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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN.

CRAFT DESIGN. METALWORK DEPARTMENT.

IRISH SILVERSMITHING TO-DAY.

BY

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I would like to thank Joe McDonnell for all his support throughout the year. Also Peter Donovan, Brian Clarke and Kevin O'Dwyer for all their help and co-operation in the writing of this thesis.

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BOND

WILL BOND

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

ESSEX BROOK

BOND

Gold and silver have been known and highly valued by man since prehistoric times and consequently are known as precious metals. It is their physical properties that the craftsman appreciates most. Their malleability, ductility, chemical and conductive properties enabling them to be worked and shaped by hammering.

There has always been some confusion with regard to the word "Goldsmith" which was for centuries used to describe craftsmen in both gold and silver. The word "Silversmith" is of a more recent origin. In the middle ages, silver was nearly always gilt with a thin layer of gold and referred to as gold not silver gilt. Hence the craftsmen who worked with these items were called Goldsmiths.

Silversmithing is the cold working of silver. The essence of Silversmithing is to take a flat sheet of metal and by means of different hammers, stakes and other simple hand tools, create an object. However, time and patience are required since an item is created through many thousands of hammerblows, and changes in the metal come slowly. Since the creation of an object comes from individual hammerblows alone, this allows the work to be called handwrought. This age old process was handed down from generation to generation and the tools as well as the methods are thousands of years old.

BOND

WILLIAM BOND

The subject matter of this thesis is the work of three contemporary Silversmiths; Peter Donovan, Brian Clarke and Kevin O'Dwyer. Although each have a different background, they are all presently based in Ireland. After having met all three craftsmen, I have a great admiration and respect for their innovative ideas and new way of thinking. I first met Peter Donovan in Grennan Mill Craft School, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. The school offers a course in a wide variety of crafts including metalwork, which is taught by Peter Donovan. The course is designed to give students an insight into the design and manufacture of these various crafts. I met Brian Clarke and Kevin O'Dwyer in the National College of Art and Design, where both teach part time. Brian Clarke visits the College on numerous occasions throughout the year, teaching the metalwork students the skills of the Silversmith. Kevin O'Dwyer teaches design methods to the craft students in metalwork, glass and ceramic, relating the idea of the three crafts through the design and marketing aspects of their work.

Each Craftsman is individual, and this is easily seen through all their work which is all of the highest standard. Through their work, these Silversmiths have revolutionised the metalwork industry throughout Ireland. They have broken the mould of Irish Silver of the past through their modern designs, using the most traditional of methods.

FOUND

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My first chapter consists of a brief survey of Irish Silverware and Silversmith's from 2000 B.C. to the present day, including the contribution made by the Arts and Crafts Movement to revitalise the status of the Craftsman.

My second chapter consists of the history of the Dublin Company of Goldsmiths and the rigid rule that came about in 1238, that the standard of 'fineness' should not be less than that used for coinage at the Mint. A standard which still remains in operation to-day.

My third chapter consists of the work of Peter Donovan, an English born Silversmith, presently living and working in Ireland, also his contributions to Irish design through the Kilkenny Design Workshops and through his many works which can be seen all over Ireland.

My fourth chapter consists of the work of Brian Clarke, an Irish born Silversmith, who's work has earned him respect and honour in Ireland and throughout Europe.

My fifth chapter consists of the work of Kevin O'Dwyer, an American born Silversmith, working mainly in Ireland. His contemporary style and designs have made him world famous and greatly admired for his originality.

The first meeting of the committee was held on the 15th of January 1950. It was held in the office of the Director of the Department of Health and was attended by the Director, the Secretary, the Chairman of the Committee, and the members of the Committee.

The committee was set up to investigate the problem of the shortage of medical staff in the Department of Health. It was to report to the Director of the Department of Health on the progress of its work and on the measures which it recommended for the improvement of the service.

The committee has since that time held several meetings and has been very busy in its work. It has held a number of public hearings and has received many suggestions from the public. It has also held a number of private meetings with the members of the Department of Health and with the members of the medical profession.

The committee has now completed its work and has submitted its report to the Director of the Department of Health. The report contains a number of recommendations which the Director is now considering.

The committee has been very fortunate in having the assistance of a number of very able and experienced members of the medical profession. It has also been very fortunate in having the assistance of a number of very able and experienced members of the public.

The committee has been very busy in its work and has made a number of very valuable contributions to the improvement of the service. It has also been very fortunate in having the assistance of a number of very able and experienced members of the medical profession.

CHAPTER ONE.

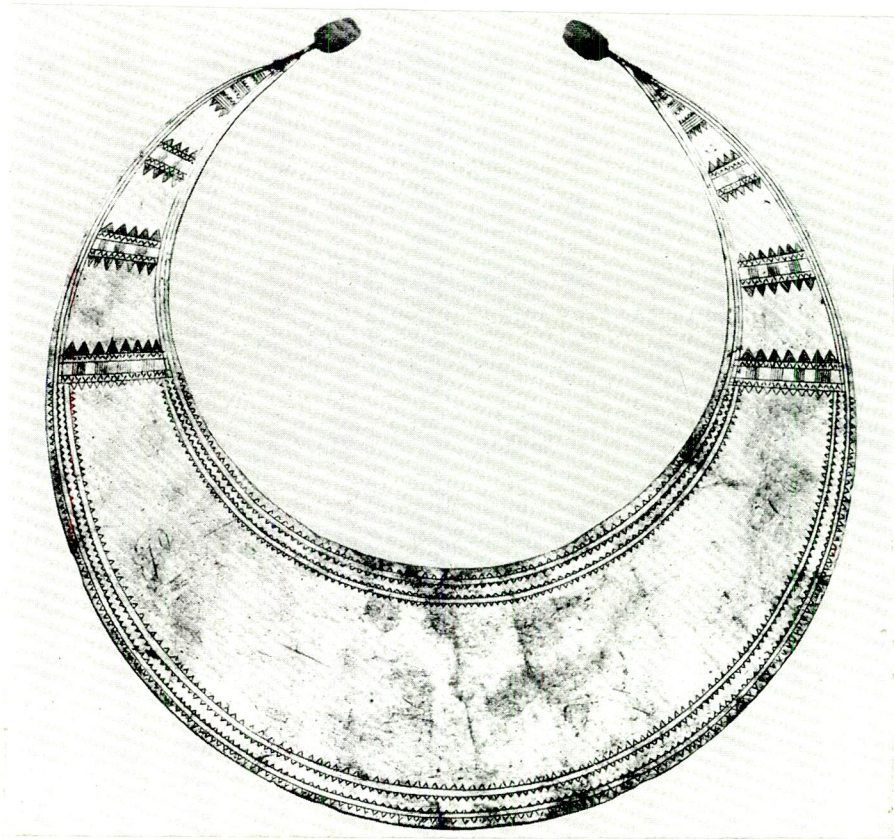
THE HISTORY OF IRISH SILVERWARE.

The work of gold and silver in Ireland can be defined into three periods. The first of these being from 2000 B.C. to 500 A.D. The second of these being from 500 A.D. to 1500 A.D. and the third and final period being from 1500 A.D. to the present day. During the first period, gold more so than Silver was found during the bronze age. Irish bronze age ornament was abstract and geometrical in form. The earliest works in gold were small disc manufactured from very thin sheet gold. The decoration was applied by hammering out the desired shape from behind. This was usually a cross encircled by concentric bands of dots. The best examples of this type of work are the lunulae, little moon, a crescent shaped ornament worn about the neck, seen in illus 1. They are a unique Irish art form. Between 1500 B.C. and 1200 B.C., there came about an increase in the manufacture of Gold and Jewellery, particularly earrings and torcs. The torcs vary in size and appear to have been worn as necklaces, bracelets and anklets. These earrings and torcs were made from twisted bars of gold.

Towards the end of the bronze age, further developments were seen in gold working, mainly around the West of Ireland. It was here gorgets were largely made. These neck ornaments were the largest gold objects produced during the entire period.

BOND

SMALL BOOK



illus. 1. Gold Lunula,, Ross, Co. Westmeath.
20cm, 1800 - 1500 B.C.



Sheet gold was hammered up into ribs and separated by lines of punched dots or rope mouldings.

Bronze was the main material used up to the last half of the first millennium B.C. after which it was replaced by iron. This change came about with the arrival of the Celts. The Celts appear to have dominated the country within a relatively short period of time and to have fully imposed their own language and culture on the entire Island. This language mixed with the dialects already in use by the natives formed what is our Irish language to-day. The Celts introduced their own techniques and crafts as well as their designs. They did not ignore the existing traditions, but a fusion of both elements is obvious from the objects found.

The most distinctive contribution by the Celts was the La Tene style, which was called after a site in Switzerland where the Celts lived for some time. This type of design ornamentation in its earliest phase adapted and stylised classical greek motifs such as the honeysuckle, and was infiltrated by animal ornament of Eastern and even Persian origin. Although iron was increasingly popular, it was on the more traditional metals, bronze and gold that the La Tene style was constructed. One of the finest examples of the craftsmanship of this period was the Broighter Collar, seen in illustration (2). This gold neck ornament dates from the first century A.D. The collar displays flowing curved abstraction, yet appears to retain an element of irregular or spontaneity. This is an important aspect of Celtic design continually encountered.

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Small Book



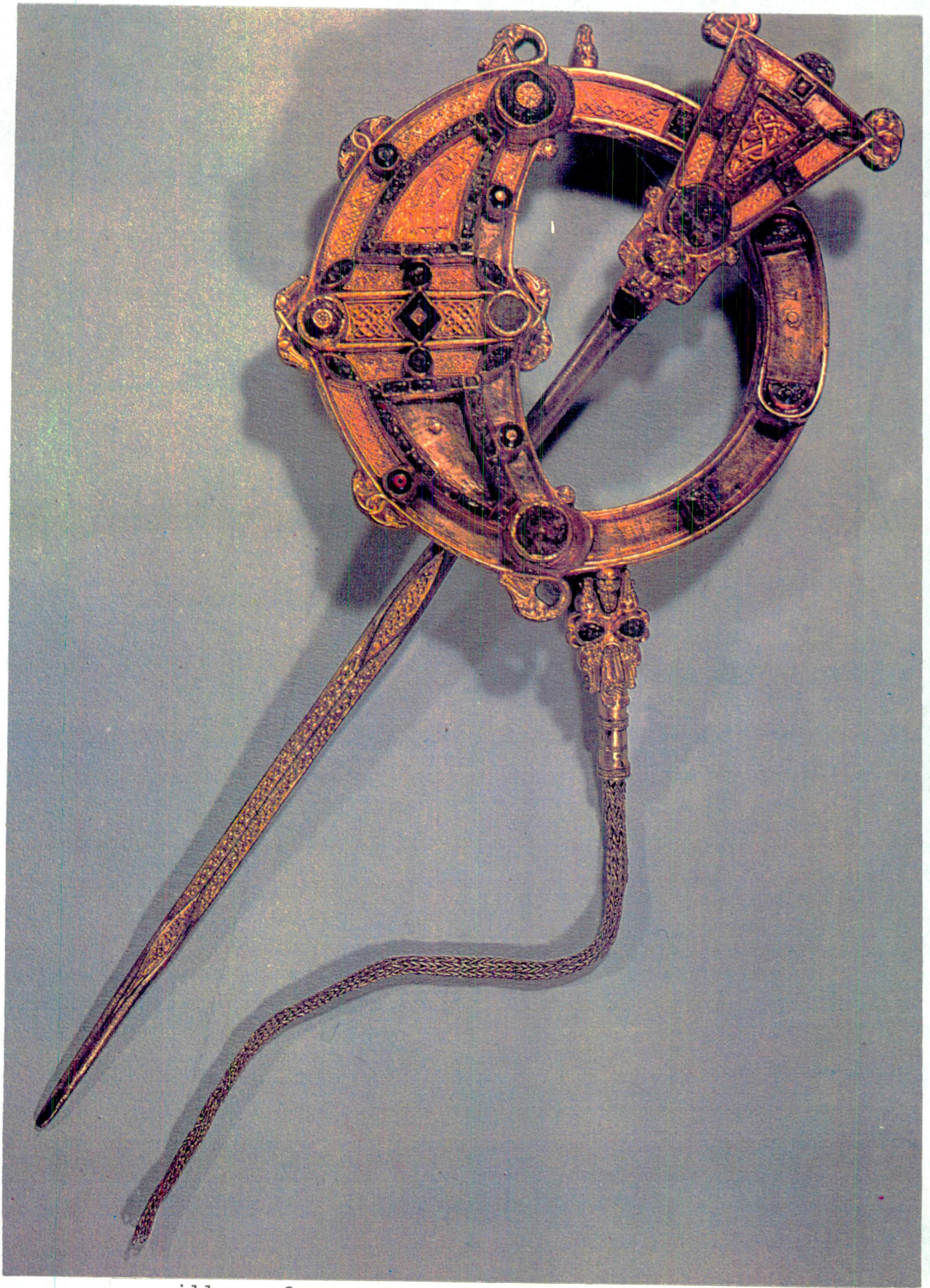
illus. 2. Gold Broighter Collar, Co.Derry,
18.2cm. 100 - 500 A.D.

The designers used a certain amount of geometry to start, but never allowed it to dominate their work fully. The La Tene Style was used in Ireland long after its departure in England where Celtic Art was supplanted by classical art during the invasion of the Romans.

The second period began 500 A.D. shortly after the introduction of Christianity into Ireland. It is at this time goldsmithing is found less frequently in comparison with silversmithing, although often both were found combined with a base metal. It is also at this time that metalwork was widely practised and that the craftsmanship reached a high standard. The Church was a great patron of the arts. It is therefore easily understood that much of this metalwork was connected with religious ceremony, although the idea of personal or dress wear was not forgotten totally. The early eighth century brought Ireland some consummate examples of the Silversmith's art. The Tara Brooch itself is of the familiar penannular variety which evolved from models originally Roman. However, the greatest treasure from this period was found among the 1868 hoard from the Ardagh Rath of Reerasta, is of course the Ardagh Chalice, seen in illustration (4). It is a two hemispherical Chalice, joined by a thick stem of gilded bronze. The shape is further modified by two handles and greatly enriched by inlaid panels of very fine gold filigree and also containing large studs of red and blue enamel. The Chalice like all the best examples of Irish metalwork requires close scrutiny if the full richness of the various decorative surfaces and indeed, the sheer ingenuity of the

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GRADING BOOK



illus. 3. Tara Brooch, Co. Meath. 8.5cm.
8th Century A.D.



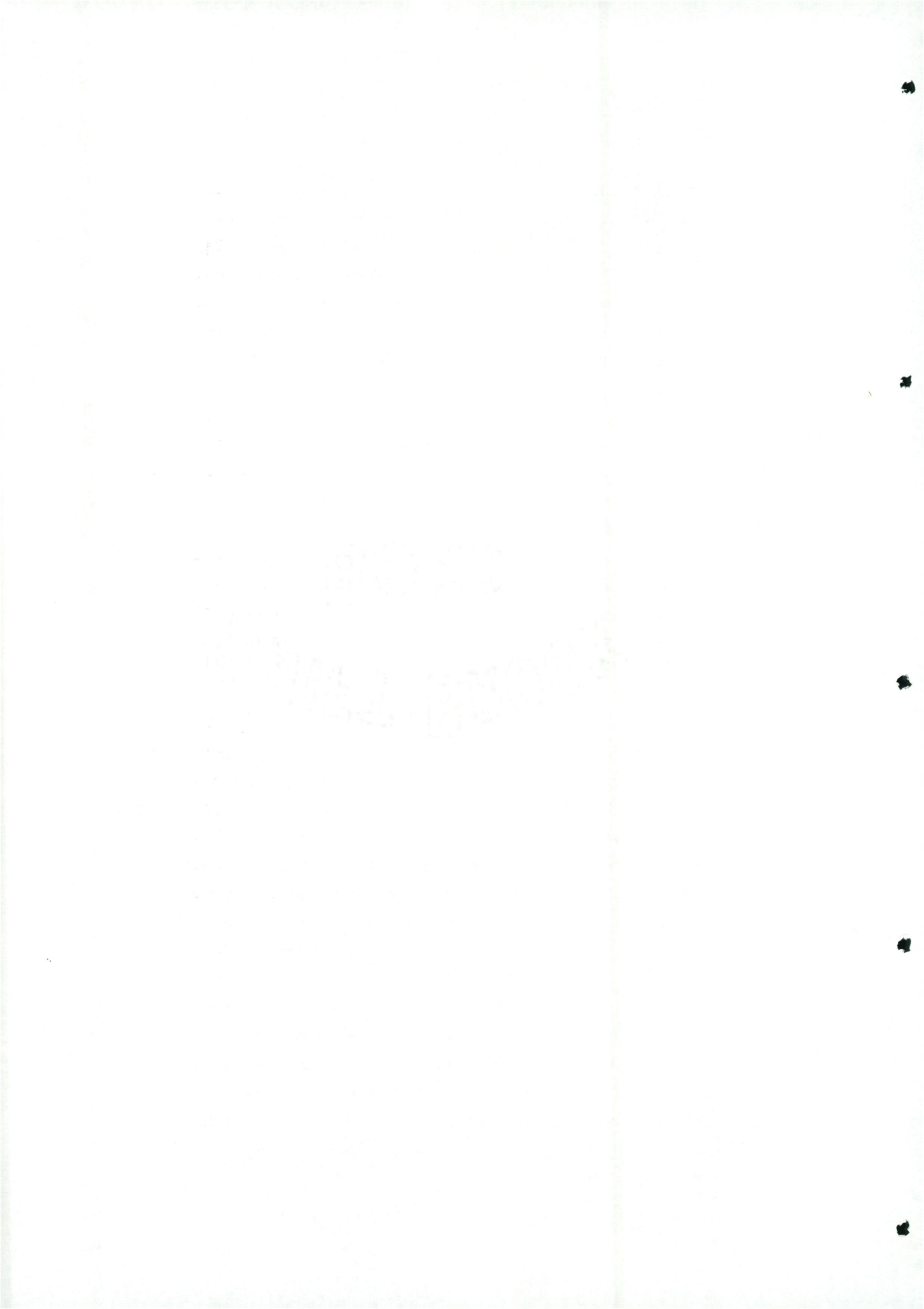


illus. 4. Ardagh Chalice, Co. Limerick, 19cm.
Early 8th Century A.D.



craftsmanship are to be fully appreciated. Ireland rich in Monastic work, whose makers delighted in the use of artistically contrasting base and precious metals. There is a distinction here between the craftsmen of this time and the silversmiths of the last period, who stuck almost legalistically to precious metals of a definite standard of purity.

The third and final period dates from 1500 A.D. to present day. It was a time of great social and economic change and luxurious living of the upper class which was undoubtedly obtained at the expense of the poverty stricken masses. This desire for silver brought into being a band of skilled silversmiths whose work could not be surpassed and reached its flowering in the 18th century, which developed into the Irish age of elegance and silver leaped from being a minor craft to a trade which produced a splendid variety of domestic silver as can be found anywhere, with a thriving manufacture of silverware, not only in Dublin, but also the whole of Ireland. Perhaps the greatest change at this time took place with the introduction of asymmetrical shell, scroll and floral motifs generally known as rococo. This style and decoration originated in France and Italy in the 1720's and spread from architecture to interior decoration and many forms of applied art. By present standards of taste, both English and Irish silver of the period may be considered over-decorative but one must admire the artistry and craftsmanship of the productions. Many objects of domestic silver were made in great numbers throughout Europe. There are no features on any of these objects which would classify them as specifically Irish, as



distinct from English provincial pieces, however, some objects which were made exclusively in Ireland and which can be attributed to Ireland at first sight without examination of the marks. These are helmet shaped cream jugs, sugar bowls, dish rings, dish covers and to a lesser extent coffee pots, all made in the second half of the 18th century. The decoration of these objects varied in accordance with the development of the ornamentation on English silver, but some decorations were typically Irish and not found on English pieces.

The beginning of the 19th century was a disastrous period for silversmiths and design. With the increasing competition from England bringing the price of mass produced silver into the grasp of the ever increasing middle-class. With all this added pressure, Irish silversmith's found it difficult to cope and resorted to buying in mass produced mounts from England, rather than go to the added expense of producing themselves, making it difficult for the Silversmith's to use the skills and craftsmanship that made Irish silverware of the past. This led to a lot of silversmith's leaving the country or closing up shop altogether, and by 1850, not one was to be found in Cork or Limerick. However, a few from Dublin persisted and carried on producing with a heavier form of repousse decoration, similar to that of the rococo period, although not as elegant in form.

1840 brought hope for these artists, when an interest was shown in antiquarian studies and this is seen through gold and silver jewellery. Two years later, Waterhouse and Co., reproduced a brooch from an antique fibula.

POND

WATER BIRDS

To further this, the Royal Irish Academy then gave its permission for reproductions of brooches from its collection to be produced. Hence, a revival in the gold and silver trade, resulting in an extensive souvenir market which still remains to-day. After the "Tara Brooch" was found, it was purchased by Waterhouse and Co., and as with the fibula, it was reproduced and is now still one of the largest selling pieces to be found throughout Ireland. It became known as 'The Royal Tara Brooch' after two copies were bought by Queen Victoria. Many, if not all Irish Silversmiths followed Waterhouse's example, and in 1851 at the "Great Exhibition in London", much of this work could be seen. Also, there were two exhibitions in Dublin in 1853 and 1856 and like the exhibition previously in London, it carried this new beginning for Irish silversmiths. By the end of the century, other Irish designs began to be seen, such as shamrocks, harps, celtic crosses and interlaced work. Most Irish silver at this time carried one if not a combination of all these forms.

In 1894, the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland was established. It was brought into being by Wyndham Bourk, 7th Earl of Mayo. He had two main aims, to improve and raise the artistic level of the craftsmen and return quality to the work process, as the industrial revolution had devalued the workman and turned him into a mere cog on the wheel of machinery. This was the basis of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the principals^{les} of William Morris, its founder. Wyndham Bourk was also responsible for the Society's first exhibition held in Dublin on the 26th of November, 1895.

BOND

LEGAL RESERVE

The exhibition comprised of three sections,
A series of reproduced 18th century Irish Craft,
A collection of contemporary English Arts and
Crafts on loan from London and contemporary
Irish work.

There were some examples of Irish
silver by well established art manufacturers,
particularly the Dublin silversmiths. The centre
of the exhibition was occupied by Edmund Johnson's
display case which consisted mainly of reproductions
of earlier Irish silverware. However, there was
some contemporary work, such as a writing set in
11th century Irish style, an unusually worked casket
of carved box oak, and silver, which was designed
especially for the exhibition, also a sugar coaster
seen in illustration (5) modified from a charter
horn of the Kavanaghs. Other Dublin silversmiths
Waterhouse and Co., West & Son and Hopkins & Hopkins
exhibited extensive collections at this time.
This exhibition was very successful in moving a great
deal of interest in the Society and as a result, the
craftsmen of Ireland began to understand what the
future could hold for art and craft.

The Society was entirely administered from
Dublin, and mainly comprised of amateurs and collectors
of applied art and not many actual craftsmen.
By the early 1900's, this situation began changing
because of the steady increase in the number of
qualified individual art workers. Hence, a problem
had arisen, how the Society could best adapt itself
to the changing circumstances? Therefore, in 1909,
it was decided to reorganize the Arts and Crafts
Society of Ireland and place it on a broader basis.

1000

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illus. 5.

*Edmond Johnson: silver muffineer or sugar
caster of the type exhibited at the first exhi-
bition of the Arts and Crafts Society of
Ireland, 1895*



The Society became self supporting and administered from Dublin, Belfast and Cork. The most competent of craftsmen had control, and had in their power the making of a guild with adequate standards and ideals.

One of the most remarkable individual craftswomen to develop in the later stages of the Arts and Crafts movement was Mia Cranwill. She was born in Dublin, and studied gold and silver-smith's work at the Manchester School of Art. On returning to Dublin, she set up her own studio in 1917. By 1921, she was a member of the Guild of Irish Art Workers. In these early years, she specialised in jewellery in silver and gold. Her jewellery was almost all of celtic inspiration, and was often symbolic in theme, designed to express ideas drawn from Irish National poetry and tales.

"She is no mere copyist of the old types of Celtic ornament, but a designer and craftswoman who understands the Irish National style and can interpret it, create anew within it and add to the old delightful form a personality and expression quite her own" (Lamour, 1992. pg 215)

In 1925, the 7th Exhibition of the Society turned out to be its last. The reasons for this are not exactly clear. The death of the Society's founder and long standing President, The excessive number of Exhibitions at that time, hence the more successful artists had not time, with commissions and other previous engagements to exhibit, or a

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

consequent lowering of standards from a high quality of craftsmanship to how it had been when the Society was originally established. Returning to a matter of quantity rather than quality. Such a turn of events did not serve the cause of the Society well. The 1925 Exhibition housed excellent work by some of Irelands greatest craftsmen, however, overall, the show was considered to be a dissappointment. Some of the Arts and Crafts which a few years previously seemed extremely hopeful and likely to develop, did not fulfill their promise.

With the downfall of the Society, the heart of the Movement had gone, although carried on with plenty of oppertunities for craftsmen to exhibit work right up to the end of the 1930's. Some design reform had certainly been established by the Arts and Crafts Society, although no fundamental union of art and industry was achieved. In trying to evaluate the success of the Movement in Ireland, too much value should not be placed on its short lived existence but on its positive achievements. The movement succeeded in drawing together many artists from very different walks of life, and uniting them in a common quest for artistic fulfillment, more importantly, the individual works of various Irish artist and craftsmen. The Arts and Crafts Society, saw a fundamental increase in the standard of craftsmanship that ranks with that of earlier great periods of Irealnd's creative past and was a vital contribution to the international revival of art and design.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

BOARD

CHAPTER TWO.

THE DUBLIN COMPANY OF GOLDSMITHS.

Bishop John Comyn's Synod of 1186, in Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, laid down that in Monasteries and rich Churches, Chalices should be provided in silver and gold. The old fashioned bronze with gilt and silver and gold embellishment became extinct. The 1238, "De Auro Fabricando In Civitate Londinarum", ordered that no silver chalices should be made worse in 'fineness' than used for coinage at the Mint. Hencefore, the use of the 'Sterling' standard of 1300 was to become a rigid rule of the craft. In 1637, the complete organisation of the Company of Goldsmiths of Dublin came about. Established by Charles 1, it was essentially a Craft Guild, an organisation originating from medieval times, founded for mutual protection of its members and for adherence to standards established for a craft.

The first recorded mention of a Company of Goldsmiths in Dublin was in 1498. The earliest reference of their legal charter was in 1557, when, before the Dublin City Council, they produced evidence of their ancient incorporation, but these documents have been destroyed. At this time the Company was reincorporated, and entitled the Company to the same privileges as the other fraternities and guilds of the city. In 1605, a number of marks were issued, a Lion, a Harp and a Castle. These certified the quality and standard of the piece, It had to undergo a test for the 'fineness' of the silver, of which a scraping would be taken and then tested. Intending to

EXPORT BOND

regulate the entire trade in Ireland, it was ordered that the pieces contain a proper mark and the Kings stamp. The hallmarks stamped by the maker and the Goldsmiths Company on silver provided information about the maker and the date of manufacture and have remained virtually unchanged. The crowned harp certified the 'fineness' of the article 92.5% silver. This mark is still used by the assay office in Dublin to-day. However there were other marks placed on the articles. The makers mark which identified the craftsman, this usually consisted of the craftsman's initials. The mark was stamped by the maker on each piece before it was sent to the Assay Office. A date letter also accompanied the other markings. It was simply a letter of the alphabet, used to represent the year of assay. The mark was stamped by wardens at the Assay Office used in a series to cover twenty years. Each series of letters differed from the preceding series in style or in the design of the shield within which the letters were struck. The date letter was not a specified requirement in the charter of the Goldsmiths but it was however introduced in 1638. The Hibernia mark was introduced in 1730, Hibernia being the latin name for Ireland. It consisted of a woman seated holding a harp. Originally a duty mark, it was stamped after assay on each piece on which duty had been paid. After 1807, it lost its significance as a duty mark and is now regarded as the town mark of the Goldsmiths Company. Another mark was introduced in 1807, the Monarch's head. When excise duties on gold and silver were abolished in 1890, the mark was also discontinued.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Although the production of gold and silverware in Ireland was controlled through Dublin, the actual operation of the system was not always in accordance with the law. Between the middle of the 17th century and 1840, silver articles of high quality were being produced all over Ireland. Many of these objects were never sent to Dublin for assay but stamped with local marks. At that time Dublin would have been considered quite a distance and the fear of damage or loss from robbery would have been the main reason for not sending them. Although it is likely they may have been merely evading tax duty. It was important to the silversmith that their work be accepted in the market as containing the standard of 'fineness' hence, a voluntary system of local marks were devised. The town mark was used by silversmiths from Cork, Limerick and Galway. These marks indicated the place of manufacture. Cork's town mark consisted of the Cork City Arms and a ship between two castles or various combinations of this. Limerick had several town marks including a castle gateway with two towers based on its City of Arms. Galway's marks consisted of a ship from the City Arms or an anchor. The fineness mark was not used in Galway, Cork and Limerick. The word sterling was used occasionally spelt starling or stirling, also the term was abbreviated or divided in two. In Cork the word dollar was sometimes used instead of sterling. It is believed this indicated that the piece was made from Spanish dollars which had been melted down.

The Company of Goldsmiths exists to-day as it did in the 17th century. It was headed by a

RIGHT BOARD

BOARD

master who was elected annually. Also there were two wardens and ^a number of brethren. The company held meetings monthly to discuss the problems of the modern trade just as it was done 350 years ago. In 1925, the company moved to the Goldsmiths Hall in Dublin Castle where it has remained since. The importance of fine craftsmanship among the guild led to the establishment of apprenticeships as a method of training the up and coming artist in this trade. An apprentice had to serve seven years to be reorganised as a master. The guild was ~~very~~ intent on the necessity of the very full, careful and strict training a student must undergo before he could call himself a gold or silversmith. The young craftsman had to prove himself by producing an article which had to be 'begun and finished' without the help of any other hand. This resulted in an exceptionally high standard of craftsmanship.

Over the years, the Company of Goldsmiths has tried to encourage the gold and silversmithing trades through commissioning these craftsmen, press releases and exhibitions. On the 15th of December, 1987, a major exhibition was opened in Dublin to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the Company of Goldsmiths. It was shown at the National Museum in Merrion Row from this date until the end of the following year. It consisted of a wide variety of articles from a wide variety of craftsmen. The most impressive pieces exhibited were those of Peter Donovan, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Throughout the past 350 years, the Company of Goldsmiths has ensured a high degree of consumer protection and guarantee of a high standard of craftsmanship.

WATER BROTHER

BOARD

The term 'Hallmark' to-day, has become through common useage, a mark of quality and standard which is generally known.

WATERBURY BROTHERS
BOND

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Kilkenny Design Workshop was established by the State in 1963. Ireland was the first country to establish such a state design service. The Kilkenny Workshop came into existence without public debate or political lobbying and without direct responsibility to a Government Minister. It formed a specialised design group capable of rebuilding failing industries and aiding new ones. It set out to develop business to provide local market conditions directed to improving industries design standards. The organization was to be a missionary centre of influences for the craft industry. The workshop was to be a community of experienced designers, craftsmen and technicians. It was agreed that the new organisation should have an identity of its own, not overshadowed by existing state agencies in Dublin. The concept of a community where designers and craftsmen would interact, share resources and pool ideas. The complex of stable buildings opposite the castle in Kilkenny were architecturally distinctive and were considered ideal for the type of craft based activities. There were also two Kilkenny Shops, one in Kilkenny and one in Dublin. Products from the workshop were sold in these shops and marked with the Kilkenny Design Workshop Monogram. However, after a period of recession, the workshop fell into difficulty and ceased to exist. Consequently, the workshop and the Craft Council of Ireland formed the Crescent Workshops, entailing a **business** course for up and coming artists in a variety of different fields.

WATER PROOF

BOARD



illus. 6. The Kilkenny Design Workshop.
Peter Donovan is seen in the right hand
corner.

[Faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

The course encourages and gives the students every facility to relate their own design skills to current industrial practice. The future of the craft industry depends on the quality of the young designers and craftsmen of to-day. The Crafts Council is convinced that through the Crescent Workshops that training in product design and effective marketing will lead to an increase in jobs and product sales in the future.

The first silversmith I wish to discuss is Peter Donovan, who was born in London in 1942. After studying metalwork and engineering in secondary school, he knew he wanted to work with metal on a one to one basis, not produce through machines. He then went to the Central School of Art and Crafts in London for a one year's pre-apprenticeship course. After each year, Companies would visit the college and choose the best of the students for apprenticeships. Donovan served his time with Naylor Brothers in London for five years, until his twenty first year. During this time he spent one day a week in college to develop his own design skills. He was also encouraged to attend night classes of which he studied engraving and casting. At the end of this five years, each apprentice had to produce a piece of work entirely alone, which would then be sent to the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths for assay. If the standard of 'fineness' was correct, he then received 'freedom of worship' of the company and given the title of Goldsmith.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEMORANDUM



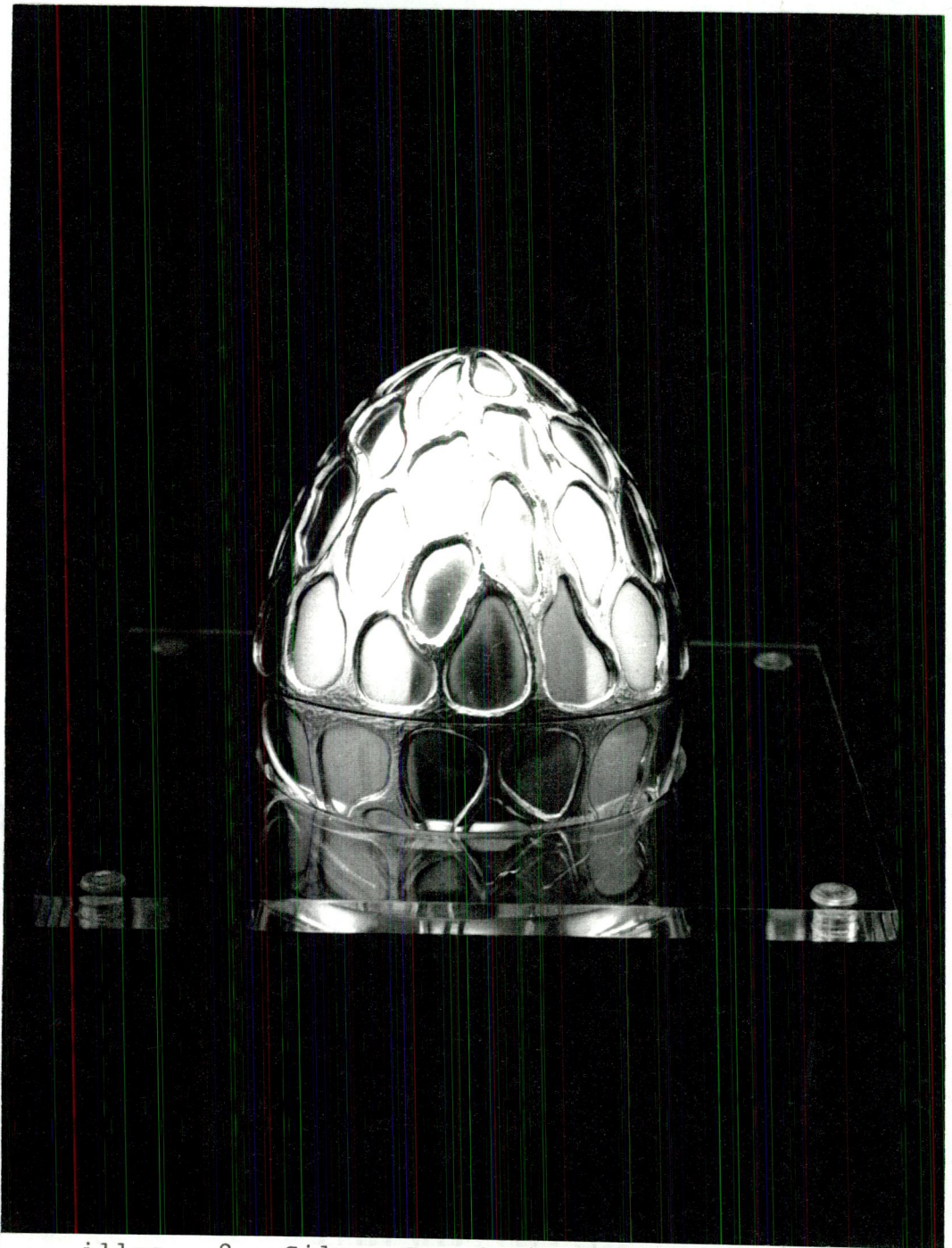
illus. 7. Peter Donovan.



In 1964, Donovan moved to Ireland and began working in the Kilkenny Design Workshops with many top silversmiths. Here he produced designs and prototypes of work which were sent to manufacturers to reproduce, he also produced his own work which was sold in the Kilkenny Shops. Peter Donovan produced quite a number of exquisite pieces at this time. One such piece can be seen in illus. 8. It is a silver egg which was hinged and could be opened revealing a golden rose inside. The form could easily have been turned on a lathe¹. but like many true craftsmen, Donovan decided against this. He raised² up the shape of the egg through the use of hammers and stakes. Fitting them together precisely and completing it with a strong texture attached to the outside. The rose was cast³ in silver and then the entire interior was gilt with a generous layer of gold. The base on which the rose stands was produced similarly to that of a rose bowl, with sections pierced out. Pot pourri would be filled underneath giving a gentle fragrance whenever the egg was opened. In 1970, he opened his own workshop on the Canal Walk in Kilkenny, although he continued to have an active part in the Kilkenny Workshop. In 1976, the Kilkenny Design Workshops opened an exhibition in its shop in Dublin. Its purpose was to demonstrate how imaginative patronage can help in the revival of fine craftsmanship. Peter Donovan exhibited several pieces at this time. One of the pieces he exhibited, can be seen in illust.10.

2008 TEAM

BOND



illus. 8. Silver Egg designed and made by Peter Donovan in the Kilkenny Design Workshop





illus. 9. Silver Coffee service by Peter Donovan including Coffee Pot, Creamer and Sugar Bowl with ebony insulators.



illus. 10. Silver Plate presented to Michael Scott,
33cm in diameter, by Peter Donovan in 1975.



A handwrought silver plate presented to Michael Scott, the architect, It was to mark the occasion of his receipt of the 1975 Gold Medal of the R.I.B.A. In 1972, Donovan moved again, this time to Thomastown a small town outside Kilkenny City. He began teaching in Grennan Mill Craft School, where his workshop is presently based.

Peter Donovan is one of the great masters of his trade, a trained goldsmith, although he works mainly in silver. Like many artists before him, he prefers the handwrought quality of metal in all its elegance in comparison to that of machine manufacture. Throughout his life, he ~~had~~ produced many commissioned pieces for a variety of different occasions, such as presentations pieces for the Young Scientist Exhibition at the R.D.S., sailing clubs, Bord Failte, tidy towns and other personal work. He designs for each individual piece, taking into account the clients personal taste and the function of the piece.

In 1987, he exhibited three pieces designed to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the Irish Company of Goldsmiths. The first of these pieces can be seen in illus. 11. It is a silver rose bowl which is gilt inside. It is a circular bowl which was raised from a flat sheet, carefully planished⁴ and finally hand polished. The lid consists of a heavy wire mesh which forms the Coat of Arms of the Company of Goldsmiths delicately soldered⁵ together. The idea of the piece works extremely well. It is basically traditional in concept, however, he modifies this by utilizing the idea of the lid from being just a holder to its identity with the company; drawing the main attention of the piece.

EMERALD BROOK

BOND



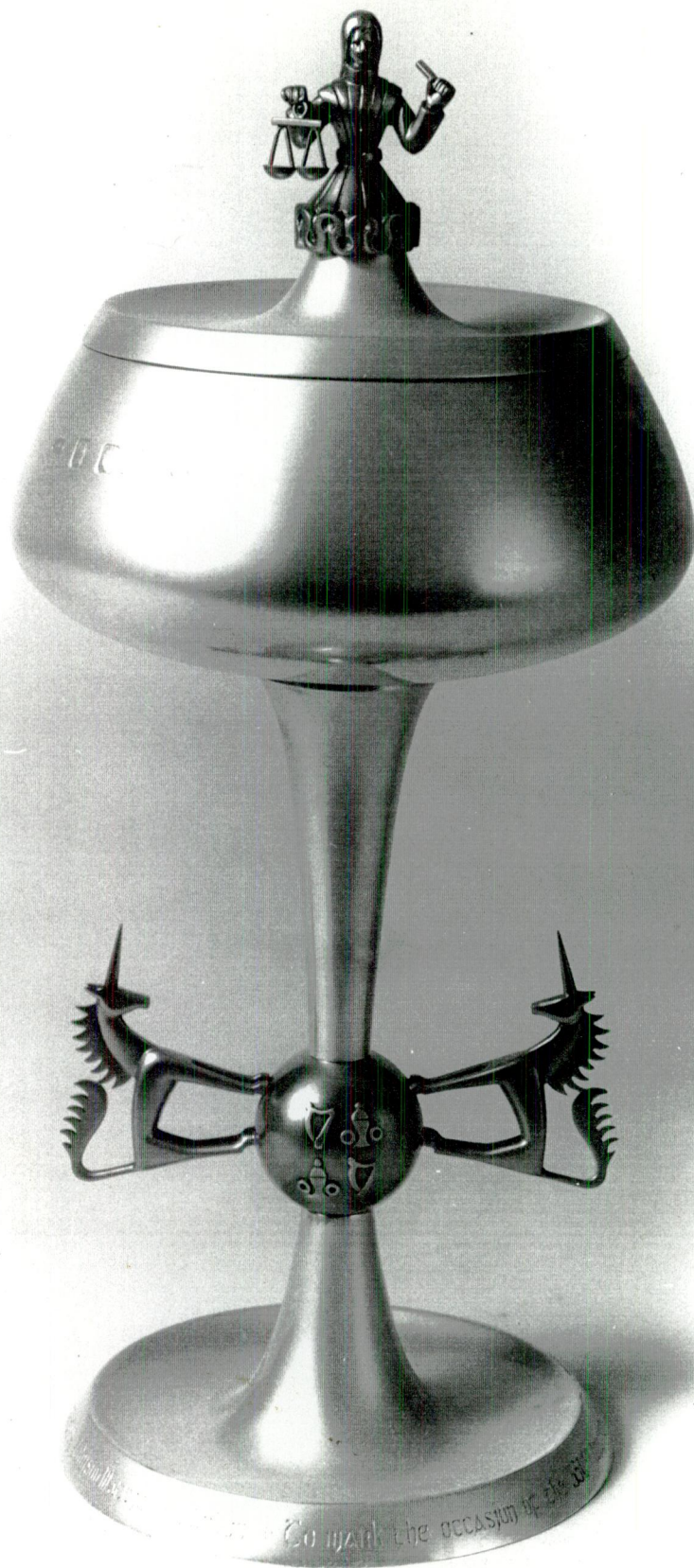
illus. 11. Silver Rose Bowl produced for the Company of Goldsmiths, 34cm x 13cm by Peter Donovan.



The second piece shown was a standing cup and lid, seen in illus.12. It was made in five sections. The stem was broken halfway down and a feature of the Company's Coat of Arms, which was separately cast, was attached here. The two unicorns are holding a shield, in this case a sphere. The cup and lid were also raised and gilt inside. On the peak of the lid is a cast figure of a woman which concludes the Coat of Arms. The piece was also engraved around the rim of its base. The third and final piece exhibited at this time by Donovan, was a time glass seen in illus.13. The base and lid work in the same form as each other, which are held together by four silver rods. Four sections extrude from these rods joining to form the section on which the glass piece spins. On the peak of the lid stands, in all its glory, the Coat of Arms of the Company, even more extravagant than the two previous pieces. This entire part is cast with the shield subsequently enamelled. Also, the piece is engraved with the motto of the Company 'TE RADIANTE VIRBIMUS'. These are all unique pieces by Peter Donovan, commissioned by Johnson Matthey Ltd. They all carry the last E.E.C commemorative hallmark struck on the 31st December, 1973; after which the punches were all destroyed. All three pieces were exhibited on the 15th of December 1987 at the National Museum and were on loan from the Company of Goldsmiths' personal collection.

In 1988, Peter Donovan was commissioned to produce the faculty mace for the National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick when it became a recognized University. It was designed by the President of the Royal Hibernian Academy of Art,

WATER PROOF
BOARD



illus. 12. Silver Standing Cup and Lid produced for the Company of Goldsmiths, designed and made by Peter Donovan.





illus. 13. Silver Time Glass produced for the Company of Goldsmiths, designed and made by Peter Donovan. Glass blown by Keith Leadbetter, Jerpoint Glass Studios.



Thomas Ryan. Donovan was sent several designs and modified them to produce the final design. The mace was made entirely in silver. The piece consists basically of a long straight handle and a cup shaped elaborate head. The handle is a hollow cylinder with three spheres along it, one at each end and one in the centre. The cup shaped head was raised from a flat sheet of metal and crowned by a pierced out step section, soldered around the top rim. The crown was topped by a figurative portrait of St. Munchin, the patron saint of Limerick, which was cast from wax. The Limerick Coat of Arms was chased ^{6.} on to a separate piece of silver, pierced out and then attached to the face of the cup. There is also a harp attached at either side of the Coat of Arms. The entire piece took approximately three months to complete and can be seen in illus. 14.

Although the piece was successful, and a superb example of Donovan's craftsmanship, he had some reservations. He would have preferred to use the opportunity to experiment with the design of the mace. The actual piece is of a traditional concept, whereas Donovan would have liked to have been able to individualise it from previous work. By doing so he would have returned to the original concept of a mace, a medieval Knight's weapon, some form of protection.

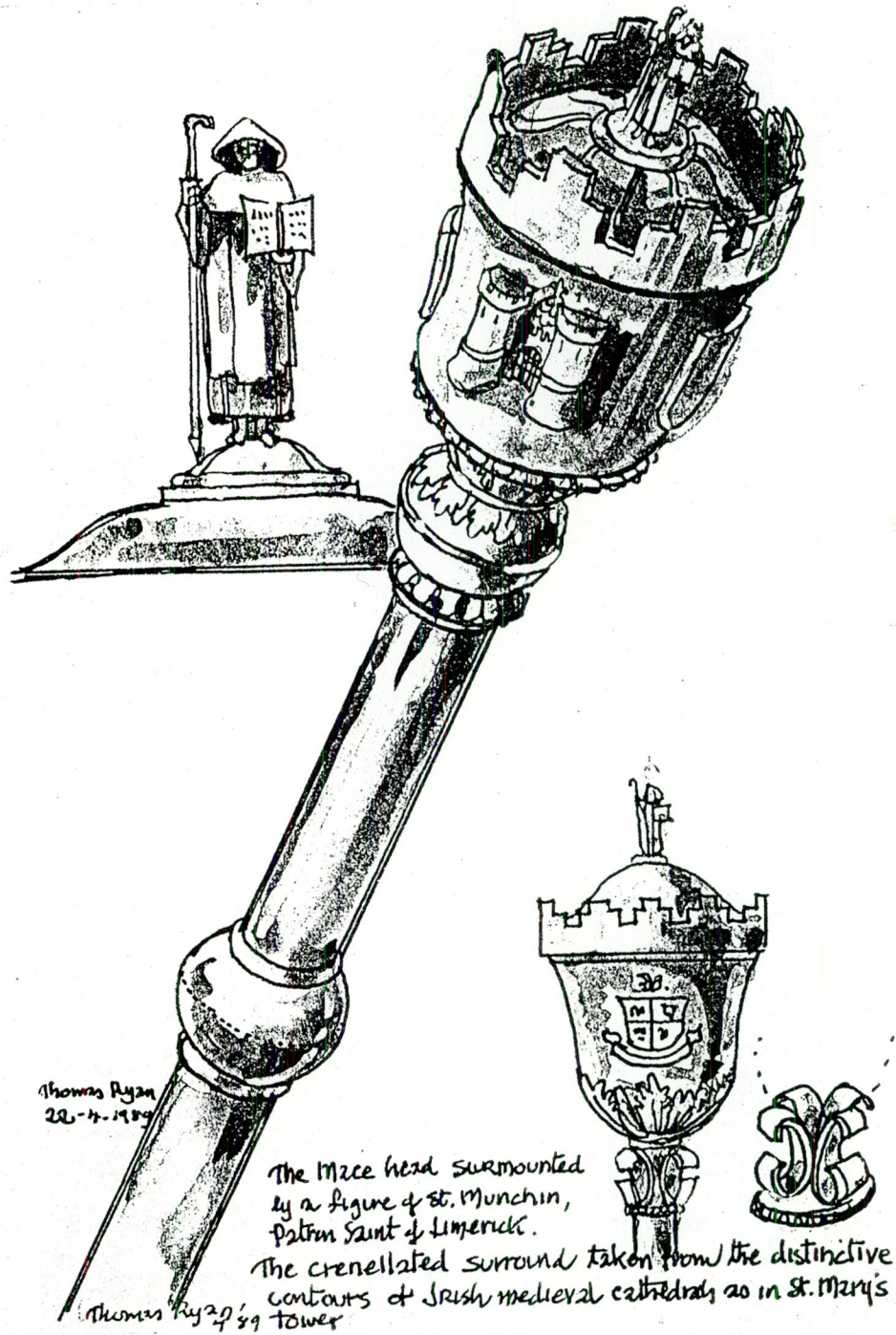
"Irish Silver of the 90's "Exhibition was a project conceived in the hope of revitalising design in domestic silver, a somewhat neglected area of work in contemporary silver, traditionally the strength of Irish domestic silverware. The idea was to rekindle

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General Broop

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illus. 14. Silver Mace.



interest in silverware by introducing a modern design aspect to the familiar repertoire of domestic utilitarian forms. The exhibition was a great success. Nine craftspersons exhibited their work. It was varied, bringing about new ideas to the world of Irish silverware. Peter Donovan produced a rather unusual decanter for the exhibition seen in illus. 15. He has combined glass and silver in a number of his previous works. Believing in the relationship between silver and glass to work well, he designed this elegant decanter. The idea of the glass being fragile interested him and brought about the idea of casing the silver around it for protection. The bottle is caged in by twelve angular hand forged triangular section bars. There is a very simple base to which the bars are attached and the glass seems to be suspended inside. The neck of the bottle is cased in silver: here the top of the bars connect closing off the cage. This silver section spreads out to form the top of the bottle and topped with a solid glass stopper. The hand blown glass cup of the wine goblet is mounted on top of a cage like stem to compliment the decanter. The port goblet is a miniature version of the wine goblet, with a silver cup gilded inside. The combination of the delicate yet sheer strength of the line of the glass and the cold sharp edge of the silver, compliment the relationship between these two great materials.

Water Proof

BOARD



illus. 15.

Silver and Glass Decanter for the Irish silver of the 90's exhibition by Peter Donovan, Glass blown by Keith Leadbetter.



The second silversmith I wish to discuss is Brian Clarke, who was born in Dublin in 1947. Having a keen interest in metalwork, he began producing pieces of jewellery in his spare time. To develop this further, he attended night classes in metalwork at the National College of Art and Design and carried on to attend full time classes there. Unfortunately, there were little facilities or opportunities available at that time, so he decided to accept the offer of a place in the Ecole Des Arts Appliques in Paris. However, this period, 1968 was interrupted by the student protests, and his time was cut short. He then went to the Loughborough College of Art in England. After spending but a short time in college, he returned to Dublin and began working as an enameller. It was at this time, he received his first commission. He gave up his job and began working for himself. Like all craftsmen starting up, he possessed a limited amount of equipment, but he persisted and worked around this obstacle. As time went on and his work became more and more in demand, he finally was able to expand his workshop and work more freely.

In previous years, when the Company of Goldsmiths dictated that all students serve their time with a master silversmith, apprenticeships were plentiful. In present times however, it is not as easy to find such a master craftsman in Ireland, who would have enough work to take on an apprentice. Clarke has himself stated "I bought every book written on silversmithing, and basically taught myself" (CLARKE,1992,DUBLIN). In this way,

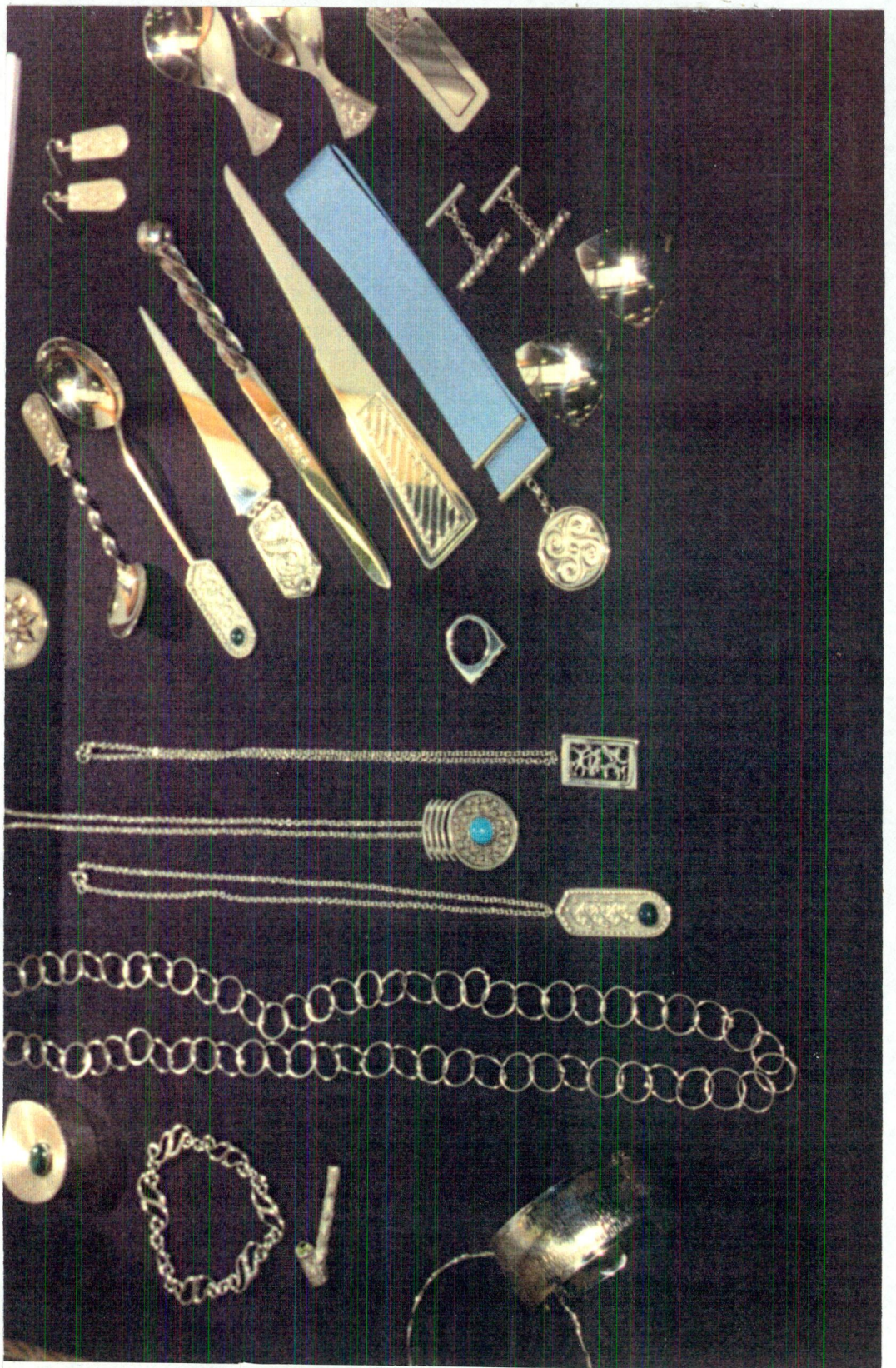
WORLD BROTHER

1901

through practice and patience, he built up his skills and techniques.

To-day, Brian Clarke is a silversmith of International renown, who specialises in producing presentation and trophy pieces, religious objects and a series of jewellery and giftware. His studio is located in an old school house in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow. His range of jewellery and giftware on display in his workshop consist of: bracelets, brooches, necklaces, rings, tiepins, pillboxes, letter openers, spoons and moneyclips. A selection of this jewellery can be seen in illus.16. Clarke enjoys the use of texture and by the use of hammers and punches produces outstanding repousse, chasing motifs and interlaced work, some if not all, of Celtic origin. Nearly all Clarke's work contains textured areas of this kind. Illus.17. shows Clarke chasing the bottom rim of a silver teapot. Great care must be taken when creating this kind of design work. As each hammerblow affects the metal and entice the shape to be formed.

In illus. 18., one can see an elegant silver necklace by Clarke. It consists of thirteen sections which are attached together by several links. Each section has been roller embossed¹ giving a delicate texture and then pressed into a raised shape. There is a back soldered onto each section to give extra body and strength without any added weight. The centre piece has a large garnet set on to it. The whole piece is elegantly formed and sits comfortably on the neck. This piece creates a feeling of purity and simplicity to the wearer and can be seen in the Crafts Councils Headquarters in the Powerscourt Townhouse.



illus. 16. Series of Silver Jewellery available from Brian Clarke.





illus. 17. Brian Clarke chasing the bottom rim of a silver jug.





Illus. 18. Silver Necklace by Brian Clarke,
Craft Councils Headquarters,
Powerscourt Townhouse.



Brian Clarke also works on commissions and exhibitions. He gives great care and attention to the planning of each individual piece. The consideration of what the client wants and what the piece is to be used for is of great importance. The material and design must work with its environment. He has been commissioned for a number of presentation pieces and trophies for the Racing Board and Turf Clubs. illus.20. is a large silverplate commissioned by the Racing Board in 1992. Like all Clarke's work, it contains a gentle texture around the rim, which compliments the shape of the plate. It consists of a subtle interlaced motif.

Perhaps the most exciting of Clarke's work was his commission to produce the Dublin Mayor's Chain of Office, seen in illus.21. This piece is truly an original artefact and a superb example of contemporary silversmithing. It is made up of twenty eight sections, each representing a part of Dublin's history. The main emblem is in gold, with a viking ship chased onto it and the two panels above representing the sea. Each section was worked in silver in great detail. In illus. 22., one can see in detail, the left hand section of the chain and the care and planning that has gone into each individual section. Each piece was chased onto a separate section of silver, which was then pierced out and arranged to best suit the entire chain. They were then soldered into place giving an almost three dimensional quality to each section. The work in progress can be seen in illus.23., and how each individual section is to be laid out before finally completed. When the finished piece was first shown everyone welcomed this new change to a traditional piece. Clarke will always be credited with this outstanding piece of craftsmanship.



illus. 19. Sketch by Brian Clarke of a Silver Jug





illus. 20. Silver Plate for the Racing Board and Turf Clubs by Brian Clarke in 1992.

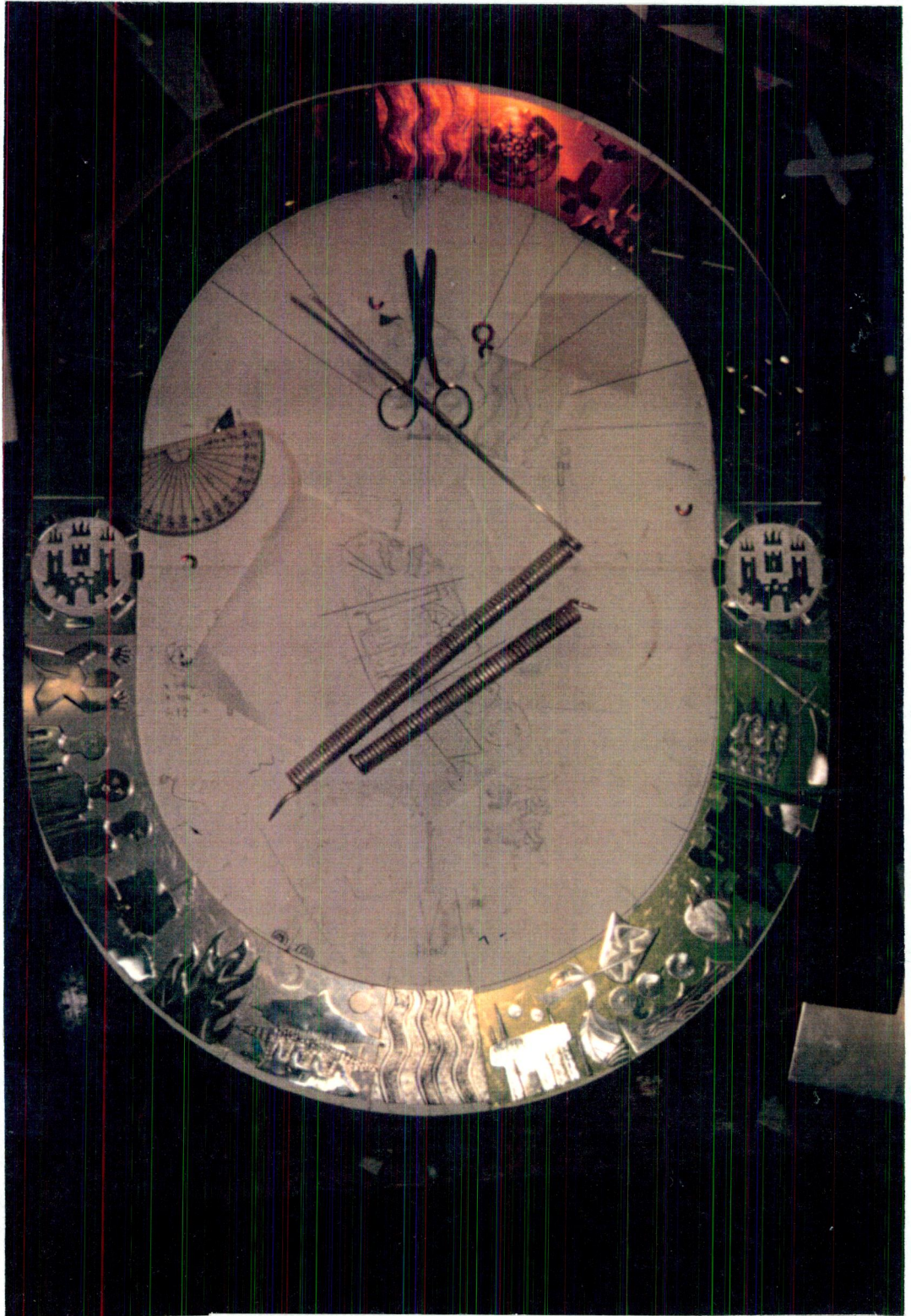




illus. 21. Dublin Mayors Chain of Office by Brian Clarke.



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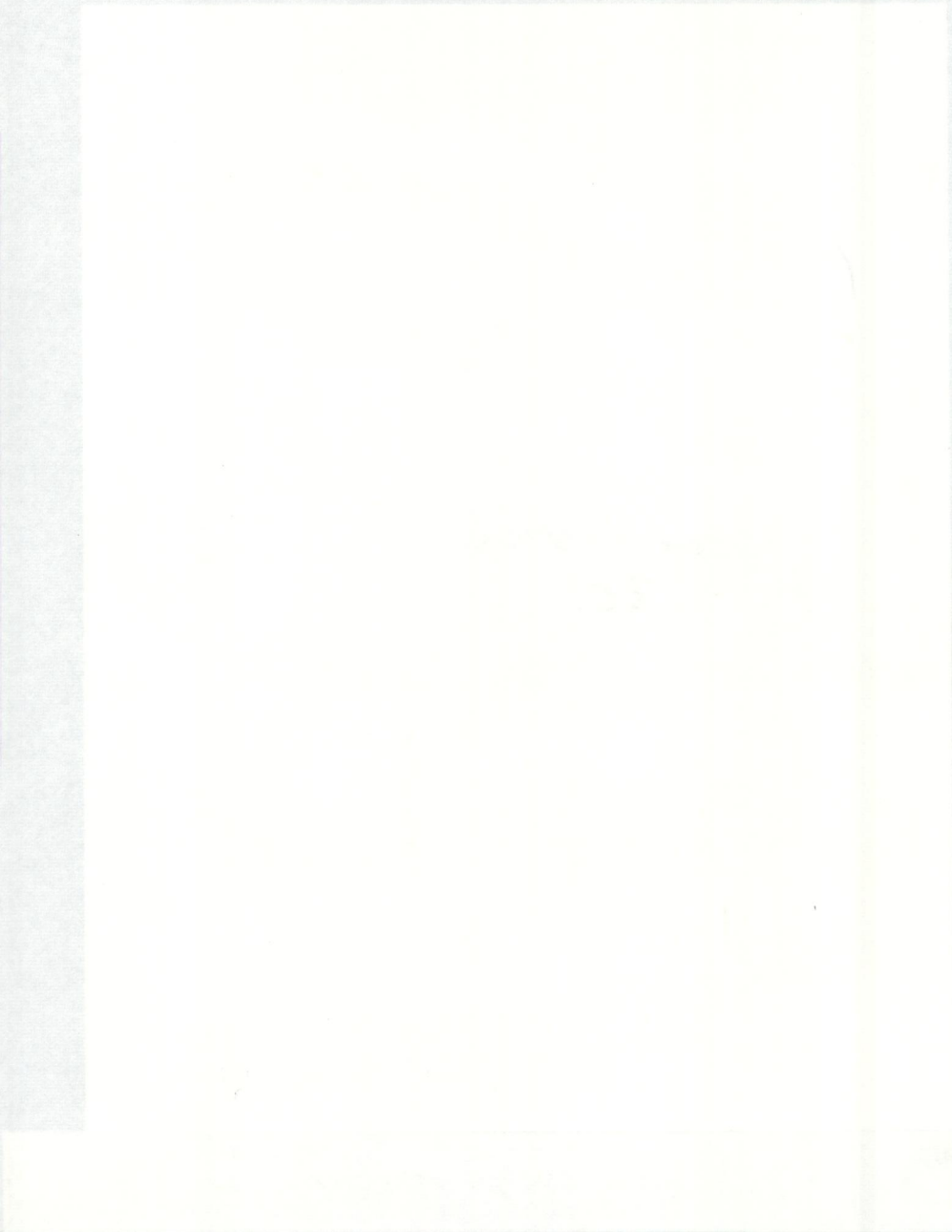
illus. 23. Work in progress of the Dublin Mayors Chain of Office.



In the "Irish Silver of the 90's" exhibition, Brian Clarke showed a pair of candlesticks seen in illus.24. The design originated from the idea of a hand, finger and thumb, holding a candle. The curve of the hand accentuates the form created. However, this led to the necessity of filling an internal space. A single piece of silver was used, which had to be formed and stretched in opposing directions and carefully attached to the interior. The chased linear decoration around the form is used to emphasise the interior, reflecting light and shade of the piece. The base is delicately attached to the holder, giving a sense of fragility and proportion to which it stands. Like all Brian Clarke's work it is simple yet strong in form and design with the co-ordination of line and purity of the metal.



illus. 24. Pair of Silver candlesticks produced for the "Irish Silver of the 90's" exhibition by Brian Clarke 10cm.





illus. 25. Kevin O'Dwyer.



SWINE

The third and final silversmith I wish to discuss, is Kevin O'Dwyer. He was born in New York in 1953 and studied at the School of Art Institute in Chicago. He then trained as a goldsmith with Harriet Dressinger for three years and as a silversmith and enameller with William Fredrick for a further two years. His workshop is presently based in Dublin, however, he travels to the United States throughout the year to promote his work. He is a professional metalsmith who specialized in the design and creation of custom silverware for home and personal use and a range of jewellery in gold and silver. The majority of his work is exported with an even more extensive market for his work in the United States. For it is here, that his contemporary work and modern designs are accepted and appreciated. However, in Ireland, with a more conservative aspect to the trade, he finds it somewhat difficult to sell his more elaborate work, leaving him with a rather limited range. Nevertheless, all O'Dwyers work is formed using traditional silversmithing techniques of the hammer and anvil which is then meticulously planished and hand polished to its final finish.

Contemporary, functional and simple elegance can best describe Kevin O'Dwyer's work. The creation of a one of a kind functional object that maintains artistic integrity is the goal of his designs. He enjoys the aspect of fun and movement in his work and is influenced by a number of American sculptors, and the art deco period. His earlier works were traditional style silverware consisting of goblets, jugs, bowls and flatware. He then began to work more freely, individualising his work and

developing a style all his own. One such piece can be seen in illus.26., a pair of candlesticks. At first glance, they are simple and graceful in appearance. The long honest stems branching out into the elegantly forged base. This allows a relationship to appear between the form and the movement of the work. illus. 27., is a sculptural piece which was raised and forged to produce the elegant movement of the metal. It seems to evolve around itself while remaining still. The base which consists of a solid block of wood is linear and geometric in form as opposed to the freeness of the slender silver structure. While working on his commission and exhibition work, O'Dwyer also produced a series of jewellery which are sold in America and Europe. In the "Vice Versa Exhibition" jewellery as sculpture, sculpture as jewellery" he exhibited two bracelets 'Helicord 1 and 11, in September, 1990 seen in illus.28. It is visible in all these pieces the contrast between the sharp hard edges and free flowing forms, which is associated with all O'Dwyer's work.

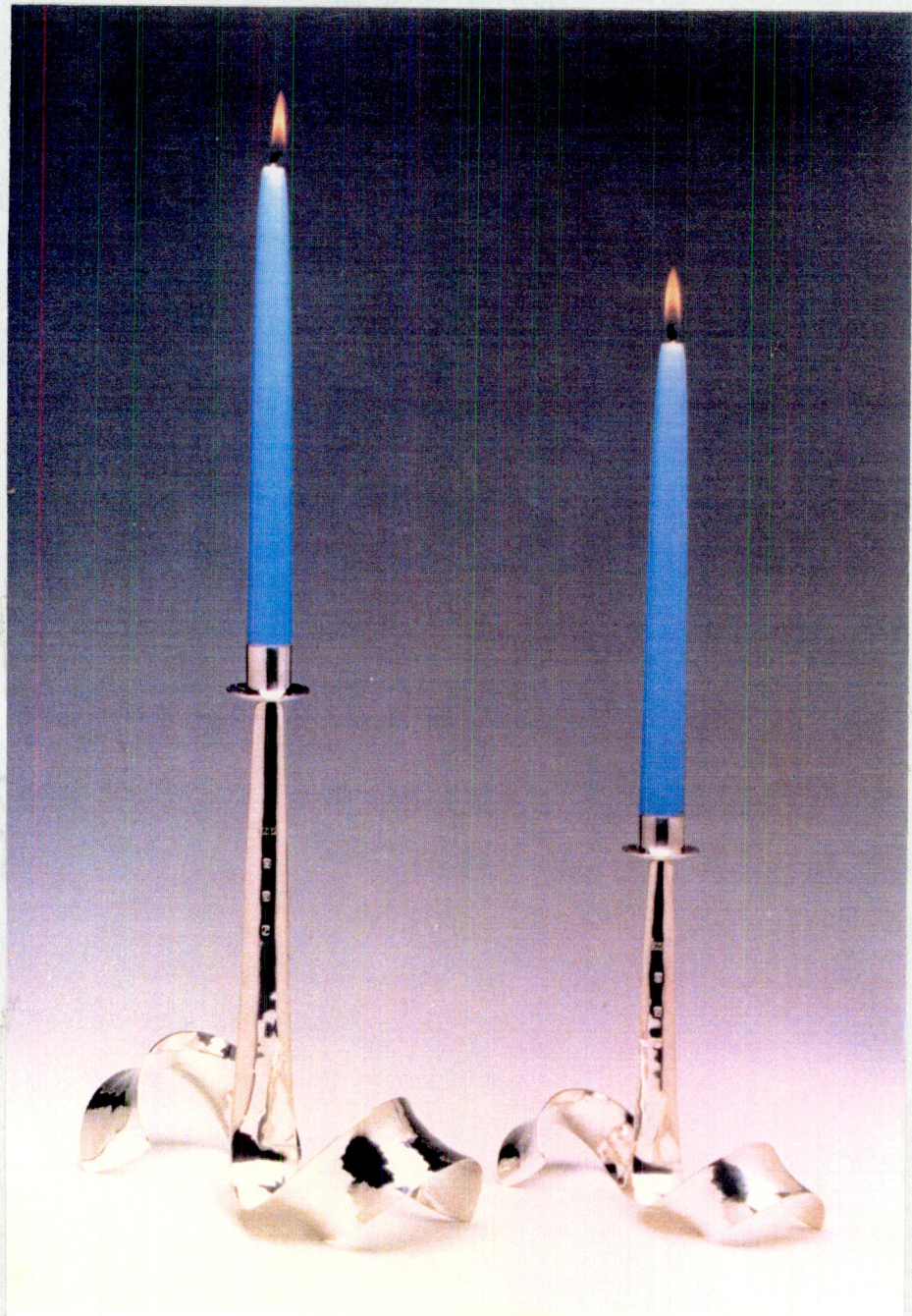
O'Dwyer is also one of the member on the Board of Directors of the Crafts Council of Ireland. The Council is a state body designed by the Government with the responsibility for the development of the standard and promotion of craft and design in Ireland. The Craft Council's statement of intent "is to foster and develop the craft sector" means that we have to examine the product, the quality of that product and by means of promoting it successfully, (Kelly 1989 pg 6). O'Dwyer does this through the marketing aspect, inspiring and encouraging the sale and export of Irish products. Rebuilding Irish craft to the standard much appreciated on previous years.

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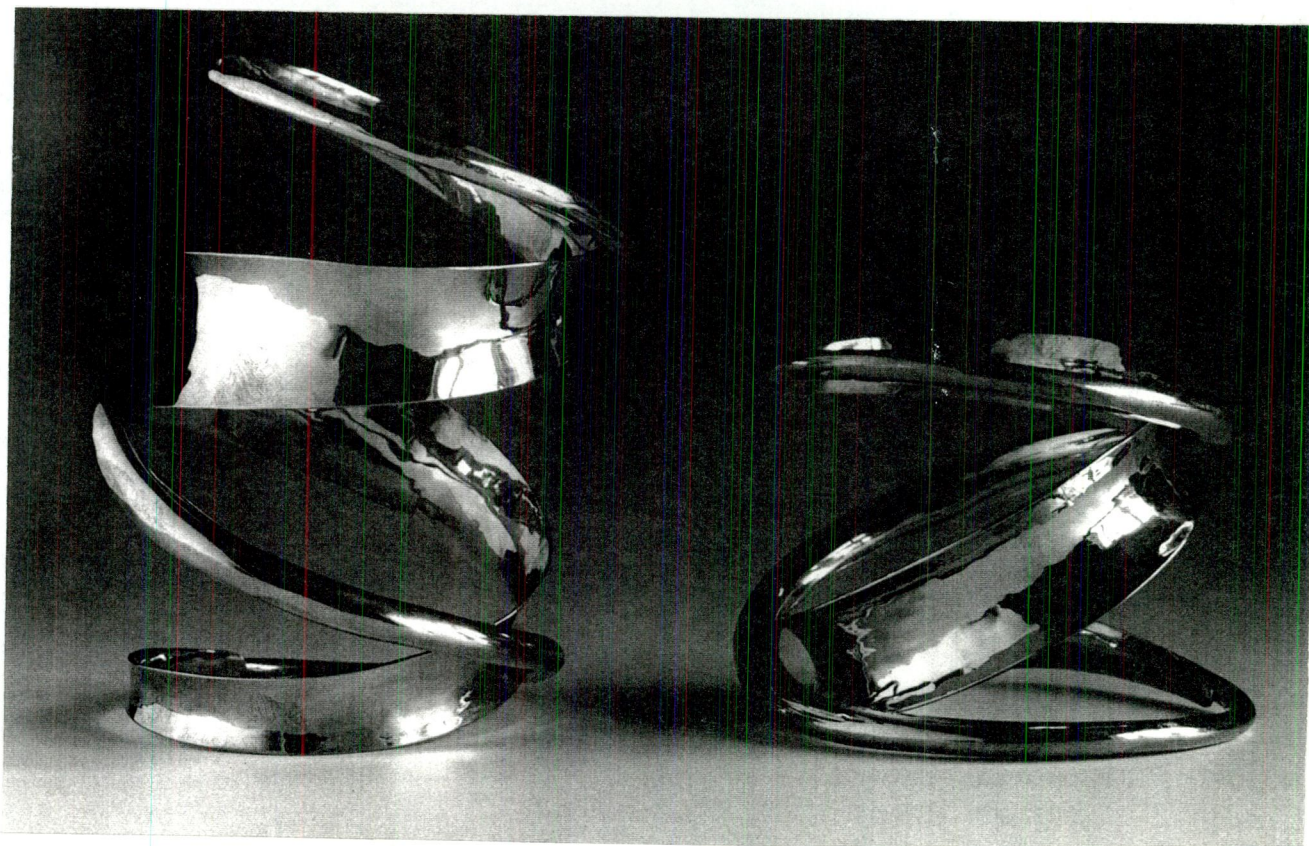
illus. 26. Pair of Silver Candlesticks by Kevin O'Dwyer.





illus. 27. Silver Sculptural piece by Kevin O'Dwyer.





Bronze bracelets Helicord 1 and 11, Vice
Versa Exhibition, 1990, 15 x 10cm,
Illus. 28. 7.5 x 10cm.



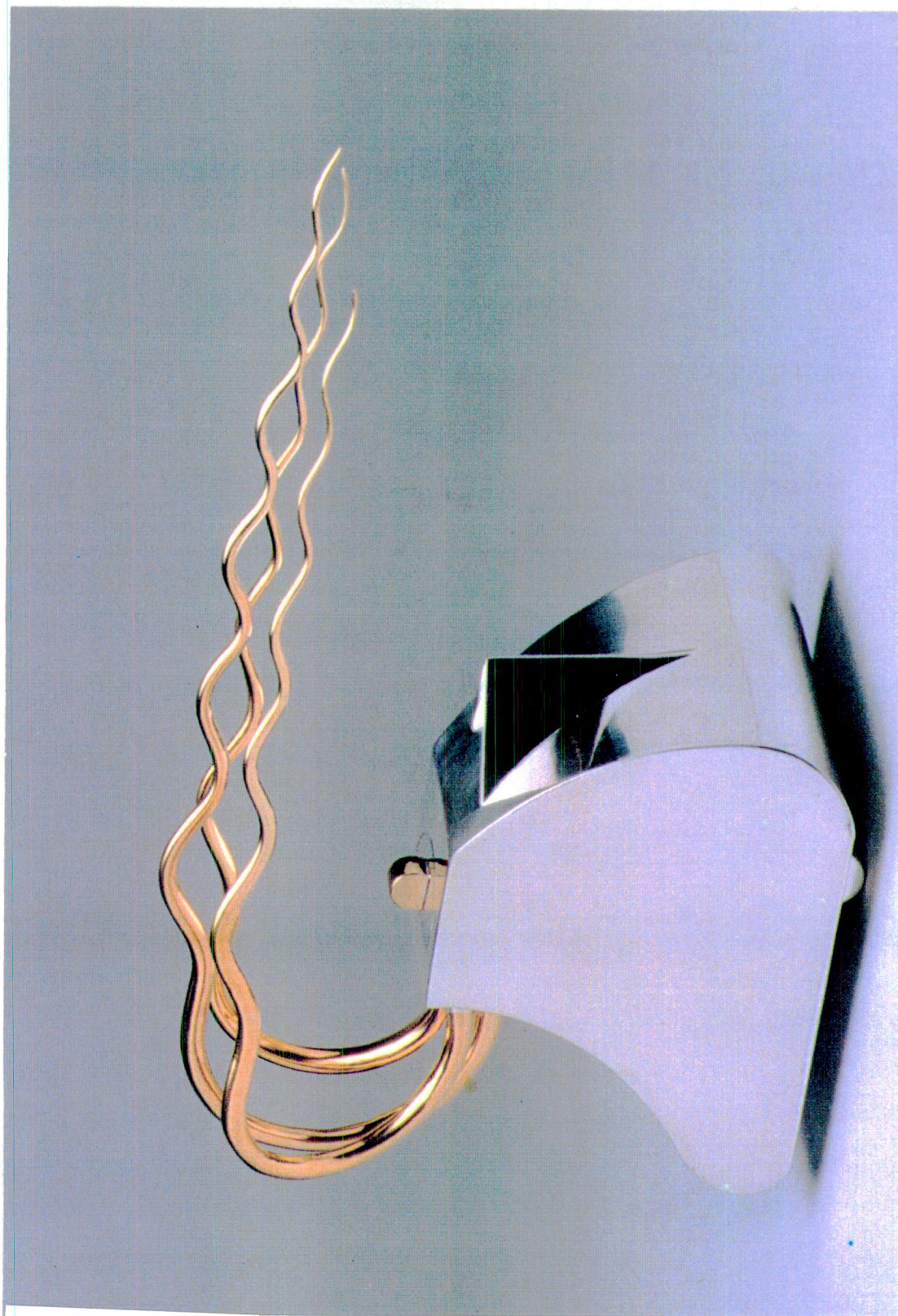
For the 'Irish Silver of the 90's' exhibition, O'Dwyer produced a series of teapots and accessories, i.e. candlesticks, creamers and sugar bowls. The theme of the series is the "Mad Hatters tea party" from Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland", which has been referred to as teapots with an attitude, which is obvious from first glance by the sheer strength of line of each form. O'Dwyer also spoke of how the traditional tea ceremony - afternoon tea, is disappearing from Society and the silver tea service becomes more and more a decorative object of art. "I feel that the role of silver teapots in the nineties and beyond will be that of a decorative object and my teapots address this design approach" (Craft Council 1991. pg.15.) There is quite a change here from any of Kevin's previous work. Although all his work is beautifully crafted, they cannot compare with the exciting and truly contemporary piece produced for this show. illus. 29. , shows one of the teapots from O'Dwyer's show, which was subsequently purchased by the Belfast Museum of Art. The gilted forged¹ handles are in total contrast to the sharp cold edges of the white silver, yet work together in motion. Three small legs below also add to the effect of floating as though they were alive and would float across the table to serve each individual tea. It is easy to see the relationship from this whimsical tea service and the zany gatherings in Alice's Adventures. In illus. 30., you can see two more of O'Dwyer's wonderland teapots, a continuation from the first with the same form although with more elaborate forged handles. Also the teapot on the right contains a subtle texture which adds to the

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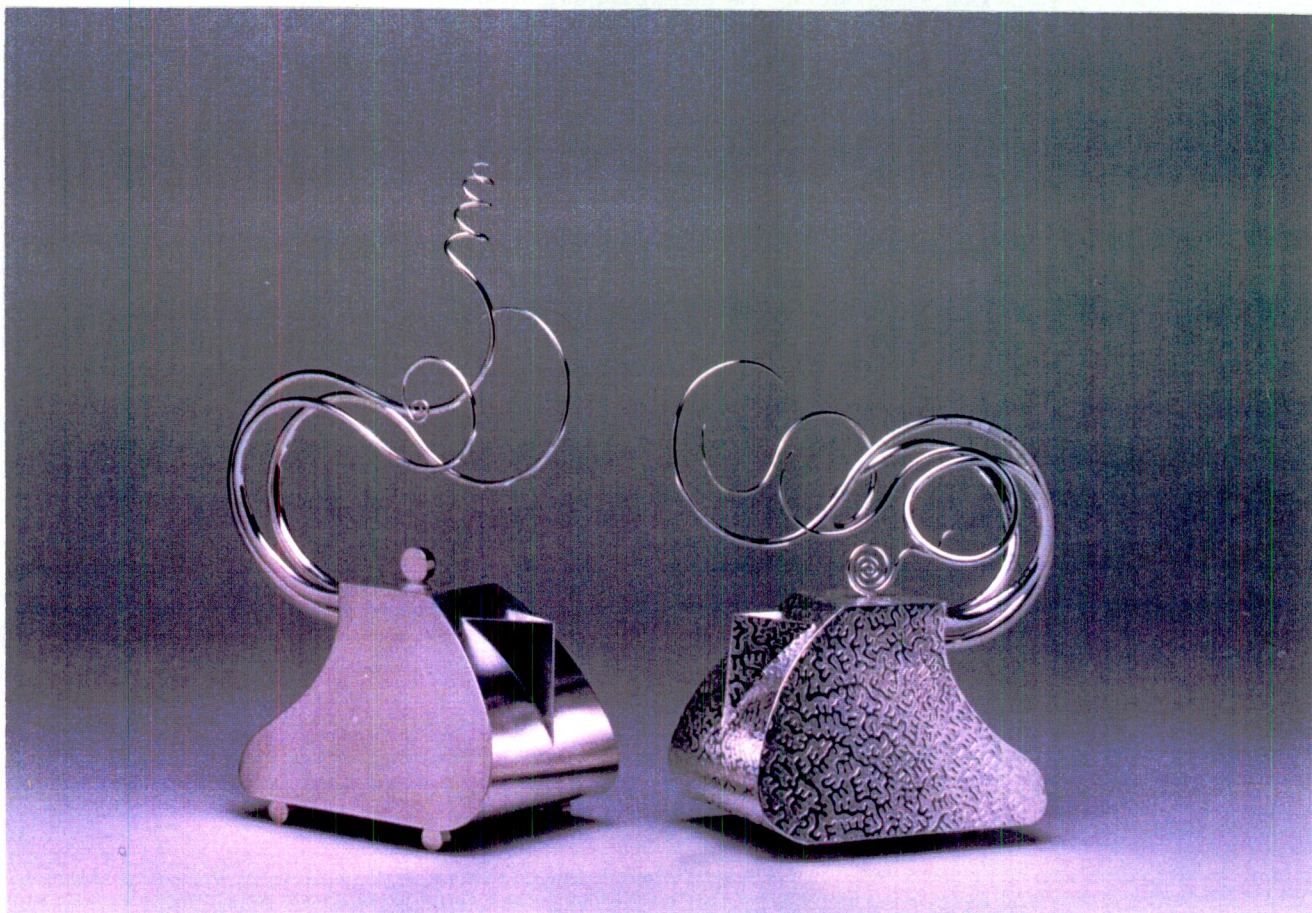


illus. 29. Contemporary Silver Teapot No. 3 by Kevin O'Dwyer for the "Irish Silver of the 90's" exhibition, 1991.



Mad Hatter effect. All three teapots were basically produced in the same way. Walls of silver were soldered edge to edge. In this way, he built up the forms. This process is referred to as fabrication and is also in contrast with the work of Donovan and Clarke who raise the majority of their work from one flat sheet. The handles are wonderfully forged using the hammer and anvil and then meticulously cleaned to a very fine high finish. They are attached to the teapot through a small section of silver tubing which was soldered onto the back of the piece. All three pieces are superb examples of Kevin O'Dwyer's workmanship, they are graceful, precise with a sense of fun. All his pieces are functional yet he does not think of them as a mere object, but as a work of art. When he is producing for an exhibition, it is easily visible he does not let the practical precious side take over the creative and aesthetic concepts. In illus. 31., you can see a number of pieces from the accessories in the show. There is a pair of candlesticks, a creamer and sugar bowl. Each piece is unique, yet with the gentle texture and forged handles, mix successfully with each other and the rest of the show.

Kevin O'Dwyer's whole show was outstanding, overpowering the entire "Irish Silver of the '90's" exhibition. It is not surprising therefore, that he received a prize, presented by the Company of Goldsmiths for the design which best took on the terms of the brief at the official opening of the exhibition by Nicholas Robinson.



illus. 30. Contemporary Silver Teapots 1 and 2
by Kevin O'Dwyer for the "Irish Silver
of the 90's" exhibition, 1991.





Series of accessories from Kevin O'Dwyer's show at the "Irish Silver of the 90's" exhibition. A pair of Candlesticks, Creamer and Sugar Bowl.



CONCLUSION.

Silver has been used from ancient times for a great variety of articles, principally jewellery, and domestic utilitarian forms. In the middle ages, it was used mainly for ecclesiastical use. However, after the 16th century, when the supply of silver became plentiful, quantities of fine silverware was made in all European countries. There are many examples of extraordinary silverwork throughout Ireland's history. Although after a period of stagnation, which left the industry lacking in fine examples of the craft, silver is once again being put to its most appropriate use. The standard of modern Irish silver to-day, continues the great tradition of previous centuries and a revival of the vitality in the craftsmen of to-day is easily visible from their work.

Like previous artists and craftsmen before them, Donovan, Clarke and O'Dwyer must be acknowledged for the work and contributions made individually to the silver trade. After just a brief glance at a few of each silversmith's work, it is not necessary to compliment them, for each has already proved themselves worthy of the title of silversmith, through their skills and craftsmanship. However, design plays a vital role in the production of modern silverware., and it is through their contemporary design work which sets these three silversmiths apart from those of the past.

ENDNOTES:

CHAPTER THREE.

1. Turning is a method whereby symmetrical forms are shaped over a pre-determined form on a lathe.
2. The special pride of the craft of silversmithing is the raising of hollow vessels from a flat sheet. A method of creating a seamless form where a flat piece of metal is hammered on its outer side upon a steel stake.
3. Casting is the process by which molten metal is pored into a hollowed out form to produce a solid section of metal.
4. Planishing is a process used to smooth and harden a raised shape. A light convex, highly polished hammer is used to lay down a series of gentle, overlapping blows on the metal, onto a steel stake with a radius slightly smaller than the curve of the piece.
5. Silver soldering is a challenge requiring careful observation and great technical skill. Soldering is used in almost everything the silversmith makes. It is the joining together of two or more pieces of silver with heat and solder, an alloyed metal with a lower melting point than that of any piece of silver being joined.
6. The complimentary techniques of chasing and repousse, provide surface decoration on silver, ranging from the simplest linear pattern to elaborate ornament in considerable relief. Chasing is the process of modelling a design in low relief by the use of a variety of steel punches struck with a light hammer.

In repousse, much the same tools are used. However, greater detail is given to the stretched areas allowing the piece to be worked to the desired amount of relief and detail.

CHAPTER FOUR.

1. Roller embossing is the process used in the creation of a textured design on the surface of the metal by rolling it together with different shapes and materials through a rolling mill.

CHAPTER FIVE.

1. Forging is a process by which metal is hammered from bars of regular section into forms of varying lengths, widths and thicknesses.

In addition, when the steel is rolled, however, the thickness is given by the difference of the rolling angle and the angle of the rolling mill.

CHAPTER FOUR.

Roller embossing, in the process of the reaction of a forward design on the surface of the metal by rolling is combined with different shapes and sections through a rolling mill.

CHAPTER FIVE.

Rolling is a process of forming the metal into a shape of the desired section from a round bar of the same material. It is done by passing the metal through a series of rollers which are arranged in a row and are driven by a common shaft.

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1. Introduction, History, and Objectives

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6. Conclusion and Future Research

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33. Appendix Y: Appendix

34. Appendix Z: Appendix

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