for this: was it the bomb that hung over people’s heads? Was it the camps? I think the worst thing about the camps was the view, the aspect of human nature they revealed. It wasn't so much the suffering of the victims, but the appalling view of human nature we were forced to contemplate and indeed have been forced to contemplate ever since in new contexts.”

1960s

Crozier's time spent in Paris in the 40s and 50s, and his encounter with the Existential writings of Jean-Paul Sartre gave a voice to post-war malaise and became a touchstone for the work he would make over the next fifty years. The isolated, existential, human figure enters his work at this time, but it is flayed or interred in a blasted landscape. In the early 60s he moved to Spain and lived close to Malaga. There he was exposed to Spanish folk art and Mexican prints and he absorbed the intensity of the Mediterranean landscape, the colours of which charged his paintings with a kind of energy that immediately changed the palette of his work. Although works like *Lees End* appear abstract in form, in fact they representational. We see twisted vines growing through metal supports, there is a hill in the background and the sky is lit with a bright intensity.

1960s – 1970s (Room 3 and Corridor)

The horror of wartime concentration camps and the atom bomb is of vital importance when considering Crozier's work up until around 1975 and offers a way of reading these keys works. The image of the screaming head with the flesh apparently burning from the bones could be an imagined scene from Hiroshima. The crouching figures, half-man, half-skeleton speaks of the horror of war and Crozier's disgust on seeing the concentration camps at Bergen-Belsen in 1969. His image seems to deal with the ghosts of these people, their undead spirits. It is always a single individual that we see, that existential figure of the outsider. Later works like *Crossmaglen Crucifixion* (1975) weave concerns with religion, violence and society. He was appalled by the atrocities committed by both sides in The Troubles in Northern Ireland and appropriated Christian iconography to make a deeply-critical political and religious image.

1980s

Returning to London from an extended period in Spain in the mid-60s he found that the seriousness of his work was out of step with the prevailing fashions for American abstraction and Pop-Art. At this time he began to teach and in 1968 was appointed Head of Fine Art at Winchester School of Art where he would remain for the next twenty years. The landscape around Winchester effected a change in his image-making. He created paintings in the grand European style with large gestural canvasses, often made in one day, describing his surroundings. Around this time he also abandoned the use of the body or skeleton saying that he had begun to 'manufacture the quality of torment and isolation', but significantly he also admitted that the landscapes that followed were the same scenes but without the skeletal figures.

In 1985 he sprang onto the Irish cultural stage when his painting *The Rowan Tree* (1982) won first prize at the exhibition 'Cork Art Now' at the Crawford Art Gallery. Billed as a major survey of Irish art, it is ironic that Crozier's picture was neither made in Ireland nor had an Irish subject; but indicative of the way that he was fully embraced as an Irish artist when he began to exhibit here in the mid-80s.

1990s – 2010

Crozier's relationship with Ireland deepened when he adopted Irish citizenship in 1973 and finally bought a home in West Cork in 1983. This began a hugely productive period of work as he grappled with the powerful landscape there. He would go on to produce some of the most iconic works of the Irish landscape made in the latter half of the twentieth century. Only ten years separate Crozier's Existential works from the earliest of his paintings inspired by the landscape of West Cork. Often described as 'lyrical' and praised for their vibrant colours many viewers are unaware of the deeply political context from which they emerge. His colours are that of the European Expressionists and employed by those artists to convey ideas of the inner life of the artist or alienation.

For Crozier the landscape was the source of his visceral paintings. Instinctive, animated brush strokes convey the primitive energy he unearthed in the natural world. This is evident in both the lyrical landscapes of his West-Cork work, and the ravaged landscapes of this earlier period; symbolising the torment and fear of the post-war condition at the heart of existentialism. William Crozier turned to landscape painting at a time when abstraction was dominating artistic discourse, a gesture typical of an artist who consistently sought an individual vision and artistic path. Crozier's connections to European painting and writers single him out as a unique voice. His quotation of Existentialism, and his expressionist style create very potent images - yet few of these seminal works have been seen in major exhibitions. This exhibition seeks to address that gap and reposition Crozier as a central post-war painter.