

The Making of  
Muckish Mountain  
and the  
Surrounding Landscape

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Design  
1994







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FACULTY OF DESIGN

DEPARTMENT OF CERAMICS/CRAFT DESIGN

"THE MAKING OF MUCKISH MOUNTAIN  
AND THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE"

BY

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SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF  
ART AND DESIGN AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF B.~~Des.~~ IN CRAFT DESIGN

1994



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER ONE:

(p. 4-10)

The powerful force of nature, brought about the birth of the landscape. A 3-D canvas was created for sculptural and decorative activities of nature.

### CHAPTER TWO:

(p. 11-22)

The 3-D canvas is altered further, by the actions of life: Living organisms, plants, animals and later man add details to this landscape canvas.

### CHAPTER THREE:

(p. 23-31)

As man exploits the landscape, scars soon appear and nature is left to doctor the wounds and help the affected areas recuperate.

### CHAPTER FOUR:

(p. 31-50)

The landscape has encouraged man to react to its visual and spiritual presence, both with positive and negative consequences.



## LIST OF PLATES

### INTRODUCTION

1. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1992.

### CHAPTER ONE

1. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1992.
2. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1992.
3. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1992.
4. Moore., Hornhead, 1991.
5. Moore, Hornhead, 1993.
6. Moore, Tory Island, 1992.

### CHAPTER TWO

1. Moore, Sessiagh Lake, 1990.
2. Moore, Below Muckish Mountain North Side, 1993.
3. Moore, Hornhead, 1993.
4. Moore, Marble Hill 1991.
5. Moore, Hornhead, 1992.
6. Moore, Ballymore, 1993.
7. moore, The Gap, 1993.

### CHAPTER THREE

1. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1993
2. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1987.
3. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1987.
4. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1987.
5. Moore, Muckish Mountain, 1987.

### CHAPTER FOUR

1. Moore, Hornhead, 1992.
2. Moore, Sheephaven Bay, 1993.
3. Moore, Purt, 1993.
4. Moore, Ards, 1992.
5. Adams, Vessel, 1990
6. Adams, Vessel, 1989.
7. Moore, Creeslough, 1993.

### CONCLUSION

1. Moore,  
Muckish Mountain 1990.



## INTRODUCTION

Twenty three years ago, I became part of a large sculpture gallery. The gallery displays many different types of sculpture made from various mediums. The sculpture in this gallery is known as the landscape. There are many different versions; ours is called the Mountain of Muckish. To me, Muckish is the main feature of this gallery but it is just important to name the other parts that form a pedestal for this mountain: The Atlantic Ocean, Sheephaven Bay, Tory Island, Hornhead Peninsula, the towns of Dunfanaghy, Portnablagh and Creeslough, the beaches of Killyhoey and Tramore, the townlands of Purt and Kill, Shessiagh Lake, The New Lake and Lough na Boll at the foot of Muckish.

No one knows for sure who had the idea first or who the original sculptor was but it all started about 5000 million years ago and it is still in the process today. Nature has played the biggest part in determining what the landscape looks like. Today and indeed since Mesolithic man inhabited the land about 8500 - 7500 years ago, we the people living in the area and those who come to stay here for short periods also play a role in this ongoing process. Where and whenever we slip up or go too far in our doings, nature usually steps in and sorts things out again.



## INTRODUCTION



1. "Muckish Mountain" — North side taken from Ballymore







The Local Poet, Eddie Mc Claafferty sings

"Praises of his beloved Mountain."

O mountain so lofty,  
I see you today  
So tall and majestic  
'Neath sky dark and grey

I saw you in summer  
'Neath sky bright and blue,  
And I climbed to your summit  
The country to view.

I passed by the carnan  
And added a stone  
Perhaps to the grave  
Of some hero unknown.

He might be a prince,  
or a warrior bold,  
or maybe the son  
of some leader of old.

Whose ardent desire,  
or dying request,  
was high on the hill-top,  
to be laid to rest.<sup>1</sup>



## CHAPTER ONE

The powerful force of nature, brought  
about the birth of the landscape.

A 3-D canvas was created for the sculptural  
and decorative activities of nature.



## CHAPTER ONE



1. Muckish Mountain  
- South Side.



2. Muckish Mountain  
- West Side.







## CHAPTER 1

The topic of who, how and why this landscape gallery was formed has baffled and continues to fascinate mankind since the beginning of our existence. Various races and cultures have come up with their own answers for the creation, a number sharing similar concepts.

The scientific conclusion is very similar to a ceramic format, where clay materials and gases, reacting to high temperatures produces a fairly permanent structure. About 5000 million years ago, suspended matter in the atmosphere began to collect together to form our planet earth. It took several million years for the surface to cool down but as it did, it expanded and the crust was formed. The early crust would have been very little variation in structure and shape. And evidence<sup>1</sup> suggests that all the five continents of today were once joined together as one vast continent known as Pangea.<sup>2</sup> Movements below the crust, in a liquid core, caused the crust to break up, colliding and folding against each other. This was the beginning of the mountain building programme. It took about 500 million years for the crust to settle and became much like what it is today.<sup>3</sup> Volcanoes and earth movement contained, as they do today, building up the landscape further. The three-dimensional canvas of rock was now prepared so sculpting could begin.

The first major carving activities were produced by large glaciers. Several Ice-Ages have occurred in the history of the earth with the last one starting only 18,000 years ago.<sup>4</sup> The landscape would have been barren, white and cold. It is through the Ice Age periods that much of our landscape of today was sculpted out of the masses of rock. The weight from accumulating snow and ice was so great that the glaciers were forced to move downwards. As they did, they plucked chunks out of the land. The hollows they left became lakes, such as Lough na Boll and Sessiagh Lake. Moving on, the glaciers sculpted the land in a sandpapering manner. With bits of rocks stripped from the ground and now embedded in the glacier, it





3. Muckish Mountain - North-West Side.



4. Hornhead taken from Falcarragh.







continued to tear more freely on the landscape, cutting out the valleys and rock faces we know today. Thawing of the ice resulted on the glacier depositing its collected materials, forming fertile areas about Purt and Kill and also being free from the weight and pressure of the glaciers, the continents began to rise. This process of land lifting is still happening today.

When the glaciers had finished shaping our environment, the forces of wind and water took over, both powerful enough to continue shaping and reshaping anything that was in their paths. They are still part of the present day operation responsible for the condition of our landscape. We do not have to wait millions of years to appreciate their work as their process brings about immediate changes especially in winter.

Hornhead does its best to protect us from the pounding North Atlantic winds and it has the scars to show it. This headland is best viewed by boat as it rises straight out of the sea, to a height, together with the effects of past glacier, wind and water erosion on the cliffs, appear like a massive wall mural. The cliffs here host a "spectacle of precipitous descents and yawning carvens, where the foaming waves dash themselves hungrily against the jagged rocks."<sup>5</sup> From the top of Hornhead you can view another sculpture piece - Tory Island. Tory appears out of the sea as if it were surfacing to breathe. This mass of rock is probably the most barren place off this continent. It is a bleak land of nearly 800 acres and three miles long. Regularly bombarded by strong winds and gales and there is little vegetation and no trees.

Muckish Mountain though is the main focal point. Situated in the North West part of Donegal, it is the third highest mountain in Donegal, rising 2118 feet above sea level and about four miles from the coast. For anyone who has seen the mountain ~~form~~ the north side, they will remember its distinct slope, two diagonal sides joined by a sharp edged top. But this is only one of the many surprisingly different shapes of Muckish. The north coastal





5. The Cliffs at  
Hornhead during  
calm weather.



6. Tory Island from  
Hornhead.







front of the mountain is largely and majestic, as it seemingly just rises out of the ground from nowhere and towers over its Three Sisters on the right and Kill Mountain to the left. The rock face is exposed here and at certain times the sun sparkles of all those fasiinating rocks which make up the Mountain. As you go further west, Muckish seemingly curves gently downwards into the bogland below. Here it makes the connection with the landscape below it as if it has found its roots where it came from. The western side of Muckish looks like a smaller version of Errigal Mountain - the highest peak in Donegal, rising like a pyramid out of the boggy landscape into a pointy peak. Small shiny stones of quartz lie like pebbledash on this steep slope looking as if they were going to slide down any minute. From the south side you wonder if it is still the same mountain. In complete contrast to the northern side this side looks almost like a very high hill, sheltered from the fierce force of the north winds blowing in from the Atlantic Ocean. Plants such as heather and grasses are able to survive on these gentlier gradients. The east side is also steep but narrow. Here the greener complexion of the south slopes creep round to the north side until it is met by the whipping North Atlantic Wind.

I have described the mountain as having four sides because that is what you perceive when you see it from a distance but in reality there are numerous sides. Probably the biggest surprise of all is when you reach the top of Muckish. I first climbed Muckish in 1987 with my family. We climbed from the north side - the hardest side. It took us about four hours. On the climb up we were warned to be careful when we reached the top. I think we were expecting a narrow ledge, running the whole way across the top, like a lid on which we would have to sit incase we fell down the other side. How wrong we were.

The first surprise was that there were sheep strolling about on top of a mountain over 2000 feet above sea level, not even looking up as we interrupted their privacy. We realized that on the the top of Muckish are



acres and acres of flat land, grazing sheep and big angular stones, some about two feet high, scattered all over the place with flowers and grasses growing among them. We found a pile of stones about 8 to 10 feet high and so we added another. On the east side we saw the cross that had been placed there in 1951.<sup>6</sup> Then we descended.

It was a clear day and you could see for miles around. You could follow the coast line from away over by Bloody Foreland to Malin Head and Tory Island peeping out of the vast Atlantic Ocean. We saw lakes that we never knew existed and Errigal Mountain rising high in the west and the Glenveagh Mountains behind us to the south. Everything below looked minature in this spectacular open air gallery.



## CHAPTER TWO

The 3-D canvas is altered further, by the actions of life: Living organisms , plants, animals and later man add details to this landscape canvas.



## CHAPTER 2

Until 350 million years ago, life existed only in water. The landscape of the earth was not an inviting habitat, with regular volcanic eruptions, clouds of dust and ash, hissing steam geysers and very hot conditions.<sup>1</sup>

The first life forms were primitive living cells in the sea which developed into fish. Some marine algae probably managed to live on the edge of the seas, but they would not have been able to go far beyond the edge or they would have dried up and died. However about 420 million years ago, some ferns developed a waxy coating which gave them some protection from the threatening heat, enabling them to stay on land longer.<sup>2</sup> The first plants of ferns and horsetails must have been very small, rootless and fertile. Before they died they bore fruit, then their decaying bodies provided mould for their off-spring. Air, water, wind and sunshine would also contribute to their development. The action of weather on the rocks caused surfaces to soften and decay. The oxygen and carbon dioxide found in the air, with moisture, combining with chemicals in the rocks, caused the rocks to break down into small particles. Rain, snow and ice also helped break the rocks into small pieces. As a result, soil, (sand and clay) was formed and was then spread by wind, glacier and running water. Although the plants benefited from clay and sand, the plants preferred soil mixed with humus, the decaying leaves and stems of other plants. The mix of soil and humus - light fertile and holding moisture allowed the small roots to move and feed. When they found their way into cracks in the rocks and grew thicker and stronger they gradually broke up the surface of the rocks. In time, with sufficient depth of suitable soil, vegetation slowly covered the bare soil, vegetation slowly covered the bare rocks. The plants provided habitats and food for insects, birds and herbivores. The decorating of earth has taken root.

Between 8500 - 7500 years ago, when plants and land creatures started to settle here again, that Mesolithic



## CHAPTER TWO



1. Crannog on Sessiagh Lake.







man became established in the north of Ireland. These people were hunters and fishers and apart from taking fruit they left the plants alone. Then about 5500 to 4000 years ago, when the Neolithic people arrived, the landscape underwent a change. The woodlands began to suffer. These newcomers were farmers who needed open ground and fertile soils. They started to fell the woods to make space to farm on. The timber they cut down was used for stockades, built to protect crops from grazing animals and to protect stock from the wolf and the fox. The Bronze Age people of 4000 years ago, also cleared forests but between 200BC and AD300, with the arrival of the Iron Age, and the Celts, the woodlands experienced a period of relief.<sup>3</sup> Men were already beginning to leave their trademarks on the land.

Outside Dunfanaghy in the sand dunes at Tramore Beach are remains of over 50 primitive houses called middens. Some of these middens contained bronze artifacts dating back to 1AD.<sup>4</sup> Crannnogs, artificial manmade islands constructed from stones, bushwood and peat, were constructed in the middle of three local lakes. They were built usually for protection from wild animals and invaders. As more and more trees were being cut down, the land became more exposed to the elements and dwellings had to be stronger. Huts developed into housing establishments built out of stone and timber with simple roofs and later the introduction of mortar made stone structures much stronger.

From AD300 - 600 the development of the Coulter-Plough brought an expansion in agriculture and a further loss of woodland.<sup>5</sup> AD600 to 1150 saw further developments in farming technology, with the development of a sloping board (the Mould-Board) to the plough - to turn the sod. With this technology, long narrow fields replaced small square fields. Sturdy banks, ditches, stone walls and fences began to surround the fields. Throughout Ireland it was the rich people with good quality land who could afford the most up to date farming equipment. With almost barren land and without much equipment, poor people worked lazy, stone beds and patches of ground up hillsides. They used their homemade implements to dig and scrape, plough





2. The remains of the felled trees found in bogs all around Muckish.



3. The methods of modern day fencing compared to the old traditional ditch building, working together at Marble Hill.







and sow their land. Both rich and poor people shaped the landscape we know today.

The big division between the rich and poor was particularly evident during the Plantation of Ulster. When Scottish and English Protestants were sent to Ulster to take over the land from the Irish, at the beginning of the 16th century. The original farmers were forced from their homes, taking their families and possessions to settle on the marginal land on hillsides, near bogs, on off shore islands and along the rugged coast. This was the beginning of landlordism.

Life was totally different now with the loss of freedom and it was reflected in the landscape. As the land was cleared to reveal the poor soil, the stones and boulders were hauled to the sides to make ditches marking out boundaries. The network of ditches increased dramatically in quantity as farmers divided out their land between their sons. This went on for several generations. It was hard work making new fields and keeping them in productive condition. Baskets of seaweed were hauled from the sea shores to be spread on the land as fertilizer. As the population increased there was more pressure for land. With sub-dividing and sharing of land between sons, the fields became ridiculously small - "a cow in a field the size of a one-car garage took shelter by a wall."<sup>6</sup> People were forced higher up the terrain and further out to uncivilized lands. Whereas farmers have been responsible for most of the small details of the landscape, like the network of ditches and roads, the landlords of the past are responsible for the major structures in the area. Firstly the homes they built for themselves contrast against the landscape and against tenant houses. There are four such structures in the area. Hornhead House, Faugher House, Ards House and Doe Castle. The latter appearing the most interesting both aesthetically and historically.

Only Ards House continues to be lived in today. Hidden deep in the trees off the main road between Creeslough and Dunfanaghy the house was converted into a Capuchin Friary and became a theological centre for monks. One





4. Old Homesteads  
of our ansesters,  
at the back of  
Hornhead.



5. Houses of more  
recent years  
at the front  
of Hornhead.







of its former residents Robert Alexander Stewart was noted for his input in the area and there stands in Dunfanaghy Square a stone monument in his memory. It was he who built the Stewart Arms Hotel in Dunfanaghy about 1840. Today the hotel is known as the Carrig Rua. In 1845 he built the Market House, also in Dunfanaghy, on reclaimed land.

A later resident to Ards House was also involved in re-sculpting the land. Lady Isobella Graham Jole, "a proud and aloof lady"<sup>7</sup> had little time for her tenants and so that she wouldn't meet them on her way to church she requested a new private road to be built to St. Johns Church at Ballymore. The result was the most unique rear entrance to an estate ever built in Ireland. It is called "The Tunnel", "a monument to pride and prejudice."<sup>8</sup> In order to carry out the request the Derryart river had to be hornised, a bridge built and a new roadway constructed through the forest and across the sand to Ballymore Hill. From here the road was carved from the rocks and wound its way up hill to the top of the Big Church Brae. Here the tunnel was constructed through the rock, to be met with a splendid view of Muckish at the other side. The tunnel ran for 40 yards, curving slightly and faced at the front and rear by hand cut stone. Behind the tunnel, entering through a smaller tunnel stables were built, enclosed by a wall and floored with a cobbled courtyard. Earth was heaped over the entire structure and trees planted on top, concealing the entrance. It was Lady Isabella's husband A.J.R. who built the stone wall that runs along the main road and extends several miles enclosing the Ards Demesne. William Wray, reigned Ards from 1723. He was responsible for most of the road building in the area. He is also noted for planting many trees about Ards some of which are still alive today.

The people of Dunfanaghy Union were fairly fortunate in their draw of the landlords. At times the landlords got on better with the tenants than they did with each other. In a letter from Charles Stewart of Hornhead to William Wray of Ards he replies, "If I had but one day to live, I would meet you on top of Muckish Mountain rather





6. The Tunnel built for Lady Isobella.



7. The remains of the old viaducts marching across the Owencarrow Valley where the train was blown off the tracks.







than loose by you what I have carried all my life."<sup>9</sup>

Indeed it was only due to these landlords that many valuable buildings came about. Valuable not only economically or in many cases aesthetically but also valuable to the quality of life both physically and spiritually.

During the famine years of 1844 - 1849, Dunfanaghy Union was one of the worst hit areas of Ireland. With continued annual potato crop failure and a major decline in fish sources, from over fishing in the past, there seemed no way forward. In the village of Dunfanaghy it was the landlord Alex Stewart of Ards who provided possibilities and solutions. Famine Relief projects were started and the old Workhouse and Fever Hospital were built in 1844. The workhouse could accomodate 300 "paupers" and proved to be a blessing for many families. In return for their accomodation and basic meals, the paupers were expected to work. The women and children did kitchen and house work and the men laboured outside. This included breaking of stones and road building. The Portnablagh Pier was constructed due to Famine Relief Projects. The Fever Hospital was built next door to the Workhouse providing relief and care for the worse hit by the Famine. Both the Workhouse and Fever Hospital continued to provide during the post-famine years, finally closing down in 1922.

Man and nature have fused to leave another land mark behind to history. Today Donegal is the only county in Ireland not to be served with a railway, but in 1903 a brach of the Lough Swilly Railways linked Letterkenny to Burtonport passing through Creeslough and running below Muckish. This new form of transport was more efficient than the horse and cart and brought some prosperity to the area. The construction of the line was a major engineering task, cutting through tough highlands and wide valleys. On both sides of Creeslough there are still the remains of the tall granite viaducts built to allow the trains across Barns Gap, the Owencarrow river and its wide valley and Cloon. At several places the line intersected with the roadway. The roads were closed when the train



was due by means of gates that were manually operated. Beside each level crossing there was built a standard "Gate House".

On January 31st, 1925 nature left its powerful effect on the railway at the Owencarrow viaducts. As the train approached the wide valley with its 13 passenger carriages, 8 good wagons and 2 bread vans, a fierce north westerly gale rushed down the valley. The precautions driver had slowed down to 8 m.p.h. and was about to give the engine steam when the gale hit. The carriage nearest the engine was blown clean off the rails, the roof hit the parapet and was torn off. In the pitch dark, four passengers were hurled out and fell forty feet to their death.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately the service was abandoned in 1941. The journey must have been a splendid adventure, clinging to the sides of the mountains and dodging meandering rivers, with magnificent scenery all around. Today the tall granite pillars stand like heroic statues becoming over grown with moss and grasses.

Our spiritual nature has resulted in three churches in Dunfanaghy alone. About seventy years ago a writer referred to "three churches, the finest of which is the Presbyterian, the biggest the Roman Catholic and the third belongs to the Church of Ireland.....the most beautiful is the Church of Ireland - without prejudice."<sup>11</sup> The beautiful natural stone which appears on the outside of this church is the same inside - all the way up to the roof with soft white damp marks appearing on some stones. The furniture is all wooden with some intricate designs carved on them. Wooden panels and arches span the nave in the roof space, resembling the inside of a boat.

About half a mile south of Dunfanaghy, looking back at Muckish, are the old ruins of Clondahorkey Church. This Church was taken over by the Protestants when the Catholic faith was outlawed in the 17th century. A century later when the Ballymore Church was built, the old church was abandoned.



Evicted from their church, the Catholics were enthusiastic to continue their worship. Their new churches were formed in the open air, usually in the side of the mountains. In different areas, "mass rocks" are to be found, their new churches, "a sort of amphitheatre formed in the rock,"<sup>12</sup> and under these outcrops a priest celebrated mass, "on an altar made of loose stones,"<sup>13</sup> with hundreds of people attending.

Muckish Mountain acquires its distinct noble, authoritative form through its mass size, shape and colour characteristics but its surrounding environment boosts its majestic appearance. The smaller, flatter details below of ditches, fields, lakes, dotted buildings and roads further elevate the mountain. They and the road networks break up the vast landscape beneath Muckish in a farming manner, roller-coasting over hills and twisting about rock outcrops. The roads in Donegal are famous for their narrow, windy character and numerous potholes and bumps. About Muckish the roads live up to their expectations with the main roads being just a wider version of the by-roads and a white line down the middle at most places. The winter weather is particularly severe with the unpopular pothole legacy created by frost and ice and heavy rain then carves out the holes more deeply. The holes are then re-patched by the County Council and relevelled from the weight of lorries and buses, leaving a progression of mounds where the potholes originally were. Many of the roads appear to be at a slant, being higher in the middle and dipping downwards at the sides. This is also a result of heavy vehicles using roads that have been built on boggy ground. The weight causes the sides to sink.

If the surface of the roads were maintained, the roads would be perfect. These bendy, up and down roads all the guides about this extensive landscape, giving different views from different angles and different levels. The sharp corners and blind hill tops force drivers to take their time so that they will appreciate the three-dimensional experience surrounding them. The routes the roads are forced to take are so influenced by the landscape







that you feel part of it all and almost forget that you  
are in a mechanical aparatus.



### CHAPTER THREE

As man exploits the landscape scars soon appear and nature is left to doctor the wounds and help the affected areas recuperate.



### CHAPTER THREE



1. The road leading to the base of Muckish Mountain.







### CHAPTER 3

At the main road between Dunfanaghy and Creeslough there is a narrow unmarked road which winds its way towards the base and north side of Muckish Mountain. En route, you pass evidence of the old railway tracks, small viaducts supporting the level lines, sleepers and gate posts on either side of the road. The road carries on, more and more deteriorated, until it becomes a rough track. Usually at the bottom of a mountain you expect to find layers of stone and mud but here below Muckish there is fine clean sand, like that found on a beach, even though the nearest beach is at least five miles away. On the lower slopes and even on the top of Muckish there are bits of metal and machinery parts, now scaled with rust and non-functional.

The mystery of Muckish is unravelled by digging up its ancient history. A secret source of mica and silica sand which it had kept to itself for millions of years was finally found by man and exploited. The sand was extracted from a quarry at the top of Muckish, over 2000ft above sea level. Since over sixty years ago it has been used for the manufacture of a wide variety of fine glass products.

In the Statistical Survey of Co. Donegal published in 1802 there is the following reference to the sand of Muckish Mountain:

"On Muckish Mountain within four miles of two safe and deep harbours, namely Sheephaven and Dunfanaghy, silicious sand is there in exhaustable abundance. It has been for some time sent to the Belfast glass manufactory."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Benjamin Edwards had been successfully making flint glass in Belfast since about 1800, using only Muckish sand. The sand was of such high quality that nothing was thought of climbing 2000ft up the steep face of this mountain to extract sand. An employee, Paddy Mc Fadden who worked on top of Muckish described the sand "as pure as the driven snow"<sup>2</sup> Mr George Henry Kinahan, Geological Survey of Ireland and Vice President of the Royal Irish Academy describes



the sand as being a "very pure silex, and just as good as Fontaine-Bleau sand, but that while suitable sand could be shipped from Antwerp for 15/- a ton, Muckish sand cost 25/- a ton, because there was no chute to bring it down the mountain and because of heavy freight charges."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed for the next few decades, there seems to have been lapse in the excavation of Muckish sand, probably because of the mountains desolate location, the abnormally high position of the sand, the servere weather and working conditions and the cost of excavating the sand and transportation.

Muckish's privacy though, was short-lived; at the beginning of this century the late Hugh A Law M.P. and later T.D. for Donegal, became excited over the Muckish Sand concept. He established a small sompany to extract the sand from the seams on the upper slopes. He also encouraged Judge Phillimore to join forces with him to develop the project further. But about six weeks after their collaberation, the workmen called a strike and as a result the firm had to close down.<sup>4</sup> A few more years of quietness followed and Muckish regained its posture.

Prior to and during the First World War, the local landlord, Sir Peter Stewart-Dan, had samples of Muckish sand sent to London for analysis. He received back glowing reports of the high quality of sand. The Muckish deposit was described in the British Resources of Sand and Rocks used in Glass Making of 1918 as being "of a large supply of excellent quality, sufficiently good for the making of the best optical glass".<sup>5</sup> Even with this positive analysis, Muckish contained to cling onto its precious deposits. Nobody was willing to go all the way up the mountain and recharge the project. The privilege was taken away by the Arklow Industrialist Laurence O'Toole. He researched and experimented with the sandstone, finding it had potential for the future. He put his facts to the Irish Government and won their support. They were back in business. Work restarted in August 1939, Muckish was undergoing open surgery.





2. The Washing Machines and Loading Bags for the Lorries.



3. Half way up Muckish the Grinding Machines stand.







With the advent of the Second World War, there was a shortage of supplies, suitable sand being one of them. Up until now Belgium had been the major source for a steady supply of high quality sand suitable for glass making but it was now totally cut off. Glass manufacturers were forced to seek out other sources for quality sands, Mr. O'Toole was bombarded with markets.

The first small consignment was despatched by Rail to Dublin by the end of October. As demand for the sand increased production increased and new facility improvements were made. The first development was Ards Pier. In the spring of 1940 the Franciscan Capuchin Fathers at Ard Mhuire gave permission to build an efficient pier on a share of the Friary ground. Also built on the pier was a spacious garage, with equipment needed for servicing and maintenance of the lorries.

Another attempt at improving transport facilities resulted in the construction of a 24 inch gauge railway leading from the base of the mountain to the country road. This proved to be an unsuccessful project despite a special type of steam engine and rolling stock. The roller-coaster conditions of the landscape made it extremely difficult to control the laden wagons. This project was abandoned early in 1940 and replaced by a tar-macadam road instead.

To extract the sand from the mountain, for the first four years of production, the rock face of the quarry was drilled by hand, and then developed using blasting techniques.. By 1943 a compressor was installed; this was a great boost to production, speeding up the operation and cutting down on manual effort. To improve efficiency further, there is evidence that a mechanical loader was used. This machine replaced manual shovelling of the material onto the railway trolleys. All the machinery and railway lines were brought to the mountain manually by the workmen.

When the trolleys reached the edge of the cliff they were confronted by a wooden chute, to send the sand and stones down the mountain. Today the chute and railway tracks are almost completely non-existent. However, two relics that do remain tarnished on the side of Muckish,



are the two huge machines that ground the stones into a fine powder. Each weighed 2.5 tons and it took six long weeks to manhandle each of them up this "very inhospitable terrain" with the use of only greased rials and a ratchet winch. The grinders were situated at different levels on dedgers dug out of the cliff face. Through these grinders Muckish sand was crushed to a fine powder before continuing on down the chute at a cracking pace curving between rocks.

On the first stage of the journey the gradient of the slopes were quite steep so gravity helped the sand down, but half way down, where the gradient of the mountain was comparatively level, it found its "angle repose."<sup>6</sup> To help it on its way water was pumped in from a spring several feet away from a natural source on the mountain. The spring was harnessed and pumped under pressure to where it was needed.

Chaffeured by the water, the sand continued to travel down the mountain to its final stage. Here at the base, 2000ft from where it originated, it was washed in giant washing machines, scooped up by a continuous conveyor bucket system. This is where the sand left Muckish, dumped into lorries in a loading bay underneath. At Ards Pier, the lorries were met by the boats of up to 600 tons, able to berth at the pier but which had to be navigated first up the narrow treacherous channel.

On the pier the lorries dumped their load and the cargo was delivered manually onto the boats. This involved men shovelling the sand into wheelbarrows up a plank onto the boat deck to deposit their load. It was a slow job and often had to be completed quickly in order to catch the tide.

The Muckish sand project provided much needed employment in the area. This was the first major source of employment since the laying of the railway tracks from Letterkenny to Burtonport, at the beginning of the century. Competition for jobs was very high. In the 1940's, wages for those working at the bottom of the mountain was 6 shillings per day while at the top it was 7 shillings per day.<sup>7</sup> The workmen worked six days a week. They came from all





4. The exposed rock face near the tip of Muckish.



5. On the flat top of the Mountain of Muckish lie large stones .







around the mountain and some even walked to work from Hornhead. They worked through wind, rain and even hail but apparently the wind was the worst as it caught the sand and whipped their faces with it. At 2000ft above sea level, the temperature would be much lower than below. This explains why Muckish appears white for most of the winter even when everywhere else has thawed.

Muckish sand was sent to various places and used to make a variety of different types of glass. According to a local news paper dated Decamber 1st 1837, under the heading "Mineral Resources of Donegal 120 years ago," Muckish sand was, "conveyed to Liverpool, Glasgow, Dumbarton and Lark"<sup>8</sup> having been, "rolled from the top of the mountain in small canvas bags and collected at the bottom."<sup>9</sup> Belfast was a major customer in the early years. In 1853, they exhibited epergnes and also a pillar that showed eight watch glasses made of sand from Muckish.<sup>10</sup> The sand was also used by the Irish Department of Agriculture in the reproduction of Waterford Glass for the Cork Exhibition of 1902.<sup>11</sup> London, Birmingham and Yorkshire manufactures have made good glass from the sand and some of the boats that docked at the pier were of Dutch origin. One of the leading manufactures of electric light bulbs in Ireland, Solus of Bray, (10) Wicklow used to get all their sand from Muckish.<sup>12</sup>

It appears the industry was thriving, with regular up-dating of machines and additional equipment installed. The next major change happened in October 1945. Jack Smith, from Pilkington Brothers LTD of St. Helens, Lancashire, came over to Donegal. Pilkingtons bought 49% of the rites of Muckish Mountain. He was responsible for the quality of the raw material among other duties he undertook about the mountain, and he fell under the spell of Muckish. When the industry finished in 1954, he stayed on living within sight of the mountain. When he died he was buried near Muckish at Ballymore.

Tens of thousands of tons of sand was extracted from Muckish and sent to Scotland, England and Ireland. As the high quality sand quickly disappeared the remaining



substance was harder to market. The pure white sand that once lay in narrow seams across the mountain was becoming harder to separate from the brownish yellow sandstone. For this reason and the fact that since the war had ended Belgium was free to merchandise its supplies again, "Muckish was no longer able to compete. Reluctantly the project was wound up in 1954. Time like sand had virtually run out."<sup>13</sup>

Different attempts were made to reopen the project but nothing became of them. "It seems that never again will Muckish echo to the blasting, the crushing, the roar of the lorries and the friendly chatter of the workmen."<sup>14</sup> All that remains of the industry today is the bulky geometric shapes of the washing machines, grinders and pumping machinery, eaten away by the corrosive force of the elements - "the rotted timber of the chute, fighting a losing battle for survival, the decaying railway line and sleepers, bowing to the inevitable disintegration - the little trolleys all filled up, but with no where to go - the cog wheel, separated permanently from its big brother for whom it did many a good turn, rust on this and rust on that, in fact without a doubt rust on everything - the sandstone seams, like open wounds, raw and exposed to the biting winds and elements - the massive scars, inflicted by man here and there upon the mountain - and in the abandoned quarry at the summit, broken only by the mournful howl of the wind a significant funeral silence."<sup>15</sup>



## CHAPTER FOUR

The landscape has encouraged man to react  
to its visual and spiritual presence,  
both with positive and negative consequences.



## CHAPTER 4

The function of the landscape , including its waters seemed originally to be, to nourish life. Man depended on it to survive and in doing so he came to respect his source of life. The land was his livelihood and to abuse it ~~would~~ bring consequences. Today it is the same story - we depend on the landscape for food but not entirely. With the development of man and their economic values and "progress", there is a subsequent lack of respect for their origins and link with nature. Development and expansion have brought and continue to bring new industrial achievements. A new revolution took place, drawing people from rural to urban areas. Factories and business created new methods of survival - creating jobs, making money to buy necessities of food etc.. People were not having to work the land to make a living. Even artificial food stuffs were replacing natural foods. It was possible to live in a city and not need to know that a rural landscape existed, yet alone provided natural foods. Milk came from a carton and not a cow.

Things were and are different in the rural landscape. Here people are continually aware of their natural surroundings and are less likely to forget where their supply of milk comes from, even those who do not work directly on the land. The natural phenomenon of the landscape totally surrounding its residences brings about a togetherness in the numerous communities and townlands. The people seem to understand their inferiority compared to the landscape. "Man whether civilised or savage, is a child of nature - he is not the master of nature. He must conform his actions to certain natural laws if he is to maintain his dominance over his environment. When he tries to circumvent the laws of nature he usually destroys the natural environment that sustains him. And when his environment deteriorates rapidly, his civilisation declines."<sup>1</sup>

Even the Celts understood that they were not in total control of their existence. It was the Celts who named most of the places we know today including Muckish.



Translated, Muckish - Muc ais - means "pigs back", owing to the shape of the mountain. But why a pigs back, there is no exact reproduction of a pigs back, it could easily be that of a different animal. The pig was regarded as the lard of the animals in the Celt Society.<sup>2</sup> The animal was thought to have ritual significance seen as both a "supernatural creature" and a favoured food of men and gods. The Celts worshipped the sun god Baal and a festival was held in his honour on the summer solstice 23rd June. On this day the Celts would climb to the top of Muckish in order to catch the last glimpse of its power. They would light fires in his honour. This was done in return of his favours of fertility to the land. The ritual is still carried on today, but it is known as Bonfire Night. Fires are lit by farmers and they take a burning ember from the fire and throw it unto a field so that it will remain fertile.<sup>3</sup>

The Dunfanaghy of today is a lot quieter than it was over one hundred years ago. In 1874 there is estimated to have been a population of about five hundred people;<sup>4</sup> today it is about three hundred and thirty. The spacious quay where vessels of 100 tons could safely moor is now the permanent house of one old boat. The old blacksmiths, bakeries and dressmakers are gone as the old traditional skills were replaced by mass production methods. The new production methods have reduced the amount of manual input resulting in unemployment. Young people especially are forced to move from the area seeking employment in towns and cities of Ireland and abroad. To go hunting on the Hornhead Cliffs "now-a-days", for seagull eggs and guillemot would be a real label of poverty, a disgusting way to survive even though it is such a natural way. The modern world sets up new standards, targets and quality of life leaving people under pressure to live up to these expectations.

As the locals leave, there remains an empty sad atmosphere. In most cases they go against their wishes and try to return when ever possible. They leave in the hope that they will return for good some day. Indeed Muckish Mountain does not only have this majestic effect on me. Each year it draws more and more tourists of different



## CHAPTER FOUR



1. Hornhead and its reflection seen from Dunfanaghy.







backgrounds and cultures. Even in days gone by when communications and accomodation were rather primitive, people made their way here, mostly from Ireland and Engla~~nd~~. Before there were hotels built in the area, Mullins Guest House in Portnablagh provided some shelter. Mr. and Mrs. Jack B. Yeats were among those who stayed there. On one stay, they commented on it being, "very comfortable indeed."<sup>5</sup> Another popular guest there was the Antartic Explorer Captain Robert Scott. In the guest book, his son Peter, impressed by the fowl wrote, "the hens are very good layers, the best I have ever seen."<sup>6</sup>

Today, however, there are four busy hotels in the area, numerous guest houses, holiday homes and several resturants. During the summer months, these places become alive with visitors and regulars, young and old. For the winter, most places close down, giving the place a chance to recover from the busy months, so local people are able to experience their surroundings more peacefully on their own. However, there are signs that this time of quietness will become invaded in the near future as more people inquire about the winter season.

The worst by-product of all this activity affects the landscape. The tourists become intrigued by the splendid scenery and the freedom and space it offers. Many become so attached that they have to have part of it. I don't think they want to be part of it, just to have their own private plot to fence off and buried on. It wasn't so bad until a few years ago when suddenly there were houses going up everywhere. It is not so much that there as so many strangers coming and staying on, but its the way they are taking over. Taking over the landscape especially. As you look accross at Hornhead now, its getting to the point that instead of seeing the interesting fields and ditches and colours you find yourself noticing these new modern houses stuck in the middle of a once beautiful spot. Its the same looking accross Dunfanaghy and its sunroundings from Hornhead. Dunfanaghy and Portnablagh seem to be merging into one. These areas that should be preserved and left in their original natural mode are being dug up and "modernised"



and destroyed. The older houses, the original ones seem to merge into the landscape, not just the small ones but the bigger ones too. They settle into their environment without taking away too much attention from the natural surroundings. However, I wish I could say the same about the newer additions, one of which is in progress on the front side of hornhead. This recent creation rises in the middle of the "Burn Brae." A narrow windy road, almost totally concealed joins the front of Hornhead to the back leading from the coast's edge up to the top of the brae and this disperses left and right. The brae mostly consists off whin bushes on either side and a small wood and "burn" on the left. The Whins are a most striking feature in summer with an arrangement of green and speckled yellow brightening up the brae. Half way up the brae you come on this building on the left. Even the loose chippings that came out to the side of the road stand out when you look across at it. I do not understand how the owner of the land got planning permission to build there but its there. It started off first with a "shed", to the back of the site. Those that were concerned thought that was it, he had built his house or shed but that was only how he got the planning permission. The "shed" has a chimney and a window and was indeed lived in but now in front of it there is now the house. As of yet it hasn't been completed but I don't think its due to lack of money. I only hope that the owner realises what he is doing and tones down his creation to compliment the landscape.

There seems to be a bit of controversy over recieving planning permission. A local can be refused permission even after applying for over ten years, and then in one case after giving up, the land was sold to someone from "the North" and next thing there was a house being built. However they do it is a bit of a mystery and even a bit suspicious. I used to think that I was only concerned because I was so familiar with these once harmonious fields and their part in the landscape and maybe if the new owners and degisners took more pride and consideration for the landscape they could try and blend in, instead



of stand out. Its as if to them the land is a sight with just a view, something to show off, aplyground for their hi-tec designs. Those that live in the city, having only the freedom to design the interiors of their houses, as councils and firms mass produce similiar semi-detached housing estates, flats and block appartments, find the opportuntiy to flaunt their expensive designs here ! What they don't seem to recognise is that the natural beauty of the landscape and the beauty of their amazing abodes do not work together and there is no telling them. They seem to know that their creations are not appreciated as they have to go behind locals backs to get planning permission. Looking across at Hornhead from where I am now, I feel sick as I see two men jumping out of a massive white jeep in the only field left in front of us. This is one of two fields left before entering Dunfanaghy. Beyond the field is the beach where the tide somes in and then there is Hornhead.

The local owner of this field had died, and the field became the possession of the only remaining relative in London. Before we knew it, a sign went up in the field with the name Don Rush on it - an architect from Belfast. He had bought various sites about the village and Hornhead and was building on them and selling them off to the "Northerners" mainly and is planning to do the same in this field. His business theory is quite appropofitable, one financially as he intends to build st least six holiday homes here. I dread the day that the JCB's and cement mixers move in and I doubt very much that I'll get used to the end result. The helplessness felt from these bullying events are pushed deeper as to object to this activities includes a letter accompanied by f150 sent to the County Council Offices. This fee dampens the enthusiasm of those wishing to uproot his plans with a common attitude of it, not being worth it, as he'll come out the best in the long run.

When I was at secondary school a friend and I, thinking that the Government or the local Council would appreciate our concern decided we would write to a popular



Irish Band describing these distructive activities in hope that they would maybe write a song about it educating people of the problem. It never happened yet, but a band called The House Martins wrote a song - "Build", with the following lyrics;

"Uumbering men in big bud boots  
Dug up my den, dug up my roots.  
Treated us like plasticine town  
They build us up and knocked us down

From Meccano to Legoland  
Here they come with a brick in their hand  
Men with heads filled up with sand  
It's build.

#### CHORUS

Its build a house where we can stay  
Add a new bit everyday  
Its build a road for us to cross  
Build us lots and lots and lots and lots and lots

Whistling men in yellow vans  
They came and drew us diagrams  
Showed us how it all worked out  
And wrote it down in case of doubt

Slow, Slow, and quick, quick, quick  
Its well to wall and brick to brick  
They work so fast it makes you sick  
It's build

#### CHORUS

Down with sticks and up with bricks  
In with boots and up with roots,  
Its in with suits and new recruits  
Its build.<sup>7</sup>





2. Sheephaven Bay  
and the tip of  
Hornhead.

3. Looking down to  
Dunfanaghy from the top  
of Hornhead with Purt  
in the background and  
Muckish at the back  
carved in cloud.









Not all people will understand or appreciate my concern, thinking that Don Rush and his type will liven the place up instead of killing it. If this "development" continues the way it is with sites being cleared left, right and centre. There will be no land left. Instead of a rural landscape there will be an urban landscape with Muckish being only visible from the top of Hornhead and possibly snips of it seen from between houses. Hopefully it won't come to that but if we can't do anything to prevent it, nature might intervene with its powerful forces. On Tory Island there is a Holy Stone, also known as the wishing or cursing stone. For many centuries, when invaders were spotted on the sea below the stone was pointed in their direction, resulting in an immediate storm that would wipe out the approaching fleet.<sup>3</sup> One of the best known victories of the stone was in September 1884. The landlord had decided to go to Tory and collect his rents and a <sup>^</sup> He obtained the gunboat Wasp from the government to carry out the operation. As the boat was seen approaching the island, the stone was turned on its direction and a violent storm blew up, wrecking the boat. Sixty two of the crew on board, except for six people, were drowned.<sup>8</sup> Since then the islanders have paid no taxes or rates. There is not much need for the stone today on Tory, but its magical powers protected the islanders from unwelcome invaders in the past. Its relationship with nature and the faith the locals had in this partnership seems to be a popular and successful solution.

After the plantation period when local people were forced up to higher poorer ground, the landscape's privacy was invaded and nature's defences resulted in the Great Famine. On Muckish Mountain itself, nature is correcting the vulgar manmade scars particularly the machinery parts by eroding them away until there is little of them remaining. It seems appropriate, that when translated into English, Donegal - Dun-na-nGall, means The Fort of the Stranger. But Muckish and her people can consider themselves lucky, for strangers also invaded the Ok people who lived in the highlands of central New Guinea.



Their mountain Mt. Fubilan was a sacred mountain of 2000ft, sitting on top of the land of the dead. In the late 1960's these people were persuaded to lease their mountain to a mining company. The Ok people were utterly astonished as the company began systematically to scoop away the peak of Fubilan and in order to exploit Mt. Fubilan's reserves of copper and gold, the mining company intends to amputate the entire sacred mountain. When the project is finished there will be nothing left but a hole in the ground 3900ft deep.<sup>9</sup>

Half a mile west of Dunfanaghy is the New Lake; its name speaks for itself. Until the beginning of this century there only existed a marshy swamp. During the First World War, bent grass on the surrounding sandhills was extensively overcropped for export to France as horse bedding. The bent grass was originally gathered for thatching houses but its major function was to hold the sand together. As a result of this overcropping, the sands began to fall apart and drift. The north-west gales blew the sands on, depositing them to form a dam. On the other side of this dam, trapped water formed the New Lake. Another effect of the sandstorm was that the part of Dunfanaghy became silted up and since then prevented deep water vessels from docking at the pier. But the newly formed lake became the habitat for a great variety of birds and good trout. The lake and surrounding territory are now officially a Bird Sanctuary.

A local poet of the time writes about the event:

"Oh who would suspect in a decade of years,  
That the trees and the walls and the bridge  
and the pier,

Would be gorged to the neck in a smother of  
sand

Though some mighty change that we can't

understand."

"Some wise men planned and an effort was made  
To sally it back with a shovel and spade,  
As well might they sit by their own fireside  
Or to go with a pitchfork to keep out the tide."<sup>10</sup>



Nature seems to go to extreme measures to protect itself from human greediness and error, having little thought for human life. Maybe it is because local people, who regularly experience and understand better its capabilities, they more respect for the landscape while the "blow-ins" not too familiar with its laws, sculpture the landscape to their familiar city laws. As "modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it. He even talks of a battle with nature, forgetting that if he won the battle, he would find himself on the losing side."<sup>11</sup>

Every year many people attempt to conquer the plupical challenge of climbing Muckish Mountain. The challenge is just one aspect offered by the mountain. But the award at the top is the magnificent view. To get to the top and look around, is like seeing your life from a different perspective. You see your everyday surroundings in a larger context. The vastness of this gallery reminds you of how inferior our achievements are. We might feel big and powerful as we conquer this vast mountain. On top of the world though as we search for our personal landmarks far below our homes appear only as tiny dots. Determined to mount the pigs back, the local landlord Lord George Hill describes his expectations and quest of the mountain.

"There are some lofty mountains, you can ride to the top of: to the craggy height of Snowdon, Welsh tourists, as I am informed, ascend in carriages, but rest assured in many places, we had to catch hold of the heath and rock to help us in the ascent. So deep and downright was the mountain, that a stone of any size could be hurled from the top to the bottom. This amusing ourselves rolling down the compact silicious rock, and observing the noise, velocity, smoke and flashes of fire that were elicited in the momentum of the descent, at last after near four hours exertion, we arrived at the summit of our ambition.

I ran, covered with prespiration, and panting with heat, to mount the topmost ridge, and just as we arrived there - just as we had cast our eyes around, and began to feast on the immense vision of earth and ocean beneath us a vast murky cloud from the Atlantic, big with sleet and moisture, enveloped us with a night cap, and made everthing so dark, indistinct, and dreary, that we could scarcely see one another, besides it was attended with such a cold-cutting breeze, that we, who were all with pores open under the process of perspiration, felt as if the cacodaemon of the mountain, in revenge for his invaded



solitariness, had risen in anger, and armed with a scythe, had rushed on to cut us asunder - to retreat, therefore was the best policy.

How similar the results attending the ascent of this mountain, are to what await our most aspiring hopes, and promising speculations in this life; looking up to attain some desirable elevation, grasping, scrambling, sweating, weary; at length the object occupying eye, hand, intellect, and fancy, is gained, the ridge of ambition is conquered and hope is crowned; and still we are not happy! - No, some troubles cloud, some misty thing, comes and warns us, that after all our toil and labour, things were easier and brighter below! But I, whose curiosity was more intense than that of my friends, in spite of a cold and driving sleet, and fearless of a fever, still lingered behind as hastily observed, that on top of this lofty mountain, which at a distance appears so acute and linear in its ridge, there was a plain of some acres, on which grew in luxuriance, that species of saxifrage, so great and ornament to our gardens called London Pride, so abundant was it, that you might suppose that some comical fairy gardener had established a nursery of it here."<sup>12</sup>

So far I have pointed out the major functions of the landscape as being a source of food, a habitat, a playground and pedestal for man-made creations and challenges like walking, climbing and exploring in general. But another important function is the landscape as a source of inspiration. In most cases the artist involved is not aware of the inspirational effect his natural environment has on him until he moves out of it. There are various songs of emigrants that stress this point but probably the best known song writer was Percy French who was inspired to write the ballad "Cutting the Corn in Creeslough the Day! Portraying the loneliness of an emigrant, he writes;

"Dear Danny, I'm taking the pen in my hand,  
To tell you were just out of o'sight o' the land,  
In the grand aul liner I'm sailing in style,  
But I'm sailing away from the Emerald Isle  
And a long sort o' sight seemed to come from  
us all

As the waves hid the last bit of aul Donegal."<sup>13</sup>  
Even songs without words have been greatly influenced by the landscape. It could be said that Traditional Music in general has a certain amount of landscape credibility with many tunes being named after various places, like the slow haunting melody of the Hornhead Air. People such





4. Ards Forest Park in Autumn providing many colours and textures.







George Russell (A.E), W.B. Yeats, Jack B. Yeats, Patrick Pearse, Horace Plunkett, James H. Cousins, stayed on the area on numerous occasions. Hugh Law M.P. lived in Marble Hill House near Portnablagh and was well known for his hospitality towards artists and writers. One of his guests A.E. Russell said of Marble Hill "Whenever I set up my easel, I see a picture."<sup>14</sup>

One of the more recognised local artists is Frank Egginton. Born in 1908, in Wallasey, Cheshire, he was the son of the landscape painter W. Egginton R.I. R.C.A.. He lived in Donegal since 1930, taking up residence in Dunfanaghy at the edge of the New Lake in an old converted corn mill. Egginton is best known for his oil painting, with many a portrait of Muckish. Derek Hill is one of few artists to attain inspiration from Tory Island. He took over an old hut that was abandoned near the cliffs and stayed there for most of the summer months. Through his working days there, he has encouraged the local inhabitants of the island to paint and they too are gaining public attention.

Painting seems to be most popular medium inspired by the landscape but man-made sculpture has recently emerged as a result of experiencing the local environment. However in 1834 the Sculptor Baker, selected an immense block from the sides of Muckish embedded in the wall of Doe Castle is the sculptured tombstone of Mc Swiney Doe. It is believed to be a sixteenth century relic. The inscription now illegible, was probably dated 1544<sup>16</sup> with the name of the sculptor Madoniuf Oravaity (ME) FECIT. The stone includes the Mc Swyne coat-of-arms and a Celtic cross emblazoned with animals and flower patterns. The head of the cross has a seven spear headed Fleur de lis.

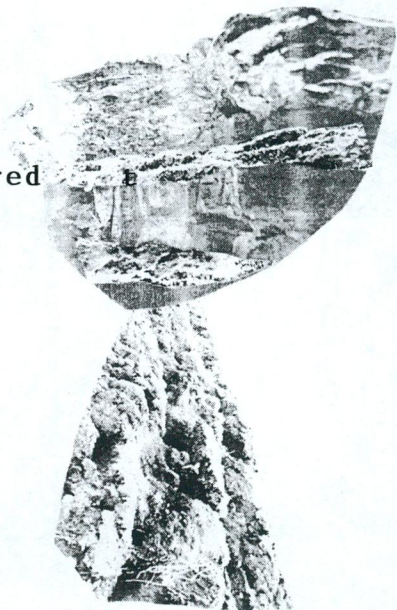
On the road between Dunfanaghy and Falcarragh in the old ruined Church of Myrath stands St. Colmcilles Cross. According to local tradition, it was cut from a solid rock from Muckish Mountain and transported to the Church by angles under the saints instructions.<sup>17</sup>

On top of Muckish, not intentionally left as pieces of sculpture, stand a Cross and a Cairn.





5. Billy Adam's vessels inspired  
by the Donegal landscape.









The Cairn, visible from sea level as a small bump on the mountain top, is increasing in size as people continue to leave stones on the old heap in a traditional manner. The cross was erected on August 15, 1951 by the Muckish sand workers. About 300 people made the climb to the top for the blessing of the Holy Year Cross.<sup>18</sup> A large slab of rock, about 8 - 10 feet tall, stood at the edge of the mountain top and it remains a mystery how it got there. The rock was known as The Minister<sup>19</sup> as it peered over, looking down at the congregation below from the pulpit. More recently the land sculptor Chris Drury climbed to the top of Muckish and remained there for four days making a Cairn shaped hut for himself out of materials he found up there.

My favourite artist influenced by the Donegal landscape is the ceramicist Billy Adams although he was not aware of this strong influence until he left Ireland. His work is based on his appreciation of how "the land has been changed by nature through weathering and erosion, and man throughout the ages has also contributed to the modification of its form through the construction of burial sites, the building of houses, the building of walls, and the scarring caused by extensive peat digging."<sup>20</sup> Both his textures and forms reflect the worn and fractured appearance of the earth's surface. I feel that the process involved in ceramics in general reflects the same processes used to create earth, apart from form and texture details, the main factor being the presence of high temperatures. Molten rocks cools to form the earth's surface as soft clay, almost in molten conditions in a kiln, cools to become a hard permanent surface. The process of glazing in ceramics is substituted by various surface decorating growth and creations of human and animal behaviour.

But like the earth, Billy Adams, pots are created from different layers. The process is a long one taking up to ten days to complete. It usually starts off with a thrown form which is built up using coarser clay. He uses porcelain in the outer surface to encourage buckling and cracking. Finally he adds a "stylishly intrusive form"<sup>21</sup>





6. Billy Adam's vessel, showing the smooth handle and rim compared to the rough texture of the pots surface.











7. St. Michael's Church, Creeslough. Its shape reflects that of Muckish Mountain.







usually that of a handle or a smooth rim. This contrast represents the intervening relationship between man and nature. But it is his "ability to focus on elements within the landscape: on the effects of time and phenomena which are the outward signs of a landscape's creation, destruction, and erosion; on the effects of time and movement, on the feelings aroused by a Celtic history which seems to go back beyond time, that brings to his pots a sense of close personal association. The sensitivity to his sources and their significance is evident in his understanding of their abstract nature, their pattern, their rhythm."<sup>22</sup>

The architect Liam Mc Cormick is also known for his sensitive approach in dealing with the landscape and we are fortunate to have one of his designs in the area. The church of St. Michaels in Creeslough, built in 1971, made good use of the landscape about it. To him "a Church is a focal point in a community and must be built in keeping with its economy."<sup>23</sup> In keeping with the place and its people he had no choice but to look to the background where Muckish stood on guard. The external clean, clear, contour of the Church is a smaller version of the mound of Muckish behind it. The Church stands out against the strong figure of the Pigs Back with its white-washed walls. The simplicity of the structure, - reflecting rural life, is followed on the inside, behind the big oak doors; In the stone sloop, and cauldron - like font, the wooden curved pews and uncluttered altar. Through the glass wall of the Chapel of our Lady, appears the familiar form of Muckish. This is the most modern of the Churches about Muckish, but with all the advances and developments in our society, Mc Cormick cleverly bridged the two forces of spiritual and visual awareness within the natural surroundings. If only other architects working in the area could do the same.



## CONCLUSION

According to the of Gen<sup>is</sup>is, one of the reasons man was put on earth was to look after and care for it, but there are no specific orders of how to carry out this duty. However, there is also no mention of man been placed on the land to control it yet that is what man tries to do. The greedy nature of man has gone so far that the consequences have resulted in numerous plant and animal species becoming extinct and minerals and natural elements exhausted.

About Muckish, both local and seasonal tourists societies are reflected in the landscape. The different man-made structures are there for a reason; the ditches, roads, new and old dwellings, the work houses, castles and churches. Most of these structures were built as a result of a struggle to survive, with other structures built as a result of those controlling the struggle; those who live here "full-time" and those who live here "part-time". The struggle of controlling the land goes on. As regards buildings/houses, obtaining planning permission seems to be a major obstacle for "full-time" resider, whereas the prevailing forces of nature provide difficulties for the "part-time" resider. Muckish Mountain itself, has now been left to its own devices. There is no threat of the grinders and crusher starting up again. People are still challenged to climb to its summit and of course in summer it nourishes and accomodates the seasonal herd of sheep.

At present the landscape is still going through changes both by man and nature. Farmers, by growing different crops and using new farming methods are bringing new colours and textures to the landscape. The random, almost caotic, composition of this landscape is broken up by the civilized terms of brick and mortar. To a certain extent the designs and colour of houses and out-houses contrasting against the natural surroundings, assist us in appreciating the landscape but when an area gets built up there comes the time that their is no natural landscape left to be appreciated.



As well as man continuing to sculpture the land, nature itself still plays an evident role. Longterm processes of wind and water erosion polish the rocks and exposed land with gradual results. Short-term results are also brought about by the wind and water. Tidal activities on the beaches causes the sand to shift so that at different the beach can look very different. Wind and water together with or without temperature changes causes cracks to form in rocks and potholes to form in the case of our roads.

The elements influence the lighting system in this landscape gallery: "every condition of atmosphere, offers effects of the most striking character. It looks most glorious indeed, when lit up by the beams of the early sun; but no matter at what season, whether in sunshine or in cloud, in calm weather or in rough, the visitor will come away ..... - deeply impressed by the scene."<sup>1</sup> With the light changing constantly daily and seasonally you never see the same scene twice. This proves to be a real delight for artists.

It is though artists in general that maybe people can be educated about this stunning landscape so that they can appreciate its pure natural qualities and loose their corruptive attitudes. Maybe if the sculptor Christo came and wrapped Muckish in pink polythene it might have a positive influence on those who take the landscape for granted. Mario Pogacnik, a slovenian landscape sculptor, came to east Donegal in 1991, in order to heal the land there. He has developed a unique method of healing which he calls "lithopuncture",<sup>2</sup> which is similar to the concept of acupuncture points of the landscape, where energy is trapped and the sculptures are carved to reflect "the specific identity of the corresponding site."<sup>2</sup> Marko believes that "the landscape, being wounded through human action, can ultimately be healed only by our conscious and loving endeavour."<sup>2</sup> But if the artists can not save the land it will be left to the responsibility of the artist who designed the landscape originally to reclaim the land to bring it back to nature again.



## CONCLUSION



Muckish Mountain, covered in snow almost like a Christo  
Sculpture.







Until then, the change goes on, man trying to conquer and control the land and nature manipulating his efforts. Muckish, though, seems to be safe and in control again and long may it last. "The life cycle of creation is endless. We watch seasons come and go, life into life forever. The child becomes parents, who then become repected elder. Life, so sacred; it is good to be part of it all."<sup>3</sup>

Anon. American  
Indian.



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