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The National College of Art and Design.
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"The Fruitful Orchard."

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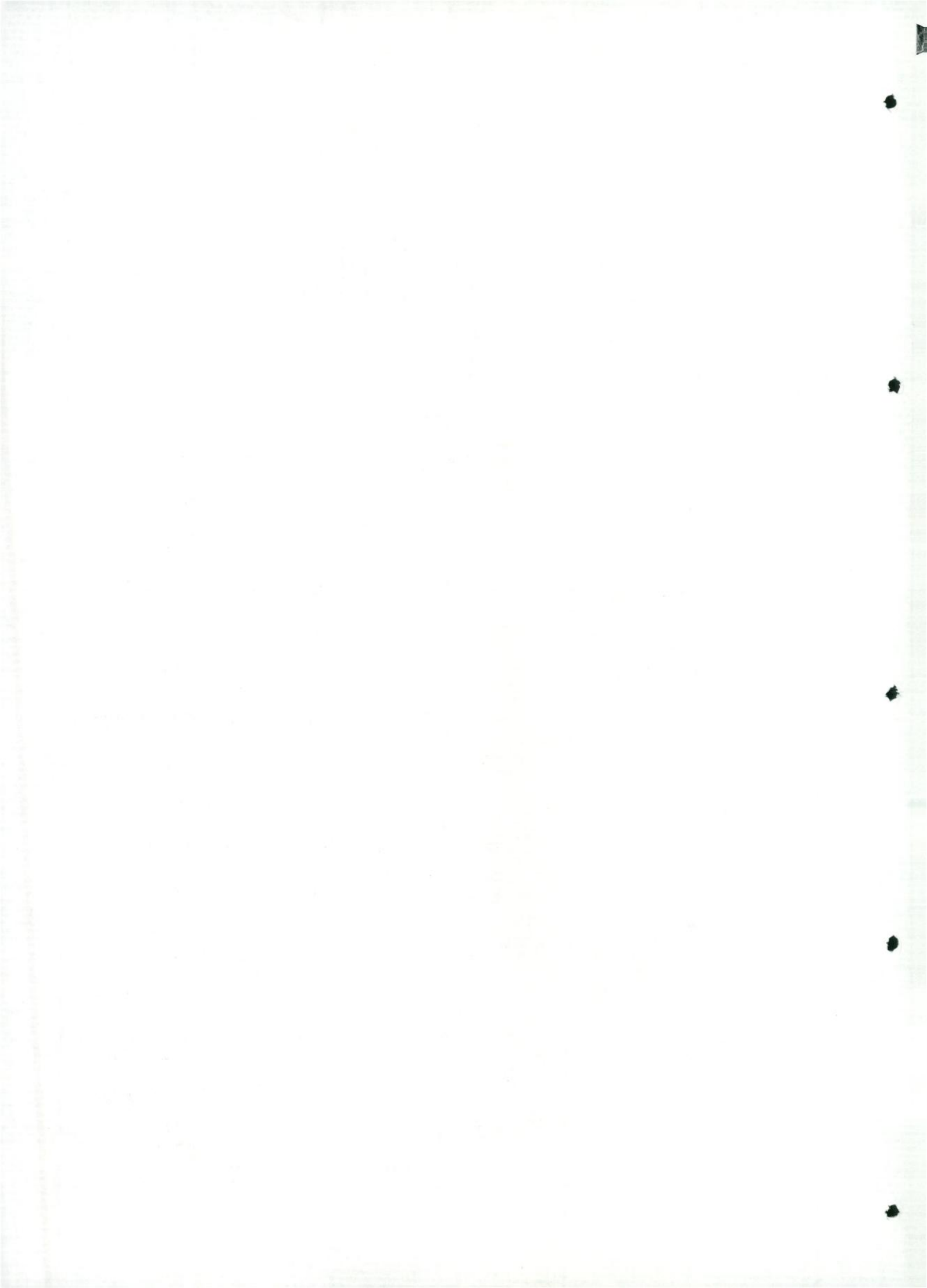


Introduction

The Orchard Gallery, Derry has achieved international status as a contemporary arts space, even though it was a very unlikely venue for such an arts institution, and today it has become a model for other arts institutions. These points are proved through the use of various primary and secondary sources. From recent critical writings of the histories, theories, and discourses on art institutions, one can clearly map out their changing roles in society. As the Orchard Gallery is situated in such unique environment, because of its social, cultural, and historical context it has been necessary to research these diverse areas. To date there has been no written documentation of the establishment of the gallery, therefore much of this information was gained through interviewing its founding director Declan McGonagle and present and former staff. The Derry City Council archives in Pennyburn were also useful, as they have retained official records of funding and expenditure of the gallery from 1978 to 1990, and also all administrative documentation. The Orchard Gallery official publications were an excellent resource as they gave an insight into the work of the artists who exhibited at the gallery. As the gallery grew in reputation local and national newspapers and art magazines reported on its success.

“The notion of ‘art’ is far from self-evident, and its development is bound up with the development of modernism itself, and with modernism’s characteristic institutions, among which should be counted museums and art galleries.”(Pearce, 1995,p.1.)

Art museums and galleries have been subject to constant change. In the last two decades they have attracted much public debate. Critical analysis of art institutions is due to a number of contributing factors. In recent years, these art institutions are now expected to define their role in the community. They have to justify their existence to taxpayers



and they have to define their function and their potential to enrich the community. "The New Museology ", edited by Peter Vergo of the University of Essex, is a collection of essays which define the dissatisfaction with the "old museology". (1989). This "old museology" has, in recent times, concentrated on the methodology of exhibiting to an established audience and therefore neglected the potential of the museum to educate a broader social class.

Museums, as we have come to know them, evolved out of the chambers of art and curiosities collected in the late Middle Ages and the modern period. The 18th century saw the separation of science from art and then in turn subdivisions occurred in the sciences and the arts with increasing specialisation as a basis of their autonomy. By the end of the 19th century the art museums were subdivided into collections of painting, sculpture, and applied arts.

During the Victorian era art institutions changed because of social reforms. The theories of John Ruskin and his museological principals and practices during the period were enlightening and progressive.

" At the core of Ruskin's 'art of seeing' was a visual system of appreciating objects, which he attempted to codify and apply in his sole museological endeavour, the Saint George's Museum in the working class city of Sheffield England " (Casteras, 1993, p.187.)

The history of the foundation of Saint George's Museum is very significant, as it became the embodiment of many of Ruskin's theories on art, style, connoisseurship and museology. He believed that he could counteract the faults of industrial capitalism with the power of art and culture. The Museum was situated in a densely populated working class district. Through its contents Ruskin believed he could educate and enlighten these people.



Ruskin was quite forward thinking in his attempts to remove the numerous barriers which had excluded the under privileged visitor to the Museum. He extended opening hours, to include Sundays, student access to the Museum became free, he also founded an education programme aimed at adults and children.

" His Museum might be viewed with late twentieth century hindsight more as a battleground for social and aesthetic change than as a tame encyclopaedic repository."
(Casteras, 1993, Pg, 186)

This Museum resulted from Ruskin's personal response to industrial capitalism and it also became a model for several major museological concepts.

Ruskin's theories of the transforming power of art and culture influenced the Barnetts, who were among the most respected social reformers of their generation. Samuel Barnett the Vicar of St. Jude's and his wife Henrietta were able to gain influence over many politicians, journalists and intellectuals of their time. Through their work in 1881 on the exhibition in St. Jude's known as the White Chapel Fine Art loan exhibition, the Barnetts believed that the artwork displayed would promote social reclamation and urban renewal. It was also hoped the exhibition would promote cultural and spiritual elevation. Lessons can still be learned from Ruskin and the Barnetts as art institutions of today try to come to terms with accusations of elitism and insensitivity to the cultural aspirations of their diverse publics.

The change in museums and galleries in recent years has been extreme and rapid. This was due in part to the perception that such institutions were elitist and did not encourage the interest of general public. Leading into the next century, the arts face the move

towards the centralisation of public funds, and the greater reliance on private funds. Also there is a greater emphasis on the decentralisation and the broadening of social class access to the arts. The Orchard Gallery is an example of the move towards the decentralisation because of its location in relation to Belfast, Dublin, London and Europe. The broadening of social access to the arts was one of the objectives of the Orchard Gallery from the outset. In the course of the next chapters these points will be more clearly defined.

Chapter 1

"An Unlikely Place"

The Orchard gallery was established in 1978, and is situated in the heart of Derry City. During the early years of Orchard's existence it had already broken many of the conventions of the traditional art gallery. There are many contributing factors why this gallery would be considered as a most unlikely venue for a contemporary arts space. To fully understand these factors the City itself will have to be placed in its geographical, historical, political, social and economic context. Before the foundation of the Orchard gallery, Derry's cultural map was barren; its outline had been largely defined by the poverty of the area, not alone its cultural poverty, but the social, economic and political problems the city also had.

The city of Derry is the second largest city in the state of Northern Ireland. Geographically it is situated in the north west of Ireland, bounded on the north by the Atlantic Ocean, in the west by Lough Foyle and County Donegal. It was named 'Doire-Cholmcille' after St. Colmcille who founded Derry in 546 as a monastic settlement. Derry originally derived its name from the Old Irish language 'Daire', in modern Irish 'Doire', which translated means Oakland or oakgrove. The history of the City has shown continuous upheaval. The Annals of the Four Masters, composed in the early 1600s gives an account of how the settlement of Doire wasn't pillaged by natives but by the outsiders, namely the English. (O' Donavan, Ed., 1848-51.) By the end of Queen Elizabeth's 1 rule most of Ireland was under British rule, except for the province of Ulster. The Ulster chieftains the O'Neills and the O'Donnells had overcome English



rule up until then, and most of the land in Ulster was still in the hands of the Catholic Irish. Eventually, Ulster was brought under British rule and the Ulster chieftains fled the country in the 'Flight of the Earls.' Land was confiscated and distributed to colonists from Britain, together with the introduction of a foreign community, a new language, religion, culture and land tenure management was introduced to the Province. Derry City's economic poverty was also accelerated in light of the on going 'Troubles' province. By 1703, approximately only 5% of the land in Ulster belonged to the Catholic Irish. (Foster, 1988, p.3-13.)

In the 17th century the name of the city itself changed. The city was given to merchant companies of London, and by royal charter the city became known as 'Londonderry' under the rule of King James 1. It was under his rule that the twenty-foot thick walls were built between (1613-18), which still stand today. Derry City is best known for the part it played in the attempts of the Roman Catholic King James II to return to the British throne in 1689. Annually the Apprentice Boys march to commemorate this one hundred and five day siege. (Lacy, 1990.) 1689 marked the strong Catholic claim to the city of Derry and the Protestant claim to the city of Londonderry.

Before the 19th century, the province of Ulster was regarded as a remote and unimportant part of Ireland and of the British Isles as a whole. The impact of industrialisation during the 19th century pushed the north of Ireland into economic and political prominence and thus gave Ulster politics a sharper edge. Irish liberation from the British was eventually achieved as the result of a struggle extending over several centuries and marked by numerous rebellions, this struggle culminated in the Irish war of Independence 1919 to 1922. In the course of the war, the British parliament enacted,

a Home Rule Bill, in the December of 1920, providing separate parliaments for the six counties of the Ulster Province and for the remainder of Ireland. The signing of the Anglo Irish Treaty finalised the division of the six counties of Ulster. Derry found itself part of this new partitioned Ulster, retained under British rule.

Cultural divisions in Derry, like the rest of Northern Ireland, grew due to the partitioning of Ulster. Divisions commonly held in communities in Northern Ireland are, Protestant/Catholic, Nationalist/Unionist, Republican/Loyalist, Irish /British. It was not until the late 1960s with the rise of the Civil Rights Campaign that Northern Ireland gained world wide media attention. The Province of Ulster had become what Seamus Heaney called 'anachronistic passions.' (Heaney, *The Listener*, November 27, 1969, p.757-759.) Through the Civil Rights movement the media threw the spotlight on the deep divisions in culture, politics and socio-economic conditions of the Catholic and Protestant communities. In the city of Derry the divisions became geographically physical, with Catholics remaining on the west side of the city known as the Bogside, and the Protestants moving to the east side or the Waterside of the banks of the river Foyle.

The 'Troubles' became the term that was commonly used by journalists' world- wide, to describe the on going violence, spanning for nearly four decades. The city of Derry had been the location of some of the worst scenes of violence, divisions had deepened and there was general anarchy and day to day murders. Some notable events in Derry's turbulent past are, the battle of the Bogside in 1969 and Bloody Sunday in 1972.



Economically, since 1945, Northern Ireland has constantly been the most disadvantaged part of the United Kingdom. The Downing Street Declaration of August 1969 addressed many of the grievances of the Catholic community; this was a direct result of the Civil Rights Campaign. Since 1922, the Unionist government, through the Government of Ireland Act, had consolidated its grip on local politics. This was achieved through 'Gerrymandering,' and the replacement of proportional representation with the first past the post system. As the majority of councillors elected in the local council in Derry were Unionist, this led to wide spread discrimination in housing, and job prospects in the civil service against the Catholic nationalist community living in the city.

In 1973, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark joined the E.E.C. (European Economic Community.) The Community Regional Policy of the EEC, wanted to work towards the reduction of regional disparities acknowledged in the 'Treaty of Rome in 1975.' The European Investment Bank was given the task of developing and financing less developed regions through the E.R.D.F. (The European Regional Development Fund established in 1975.) The Department of Environment in Northern Ireland prepared a planning strategy to disperse these resources. Derry was allocated a large amount of these funds, as the north west region of Northern Ireland had the highest unemployment rate in the province. Derry City's economic poverty was also accelerated in light of the on going 'Troubles.'

Culture and society in Derry is divided according to religion; religion usually dictates political allegiance, cultural background and your socio-economic status.

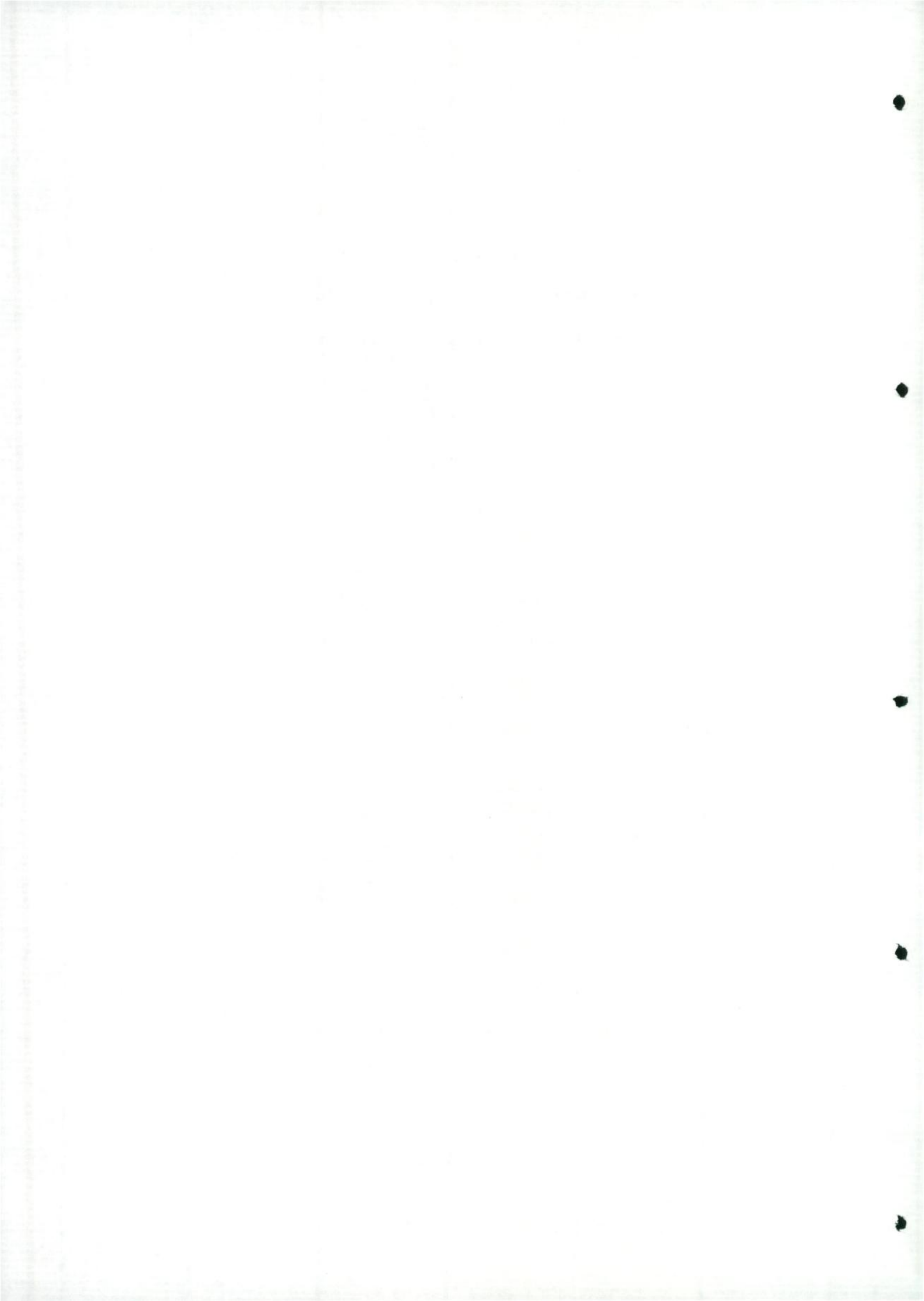
As illustrated so far, society in Derry was deeply divided. The City of Derry was a most unlikely place for a contemporary arts space, as it had mainly a working class



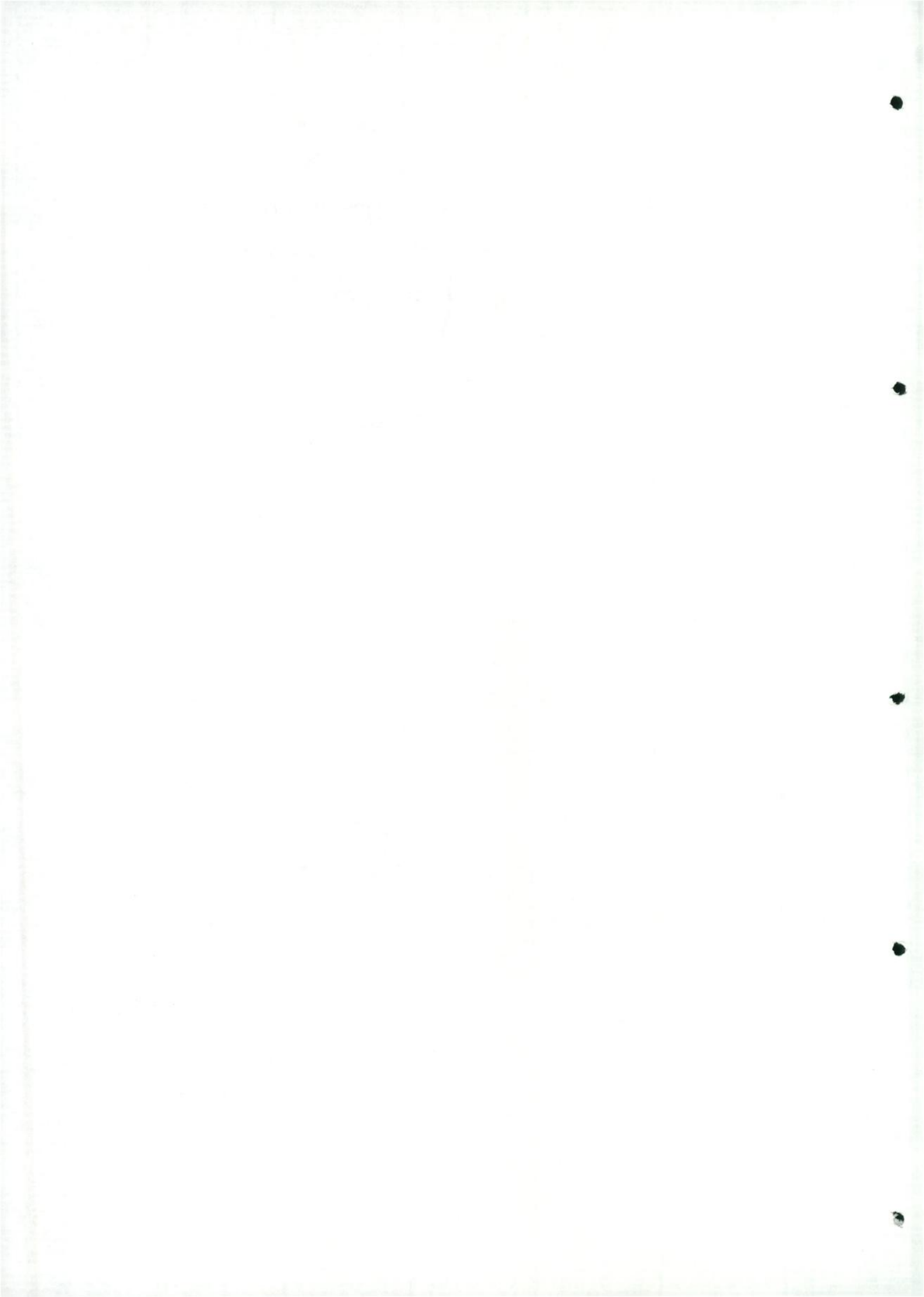
population. Many artists born in the city had moved to Belfast or else were in the United Kingdom to gain a third level arts education or simply establish themselves as professional artists. It would appear therefore, that if the Orchard Gallery were to be established, that it firstly would have no audience and no function in a city with very high unemployment and emigration figures, with an economy dependent on the public sector for jobs subsidised by the British government. The area, because of the 'Troubles' didn't attract many visitors; this left out another vital audience that the gallery might have.

Many of the recent studies written on art galleries and art museums show that these institutions still only attract a small cross section of society. Vera Zolberg argues in the book "An Elite Experience for Everyone. ", that art institutions only attract an audience of high income and high educational attainment, they are the least likely places to attract the working class: "Art Museums appeal to artists, art historians, collectors and the well educated public because they display authentic work." (Zolberg, 1994, p.51)

Pierre Bourdieu is one of the most influential French sociologists. His book 'Distinction' refutes the fact that taste is innate or a gift of grace. If this theory were true there is not much one can do to develop it. It is the consequences of this belief that privileged classes have innate taste in art, which has only served in maintaining the inequality to access to art in society. "The Love of Art" by Bourdieu and Darbel, is one of the first important studies made into art museums and its publics. From surveys undertaken by numerous arts institutions around Europe around the 1960s, it transpired that poorly educated individuals from lower status backgrounds, found visits to these art institutions to be a very unsettling experience. The Orchard Gallery if it were to be successful,



locally, nationally and internationally, would have to dispel the myths of elitism and appeal to its unique and diverse society. As the City of Derry was virgin territory in the contemporary art world, it would be necessary to educate and involve its public in the contemporary arts. Chapter two documents how the gallery successfully funnelled into it an unlikely audience of young, old and the working classes.



Chapter 2

" Sowing the seeds of a fruitful Orchard."

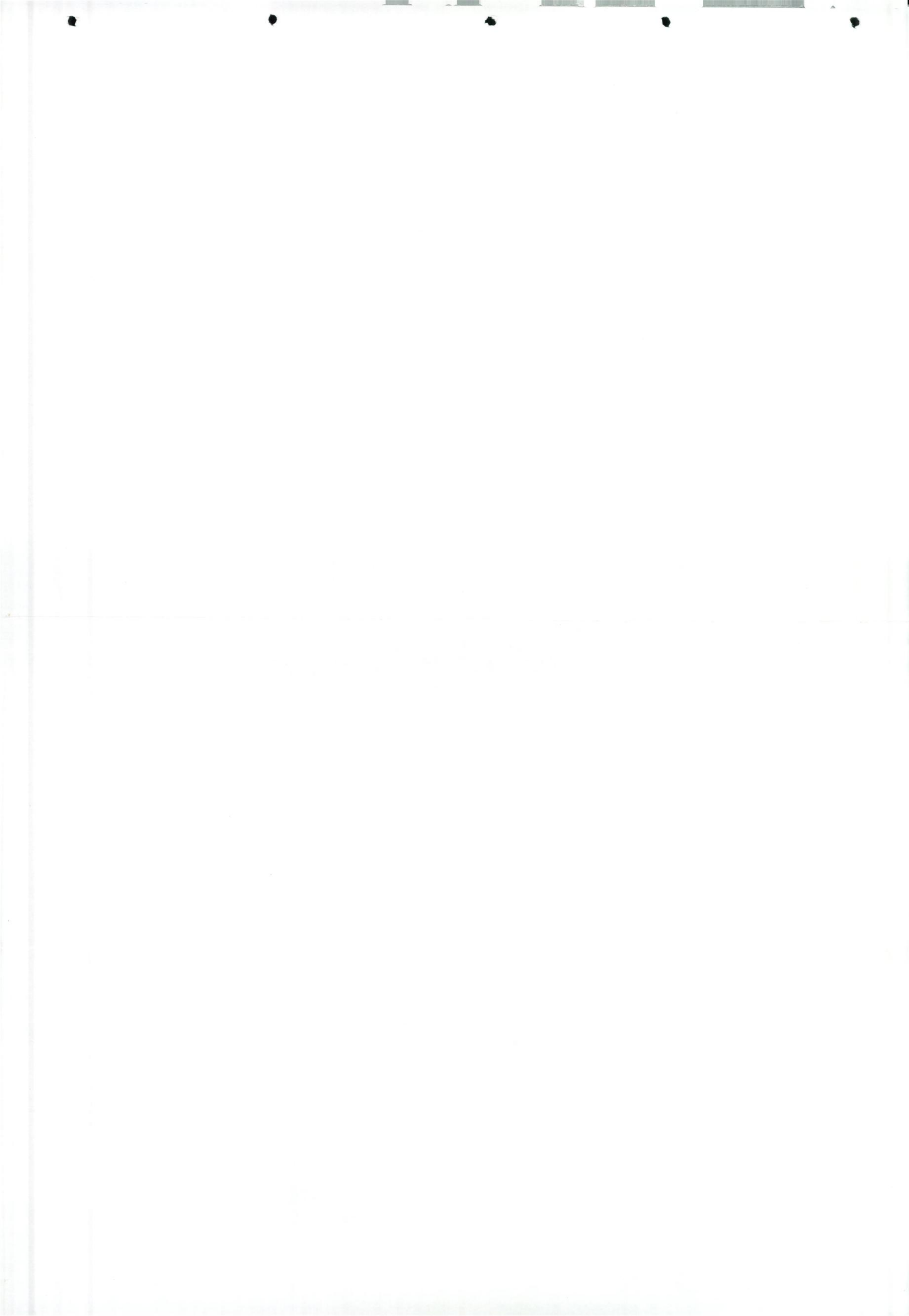
Funding the Orchard.

In 1970, the old City Council in Derry was abolished. The local government in Northern Ireland was reorganised; responsibility was divided between local governments and central agencies. The newly reformed Derry City Council made a five-year plan to develop amenities, such as sports facilities, a museum service and an art gallery in the city. Central agencies advised the City Council on the development, and the Arts Council advised on how best to develop Theatre and art gallery facilities. Discussions went on for five years between the Arts Council and the Derry City Council on the suitability of the space for the gallery and local feelings and connections. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland offered the City Council an attractive grant aid if the gallery in Derry were set up straight away. The Arts Council wanted to decentralise their funding, so they offered to pay 75% of the initial set up costs up to a cash limit. It was due to this incentive that the Orchard Gallery was opened in 1978, on a minimal budget, under the directorship of Mr. Declan McGonagle. (Plate 1.) Shows details of sources of Finance and Expenditure from March 31st 1977 until March 31st 1984. From 1979 up until 1984 there was no increase in aid from the Arts Council, even though the Gallery was expanding and growing all the time. One can ascertain from this document that the Orchard developed on a minimum budget. For six years the source of Finance had remained stagnant, also the expenditure had been astutely budgeted never to exceed the Orchard's income.



LOAN SANCTIONS						SOURCE OF FINANCE								
Authorising Minute	Amount of Application	Sanction Reference	Date	Period in Years	Amount	Date	Loans	Revenue	Capital Receipts	Grants Arts Council	Other	Total	Cumulative Total	Overdraft
						31/3/77								3,000.00
						31/3/77		750.00				750.00	750.00	2,250.00
						30/6/77				2,250.00		2,250.00	3,000.00	947.00
						30.9.77							3,000.00	1,115.00
						31.12.77				1,061.25		1,061.25	4,061.25	353.75
						31.3.78				210.47		210.47	4,271.72	2,564.36
GENERAL INFORMATION AND MINUTE REFERENCES						31.3.78		959.02				959.02	5,230.74	1,605.34
ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS T. GORHLEY						30.6.78				1,665.34		1,665.34	6,896.08	
CONVERSION Successful Tenderer M. W. CONSTRUCTION 1 BEECHILL COTTAGES, ARDMORE £4349.84						31.3.79							6,896.08	
Address 107 LONE MOOR ROAD Amount £4705						31/3/80							6,896.08	
C 148/77						30/9/80							6,896.08	
Authorising Minute C 441/76 Contract Reg. No.						31.3.81							6,896.08	
GRANT APPROVAL OF N.I. Arts Council of N.I. 75%						31/12/81							6,896.08	
Statute under which Acquired						31/3/82							6,896.08	
Authorising Minute						31.3.84							6,896.08	
Capital Contributions Due														
DETAILS OF EXPENDITURE														
Date	Source	Folio	CONTRACTOR	LEGAL FEES	ADDITIONAL ELECTRICAL WORKS	N.I.E.S	Internal Transfers	Total	Cumulative Total	Cash Balance				
31/3/77	Lodge Books		3,000.00					3,000.00	3,000.00					
30/6/77				47.00	900.00			947.00	3,947.00					
30/9/77						168.00		168.00	4,115.00					
31/12/77					300.00			300.00	4,415.00					
31/3/78			2,140.45		280.63			2,421.08	6,836.08					
30/6/78									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
31/3/79									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
31/3/80									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
30/9/80									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
31/3/81									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
31/12/81									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
21/3/82									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
21/3/83									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
31.12.83									6,836.08	60.00 CR				
31.3.84									6,836.08	60.00 CR				

Plate 1. Sources of Finance and Expenditure for the Orchard Gallery. March 31st 1977, to 31st March 1984.



The Director.

Declan McGonagle was a major catalyst in the development of the Orchard Gallery. Like many young and talented artists from the city of Derry, he too had to leave the city to further his artistic career. He studied Fine art painting in the University of Ulster at Belfast. Before he took on the job of Director of the Orchard Gallery in 1978, he was an artist and a part-time lecturer at Letterkenny R.T.C., in Co. Donegal. He had no previous experience in arts administration, but his untrained approach actually contributed to the Orchard's success. Before the gallery was officially opened, there had been a lot of public debate among the local people on whether or not Derry City needed a gallery of contemporary art. Many of the public felt that the funds used to establish the gallery should be channelled into solving the economic hardship in the city. The Orchard was to be the first professionally established civic arts facility in the city, funded partly by the Derry City Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The function of the gallery in Derry, a small provincial city, would have to break new ground and to change many of the conventions of the traditional gallery. The main reasons for the breaking of traditional conventions were because the pre-existing elite sector of the community and the small group already active in the visual arts, would be too small to sustain the gallery alone.

The new Director of the Orchard Declan McGonagle was left in a situation where he would have to justify the establishment of the Orchard to the ordinary citizens; the gallery would have to give something back to the community. He explains that " It wasn't just a professional job for me, it was like this is my community, before we were an art gallery the Orchard was a space in Derry where people could have an experience." (McGonagle, interview, IMMA, Feb. 8th, 1998.)

The Orchard had been originally known as St. Columb's Hall. It was used for Irish dancing classes, amateur theatre productions and as a warehouse. Space 'A' (Plate 2.) indicates the original space the gallery started off with. This space is approximately sixty-foot in length and thirty foot wide. It is difficult to believe that a gallery of this size could gain such acclaim.

McGonagle had a strong belief that there was no reason why the people of Derry shouldn't have access to the best contemporary art works. He used a straightforward approach to persuade artists to show their work in this Derry gallery.

"I started to invite artists that I could see in magazines, that I thought were doing interesting work. They started to respond enthusiastically because I wrote to them not in terms of, that if you show your work in Derry you'll sell a lot of work. They knew this wasn't possible so all I could say was, look this is an interesting place, without making them feel like missionaries." (McGonagle, interview, IMMA, Feb. 9th, 1998.)

On his second day as curator / director he wrote a letter to Richard Long a well-known British Landscape artist. He invited him to stage an exhibition in the newly opened gallery. Within the first six months of the Orchard being opened, Richard Long had come to the gallery to exhibit his work. In responding to the Orchard Gallery's invitation to exhibit, Long helped to launch the gallery as a platform in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland for leading international artists. Declan McGonagle's Visual Arts Programme had brought to Derry a combination of international, familiar and strange works of contemporary art. There was a deliberate policy of showing work from outside Ireland as it provided an opportunity in Ireland as whole to see what was going on further afield in contemporary art.



ORCHARD GALLERY EXHIBITION SPACES A,B,C,D & E
ADMINISTRATION SPACE F

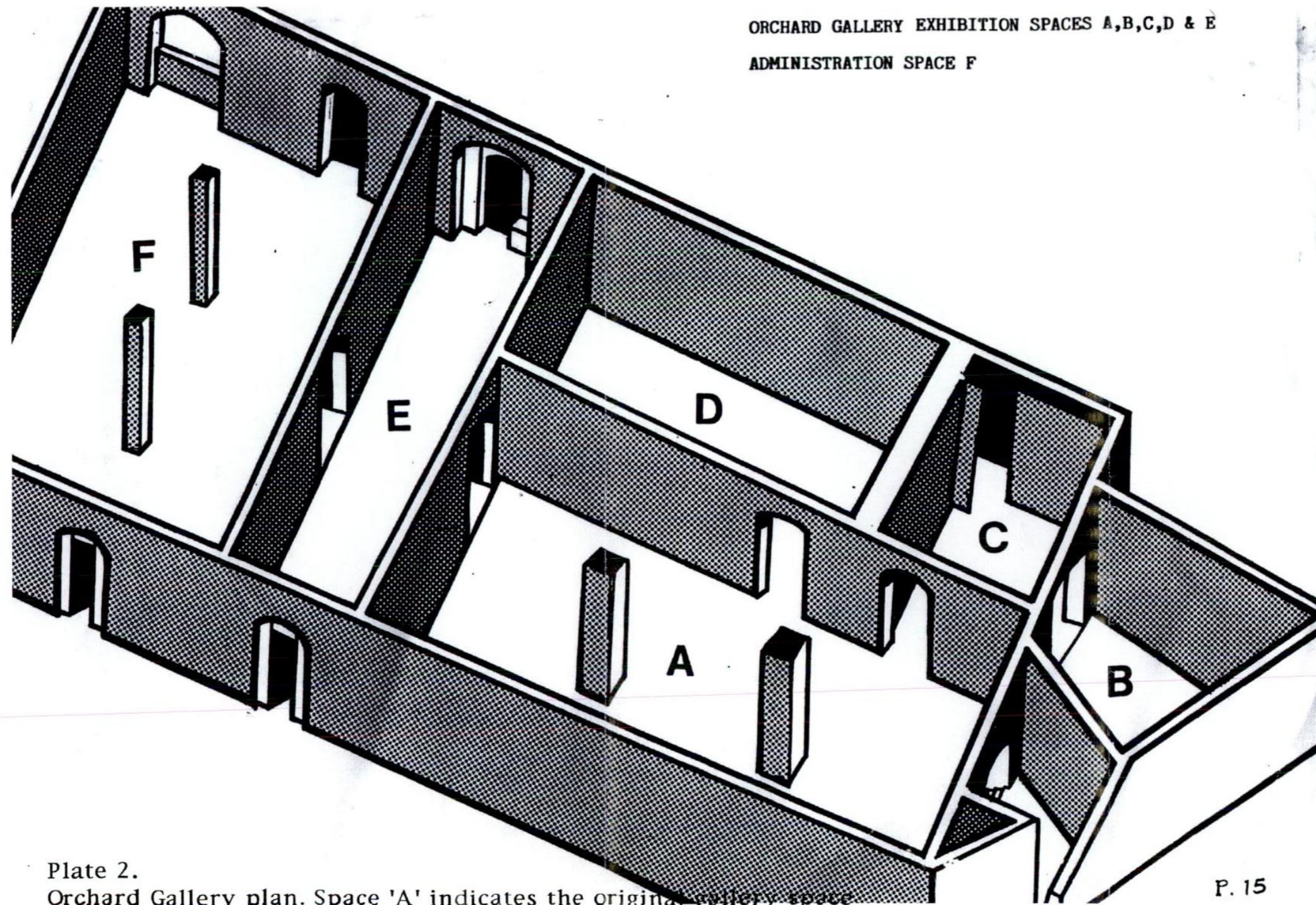


Plate 2.
Orchard Gallery plan. Space 'A' indicates the original gallery space.



In the past, finances had stopped many artists from coming no further than Britain. McGonagle solved this problem by bringing some substantial artists to group shows. Therefore his direct approach to artists had worked. He also tried to funnel the interests of the young people and the rest of the community into seeing these works. Initially artists agreed to come to Derry out of curiosity. The city had become known world wide because of its turbulent history and politics. The Orchard would provide the artist with a professional context for the work in the form of the gallery itself, but it also provided the artist with the general ambience of the community and the community's reactions to their art works. Much of the gallery work in the Orchard has been concept based; the work shown is more concerned with ideas rather than traditional art forms. His objectives at the time were "to make shows with artists that in a sense would never be the same anywhere else."(McGonagle, *Irish Times*, 5-5-86.)

After several years of adventurous projects at the Orchard, McGonagle took up the position in 1983 of the Exhibition Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. Before leaving Derry and going to the I.C.A. a number of job possibilities were open to him in Ireland. He felt that "If I was going to leave Derry I should leave Ireland, and if I was going to leave I should go to the most opposite extreme, a large cosmopolitan situation." (McGonagle, *Circa U.K.* No.29 July /Aug 1986, p.15.) He had arranged, before he left Derry, to return after two years to the Orchard to continue his work in the Gallery.

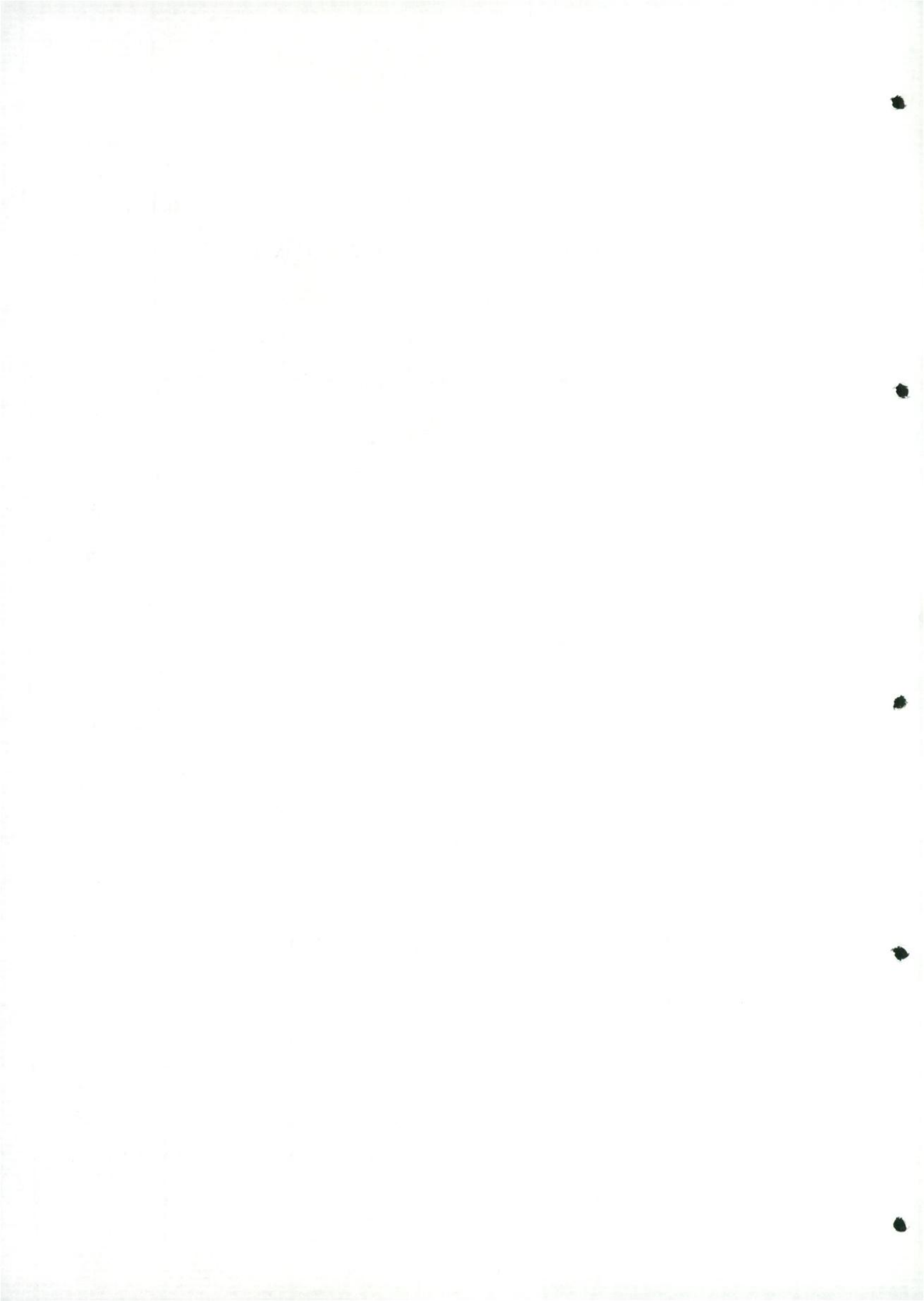
Working at the I.C.A., he clearly saw that, for an artist, a show in London created an element of pressure on the artist. The work would be critically reviewed, and this could mean a step up or down on the career circuit. The Orchard Gallery could offer the artist



a more professional engagement, as it required artists to interact with the community. There was a clear difference in location and context between the I.C.A. and the Orchard. This is the reason that McGonagle returned to Derry to expand the Orchard. While working in London, he kept in close contact with the Orchard, which was left in the capable hands of Willie Doherty. McGonagle then transferred many exhibitions from the I.C.A. to the Orchard. By moving to the prestigious Institute of Contemporary Art in London, he got to travel widely and make contacts throughout the world, which were of benefit on his return to the Orchard.

When he returned to the Orchard in 1986, it marked the expansion and devolution of responsibility in the gallery. An Education programme was established and a public art group developed. After five years of planning and ten years of partial refurbishment, the former Foyle College was ready to be occupied in 1987. The large building is used for performance arts, conference rooms, and also exhibition space. Moreover, it also contains studios and workshops and is a base for voluntary organisations. It is a place where "the artistic process can be experienced, rather than merely the artistic product displayed." (Trench, *Magill*, November 1987.)¹ In 1987 he became the first gallery director to be short listed for the Tate Gallery Turner prize for his outstanding contribution to art in Britain and Northern Ireland. His nomination citation was "For making the Orchard gallery an international centre for the artist." (*The Irish Times*, Sat, Oct. 24th 1987.)

¹ **PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS AN ADMINISTRATOR.** *Magill*, November, 1987 by Brian Trench. "A young Derry gallery administrator has been nominated for a top award along with some of the currently most influential painters. Declan McGonagle has made the Orchard gallery in his home town a place where international artists actively want to exhibit. Brian Trench profiles a council official who avoids bureaucracy, an administrator who thinks like an artist."



Community art and the educational role of the Orchard.

"Community then is not an entity, nor even an abstraction, but a set of shared social meanings which are constantly created and mutated through their interactions of its members, and through their interactions with wider society." (Kelly, 1984, p. 50)

The community arts movement began around the 1960s. There is no definite starting point for the movement. It was formed from the radical social and political cultural change occurring at the time. The new class politics aimed at giving power to the people. Community arts became a way of giving back to the people by taking arts into the streets. Community arts developed from opposition to the notion that arts are elitist and only appeal to a small segment of society. Community art centres do not produce 'high art', but develop and educate an audience for the arts. Through the Orchard's community arts programme, it educated a new audience for the contemporary arts.

In the first two years of the Orchard's existence, along side the exhibitions there was a programme of events held in the gallery. For example there were seminars, book fairs, punk rock concerts, performing arts, audio studio and photographic exhibitions. Punk was hugely popular in Derry City around 1978 and '79. Fergal Sharkey and the band 'The Under Tones' were starting out around this time and the Orchard actually provided a venue in which they could perform, on several occasions. These concerts came about because "These young people, who had fantastic energy, had no release for their energy, therefore, giving the youth of the City a place to come and perform released some of this positive energy in a positive way" (McGonagle, interview, IMMA, 9th Feb. 1998.) Some of the young people who were at the Punk concerts would come back to the gallery as a result to see some of the contemporary art works on display. This succeeded in gaining a new younger audience for the Orchard. Exposing many of Derry's youth to



contemporary art for the first time, resulting in the formation a new generation of gallery goers.

Whilst the community of Derry City is a divided one, there are common bonds between the sides. In the book, "Worlds Apart." Dominic Murray states "that there are as many elements of culture which unite people in Northern Ireland as there are those which 'separate'." (Dunn, Ed., 1985, p.216.)² There is no difference in dialect. House types, agriculture, culture and heritage are much the same for the social class living in the same area. The communities are largely segregated by their religion; there is no endogamy (inter-marriage) between the two communities. Young children had been segregated from an early age because of the schools they attended. Young Catholic children attend, what are known as, 'maintained schools.' These are run by religious orders, and receive less funding from the government. 'Controlled' schools in theory are non-denominational, but can be described as Protestant. Segregation of this kind only served to exacerbate the conflict by increasing mutual ignorance and prejudices and promoting the growth of stereotypes.

In the latter half of the 1980s the government established a policy of increasing opportunities for contact between Protestants and Catholics. It also saw the re-establishment of the central communities relations unit, encouraging tolerance and pluralism. People started to work at street level attempting to develop channels of communication between the Province's divided communities. There was a greater focus

². This essay entitled "*Culture, Religion and Violence in Northern Ireland*" by Dominic Murray investigates the uniformity in the Northern Irish cultures. It dispels also many of the common myths believed about the provenience of Ulster, and it also explains how segregation has occurred.



on community relations between the young. It was this climate of openness and tolerance that enabled culture and art to bring the divided communities together.

The Orchard workshops brought children together from both sides of the community: Catholic and Protestant. The gallery, which is, within the ambit of the City Council, comes under the heading of 'Cultural and Community Services.' It is therefore required to connect with the community. Pauline Ross was the first appointed educational liaison officer in the gallery. She implemented one of the many community arts programmes 'Art Insight' which is the programme which liaises between the community and Orchard exhibitions. This is an extension of the gallery to expand beyond gallery space, creating artworks within the actual community. Since June of 1987, 'Art Insight' has completed comprehensive programmes including practical workshops, discussions, slideshows, film and video programmes aimed at children from primary right through to 'A' level students. This programme also held workshops for teachers. Their function was to introduce particular exhibitions or artists works, through practical and theoretical workshops, which suggested ways that teachers could mediate techniques within an exhibition in the Orchard, to their students.

As part of the 'Art Insight Project', the Orchard staged a five -day exhibition of art -work by children from Steelstown Primary School and Limavady Central Primary school in 1988. With the help of three local artists the children were encouraged to create visual history around Magilligan beach, making sand sculptures, sand drawings and using objects found on the beach such as driftwood, seaweed and shells. In addition there was also a series of photographs plus a video screen that documented the three-day event.



The Orchard has a continuing policy of showing artwork by local people. The Workers Education Association (W.E.A.) funded a series of art classes at the Melrose Centre in the Waterside. Their work was exhibited at the gallery in September 1988. Melrose is part of the Western Health and Social Services Boards Mental Health Service. It offers help and support to people recovering from or having difficulty with mental distress. Two local artists run the classes and they encourage art and other visual media as a therapeutic and stimulating activity as well as a forum for personal feeling.

In the city, on 11th of November 1988, many of the Texaco garages displayed masks produced by the children's Saturday morning workshops in the Orchard gallery. These workshops were, originally organised to go on only as long as they provided interest and excitement, yet they developed into an almost continuous series. They also exhibit one of the Orchard's finest qualities, its commitment to involving young people in the visual arts, not just as consumers, but through an understanding of the various processes of production. It is a commitment like this one, which widens the gallery's natural constituency. The programme costs were originally met from within the Orchard Gallery's own budget which is supported strongly by the Derry City Council. However, there had been huge cut backs in the previous five years from the Arts Council which put the project into jeopardy. "With so much dividing Derry, it seems odd that an initiative that has brought the community together, through art should be deemed unworthy of support." (Carty, *Sunday Tribune*, 24 April, 1988.) Marks and Spencers handed over a cheque to the gallery for six hundred pounds to assist in the development of residencies for artists to live and work in the city and to expand the Art Education Project.



'Sitework', a Public Art Project, was established in September of 1988 as a result of the ongoing policy of the Derry City Council, under the auspices of the Orchard Gallery. The gallery developed a programme of making art and its activities accessible outside of the gallery space to a wider public and community. The creation of posts for a full-time co-ordinator and five part time artists was made possible by collaboration between Derry City Council and Enterprise Ulster. The aims of the project are to explore the area of public language and the communications and the context of artwork within local and public arenas. It generated dialogue by presenting challenging work in a variety of different forms. It responded to community needs by working simultaneously within their own different communities. 'Sitework' completed four large-scale projects, in addition to various workshops, discussions and collaborations with visiting artists. One of the major projects was a mural completed inside a local shopping centre, which was executed by the V.T.P. (Youth training programme.) these trainees were from both religions. Their ideas were developed through workshops, which then provided the basis for the mural.

Tim Rollins an American artist held workshops in the Orchard Gallery. He works with teenagers from the Bronx area in New York. Taking works of literature as a starting point, they produce many -layered and visually stunning works of art. Critically the work has been an astonishing success; the Museum of Modern Art, New York even acquired a piece of their work. The Orchard was the first gallery outside the United States to display this work entitled 'Tim Rollins and Kids of Survival'. Rollins was very happy to come to the Orchard and work with the young people in Derry. He takes his work with teenagers very seriously and tried to give the best instruction possible during

his brief visit to Derry. He compared Derry with the Bronx saying that there is a "dignity and beauty about these 'under dog communities' and I want to bring that out." ³

Colm Cavanagh, chief executive of the Norbic Business Innovation centre, praised the Orchard and Declan McGonagle for its great work in the community of Derry. The gallery connected with the morale and the spirit of the people in the city. He also commented that "We need roads and bridges and leisure facilities for our people. But we need as well as that, to help ignite a greater sense of pride and purpose." (*Derry Journal*, 8th, April 1988) Derry's people had suffered greatly because of 'the troubles', the community on each side of the sectarian divide had a deep mistrust in one another. Community art was able to overcome the divisions through art practice.

Poignant Exhibitions at the Orchard

The success of exhibitions in the Orchard was due to a number of contributing factors. It initiated projects, which went to major metropolitan galleries, and collaborated with other enterprising galleries on specific arts initiatives. A lot of this activity was due to 'opportunism.' Exhibitions were partly designed to provoke a critical response from the public. The Orchard became infamous throughout Europe and America for showing particularly what was considered 'difficult' art. Exhibitions were issue based as well as politically based. It was also a policy of the gallery in its community to demonstrate that art was not a rarefied practice, which needed special mental or physical skills to

Information on the Tim Rollins visit and other community art initiatives were accessed from the Derry City Council Archives in Pennyburn Industrial estate. To date the fifty-two boxes of information on the Orchard Gallery have not yet been filed by the Council Archivist. The above information was obtained from a folder marked "Advertisements and exhibitions 1988."



appreciate. It brought together the amateur and professional, the local and the international. The city itself, because of social and political problems created many possibilities for exploration for the artist in their cultural activities. Therefore culture had more meaning, and visual art had more meaning because of the context of the area.

Richard Long, who was one of the first major artists to exhibit in the gallery, he had never had a one-man show before coming to the Orchard. Long had an international reputation, but he had made work consistently about Ireland. He provided another way of thinking and working with the landscape. Landscape had a particularly oppressive tradition in the area of Irish art. Many Irish artist had choose to deal with landscape in a very romanticised fashion, depicting rolling green fields, thatch cottages and other stereotypical images of Ireland. These artists had avoided dealing with the great symbolic significance that the land possesses on this island. Long represented this different angle in this work. As a result of exhibitions such as Long's, a process began in the gallery which encouraged artists to respond to a sojourn in Derry. John Hillard's 'Border Lands' examined borders in England, Scotland, Wales and North America and this subject had obvious associations with Northern Ireland and Derry.

'The Citizen' a painting by Richard Hamilton shown first in the Orchard gallery in late 1983, was part of a body of work using imagery about Northern Ireland. The work depicts a hunger striker in a dirty protest; the figure is in a Christ-like pose, blanket-draped exposing his chest and his crucifix. The painting was shown at the Orchard along side Rita Donagh's larger paintings and drawings based on aerial images of the 'H Blocks' in the Maze prison and maps of Northern Ireland. These works exhibited together made a powerful statement in Derry, because it was shown at a time that the



hunger strikers were virtually becoming canonised by members of the nationalist community. Some of the public saw 'The Citizen' as blatant image of propaganda, it was seen as a " equation: Hunger Striker = Christ = Catholic Church support for the Provisional IRA, an image perfectly attuned to the republican wall murals." (McAvera, 199, p. 114.) Some of the local people from the city of Derry used that exhibition in the Orchard as a device to substantiate an experience, including those people who disagreed with the validation of that particular imagery.

In the light of the context of the situation both sides of the divided community could read this exhibition in different ways. According to Hamilton his "intention was to produce an ambivalence rather than glorify the activities of the IRA." (Hamilton, Sept., 1988.)⁴ Critical response in Derry was covered mainly by the local papers, but was mainly ignored by the wider media. The exhibition moved to the ICA London when Declan McGonagle was taking up his post as Exhibitions Director there. According to McGonagle "There was almost a critical silence in the response to the work." (McGonagle, *Art & Design Monthly UK*, Vol. 12 Jan/Feb 1997. p.49-53) He believes that it was not reviewed because it meant dealing with the origins of the work, this would mean addressing the key issues, which are the cultural issues, represented in the situation in Northern Ireland.

"The visual arts in Ireland are often accused of lagging behind poetry and literature in using and adopting local idioms, hence a generation of poets such as Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon are able to refer to and provide insights into issues in the North while artists have only made superficial gestures." (Fowler, 1986, p.8-9)

⁴ 'Hamilton's Progress', an interview with Bill Hare and Andrew Patrizo, in *Alba 9* (Edinburgh, 1988)

Mickey Donnelly and Victor Sloan are both Northern Irish artists, who have exhibited in the Orchard and who are part of a generation of artists in Northern Ireland who use direct references in their imagery. Mickey Donnelly's *Paintings, Drawings, Prints 1986/87 in the Orchard*, were based on themes, which contain references to Ireland's history, by using emblems, and symbols that allude to Ireland's mythological past. By juxtaposing emblems from two traditions, Nationalists and Loyalists, the objects signify different meanings because of the difference in histories and politics. (Plate 3) Shows Mickey Donnelly painting called *Angel's Trumpets*. In the nationalists community the hat is associated with James Connolly and the Easter Rising of 1916. Contrasted with Connolly's hat were drawings of the Orange orders bowler hats worn during their ritualistic marching celebration of the Protestant Victory over the Catholic army in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The painting of the lilies show the ironic comparison of emblems. The Orange order during their summer marching season uses the lily as decoration, while in the nationalist side the Easter lily is a commemorative of the Rising in 1916.

"Magnetic North" was an exhibition of photographic works displayed in the Orchard in the October of 1987. Four Northern Irish artists displayed work in this exhibition; Barbra Freeman, Peter Neill, Victor Sloan and Maurice Hobson. "Magnetic North" first challenged the presumptions and expectations of the use of photography as a Fine Art medium. Second of all this exhibition challenged the Northern Irish context, in which these four artists live and work. The work provided a counter voice to the dominant representational mass media view of Northern Ireland. This exhibition went on to tour



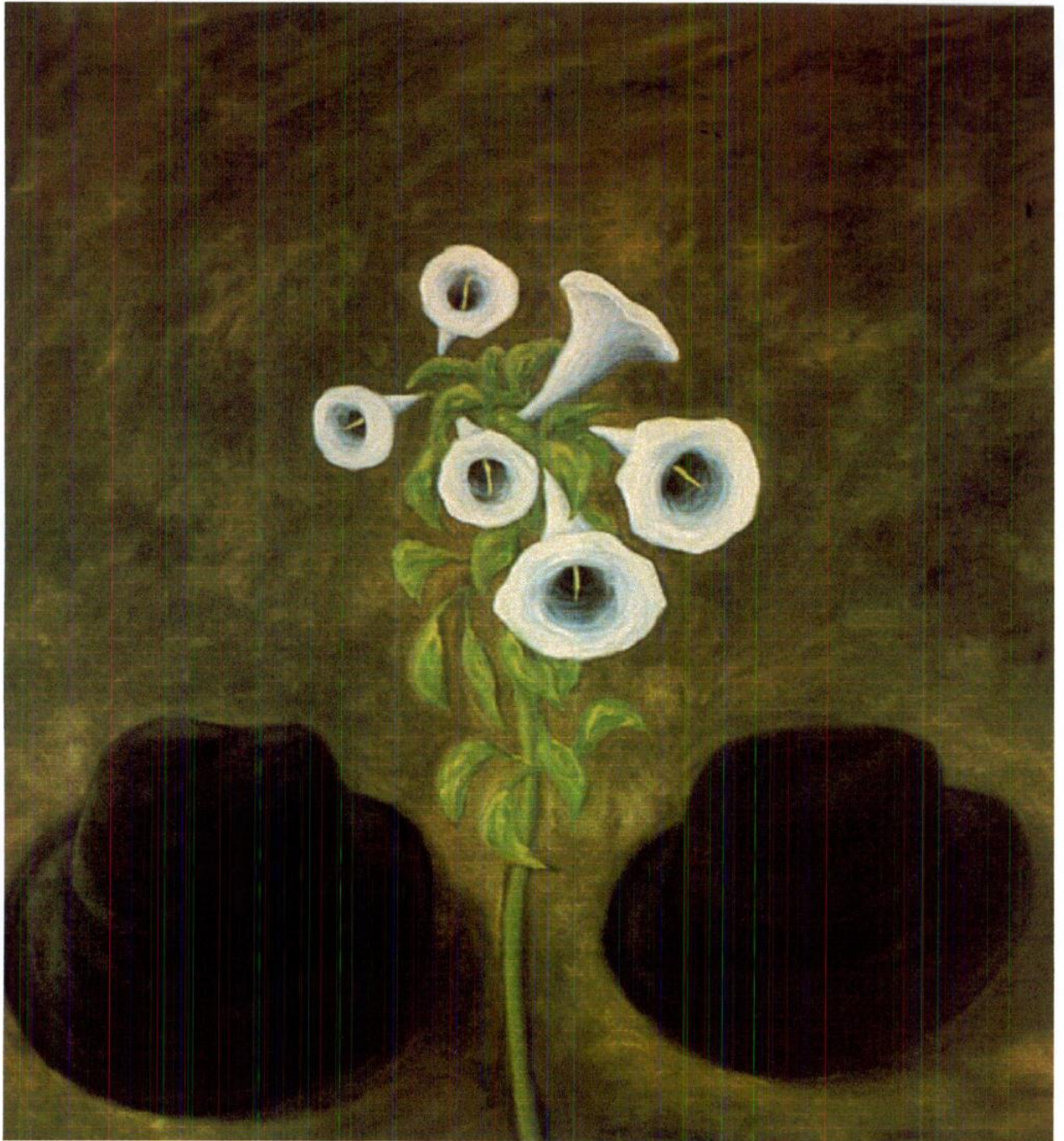


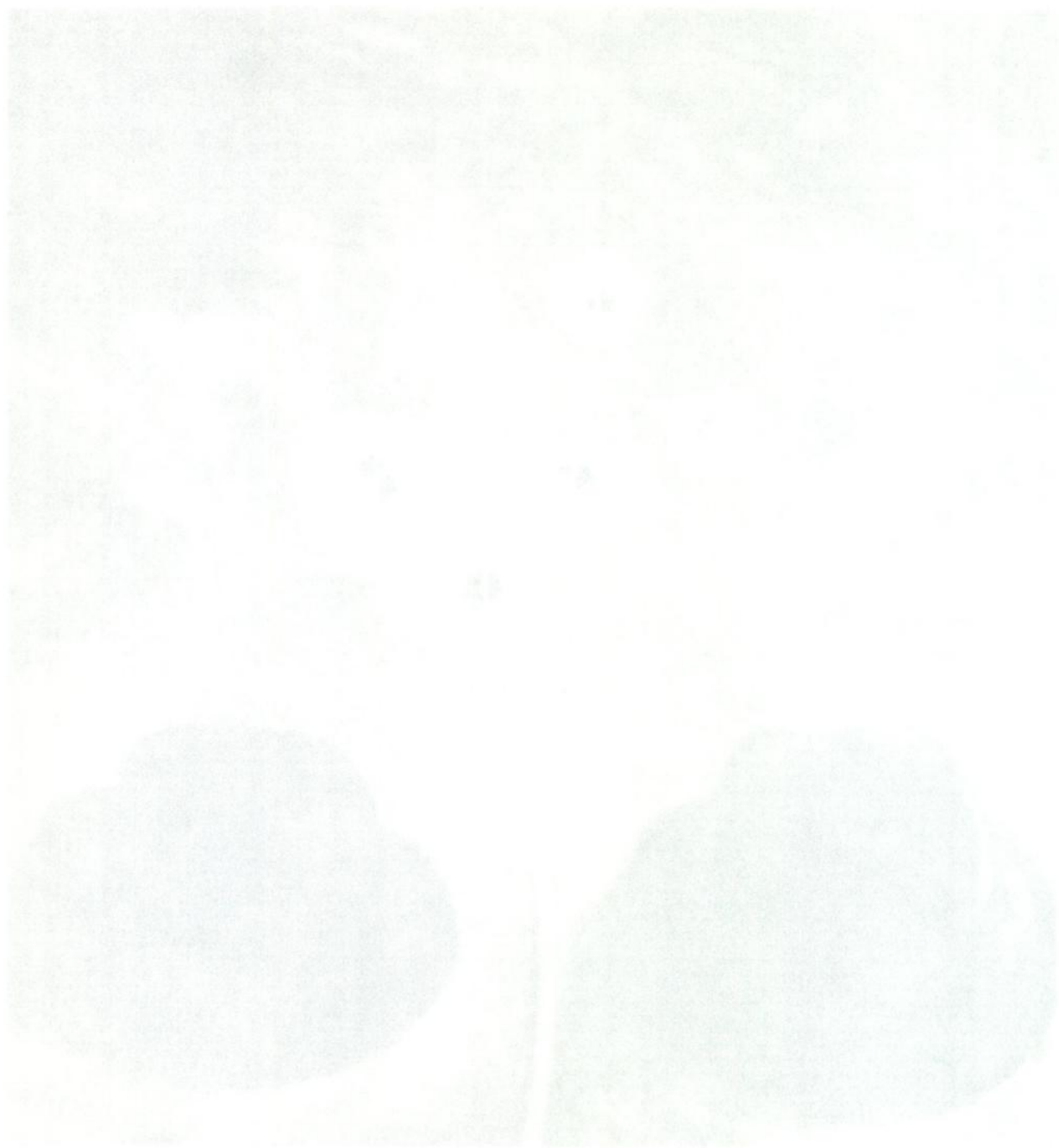
Plate 3.

Angel's Trumpets.

Oil on canvas, 1887.

48" x 48".

By Mickey Donnelly.



outside of the British Isles. This allowed a new generation of Northern Irish artists to share a sense of place dealing with their environment while locating and testing work within a wider constituency. Victor Sloan in 1989 exhibited solo in the Orchard, the show was called " Walls ". For this exhibition he produced a body of photographic work that displayed his own personal history in the context of a particular community in Northern Ireland.(Plate 4.)

" The city becomes the Gallery. "

Under Declan McGonagle's direction at the Orchard, a programme was initiated to move the gallery beyond the boundaries of its four walls. If the Gallery could achieve this goal it would adequately represent various strands of contemporary arts to the public. The city's visual arts programme involved displaying public art in the city centre and using council owned buildings. Locky Morris a local artist from Derry installed nine sculpted red and white figures around the Guildhall Square, the Richmond Centre area, which caused much public reaction. The figures were made from concrete and were modelled on characters from the community. One of the figures waits for the Creggan bus and a female figure carries her heavy shopping bags. These works were subject to vandalism, as the concrete figures were easily chipped away. The majority of the public cast a few side way glances and amused expressions at the work, according to Mary Kelly of the Derry Journal. (Kelly, *Derry Journal*, 29 July , 1988.)

In 1987 Anthony Gormley made a work for the city of Derry on one of its most potent sites available, the City Walls, see (Plate 5.) The project was partly financed by Television South West Arts and aided also by the Henry Moore Foundation. Gormley placed three double figures at strategic points on the walls. These figures were made from cast-iron three-quarter of an inch thick; the double figures are joined back to back with out stretched arms.(Plate 6.)The eyes of the figure are open looking out and looking in, the viewer can see through these eyeholes into a unified inner space. Like many of Gormley's works this sculpture was based on the form of the artist's own body.



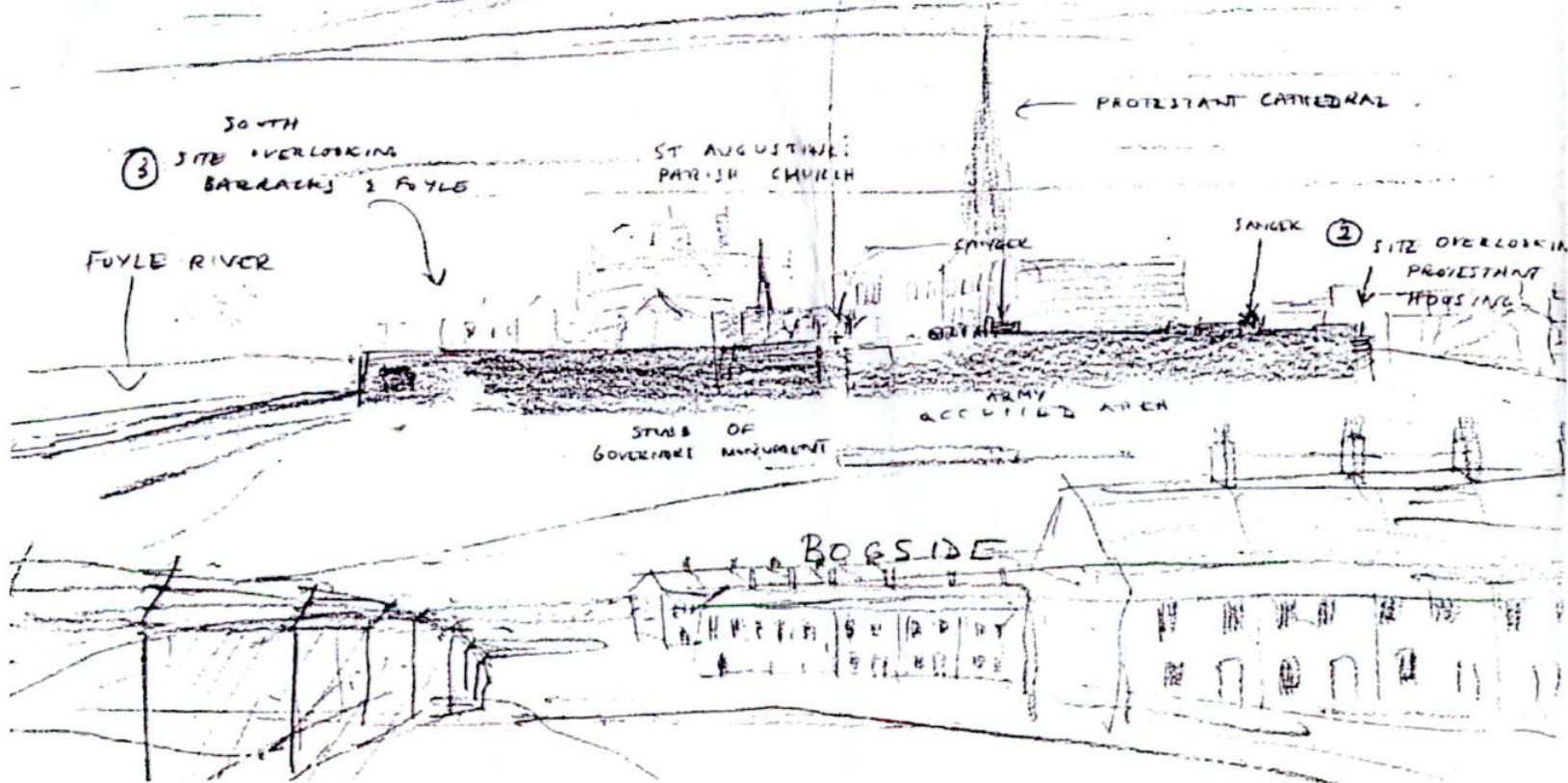


Drum Beating
192cm x 125cm
From the *Walls* series 1989
By Victor Sloan

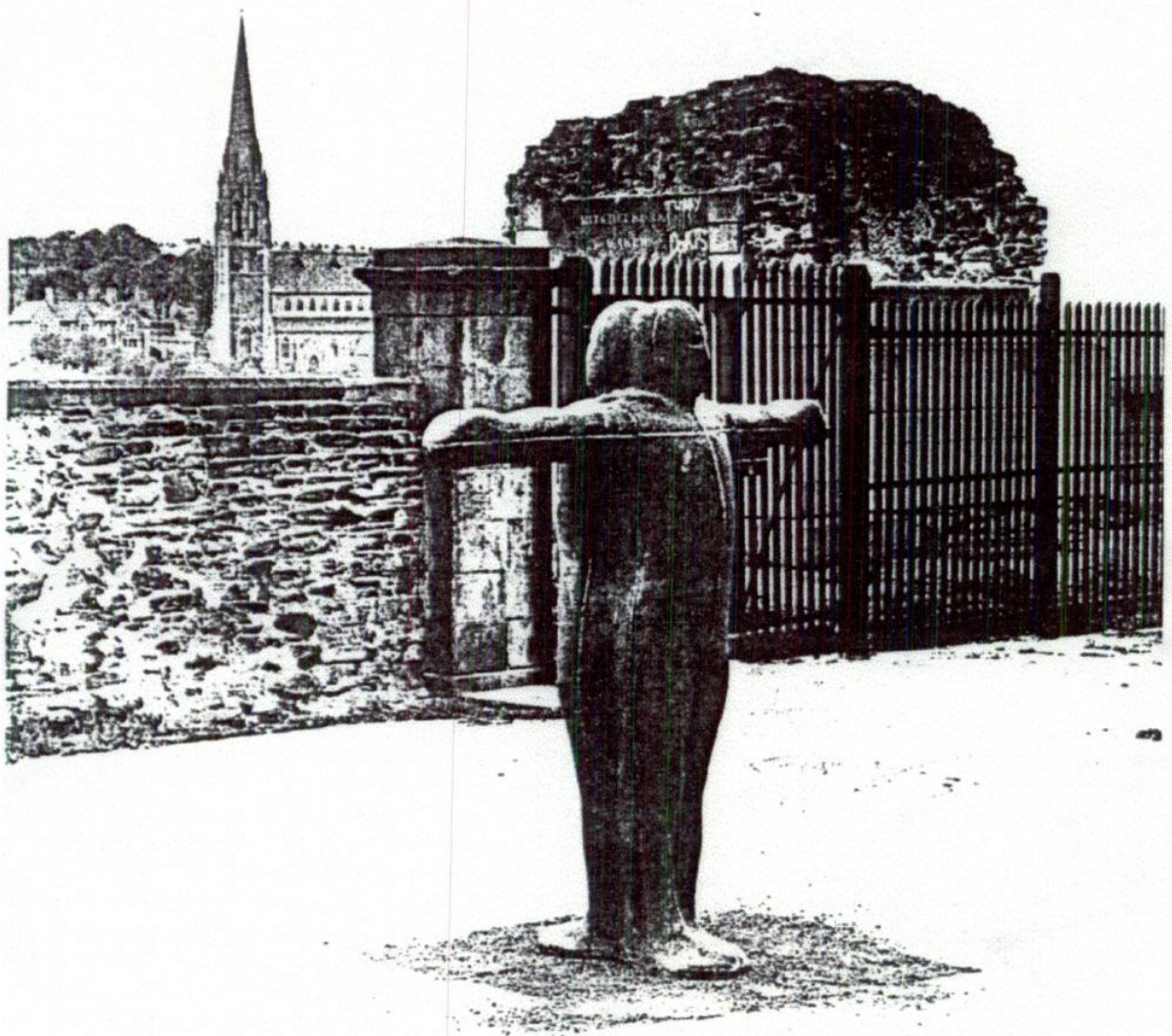
V I E W O F D E R R Y L O O K I N G S O U T H
F R O M B O G S I D E



① PROPOSED SITE OVERLOOKING BOGSIDE







Above: Remains of Walker Monument, overlooking Bogside, Derry, 1987
Left: Bastion/Fountain Estate, Derry, 1987

Plate 6.



The crucifixion form of the work was intended to refer to central images of Christianity and celebration of redemption through sacrifice. It refers simultaneously to the body as the site of experience, and the body politic of Derry/Londonderry, two bodies two communities, looking out, but inescapably bound together. These sculptures gave rise to much public debate mainly with the Loyalists community, including the Unionists Council, as the city walls are the most important touchstone of Unionist/Protestant identity in relation to the contemporary politics in Ireland. The works were vandalised. Paint was thrown over them, burning tyres set around the figure's necks. Some members of the public tried to dig them up. All these attempts were unsuccessful as the works were physically designed to survive those attentions.

Publications

Initially when the Orchard was first founded the Derry city Council had intended that the Orchard would set up a collection of contemporary art. This objective was never realised, as there was no space in the gallery to house such a collection or the staff to administrate it. The alternative to a collection of contemporary art was the establishment of the Orchard Publications. When visiting artists came to Derry as well as creating works of art, the Orchard produced a series of publications on the artist, which in turn was sent to galleries and art institutions across the globe. This gave the artist something tangible to bring with them from residency at the Orchard. Catalogue sales helped to fund the gallery. In the international arena of contemporary art, word of mouth was actually reinforced with post cards bearing images of the works on show and generous catalogues some full books that accompanied many of the exhibitions. The sheer importance of these publications can be clearly seen in Declan McGonagles nomination for the Tate gallery Turner prize. McGonagle was nominated for the award by some who had never been to the Orchard gallery or Derry, but had heard of his work and the gallery through Orchard publications.



Chapter 3

" Blossoms from the Orchard."

Before the Orchard gallery was first established the entire north west region of the country was culturally barren. The gallery was the first culture centre to be set up in the area, therefore in the early days of the Orchard's work encompassed many of the different disciplines of the arts. The Orchard highlighted the need for the development of the culture sector in this impoverished area. It also laid the foundations for the establishment of the major art and cultural bodies that exist today in the Derry. These developments in Derry City centre are not only important in the arts; they also play a vital role in the urban regeneration, job creation, communal self-confidence and tourism.

The Nerve Centre is a multimedia centre, which redressed this wide opening in the cultural industries of popular music, film and video to a new generation in Derry. Established in 1990, it is based at the former shirt factory at Magazine Street. The project was promoted by the partnership of the North West Musicians Collective and the Foyle Film Projects. It was established to stimulate local creativity in the youths of the city and popular culture by giving them access to modern facilities. The Centre has a live performance area and exhibition space, a café/meeting place, rehearsal and education facilities and film, video and recording equipment on which young people and community groups can train. Channel Four Television provided £25,000 for a video-editing suite. The annual Foyle Film Festival plays a pivotal role in linking the work of the Nerve Centre to the International Film and television community. Screened during the '94 festival alongside short films made by film and animation students in

courses throughout Ireland was the work from students on the ten-month video and television competence course held at Nerve Centre.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland gave grant aid of £370,000 to the centre in 1994. Damien Smyth from the Council believes it could eventually become Derry's main focal point for the arts. A separate but parallel development, which was a also boost for musicians in terms of facilities and morale, was the 24-track recording studio, the first in the north west, which opened in 1992 in the Foyle Arts Centre. This Project was a partnership between the North West Musicians Collective and the Derry City Council. The establishment of both these developments has ended the exodus of young people from the city of Derry going abroad to seek facilities for their music career.

The Playhouse Community Arts Resource Centre opened also in 1992. It is situated on a neutral site within the historic walls of the city, just a few yards away from the Orchard gallery. The building was previously two redundant convent schools that had been empty for nine years. Pauline Ross was the main instigator behind the Playhouse. She was formerly the education liaison officer at the Orchard Gallery. She spent two and a half years researching for the arts centre. The innovative centre aims at exposing children and young people to a wide range of art forms. She got the idea for the Playhouse while working in the Orchard at the Saturday morning workshop which got a tremendous response, with over 200 children in attendance each week." If that is the response to the visual arts, can you image what it will be for dance and theatre, mime, puppetry and circus" (Pauline Ross, *Belfast Telegraph*, Feb.22, 1992)



The playhouse has a two hundred retractable seat theatre; it also houses a dance studio, and a contemporary art gallery known as the " Context gallery. " There also is a craft shop, play centre and numerous rehearsal rooms. The centre aims to integrate the arts and arts education and in particular to target communities that are isolated. Through the arts it also aims to create new dialogue between communities in conflict. The theatre has confirmed itself to be a popular venue for National companies like the Abbey and the Shakespeare Company. It also is used by amateur and youth productions as well as Theatre Education Projects. The Context Gallery has a programme of exhibitions of local artists' work and of national and international artists. It also provides a much-needed venue for young emerging artists, offering them their first opportunity to exhibit their work in a solo show.

In 1992 a young long festival was launched in the city, named IMPACT '92. (International Meeting Place for the Appreciation of Cultural Traditions.). This festival was launched to promote Derry nationally and internationally as a place of creativity and understanding. This project was launched in an association with the Orchard Gallery. The idea was derived from the regionalisation policies of the European Commission, working to improve the life of impoverished regions around European Community. The budget for the IMPACT festival was one and a half million pounds, A half a million was granted from the Derry City Council, a Half million from the department of the Environment, and the other half million came from private sponsorship. This festival was highly successful in promoting through the press and advertising the city nationally and internationally. In order to remain true to regionalist policies the festival catered for both international and local audience. Visitors and performers from over sixty different countries attended this yearlong event. High and



low culture was represented from international and local sources; theatrical events, sporting events, exhibitions and readings. IMPACT resulted; in the continuing growth and interest in the arts and culture in Derry. This project proved that there was a substantial audience in the city for future cultural events. This was also reflected in the high level of interest by private sector, by their generous financial donations to the project.

Smaller arts initiatives that exist around the City have also flourished. The community centre at the foot of the Bogside known as Pilots row has many facilities available to a community, which has suffered the brunt of the socio-economic hardship in Derry. It has exhibition facilities and a darkroom for photographic work, it also has kilns and potter wheels for work in ceramics. The introduction of third level courses in Art and Design in Derry has contributed greatly to growing number of people in the area interested in the visual arts. The North West Institute of Further and Higher Education on the Strand road has a number of foundation and diploma courses in the arts. The University of Ulster at Magee offers a diploma or degree in Industrial, Product and Graphic Design.

The Orchard Gallery has been successful in influencing local arts but it has also contributed to the national arts in Ireland. The 26th of May 1991 saw the official opening of the Irish Museum of Modern Art at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. Before the museum was opened the Board had the task of appointing a director. According to a report in the Irish Independent of February 1990, there had been over twenty applications for the job. Declan McGonagle was appointed the Director. A noted curator in the Irish art scene, having elevated the Orchard Gallery to international status, on a



minimal budget, it was hoped he would do the same for the Irish Museum of Modern Art. McGonagle outlined his terms of working in his application to the board, which meant that the museum was set up as a limited company. He also had clear ideas and aims for the Museum. If the internal structure of the Irish Museum of Modern Art is analysed one can clearly see that the aims and objectives are cognate to the Orchard Gallery. The Education and Community Programme, the Artists Work Programme in the IMMA have similarities to programmes initially implemented at the Orchard.

Noreen O'Hare, in 1991 to 1993 had taken over Declan McGonagle's position at the Orchard as curator. Ten years previous to her move to Derry she had supervised Belfast's Crescent art centre; a hub for alternative artistic activity in Belfast. The Ormeau Baths gallery established in February of 1994, was formerly a public baths and swimming pool, and is now Belfast's largest contemporary art gallery. Noreen O'Hare became the first director of this gallery, "Although she applied for the directorship just days before the closing deadline, O'Hare's appointment came as a surprise to few in the local art scene." (Haughey, *Irish Times*, June 21, 1995.) The gallery was set up as a trust independent of the Arts Council, run by a director and twelve other trustees. The gallery received core funding of £215,000 from Northern Ireland's Arts Council which was almost a quarter of the Council's total visual art budget for 1995/1996.

The Ormeau Baths was established at a very crucial time for art in Belfast. The Ulster Museum staged notable exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s, however in recent years concentrated on history. Belfast city had up to until the opening of the Ormeau Baths had depended on the Fendereskey gallery for contemporary art. The Ormeau opened its doors on the 27th of June 1995, in doing so contributed to the post-cease-fire cultural

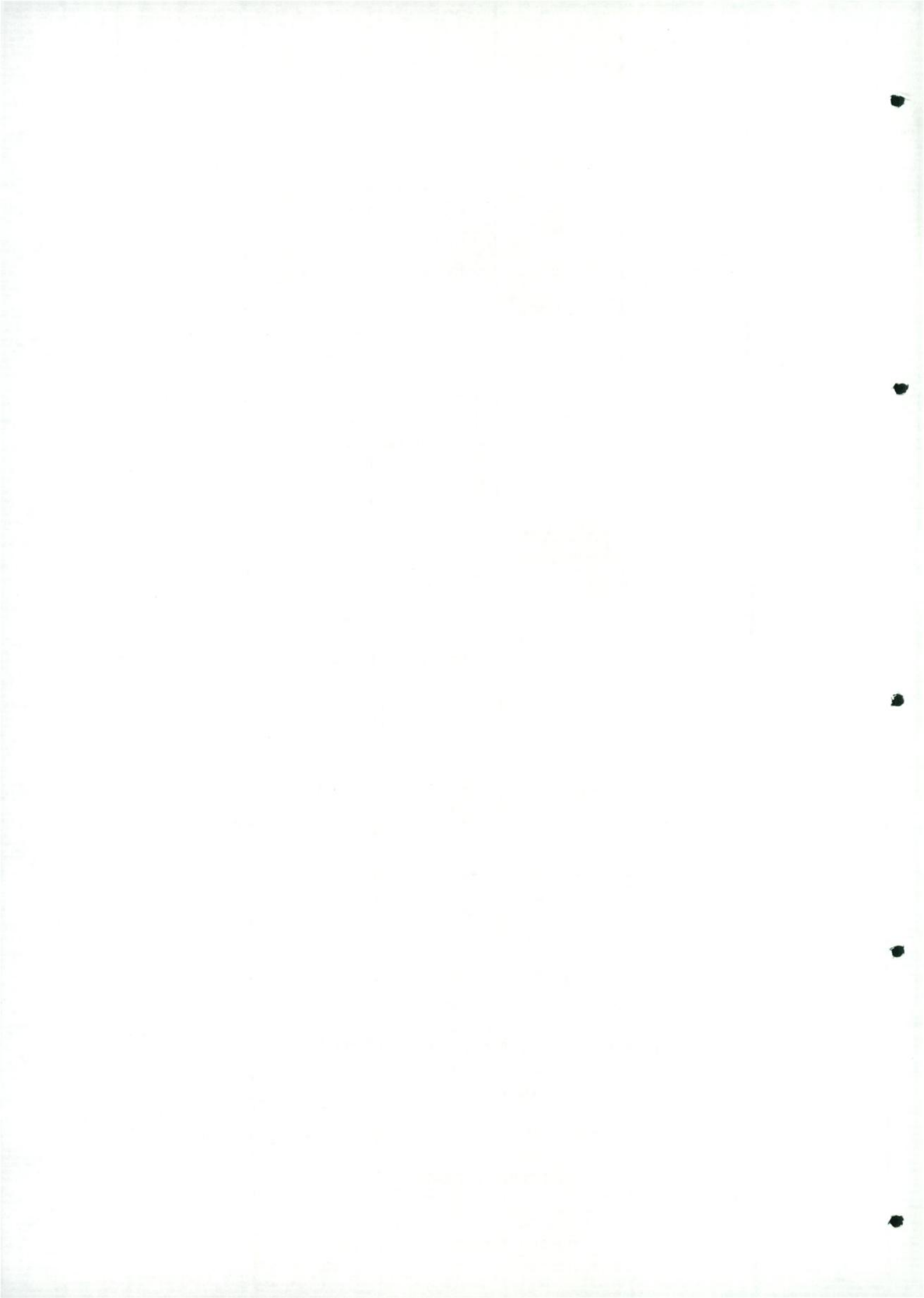
revival of Belfast. This new Belfast gallery too also utilised many of the programmes in operation at the Orchard, Derry. The Ormeau also aims to strengthen the base of Irish contemporary art nationally and internationally. It also implements an Education programme, and many activities, which go beyond the gallery walls. The Orchard gallery modus operandi had been inspiration in the establishment of the two most important arts institutions in this decade on this island, which are situated in the most prominent cities, Dublin and Belfast.

Conclusion

The Orchard gallery illustrates vividly the dramatic change in the role of arts institutions. It successfully drew an inexperienced audience into the world of contemporary art through its community art and education programmes. Local and community projects however can only be as worthwhile and valuable as the community makes them. There is a substantial quality and a great deal local and interest in community art in Derry . This interest is reflected in the large number of arts initiatives established in Derry City in the last two decades. This proves that Orchard paved the way for the growth of the Derry City as a contemporary arts centre.

The Orchard came into to existence at a time when the European Economic Community allocated a large amount of funds to reduce regional disparities in Northern Ireland. It had been nurtured in a climate in the 1980s were the British government were encouraging communication between divided communities through art and culture. The Orchard however, has shown that it is not an issue solely about grants, exhibitions spaces, residences and presentations, but how the artist can integrate with ordinary lives and reduce the divide between society.

There is a question of the importance or unimportance of Derry being a divided community. This could be seen as a benefit or detriment. The 'Troubles' have placed a certain complexion on the city of Derry, it has a very particular historic circumstance. Art about the 'Troubles' many art critics have argued has very little currency outside Ireland, this is illustrated in the little attention that Richard Hamiltons 'The Citizen.'



received in London. The Orchard exhibited the work of a new generation of Northern Irish artists, who used their indigenous history and imagery in their work. The gallery provided a platform for these artists to communicate their ideas to a worldwide audience, through the Orchard publications, and travelling group shows.

The Orchard's influences moved further afield from just its local community. The gallery itself can be seen as a blue print for the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Kilmainham. (IMMA.) and the Ormeau Baths Belfast. The current director of IMMA. Declan McGonagle was the founder director/curator of the Orchard gallery. His input in the early years in Orchard is very significant. It was because of his untrained approach and innovative ideas that gallery became successful. The programmes he implemented at the Orchard were tried and tested and the results were of total success. It because of his natural flare as a director he got that his prestigious position in IMMA.

When Noreen O'Hare took over from McGonagle as director of the Orchard, very little changes occurred. O'Hare continued the policy of showing predominately conceptual art, both national and international. The artists work programmes and education and community arts programmes continued to expand. It was mainly because of the knowledge and experience gained at the Orchard that O'Hare was appointed director of the Ormeau Baths.

The Orchard gallery illustrates the move of arts institutions towards decentralisation, and the broadening of social class access to the arts. The gallery never fully realised its ambition to decentralise itself from London because of the whole economic, social and political infrastructure focused on London. "London dominates these islands these

islands in a way that no other European capital does." (McGonagle, *Circa UK*, no. 29 July/Aug. 1986.) Our counter parts in Europe in Germany and Italy have been successful in decentralisation of the arts because of its devolved infrastructure. However, the gallery is firmly placed itself on the international map

The Orchard role has devolved through the years. Since the establishment of alternative community arts centres in the city, it can concentrate more on national and international art. The gallery's involvement in the community has not weakened it still encourages resident artist to an active interest in the society around them. The gallery has to compete with the Ormeau Baths, in Belfast for funding from the arts Council of Northern Ireland. Under the directorship of Liam Kelly the Orchard has managed to retain its high standard of contemporary art, and keep in contact with the international art world through Orchard publications.



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Interview

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