The moderns
The Arts in Ireland from the 1900s to the 1970s
The Moderns presents a survey of Irish Art from the 1900s to the 1970s, covering the whole period of what is widely referred to as Modernism. It is a period which extends from Roderic O’Conor and William Leech to Sean Scully and James Coleman. During these years the idea of progress was unquestionable, generating constant and radical formal innovations in the arts giving rise to movements such as Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism and different forms of abstraction. This course began to change in the late 1960s and early 1970s, after the appearance of Conceptual Art, when meaning was seen as something as important as form, a situation which still pertains today. It has very often been said that Modernism did not really happen in Ireland, but clearly a lot of the best art produced here demonstrates a knowledge and awareness of international ideas, even if those were filtered through or tinted with local myths, beliefs, traditions, history or politics.

The exhibition occupies all the first floor of the Royal Hospital as well as the Gordon Lambert Galleries on the ground floor, and in sheer scale is one of the most ambitious projects ever organised by IMMA. The Moderns is also a multi-disciplinary exhibition, presenting more or less chronologically developments in architecture, design, film, literature and music, as well as visual arts. Some major figures and movements have dedicated spaces in the show such as J.M. Synge, Eileen Gray, Mainie Jellett and Cubism, Jack B. Yeats, Social Realism, Surrealism, Louis le Brocquy, Samuel Beckett – whose only film we present as a major work in the visual arts canon; William Scott, Scott Tallon Walker; Patrick Scott, Kinetic Art, Brian O’Doherty, Pop Art, James Coleman and Michael Craig-Martin and the beginning of Conceptualism. The Moderns focus is on the arts in Ireland, but also includes some works of non-Irish artists, whose influence has had special relevance to what was being done here, such as Oskar Kokoschka, Giorgio de Chirico, Lucian Freud, Pierre Soulages and Patrick Caulfield.

Photography has also been given special emphasis in the exhibition, highlighting the significance of the work of artists like Fergus Bourke and Bill Doyle. This element has been curated by Tanya Kiang and Trish Lambe of the Gallery of Photography. IMMA would also like to acknowledge the assistance of DoCoMoMo Ireland, the local chapter of the international working party devoted to the documentation and conservation of modern movement architecture.

Besides works from the IMMA collection, The Moderns includes substantial loans from The National Library & Photographic Archive, The National Museum at Collins Barracks, Trinity College Dublin, The Crawford Art Gallery, The Hunt Museum, Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane and Tate, as well as numerous private collections in Ireland and beyond. IMMA would like to thank them all.

The Moderns will be accompanied by a major publication which will appear in January with essays among others by Bruce Arnold, Luke Gibbons, Robert O’Byrne, Aidan Dunne and Christina Kennedy. It is also accompanied by a series of films at the Irish Film Institute and an extensive programme of talks and lectures.

The exhibition has been curated by Christina Kennedy, Senior Curator, Head of Collections and myself, with the assistance of Brian Cass, Curatorial Co-ordinator, Nuria Carballeira, Collections Registrar (acting), Séamus McCormack, Assistant Curator, Johanne Mullan, National Programmer, Marguerite O’Molloy, Assistant Curator, Georgie Thompson, Assistant Curator, Hannah Brogan and Barry Kehoe. My thanks also to Gale Scanlan, Operations Manager, Cillian Hayes, Technical Supervisor, Edmond Kiely and team.

Enrique Juncosa
Director, IMMA.
The artists in this room travelled to France at the beginning of the 20th century, where they practised *plein-air* painting and were influenced by their post-Impressionist continental contemporaries. Recent developments in the packaging of paints had given a new mobility to artists and fuelled interest in painting outdoors, particularly in France.

Artists concerned with the transformative qualities of light began to use faster, spontaneous painting techniques. William Leech’s seascape was painted in Concarneau, a Breton village which attracted artists working *en plein air*.

In *Orchard and Mountain* (1913), Roderic O’Conor’s vigorous use of paint and colour contrast reminds us of his friendship and shared aesthetic with Paul Gauguin. Henry Phelan Gibb’s *Paysage* (1906) demonstrates purity of colour and spontaneous brush-strokes, as was favoured by the Fauves.

John Millington Synge travelled to the Aran Islands for the first time in 1898, bringing a camera to document the islanders’ lives. The Aran photographs, along with his writings, represented an act of cultural nationalism that would help transform the representation of Irishness in the 20th century.

George Bernard Shaw was an early supporter of photography as a serious art form. Buying his first camera in 1898, he kept up his hobby until his death in 1950. His images show how he became fascinated with all aspects of photography, incorporating it into his daily life.

In 1910, Roger Casement was sent by the British government to investigate alleged humanitarian abuses against tribes in the Putumayo region of Peru who worked to service the needs of the local rubber traders and the automobile industries in the West. Bringing his camera to record what he saw, this investigation was to be crucial in turning him into an Irish revolutionary.

James and Thomas Horgan were the first Irishmen to make film, which they featured in travelling shows. They opened a cinema in Youghal, Co. Cork, in 1917, and as part of this venture they made newsreel film of local interest, two of which are presented here.
In the early 20th century, Eileen Gray, May Guinness, Mainie Jellett, and Mary Swanzy studied in Paris and were influenced by the Modernist movement they witnessed there. Although Mainie Jellett and May Guinness both studied with the Cubist painter André Lhote (see Room 4), Guinness pursued Fauvism rather than Cubism before reaching her own individualistic style.

Mary Swanzy, like Eileen Gray, studied at the Académie Colarossi and is considered to be one of Ireland’s earliest abstract artists, her practice having evolved through numerous styles and included Cubism and Surrealism.

Eileen Gray’s architecture and furniture design is celebrated for its elegant combination of the Modernist aesthetic with a sense of practicality and comfort. Inspired by deck-chairs Gray saw on an ocean liner while travelling to America, her Transat Chair (1925-30) was named after the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (the French Line). One of two cabinets she designed, the Architect’s Cabinet (1925) exhibited here was used by Gray herself in her Paris apartment.

Whereas Gray designed innovative furniture throughout her career, it was only in the late 1920s that she began to work in architecture – a model of the house she designed for Jean Badovici, E-1027 (begun 1927), is also displayed here.

In 1909, Eileen Gray travelled to Morocco to learn weaving and wool-dyeing techniques and then opened a weaving workshop selling her rugs in Paris. Although Gray originally designed Saint-Tropez Rug in 1925, this hand-tufted rug was commissioned by her niece Prunella Clough in the 1970s and made by Donegal Carpets. Gouaches by Gray for other rug designs are displayed in Room 5.

In 1920, painters and friends Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone studied in Paris under the influential teacher André Lhote. A member of the Cubist movement, Lhote painted figurative and landscape works and was renowned as a teacher.

When Evie Hone returned to Ireland, she focused on stained-glass art, joining Sarah Purser’s co-operative An Túr Gloine, where she met and was influenced by Harry Clarke (Room 8b). In 1943, Hone and Jellett founded the Irish Exhibition of Living Art with Louis le Brocquy, Norah McGuinness and others (Room 14).
Father Francis Browne’s photographs constitute a valuable chronicle of life in the first part of the 20th century. Ordained as a Jesuit priest in 1915, he had begun taking photographs in 1897. He was aboard the doomed RMS Titanic, however he only had a ticket for the first leg of the journey, disembarking at Queenstown (Cobh), Co. Cork. His photographs of his time on board were to appear on the front pages of newspapers across the globe. Most of the images represented in this display were taken in Ireland. His duties allowed him to travel all over the country, building up a huge collection of negatives which lay forgotten until 25 years after his death in 1960.

Father E.E. O’Donnell, who unearthed the collection, brought the negatives to the attention of the features editor of the London Sunday Times, who said it was the ‘photographic equivalent to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls’. Father Browne’s ability as a photographer grew over the years, and his inherent artistic talent is clearly evident. His photographs have been compared to those of Henri Cartier-Bresson, but his work predates them. His images capture a unique view of social elements of an Ireland developing its post-independence identity.

The paintings in this room show Mainie Jellett’s development towards Abstract Cubism, which she and Evie Hone pursued under the guidance of the painter Albert Gleizes. Some of Jellett’s works, such as Madonna and Child (c.1937), point to her strongly spiritual outlook. Amongst other examples of Eileen Gray’s furniture designs, this room displays two of Gray’s lacquer boxes, a technique she perfected training with Japanese master Seizo Sugawara, and which she used frequently in her interiors. Although not as prolific a designer as Gray, Jellett also designed rugs and screens.

The painter and printmaker Stella Steyn repeatedly visited France, took a studio in Paris and travelled around the countryside making studies. She is thought to be the only Irish artist who studied at the famous design school the Bauhaus, Dessau.

Between 1897 and 1904, keen amateur photographer John J. Clarke took photographs in Dublin’s city centre. Originally from Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan, Clarke came to Dublin to study medicine at the Royal University, Earlsfort Terrace.

Photos from the Independent Newspapers (Ireland) Collection, are displayed in the adjacent room 4a and throughout the exhibition (rooms 8 and 15). The collection records aspects of 20th century Irish life, particularly politics and sport in Ireland.
Inspired by J.M. Synge’s *The Aran Islands* (Room 2), US ethnographic film-maker Robert J. Flaherty was drawn, as were so many other artists, to Aran as a last repository of simple primitive culture where he would record the conflict of man and nature. *Man of Aran* (1934) is centred on a family, composed of three unrelated islanders: Colman ‘Tiger’ King plays the title character – a no-nonsense fisherman – Maggie Dirrane plays his wife and Michael Dillane his young son.

Flaherty believed that documentary narrative should ‘come out of the life of a people, not from the actions of individuals’. In *Man of Aran*, Flaherty aspired to show people in a Rousseau-esque natural state, braving the elements and maintaining a way of life that by all appearances existed unmarked by Mankind’s modern technology or lifestyles.

His powerful homage to these lives, which includes superbly photographed documentary and anachronistic re-creation of outmoded island practices, is given further impact and rhythm through exceptional montage editing.

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Youngest of an unusually artistic family (his brother was the poet W.B. Yeats), Jack B. Yeats credited his childhood in the countryside of Sligo, with its atmosphere, light and landscape, for his becoming a painter. Initially, Yeats established himself as an illustrator for journals and other publications. In 1907, he painted his first landscape in oils, which from then onwards remained his main medium.

The early works in oils are characterised by subdued colours with strong tonal contrast. By the mid 1920s, his painting style significantly changed to using thick impasto with vigorous brush-strokes and deep visual colour, in which forms are more hinted at than firmly established. In these works, he documents and creates the life of Ireland – from horse-races, boxing matches, emigration, funerals and later moving into landscapes of visionary imaginative geographies, meshing the local with the universality of experience.

His evolving style bears comparison with that of Austrian painter Oskar Kokoschka with whom he was acquainted. His later works appear to dramatise a struggle between appearance and essence, with images emerging from a moving pattern of paint and colour in which we glance at an elusive reality.
Paul and Grace Henry made their first trip to Achill Island in 1910, remaining there until 1919. For Paul Henry, Achill's rugged landscape and peasant life provided the inspiration he was looking for, allowing him to take a contemporary artistic language – inspired by Millet, Whistler and Van Gogh – and turn it towards Irish subject-matter. Several of his paintings involve figures, such as The Watcher (1911) and The Spoil of the Sea (1916), but he mainly worked in the genre of landscape. The treatment of light, the expansive sky and cloud formations together with a sense of stillness are typical features.

While Grace Henry was not as settled in Achill, nevertheless she was similarly inspired. Both The Rosary (c.1912) and Misty Moonlight (c.1912) demonstrate a different treatment of Achill life from her husband’s, evident in the expressive way she plays with perspective and simplifies, flattens and outlines forms.

The Congested Districts Board was established to alleviate poverty in the most disadvantaged places along the western seaboard. Families were moved out of these areas into single houses, such as the dwelling in the photographs by Robert J. Welch.

Photos from the Independent Newspapers (Ireland) Collection are displayed throughout the exhibition and record aspects of 20th-century Irish life.

Harry Clarke was an Irish stained-glass artist but started his career in London as a book illustrator. His first printed work was Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Anderson (1916), followed by an edition of Edgar Allan Poe’s Tales of Mystery and Imagination. The first version of this title (1919) was restricted to monotone illustrations, while a second iteration, with 8 colour plates and more than 24 monotone images, was published in 1923. His edition of Goethe’s Faust (1925), containing 8 colour plates and more than 70 monotone and duotone images is perhaps his most famous work.

His style is notably influenced by movements of the time and of the recent past (Art Deco, Art Nouveau and Aubrey Beardsley-style Aestheticism) but also informed by his stained-glass training and a very dark, gothic approach.

Together with Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Kay Nielsen, he was responsible for what is now considered one of the golden ages of book illustration.

His final commission, Selected Poems of Algernon Swinburne (1928), was banned in Ireland due to the illustrations’ licentiousness. His most famous stained glass is in the Honan Chapel, University College Cork.
The building of the hydro-electric dam at Ardnaclusha on the River Shannon (1925-9) was the first major building programme of the Free State since the Civil War and, as such, a symbol of modernity and civic pride.

Academic realist and later staunch opponent of Modernism, Sean Keating created a suite of 26 works (two of which are seen here) documenting the scheme of works, conveying his excitement by technology while allegorising the departure from the past. Keating’s paintings of this period and Maurice MacGonigal’s painting Dockers (1934) which is a conscious effort to create an imagery of urban workers, are in parallel with the sort of Socialist Realism developed in the USSR at this time.

Although Harry Kernoff’s early interest in avant-garde art, especially German Expressionism, later gave way to a more representational style, nevertheless his work retains a distinctive angular stylisation, such as seen here in The Twins: There’s only a few of us left (c.1935).

Cecil Salkeld studied at the Kunstakademie at Kassel from 1921, where he was influenced by the German Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) movement, which along with Cubism was the main European artistic influence on the interwar Irish arts scene. Here, his woodcuts show his debt to the contemporary German printmaking of Otto Dix and George Grosz but without the social criticism.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, a number of English artists came to Ireland where they formed the White Stag Group. Its principal members were Kenneth Hall and Basil Rákóczi. They brought with them the influences of Picasso and Surrealism, filtered through their experiments in psychoanalytic techniques and terming their artistic output ‘Subjective Art’.

Rákóczi’s Child Flying (1943) is a prime example; its significance is underlined by its reproduction on the cover of the 1945 exhibition catalogue Three Painters. This included work by Kenneth Hall, Basil Rákóczi and Patrick Scott, with text by psychiatrist and White Stag patron/member Dr Herbrand Ingouville-Williams, seen in the nearby vitrine. It was his coat of arms which provided the name of the group.

The White Stag Group had no manifesto nor official membership, but a number of Irish artists, such as Patrick Scott, Ralph Cusack, Thurloe Conolly, Dairine Vanston and Mainie Jellett, associated and exhibited with it, inspired by its innovation and detachment from the conservative indigenous atmosphere.

As well as exhibiting its own works, the White Stag Group often included loans of works by Picasso, Juan Gris, Raoul Dufy, Albert Gleizes and others, a strategy which raised Irish awareness of Modernism.
Henry Moore’s Modernism had a direct influence on several generations of artists of both British and international reputation. He began in the early 1930s with direct carving from materials, often stone, later casting in bronze; his exploration of this form led him to increased abstraction. One of his abiding themes was the reclining female figure, rendered undulating like a landscape, with alternating convex and concave shapes penetrated by spaces piercing directly through the body. Moore’s early sketches show the influence of Primitivism, Picasso and Surrealism. Works by him were exhibited in Ireland at the IELA during the 1940s and ’50s.

Northern Irish sculptor F.E. McWilliam was a fellow student of Moore’s at the Slade and a lifelong friend. His *Woman with Arms Crossed* (1935) is in tune with the Primitivist works of Brancusi and the Surrealist interest in dreams and chance.

English-born Nevill Johnson worked in Belfast and Dublin between 1934 and 1958. Although by his own account most influenced by Picasso, works such as *Linenscape* (1945) recall the hallucinatory landscapes of Salvador Dalí.

Giorgio de Chirico’s haunting, metaphysical paintings of 1909-19, of which *Il Trovatore* (c.1960) is a later variation, were a strong influence on the development of Surrealism itself.

The collaboration between photographer/ film-maker George Morrison and composer Seán Ó Riada resulted in the historical documentary *Mise Éire* (1959); its narrative sets colonial domination against growing Irish resistance from the 1890s until 1918. *Mise Éire* was the first full-length Irish-language film and the first Irish film ever to be scored for a full orchestra. Painstaking research in Ireland, Britain and France gave Morrison access to historical news footage and photographic images in the making of what is a narrative told in montage – held together by Seán Mac Réamoinn’s commentary and Ó Riada’s score.

A crucial figure in 20th-century Irish music, Seán Ó Riada is further represented with the score of his *Nomos no. 1: Hercules Dux Ferrariae* (1957). He also formed the group Ceoltóirí Chualann, which included many of the founding members of the Chieftains, who recorded for Claddagh Records.

Claddagh Records was founded in 1959 by Garech de Brún and Ivor Browne. It not only released albums by many of the best traditional musicians but also by leading literary figures, inviting artists to design its record covers.

Brian Boydell’s music of the 1940s and 1950s was among the most modern musical achievements of the time in Ireland and is represented here with the score of his *In Memoriam Mahatma Gandhi* (1948).
Room 13

This room provides examples of contemporary art produced in Northern Ireland. Every artist here was born in Belfast, except for the Wicklow-born George Campbell, who started painting in the city in 1941, partly in reaction to the Luftwaffe bombing raid.

John Luke was involved with the short-lived Northern Ireland Guild of Artists, a forum in which young, progressive artists – usually excluded from the Ulster Academy – could meet and exhibit. Included here is an early self-portrait and Goat and Mountain (1935), the latter demonstrating Luke’s prevailing interest in using landscape as subject-matter. Colin Middleton is known for his chameleon-like changes of style, for example from Surrealism (Opus 1, No. 15, 1941 and Fish and Chips, 1939) to Cubism (The Family, 1940). Gerard Dillon worked for several years as a painter and decorator, a theme depicted in Interior Decorators (1945). Self-taught, Dillon has cited Sean Keating and Marc Chagall as influences, with subject-matter often being ordinary people and their customs. Daniel O’Neill’s Donegal Couple (undated) has a static, unreal quality, due to his typically dark palette.

George Campbell exhibited alongside fellow Northern Irish artists Middleton, Dillon, O’Neill and Nevill Johnson in the Living Art exhibitions, and together they brought new ideas into what had predominantly been a Dublin-based scene.

Room 13b

Presented in this space are first editions of renowned literary works from the 1940s and ’50s by Patrick Kavanagh, Brendan Behan, Flann O’Brien and Anthony Cronin, as well as the first issue of X magazine.

On the wall above the vitrine is Edward McGuire’s Colour Dictionary, part of the artist’s studio contents donated to IMMA by the artist’s widow, Sally McGuire, and key to the colour scales used by McGuire in his portraits.

During this period, artistic and literary circles were close-knit in Dublin, with links to London also. In London, Irish artist Patrick Swift founded and co-edited X, a quarterly literary and arts magazine, 1959-62, which championed a number of young figurative painters including Francis Bacon and Frank Auerbach when the vogue was for abstract painting. It also featured various Irish writers, including some of the above.

First Floor East Wing
Room 14

The paintings in this area date from the 1940s and '50s and are by artists who exhibited with the Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA), established in 1943 to be an alternative to the Royal Hibernian Academy exhibitions, the academicism of which opposed the inclusion of the more progressive works.

A direct catalyst for the IELA's foundation by Mainie Jellett, Louis le Brocquy, Jack Hanlon and Norah McGuinness was the RHA's rejection of Louis le Brocquy's *The Spanish Shawl*. Pluralistic in ethos, IELA's selection committee was composed of Moderns and Academicians and was also open to the best of academic art. Its function was to 'make available to a large public a comprehensive survey of significant work, irrespective of School or manner, by living Irish artists'. As this excluded the innovative White Stag Group, the catchment was extended the following year to non-Irish artists. The IELA had a long life, continuing into the 1970s.

Of particular note here are two works by Norah McGuinness and Nano Reid, which were part of the set with which they jointly represented Ireland at the 1950 Venice Biennale. Nearby are two fine sculptures by Hilary Heron, who jointly represented Ireland with Louis le Brocquy there six years later.

Increased concern over the poor standard of design in Ireland contributed to the establishment in 1951 of the Arts Council. To generate greater public interest, it organised the International Design Exhibition (1954) and the Irish Design Exhibition (1956), which toured the country (see catalogue and posters in vitrine).

Meanwhile, there were inspired private initiatives too. In 1954, John McGuire, managing director of Brown Thomas, commissioned new linen designs from four leading artists – Louis le Brocquy, Nevill Johnson, Thurloe Connolly and Patrick Scott. Scott's design *Pubwall* derives from the traditional lozenge patterning seen in many pubs then (it appears in Harry Kernoff's painting *The Twins*, Room 9).

Signa Design Consultants was established in 1954 by Louis le Brocquy and Michael Scott, with the aim of creating a national design identity; it included painters, architects, sculptors and fashion, graphic and textile designers. Their output included publications, postage stamps and textile and furniture production.

Ceramicist John ffrench was known for his use of colour, decoration and experimental form, sensitivities developed whilst studying and working in Florence, Calcutta and Reykjavik in the 1950s. On returning to Ireland, he joined the Ring Ceramic Studio (established by Peter Brennan and Victor Waddington in 1945), and established Arklow Pottery Studio in the '60s.
This section mainly focuses on key architectural projects from the early years of the 1900s until the late 1950s. Starting with a selection of photographs of the Guinness Storehouse of 1903 – the first multi-storey steel-framed building in Ireland – next up are important examples of the so-called Free State architecture of the 1920s and ’30s, such as the Siemens-designed hydroelectric scheme at Ardnacrusha (1925-7, allegorised in a series of paintings by Sean Keating, two of which are exhibited in Room 9). Architectural historian Ellen Rowley describes the hydroelectric scheme as ‘encompassing all that the new state aspired towards in relation to indigenous material, rural site, modernist tropes and progressive technology’.

Housing and hospital developments from the 1930s onwards, as represented by Scott and Good’s drawing and Vincent Kelly’s Fever Hospital Kildare (c.1933), display an adaptation of European Modernist aesthetics to an Irish context.

Dublin Airport (Desmond Fitzgerald, 1937-41), the Aspro Factory at Inchicore, Dublin (Alan Hope, 1946-9) and the Busáras station at Store Street, Dublin (Michael Scott & Associates, 1944-53) are the highlights of an otherwise bleak and emigration-driven 1940s and 1950s, although a boom in schools and hospitals alleviates the picture. There was also the innovative work of Noel Moffett, as seen in his remarkable outdoor theatre on Achill Island.

The restraint and intensity of observation seen in Lucian Freud’s early works (e.g. *Head of a Boy*, 1956) influenced a number of Irish artists of this period, including Edward McGuire and Patrick Swift, whose *Forget-me-[K]nots on a Cane Table* (undated) is characterised by the same evenly diffused pale light.

Swift completed an artist’s residency at the Digswell Arts Trust, near Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, where he painted *Self Portrait in the Studio* (1959). He then moved to London, where among the Soho bohemia he met Francis Bacon and John Minton and befriended Lucian Freud, who used Swift’s flat and studio in Hatch Street when visiting Dublin.

Edward McGuire attended the Slade School, London in 1954-5, where he, too, was greatly affected by the work of Freud, who taught there. Back in Dublin, McGuire’s portraits of Dublin’s literati are characterised by stillness, frontality and schematic colouring. His first was the small water-colour *Portrait of Patrick Kavanagh* (1961). In 1968, McGuire executed the meticulously painted, full-length portrait of Garech de Brun surrounded by traditional Irish musical instruments symbolic of his role as founder of Claddagh Records. Other literary sitters included Pearse Hutchinson, Seamus Heaney and Anthony Cronin.
Broadly speaking, the portrait has been the basis of the art of Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon. Both treated it very differently. As seen in Room 16, Freud's early figures are sharply focused, rendered with an obsessive, almost neurotic, intensity. His two (from a suite of three) 1951 drawings of Francis Bacon (seen here) clearly show his preference for line over plane and volume. There are very few portraits of Bacon by other artists; Freud made two other oil portraits of him – one in 1951 (now missing), the other in 1956-7.

Unlike Freud, Bacon rarely worked from life, preferring to use photographs. His portraits continually negotiate between image and appearance. *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne* (1966) is realised in a unique method of spontaneous and improvisatory painting, in which the image is embodied in the brush-stroke's form and the paint's very texture. Also in this room is a sculpture by Edward Delaney, *The Bathers* (1962), whose stark pose and distorted form are reminiscent of Bacon's anguished figures in *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (c.1944). Just outside this room is a drawing by Alberto Giacometti, whose eviscerated sculptures made a strong impression on Bacon and Samuel Beckett (Room 19).

The post-war paintings of Louis le Brocquy and Francis Bacon are informed by a sense of isolation borne of existential anxiety and fear of nuclear apocalypse. Both self-taught, their work shows a continued preoccupation with the figurative when abstraction was becoming all the fashion, a factor which presumably contributed to their interest in each other's work and their friendship.

Le Brocquy painted *Young Woman (Anne)* in 1957, the year after he met artist Anne Madden. Painful operations on her spine following a riding accident formed the central inspiration for the series of 'Presences', in which form emerges from a white background. *Irish Rebel Hero: Reconstructed Head of Wolfe Tone* is from le Brocquy's *Ancestral Head* series of 1964-6, which was inspired by ritualistic clay Polynesian heads and totemic Celtic sculpture. This led to a further series, *Portrait Heads*, from the 1970s onwards, of which *Image of W.B. Yeats* (1976) is a fine example.

*Seated Woman* (1961), by Francis Bacon, features Muriel Belcher, the formidable proprietress of the Colony Room, Bacon's favourite Soho drinking den. The disturbing concavities and distortions of her form are typical of Bacon's unflinching rendering of the human predicament as he saw it, in all its rawness and isolation.
**Room 19**

Film (1965) by Samuel Beckett is included in *The Moderns* in order to consider Beckett as a visual artist. It is a key work of Irish Culture which connects with another unique Irish intellect, the 18th-century Bishop Berkley, and his philosophical contention “to be is to be perceived”. Gilles Deleuze described the 21-minute work as “the greatest Irish film”. Beckett chose Buster Keaton for the role when he couldn’t get Jack McGowran.

*Film* depicts Keaton moving furtively through the streets ahead of the camera, as though trying to avoid being observed by it. In the room to which he flees, he systematically counteracts anything that might allow him to be seen: he closes the curtains, drapes the mirror, even covers a parrot in its cage and a fish in its bowl. Later, awakening from a nap, he is confronted by his own image, in a visualisation which Beckett offers us of self-perception – the inexorable predator. Keaton’s famously implacable face no doubt contributed to Beckett’s materialisation of his ideas.

**Room 20**

William Scott has created an unmistakable visual language of abstracted forms, shapes and motifs. His first-hand experiences of American Abstract Expressionism were deeply influential, not least because of the large scale of the works he saw. The focus on a select number of motifs allowed Scott to develop a carefully structured pictorial language in which abstract qualities competed with the representational subject. Scott made frequent trips to Cornwall and became good friends with many artists of the St. Ives School, particularly Patrick Heron, who is represented in Room 21.

Photographer Bill Doyle revisited an area which became the inspiration for Robert J. Flaherty’s film *Man of Aran* (1934), John Millington Synge’s literary and indeed photographic records, and James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), in which the islands are described as the ‘latter end of the world’. Doyle illustrates a traditional scene of reverence on Inis Oírr, the easternmost of the three Aran islands. Always positioned behind the mourners, Doyle’s images are both distant yet let the viewer become part of this intimate scene.

**First Floor East Wing**
Tony O’Malley had a long connection with St. Ives, Cornwall, living and working there for 30 years. A friend of St. Ives School artists Peter Lanyon and Patrick Heron, O’Malley’s work of the 1960s and ’70s has a good deal in common with that of the School. Exploring the landscape and its hidden histories – O’Malley likened the Cornish landscape to that of Ireland – his paintings are suffused with an elemental energy, and he delved within, seeking revelations about the psyche, in what he termed ‘inscapes’.

Peter Lanyon was encouraged by the scale of Abstract Expressionism and went to extreme measures to observe the panoramic views of the Cornish landscape, dying in a gliding accident in August 1964. Patrick Heron reeled at the varied possibilities of colour; he analysed natural forms through his use of tones, the colour becoming both the subject and the means.

William Turnbull’s *Acrobat* (1951) portrays an upright, elongated figure balancing precariously upon a unicycle, limbs outstretched and risking a potential calamity. In the late 1940s, Turnbull visited influential sculptors Brancusi and Giacometti (Room 17a), both of whom were to have a profound impact on Turnbull’s exploration of sculpture, formally and conceptually.

Michael Kane has been actively engaged in the politics of art practice in Ireland since the 1960s. He published and edited *Structure*, a socio-political arts journal while continuing to create a large output of prints and paintings and being an uncompromising critic of injustice, inequality and ineptitude. A member of the Independent Artists Group, he founded Project 67 (later called the Project Arts Centre).

Another significant figure in Project 67’s formation was John Kelly, who was a founding member of the Independent Artists Group, which held its first exhibition in June 1960. An artist and printmaker, Kelly was also a playwright whose work was performed at the Gate Theatre, Dublin.

James McKenna, another founding member, consistently worked in a figurative mode, primarily in wood, but also in stone, bronze and concrete. Often inspired by Irish mythology and drawing inspiration from the European figurative tradition, his work ranges from the intimate to large-scale public commissions.

Also influenced by his European counterparts, in particular the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi, was New York-born Charles Brady. Widely recognised for his paintings of everyday objects, Brady’s *Italian Bottle* (1972) combines an intimate scale and a spare, almost minimal, aesthetic with an open, painterly approach.
Room 23

Basil Blackshaw and T.P. Flanagan are among the foremost Northern Irish painters of the generation that followed Daniel O’Neill and Colin Middleton. Blackshaw tends to delineate his paintings with horizontal and vertical markings. T.P. Flanagan is renowned for his evocation of close-up worlds, such as the low-lying, soft, watery Fermanagh landscape.

The Dutch artist Sonja Landweer first came to teach at the Kilkenny Design Workshops in the 1970s. Her colour palette is inspired by heather, rock and bog. She also absorbs the Irish landscape in a literal sense into her work, through her material use of Irish clay varieties and bog ash.

Barrie Cooke was deeply impressed by the sense of history that permeates the Irish landscape. He uses the human figure explicitly in his work and applies the same fluid brush-strokes in his treatment of the female nude as he does in his landscapes.

Elinor Wiltshire created a fascinating photographic documentation of Dublin during the 1950s and ‘60s, recording its inhabitants at work and play, at a time when the capital was in flux.

Australian artist Sidney Nolan makes particular use of Irish subject-matter, including Ned Kelly and the Wild Geese. His palette, however, is obviously influenced by his native Australia.

Room 23a

John Hinde’s images are deeply embedded in the minds of the Irish populace. In them, Ireland was presented as a commodity; his images project an idealised view of society – idyllic, traditional and positive. Hinde’s postcards, particularly rural views of the island, became part of the country’s marketing to an outside world.

Hinde stage-managed the photograph, in that colour was intensified and various negatives were composed to construct the image, aware that the end product was meant to be synonymous with freedom, choice and optimism. Terminal Building, Dublin Airport (1965-70) presents a Modernist and progressive view of Ireland; Desmond FitzGerald’s award-winning Terminal building, an Air Hostess, modern-day transport, and the presence of jet-setters embarking on a foreign trip. The lush green foliage and the pure blue sky assist in suggesting a more traditional side of Irish life.

Revisiting John Hinde’s images is particularly relevant today, as new advances in digital photography and image-manipulation question the boundaries between reality and artifice.

Photographers who worked with John Hinde Ltd. included Elmar Ludwig, Joan Willis, Edmund Nägele and David Noble.

First Floor West Wing
Landscape continued to be a dominant subject matter for Irish artists into the 1950s. Painters such as Patrick Collins, Sean McSweeney and Camille Souter hovered between abstraction and figuration. The style of these artists developed out of a fascination and connection with the Irish landscape.

For many, Patrick Collins is the link between the West of Ireland Romanticism of Jack B. Yeats, and the more abstract expressions of Irishness that later emerged. Misty hues dominate his palette: *Hy Brazil* and *Bird Against the Window* (both 1963) perfectly encapsulate his atmospheric style, with the subject hewn out of an abstract background.

In Souter's paintings, even the most random of marks may indicate the direction of a bird or a plane in full flight. Her tones are muted and mysterious, and the layering of paint suggests depth and hidden riches. Meanwhile, McSweeney's work reveals a fascination with the changing nature of the light on the mountains, shoreline and boglands.

As a sculptor and art teacher, the late Frank Morris left an enduring impact. One of his students was Michael Warren, who commented on his artistic approach: comparing woodcarving to peeling an onion, Morris removed layers of wood to uncover an ‘essential form’ at the core.

This room displays a range of art works created through the method of abstraction. Born during the 1960s and first half of the ’70s, these pieces convey a time when many artists chose to withdraw from the objective world and completely invalidate such notions as realism and symbolism.

Pierre Soulages, for example, uses black to dominate the canvas in a non-figurative manner. Painted over white, there appears to be a reflection of pictorial light emerging from beneath the darkness. For Patrick Scott, whose work reveals his architectural past, his *Autumnal Landscape* (1964) and *Purple Device* (1963) signal formality giving way to abstraction. Charles Tyrrell’s *Untitled* (1975), stylistically similar to Scott’s work, uses the canvas to explore paint’s qualities.

Like Scott, Anne Madden, Deborah Brown and Adolph Gottlieb (also exhibited in this room) drew inspiration from the world around them. For Scott, it was the bogs of Ireland, whereas Madden looked to her time spent in the West of Ireland to create abstract depictions over multiple canvases.

Brown acknowledges her connection with the land around Antrim, creating specifically landscape paintings in the 1940s before progressing to abstraction. For Gottlieb, it was the Great Western Deserts of Arizona, where he lived for a number of years.
Room 26

A qualified medical doctor and emerging artist when he left Dublin in 1957, Brian O'Doherty moved to New York, where he became one of the pioneers of Conceptual art as well as an influential writer and educationalist.

In 1972, he changed his name to Patrick Ireland, as a patriotic protest against the killing of civil rights marchers in Derry by British soldiers, an event known as Bloody Sunday. In celebration of peace in Northern Ireland, in 2008 he relinquished this identity in *The Burial of Patrick Ireland*, a performance which enacted a traditional wake and burial ritual at IMMA.

*The Rake's Progress* (1970) is one of a series of Ogham sculptures made between 1967 and 1971, so-called because of their use of the linear-scripted Ogham alphabet almost unique to pre-Christian Ireland. Its form, consisting of sets of lines, which in this case spell out the word ‘HERE’, is used by the artist to investigate through minimal means notions of self and location, enhanced by the reflective quality of the sculpture’s aluminium surfaces. In this and other works in this room, the artist engages language, serialism and minimal-conceptualist ideas to explore issues of perception and identity, through which also flows a fundamental corporeality.

Room 27

In the early 1970s, Cecil King began concentrating on the hard-edge paintings for which he is best-known. The play between flat surface and illusionist third dimension was a continuing preoccupation – the internal dynamics of colour and shape generating tension within his work.

Sculptor John Burke’s intimate understanding of his material is evident in the juxtaposition of simple geometric shapes forming abstract compositions in space. He was instrumental in spearheading a renaissance in sculptural practice in Cork during the 1970s, continued by his pupils Ellis O’Connell, Vivienne Roche and Maud Cotter, among others. Working in welded steel, Burke’s work was influenced by that of Anthony Caro and Alexander Calder.

Patrick Scott was invited to become the designer of the first Rosc exhibition in 1967; as well as designing the exhibition spaces, he devised the catalogue’s cover motif, as seen here in *Small Rosc Symbol*. Related to his series of *Device* paintings and tapestries, the motif was an irregular circle which could be interpreted as either an eye or an open mouth and was created in reference to the ambiguity contained in the title Rosc, translated as ‘the poetry of vision’. Scott designed the covers for subsequent Rosc catalogues in 1971, ’77 and ’80.
Room 28

James Coleman

Pheasant, c.1970
Projected Images, continuous
Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art
This area focuses on 1960s and '70s architecture, which was inextricably linked to (and often co-dependent with) visual art. The holistic approach was paramount in the work of architectural practices like Scott Tallon Walker Architects, Stephenson Gibney and Associates, Robinson, Keefe, Devane and ABK Architects – the work of all these firms is represented here.

During this period, the architectural landscape of Ireland (in particular Dublin) was enhanced through the development of landmark buildings, such as the Central Bank of Ireland (Sam Stephenson) and Trinity College's Berkeley Library (ABK).

Outside of Dublin, Ronnie Tallon’s design of the Carroll’s Building in Dundalk represented a ground-breaking move in terms of Irish factory design; Louis le Brocquy’s first Táin tapestry was commissioned for it.

At a time when general interest in the visual arts was still quite limited, public purchasing and commissioning of the arts acted as both a catalyst and a source of support for many leading artists, such as Michael Warren, Patrick Scott and Gerda Frömel.

The Modernist influence of the Bauhaus and Mies van der Rohe was introduced not only to office building but also to domestic and ecclesiastical architecture. Examples include Journey’s End, Howth Andrew Devane); Bothar Bui, Co. Cork (Robin Walker); and St. Aengus’s Church, Burt, Co. Donegal (Liam McCormick).

In 1967 the first ROSC exhibition was held in the Royal Dublin Society (RDS). The event marked the internationalisation of the Irish art world. Organised by the architect Michael Scott with the advice of American critic-curator and former Guggenheim Museum director James Johnson Sweeney, the idea was to hold a major exhibition every four years which would expose an Irish audience to the latest trends in world art. Irish artists were excluded from the first two exhibitions, as the purpose was to bring in artists from abroad.

The painter Cecil King (see Room 27) designed the first exhibition as well as the second ROSC in 1971. The significance of ROSC as an inspiration to Irish artists and as an instigator of debate amongst the general public has been immense. The documentaries of ROSC ’67 and ROSC ’71 were made for RTE and first broadcast in 1967 and 1972 respectively.

The musical scores by Seóirse Bodley, Raymond Deane, Frank Corcoran, Derek Ball and Gerald Barry on display here mark compositional developments in Ireland from the latter half of the 20th century, demonstrating the intention of Irish composers to write seriously within the perspective of a European milieu.
As conceptual art emerged through the late 1960s, it became a major turning-point in 20th-century art. Its credo that art is ideas challenged notions about art, society, politics and the media.

Conceptual artists argued that the knowledge and thought gained in artistic production was more important than the finished product, and produced publications, texts and paintings in accordance with the theory that art only really exists conceptually.

Joseph Kosuth’s *Three Titled Meanings (A.A.I.A.I.)* (1967) is an entirely text-based piece that questions the capacity of different languages to represent the same concept. Noel Sheridan encases two volumes of Chambers’s *Information for the People* in Perspex, rendering the reference books inaccessible.

During a five-hour performance, Dennis Oppenheim exposes his bare chest to the sun. Body becomes canvas, sun becomes paint, as he explores both the boundaries of the self and of self-harm.

The elevation of the commonplace was also a signature of conceptual artists. In *Film* (1963) Michael Craig-Martin’s basic approach to film-making is reflected in his subject-matter by capturing the empty stillness of the Connemara landscape. Joseph Beuys makes use of everyday materials such as butter and peat in *Irish Elegy* (1971), serving as traces of memory and history, and as reminders of deeper, ancient rituals.

In 1992, the collector Gordon Lambert donated over 300 art works to the Irish Museum of Modern Art’s collection, enriching it at a crucial time in its early development. As well as being Managing Director of Jacob’s Biscuits and a Senator in the Oireachtas, Lambert was a keen supporter of modern and contemporary art, serving on the ROSC exhibition committees and the boards of the National Gallery, Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery and IMMA.

This room shows pieces from the Gordon Lambert Trust donation by international artists and leading exponents of Kinetic and Op art: Jesús-Rafael Soto, Julio Le Parc, François Morellet, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Victor Vasarely and Bridget Riley.

Furthermore, Lambert collected works by the Swiss artist, architect, designer and theorist Max Bill and the Brazilian multi-disciplinarian conceptual artist Antonio Dias. This room also displays works by abstract artists Alexandra Wejchert and Gerda Frömel. Wejchert’s sculptures were usually free-flowing forms made from innovative materials; Frömel, also a sculptor, originally trained in Europe before settling in Ireland – she was fascinated by the intrinsic nature of materials and associated with public sculpture. Frömel’s *Moon and Hill* (1971) was donated by P.J. Carroll & Co. Ltd, which, like Lambert, collected her work and provided vital support to the visual arts in Ireland during the 1960s and ’70s.
The logos by Damien Harrington and Louis le Brocquy shown in this room are examples of some of the graphics developed by designers working in the Kilkenny Design Workshops, which was established in 1963 and ran until 1988. Initially staffed by international designers so as to become a training platform for Irish designers, the KDW's output included furniture, fashion, graphics, textiles, silver and candles. Many leading artists and designers worked for the KDW, including Sonja Landweer (Room 23), Oisin Kelly (Room 35) and John ffrench (Room 14).

Printmaker William Stanley Hayter was closely linked to the Surrealist movement and founded the print studio Atelier 17, where he worked with André Masson and Yves Tanguy. Examples of Hayter’s collaborations with Samuel Beckett and Brian Coffey, two of the small number of Irish poetic Modernists who first published in the 1930s, are shown in the vitrines in this space.

Also here are posters created by Kevin Rockett for the Irish Film Institute's Centenary of Cinema Celebrations in 1996. Footage from the IFI’s Irish Film Archive (dating from the 1930s to the '60s) and from RTE’s Libraries and Archives (featuring ROSC exhibitions) is shown on monitors in this space.

This room shows examples of conceptual art works from the 1960s and '70s. In the 1960s, Les Levine was one of the first artists to work with video and sculpture. In this work from the '70s, he investigates the power of photography as a tool.

Studying in the United States in the 1960s, Michael Craig-Martin was influenced by conceptual approaches to painting and to art in general. In the '70s, Craig-Martin used ready-mades in his conceptual works *An Oak Tree* and *On the Table*. *An Oak Tree* explores the relationship between the artist, object and viewer.

In *Brennus* and *East Coast Light*, Sean Scully wields his familiar motifs of grid, scale and stripe in a hard-edged context he used briefly during the 1970s. In the early '80s, Scully moved towards a looser use of paint and brush-stroke, creating overlaps and broader renditions of the stripe.

During the 1960s, Barry Flanagan – who was particularly interested in language, process and the intrinsic qualities of materials – made soft sculptures from humble materials such as cloth, sticks and sand. *Tantric Figures* (1973) is an example of Flanagan’s work from the early '70s, when he began to make free-standing, permanent objects, often in stone or bronze.
The Northern troubles politicised a number of artists, such as Anne Madden, Brian O’Doherty (Patrick Ireland), Robert Ballagh, Oisin Kelly and Micheál Farrell, who responded directly in a range of works.

Brian O’Doherty’s *Name Change* (1972) was a ritualistic performance in which he transformed himself into Patrick Ireland, the identity to which his subsequent art works were attributed.

Robert Ballagh, a leading figure in introducing Pop Art to Ireland, responded with the politically charged pastiche of Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People* (1969-70), as well as the more visceral chalk and blood-on-the-ground drawings, evoking the white lines drawn by police around murder victims. His use of solid outlines, flat colouring and the appropriation of contemporary imagery to document our time is characteristic of the Pop Art movement, and is evidenced in works on display by Valerio Adami, Richard Hamilton, Patrick Caulfield and Tim Mara.

Micheál Farrell also refers to the troubles in various ways. The *Pressez* series, begun in the 1960s, reflects a shift to more overt politically engaged statements, as the Celtic motif of the early works now becomes suggestive of blood and bones in *Black and White* (1970).

The 1970s saw the emergence of the ‘first wave’ of indigenously Irish film-makers who sought to create alternatives to foreign-produced representations of Ireland and to confront the issues that were emerging in a modernising society.

Film-makers such as Bob Quinn, Joe Comerford, Cathal Black, Pat Murphy and Thaddeus O’Sullivan produced work that dealt with previously unexplored issues of culture, class, gender and nationality. Collectively, they sought to establish a new Irish cinematic idiom inspired by international avant-garde movements and by experimental and low-budget film-making practices.

The first of these films, Bob Quinn’s formally inventive *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoire / Lament for Art O’Leary* (1975), had its roots in the Northern conflict. Based on a traditional Irish poetic lament composed by Eibhlin Dubh Ní Chonaill to mourn the murder of her husband by an Englishman, the film is a radically self-reflexive reconsideration of the nature of Irish identity and its representation.

The film has several narrative threads, one concerning a film version of the poem which has been made by an Irish-language acting troupe, and another concerning the actors from the film who are now rehearsing a play using the film as part of the production being directed by an Englishman.
Room plan exhibition guide

The exhibition is organised chronologically as this map indicates. Due to the architecture of the building, you will need to double back through some spaces in order to follow this chronology. Themed room titles are for overview purposes only and do not reflect each work on view.
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From 19 October 2010 – 13 February 2011, IMMA hosts a series of public dialogues, discussions, open fora, interdisciplinary conversations, gallery talks and screenings on the role and reception of Irish modernism in its various forms. Art historians, cultural critics and curators are brought together to discuss the role of Irish modernism in its various expressions, to share new evaluations and to explore the reception of Irish modernism by a latter generation of cultural practitioners today. Amongst the speakers invited to present in this series include; Bruce Arnold, Peter Carroll, Joe Cleary, Pat Cooke, Maeve Connolly, Riann Coulter, Brian Dillon, Luke Gibbons, Lisa Godson, Jennifer Goff, Francis Halsall, Roisin Kennedy, S. B. Kennedy, Linda King, Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, Brenda Moore Mc Cann, Robert O’Byrne, Jerome O’Driscceoil, Paul O’Neill, Ellen Rowley, Frances Ruane, Vera Ryan, Yvonne Scott, Gemma Tipton, Simon Walker and many others.

Further Information
An extensive programme listing the details of talks, lectures and events in this series is available on the website: www.imma.ie/talksandlectures
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