

Camille Souter.



A Thesis  
by Daeini Roche.



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BY DARINA ROCHE

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

Though very highly regarded in the art world of Dublin, Camille Souter, the painter, is not well known elsewhere. The reason for this can be partly attributed to the fact that Camille remains as a painter and person, an extremely private individual, unwilling to divulge much about her work, or her life. Her paintings are indeed described by Anne Crookshank as being 'shy', and frequently overlooked in mixed shows as their size and muted colour range did not compete with the average modern picture<sup>I</sup>. Yet Camille remains an undoubtedly talented and competent painter, and when one has the opportunity to see her finest pictures, one can really appreciate the range, variety and beauty of her work.

I have chosen to discuss Camille Souter's life and work for these very reasons, having been initially attracted by the beauty of her landscape paintings for which she is best known, and secondly by virtue of a personal curiosity, since so little has been written or published about the artist and her work in Ireland.



I have briefly outlined a biographical history of Camille Souter's life in the first chapter, attempting to supply the reader with an overall understanding of where Camille Souter has come from and where she fits in, in International terms, and as an Irish painter today.

As there seems to be no clear cut development from one stage to the next in Camille's work, as it seems to use whatever form suits her subject, her work can't be discussed in chronological order. Camille is constantly referring back to past experiences in her work, painting memories of Italy, while on Achill Island, and remembering events years back and painting them today, using paint in an abstract way one moment and painting realistically the next. Some of her earliest work from London and Italy, has been sold or lost and can only be discussed in general terms without a visual reference, and only on information Camille Souter has kindly supplied during interviews with her about her work<sup>2</sup>. Camille's constant travels over the last thirty years to Wicklow, London, Paris, Italy and Achill, have at times determined the subject matter and style of her work, which at once is always changing and always consistent.



To quote Cyril Barrett:

"To spell out the nature of Camille's personality and the quality of her work would be otiose. Only the crassly undiscerning could fail to perceive them. Camille is rare, rare as an artist, rare as a person; a private person, whose privacy must be respected, much though one delights in her company<sup>3</sup>.

And Anne Crookshank:

"Everything she (Camille) looks at is looked at because she is deeply interested and it is her concern and love for life in its simplest terms that makes her pictures so permanently satisfying<sup>4</sup>.

Here in my opinion is an artist who's personal and artistic virtuosity deserve particular attention.



## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHY

#### CAMILLE SOUTER

Betty Pamela Holmes was born in Northampton in 1929. When she was a year old her parents, who had business connections with Ireland, moved to Dublin, and in due course, Betty went to school in Glengara Park School, Dun Laoghaire.

She failed the Leaving Certificate, but received honours in art, and it was clear even then where her interests lay.

In 1948 she went to London to study as a trainee nurse at Guy's Hospital, and spent any free time she had wandering about art galleries, and in the Victoria and Albert Museum. She also visited Italy while studying, but became ill with Tuberculosis and retired to a sanatorium on the Isle of Wight, for a year to recover. While there she had time to read a lot and to think a lot. She began drawing and doing a little clay modelling and when she could she secretly climbed the cliffs by the sea.



Returning to London in 1951, she practiced as a private nurse for six months, and was painting in a studio on the Old Kent Road. She continued her visits to the Tate Gallery and the Portrait Gallery, and frequented the first of the new coffee houses beginning to spring up all around Soho, while the beginnings of Rock & Roll, she recalls, was rumbling from basements around the city. She met many other artists doing the same thing, in this post war impoverished atmosphere. Colin Wilson, Lucien Freud and literary celebrities too, like Dylan Thomas.

In 1951, in Soho, she met and married the Old Vic actor Gordon Souter and it was then that a close friend Lees Uhre<sup>5</sup>, christened Betty, Camille, because of her illness, thus Betty Pamela Holmes, became Camille Souter. The marriage lasted a year or so and after her first child was born, Camille left for Italy once more, travelling to Triete, Mugia and Maligmanona, with her child and all her belongings.

While in Italy she met Lucio Fontana<sup>6</sup>, the sculptor and painter who was exhibiting in Milan and New York at the time. Camille did portraits and other paintings and sold some of them in Maligmanona for the equivalent of the then price of 1/6d, and worked as a child minder to survive. She met the sculptor Bill Fagan<sup>7</sup>, and worked in his studio. She also met Hilary Heron<sup>8</sup>, another sculptor and they became very close friends.



She returned to Ireland soon afterwards, and from 1952 until 1958 she lived in various parts of Dublin, Rathgar, Charlemont Street, Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Upper Mount Street and her neighbours included Hilary Heron, Anne Yeats<sup>9</sup>, Patrick Pye<sup>10</sup>, and Patrick Hickey<sup>11</sup>. Her children (she now had three) and she struggled to survive financially during this time. Then in 1958 she won an Italian Government Scholarship, which gave her four months in Italy, but she stayed on living on a farm near Chioggia for nine months. She visited Rome while there and sold more paintings. She had also begun to sell her work in Dublin in 1956 before she left, her first exhibition being in the 'El Hobano Restaurant' in Grafton Street and the 'Clog Restaurant' in South King Street. Her work had also been on show in the Redfern Gallery, London, and the Obelisk Gallery, London, that same year. In 1957 she exhibited in Paris and at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art for the first time. By 1959 she was back in Ireland again. This time choosing to settle in Achill Island off the west coast of Ireland, though desperately poor at this stage again. She was living with her children on £1 a week and paying 11/- of that on rent! She began using all kinds of cheap ingredients, to paint with, bicycle aluminium paint and enamels, but her work was none the worse for that. In 1960 she met and married the sculptor Frank Morris<sup>12</sup>, in London, and briefly returned to Achill. The same year she exhibited work at the Paris Biennale, and also revisited Italy with her four small children.





Eventually she and Frank and children settled down on a farm in Calary Bog, Co. Wicklow, which they bought, in 1962, for six hundred pounds. She painted Calary Bog, and did a series of paintings on the circus theme, while intermittently visiting Achill, Shannon and Enniskerry.

In 1961, she exhibited with Nano Reid and other artists, in the Hugh Lane Gallery, in an exhibition entitled 'One Man's Meat'. In 1962, in further group shows in Glasgow and Monaco, and in 1963 she was included in the exhibition 'Twelve Irish Painters' in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. She also exhibited regularly in the Independent Artists' exhibition from '61 - '72, and at the Ulster Museum in 1965.

Then Frank Morris died in 1971 and Camille began to paint slaughter houses and meat, and in 1972, docks and canals, at the same time exhibiting in the Oireachtas Art Exhibition and The Irish Imagination and Rosc '71 in the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. She was subsequently awarded a gold medal in the Oireachtas exhibition; and won the Gainey Award in '72 of £2,000, from the American-Irish Cultural Institute. In 1977, she won the Grand Prix at the International d'Art Contemporain de Monte Carlo, for her painting 'Landscape of Achill', and then the following year she won the prize at the Claremorris National Art Competition, and to complete the spate of honours, she was awarded an arts council bursary in 1979.



## C H A P T E R   I I

### THE BEGINNINGS OF A PAINTER

Having briefly outlined Camille Souters life, and the major events which shaped her career, it is necessary to discuss in some detail, the various stages of her work and the circumstances that surrounded them. After her recuperation period on the Isle of Wight, Camille returned to London and began to paint in a studio on the Old Kent Road. Camille did not just drift slowly into the art world of London in the Fifties, and begin to paint, nor did she make a great decision to become a painter. In her own words she -

"Just began to paint, and that was it, I wanted to do it so I did it"<sup>13</sup>

She received no formal training as such and art college did not interest her, so she was largely self taught, learning all she could from her regular visits to all the art galleries in London, which seemed to have inspired and encouraged her to paint for many years. Camille describes her beginnings as a painter as a time when she was -

"Swimming about in all directions, a young thing trying to feel about"<sup>14</sup>

In these early formative years Camille recalls being most impressed by the paintings of the impressionists, admiring especially the work of Pierre Bonnard in later years.<sup>15</sup> Her own work from this time embraced a definitely impressionistic way of painting, using muted colours, soft edges, and hazy



blurred atmospheric effects, which owed a lot to Monet, Manet, and others from the same era. Today it is difficult to describe Camille Souters work and her paintings strongly resist categorisation, in Basil Goulding's words -

"Camille is but scarcely influenced, and scarcely influences, she just is"<sup>16</sup>

Whether or not there were influences, it is hard to tell. Camille feels herself that she was not strongly influenced by any particular painters, even though she does describe her still life paintings as distinctly 'Bonnardish' in style. Camille's interest in light and how it modifies our vision of things and her use of simple domestic objects in her still lives makes one think of the same interests and qualities in the work of Pierre Bonnard.

There are qualities in Camille's work that have remained constant and unchanged throughout her thirty five odd years as a painter. She has always been a private painter, her largest painting ever measuring 92cm x 71cm,<sup>17</sup> and this sense of privacy even extends to an unwillingness to part with her work when it is completed. In fact she has often expressed a desire to know if her buyers will treat her work 'kindly'. She also believes in keeping her own work until she feels it is good enough to be sold or released from the studio.





NO

Camille says -

"I think it's wise to keep work and not let it go until you are absolutely sure it's all right"<sup>18</sup>

When asked about her reasons for working on a small scale always, Camille expressed an unease about large work, feeling it would restrict her from being free to pack all into a trunk and take off at short notice, which she does regularly, having travelled between Ireland, Italy, London and Achill Island all her life. Camille has always been involved with the tactile beauty of paint, and the endless possibilities and effects in texture that can be achieved with it. She describes oil paints as being -

"So superb, you could go on using it ten lifetimes and still be finding out about it"<sup>19</sup>

At times she has dribbled the paint in thick coloured strands across the surface, the effect always remaining luscious, no matter how muted her palette may be. Other times, she has spilt, thrown and dripped the paint, creating coloured textured weps of colour that constantly move about the canvas with uninhibited energy.

From the beginning Camille has used quite unconventional materials, like aluminium paint, bicycle paint, odd bits of paper tissue, newspaper, brown paper, anything at hand, convenient, and that has the desired effect she is looking for.





I.A.

Her use of these cheap and easily acquired materials sprang mostly from a necessity of poverty while struggling to survive in earlier days in London, later in Italy, and on Achill Island. The fact that Camille spilt and dripped her canvases with colour and used commercial house paints in some early paintings around the Fifties, seems to indicate that she had seen and heard about the Abstract Expressionist Movement in America, as it was around this time that Jackson Pollack's work began to be known in Europe. Camille may or may not have been consciously influenced, it is hard to tell, because she had always been fascinated with paint and had experimented freely and unconventionally with it, long before the advent of Abstract Expressionism. Secondly, the scale of her work indicates that she had never seen an Abstract Expressionist painting, as does the fact that she was forced to use materials like aluminium paint and enamels, through poverty, and lack of artists suppliers in the West of Ireland and was not just following the trend being set in America at the time to use commercial paints.

Her paintings 'Turn of the Year Early Summer' (Ill.1) (1958), 'Pigalle' (Ill.2) (1956), and 'Dublin the early evening' (Ill.3) (1958), are paintings Camille refers to as work that she has -

"A slight unease about, using just colour...it's not quite enough"<sup>20</sup>





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Camille painted in a glass greenhouse in her father's garden around this time, and the canvases seem to capture somewhat the atmosphere of dappled, dazzling light that she would have been observing. The surfaces of 'Turn of the Year Early Summer', and 'Dublin Early Evening' are highly textured and patterned, with no discernable form underlying the masses of interweaving strands of coloured paint. Clearly Camille was learning more about her medium than her subject matter at this stage. 'Pigalle' (Ill.2), is a work which is more in line with Camille's early Italian work, which she describes as being 'simple, and symbolic', depicting the gay sunny colours of the Continent, her palette changed with Italy, naturally enough, which she visited first in 1951 after her marriage to Gordon Souter.

Camille's earlier paintings (as aforementioned) where the energetic surface of the canvas is covered with a seemingly haphazard pattern, are much more unstructured than the Italian works that followed. European artists like Klee, Kandinsky, Debuffet and Tapies<sup>21</sup> spring to mind when looking at these early paintings (Ill.1). These were the painters who stressed the simple beauties of children's scribbles, wall graffiti and urban rubbish, all subjects used by Camille at various stages throughout her life. Her series of circus paintings done in the early Sixties are quite childlike and naively painted, and brass bed heads and decaying fences appear in a few paintings from 1957.





ND?



ND?

Camille may have been influenced by these painters if she had seen their work in France or London on her numerous visits back and forth, but she would not have seen reproductions, because Camille does not believe in buying art books or magazines, rather she prefers to see the paintings "in the flesh" or not at all.

In contrast to works like 'Dublin Early Evening' Camille's Italian paintings are simpler and more structure, form and space conscious, depicting landscape and still life, both subjects that Camille has had a life long passion for. Her still life studies from these years, are painted in an unfussy and unrealistic way. She considered her subject matter a huge challenge, but surprised herself at how competently she could tackle a subject she felt herself inadequately prepared for, not having been to art college.

The Bank of Ireland owns two still life's which include simple objects like bottles, fruit, check tablecloths and flower pots. Very traditional objects maybe, but Camille paints them with a love of ordinary things, and they are painted not with a pride of possession, as the great Dutch still life painters sometimes did in the past, but more with pleasure. She says -





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"Flowers in a still life are a frightful challenge. You have to capture the souls of the flowers. One has to be in a state of being in love with the subject matter. That's why it's so exhausting, you've got to get your subject to give out love energy"<sup>22</sup>

Other works done while travelling around Italy, and afterwards in Ireland, when Camille was clearly remembering the sunny light from Milan and Maligmanono, are filled with bright colours, hot sizzling pinks and the oranges and yellows of sun scorched earth. "Boun Divertimento" (Ill.4) (1958), is a small painting based on the many card games Camille used to see being played at all the small fishing ports, on her travels. In the light of this, one can see the numerous layers of cards shapes overlapping each other, that make up the central composition of this painting. Bold heavy black paint, outlines each shape within the painting and encircles the entire composition, creating a frame within a frame effect.

Later paintings of Italy, done in the early Sixties, like 'Cycling to Chioggia', are brightly coloured also. This one depicting masses of turning bicycle wheels that seem to be precariously balanced on long delicate black stems. This painting has a sense of the naive, a childlike simplicity about it, capturing





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the fun Camille and children obviously had travelling about on farm produce carrier bicycles with huge baskets fore and aft, in which children, materials and belongings were all carried.

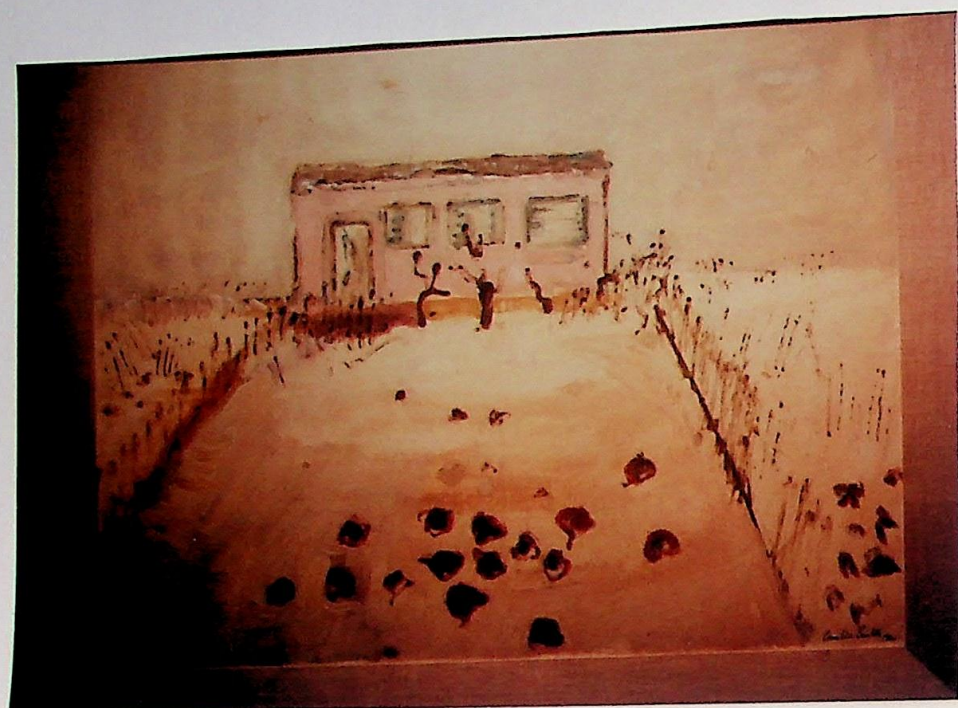
Another painting, done in Ireland on a return from a visit to Venice, is 'The last of the Radicio' 1964. Concerning the imagery of this picture and her motivation in painting it, Camille has added -

"Radicio is the local name for (I think) Cicorio - Rossa de Verona. A reddish lettuce, like the plant used extensively in salads, later summer, in the Venetian area. The crop, sown after the potatoes and carrot season, often remaining in the ground, gradually being pulled, well into the misty season of November.

"I received an Italian Government scholarship in 1957 and lived for many months in such a little farmhouse (most of them pink). This was a sottomarria across the causeway from Chioggia (the fishing port of Venice).

"All that time, there was the Adriatic, low sand dunes and then these mile upon mile of cultivated small farm lands, stretching along the sandy coastal strip. One house, one hotel





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waterpump outside and mile upon mile of carrots. These little pink farm houses scattered amongst all this agricultural activity, not an inch uncared for. The Radicio being the last crop to be lifted.

"I returned briefly in 1963....I could hardly find the farm. Nearly all gone. The holiday hoardes of Northern Europe had descended. The small farms sold and the hotel creep had started.

"But our friends and the farm where we lived were still there, and there too, the Radicio. With buildings commencing on the far side of their land, it indeed seemed to be truly 'the last of the Radicio'. All had that forlorn look that massive building projects give to the surrounding soil. But all this has a happier ending. Last June (1964) I was able to once again call by and there the farm remains....the only farm that hasn't sold....now surrounded on three sides by hotels...

"It was indeed strange and very beautiful to see this, from long ago cultivated bit of land, flourishing amidst this encirclement of concrete holidays".<sup>23</sup>





8.

Camille's obvious love of the landscape, and the soil, and growing things were the motivating forces behind her painting of the 'Last Radicio'. And her love of the countryside and rural activities, have helped produce her vast output of landscape paintings, over the last quarter of a century, for which she is best known. Living, as she does at the moment in Dublin City, she finds herself becoming visually overloaded with information, and feels the need for the peace and the simplicity of the countryside to be able to concentrate on her subject matter. She says -

"To work best I like to go right off, almost as if the rest of the world doesn't exist. Go totally into the subject matter"

and

"I don't want to be in Dublin now. I keep returning to Achill. I want to go back, but only when I'm quite ready".<sup>24</sup>

As a landscape painter Camille Souter is part of a very Irish tradition and way of painting, and her work is akin to other painters like Nano Reid<sup>25</sup>, and Patrick Collins;<sup>26</sup> in that they form part of what is referred to as 'the poetic genre' by Brian O'Doherty.<sup>27</sup>





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10.

These are the painters deeply affected by the landscape in Ireland, and its very distinctive characteristics, its misty wet atmosphere, its long twilights, and ancient, history sodden stretches of untamed land, like the Burren, Co. Clare, which Barrie Cooke has often referred to as being full of ghosts.

Brian Doherty describes this atmosphere of the Irish landscape, as being characterised by -

"A mythical rather than historical sense, an uneasy and restless fix on the unimportant and a reluctance to disclose anything about what is being painted".<sup>27</sup>

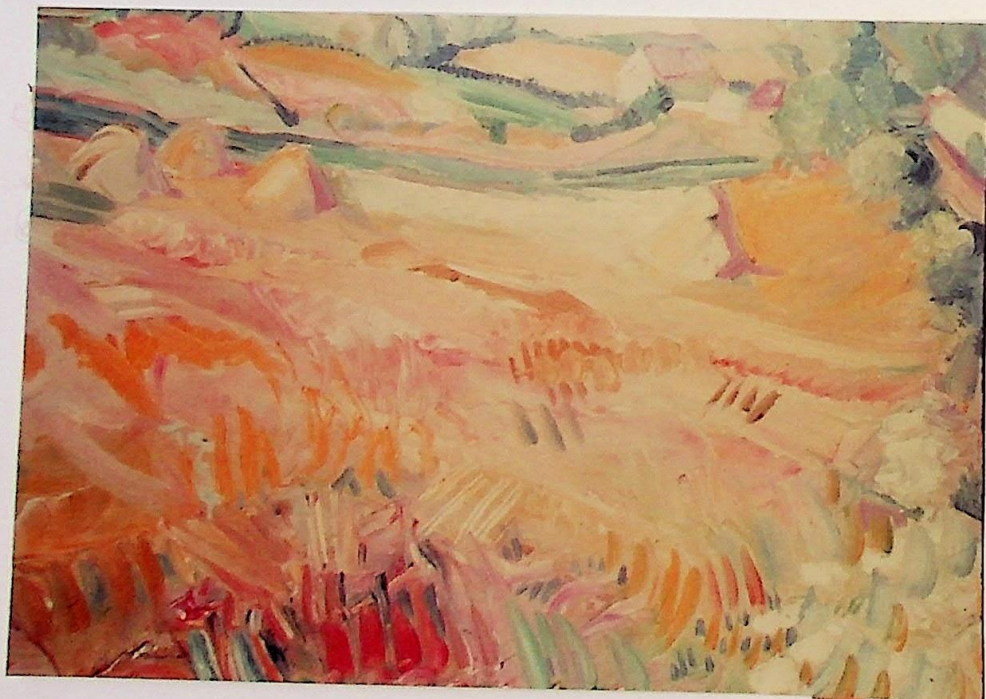
The work O'Doherty is describing is intuitive rather than intellectual, and Camille's work demonstrates this characteristic, having an intimate scale and a preference for rich surface textures. Her colours, when she paints Ireland, are generally subdued and atmospheric, with what can only be described as 'softness compatible with the Irish countryside'.<sup>28</sup>





Outside  
1987, Oil on canvas  
40 x 60 cm (16 x 24 in)  
Collection David Clarke

11.



12.

Camille's work is Irish also in her reluctance to assimilate international influences, despite her brief apparent flirtation with a kind of abstract expressionism. An older generation of Irish painters, like Jack Hanlon<sup>29</sup> and Nora McGuinness<sup>30</sup> experimented with a cubist like, fragmented, faceted style, but overall the influence of post 1940 America was really quite minimal. Ireland was possibly spared the shallow imitation of the fashionable styles, which was rampant, in the more visually sophisticated cities, because of the intellectual isolation that she came under after the second world war.

Many painters working at this time like Camille and Patrick Collins, Colin Middleton<sup>31</sup>, Maurice McGonigal<sup>32</sup>, and others developed their own individual artistic styles during this time of introspection.

Some of the younger generation of painters working now, like, Danny Osborne<sup>33</sup>, Trevor Geoghan<sup>34</sup>, and Martin Gale<sup>35</sup>, have predictably come under a more direct influence of internationalism, searching for modern aesthetic alternatives, that reflect their own sensibilities.

Camille's generation sticks more with agricultural roots, and indirect statements and a sort of conservatism.





13.

The huge importance of the landscape, whether it is in Italy, Achill or France, is probably the single most important element that distinguishes the work of Camille Souter and Patrick Collins from the international mainstream. When Patrick Collins spoke about the inevitability of his direction in painting, he said -

"It's the field I plough, I have nothing else".<sup>36</sup>

Likewise Colin Middleton's passion for his rural surroundings is extremely intense, almost religious. That feeling is transferred to his paintings.

"When I go to a place there's got to be something in the bloodstream to belong to and the 'qualities' are there to get the old machine ticking....There's got to be some sort of place....particular places, holy places. Once you get there, you know you are kith and kin. The stones start to talk".<sup>37</sup>

As with these other Irish landscape artists, Camille's concerns remain essentially rural, and she is more likely to adapt to irregular organic shapes of the hillside, than the hard geometric edges of the city. Hard edged painting, pop imagery and garish high colours are most definitely not the characteristics of Camille's generation of Irish painters. There





14.

are no hard edges in the landscapes Camille paints or for that matter in Collin's work. Indeed, he explains exactly why when he talks about Ireland.

"Here everything is woolly and loose, now the old Irish cottage was mud built with straw, and so on.

"The light goes round the corner.... it's not a hard edge. In an old Irish cottage there's nothing that says, here's a right angle, never. Except the bog, but then that falls in and it's gone".<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to consider Camille's use of materials in connection with this kind of sensibility. Her preference is usually for the more traditional materials. In fact Irish artists in general seem to have a definite preference for oils and watercolours.

Nano Reid once said<sup>38</sup> -

"I've never tried the new acrylics, there's a kind of metallic something about them, like neon signs".





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16.

Like Nano Reid, Camille also dislikes acrylics, feeling that they dry too quickly. In her own words Camille describes her favourite painter, Nano Reid, as being -

"Absolutely top rank. I place Nano at the top of the lot. She captures the essence".

Camille and Nano's dislike of acrylics seem practical and logical, considering their subject matter. Irish light does not reveal colours and shapes with uncompromising hardness, as bright sunlit days do in America, where pop art originated, so it makes perfect sense, that the materials Camille uses and her muted colour range are dictated by exactly what is about her in Ireland. The climate, naturally, affects her work and her palette, in softening forms, and half hiding them in veils of colour. For example, her pair of paintings entitled 'Winter' painted in 1963, are intensely evocative of a distinctly Irish atmosphere of cold and mist. (Ill.15/6) Done behind tissue paper the fleshy pink colour of bare twigs are seen against the snow, making these paintings tangibly icy, and among her most sensitive and delicate creations, layers of soft colours seen through rather than on paper.





17.



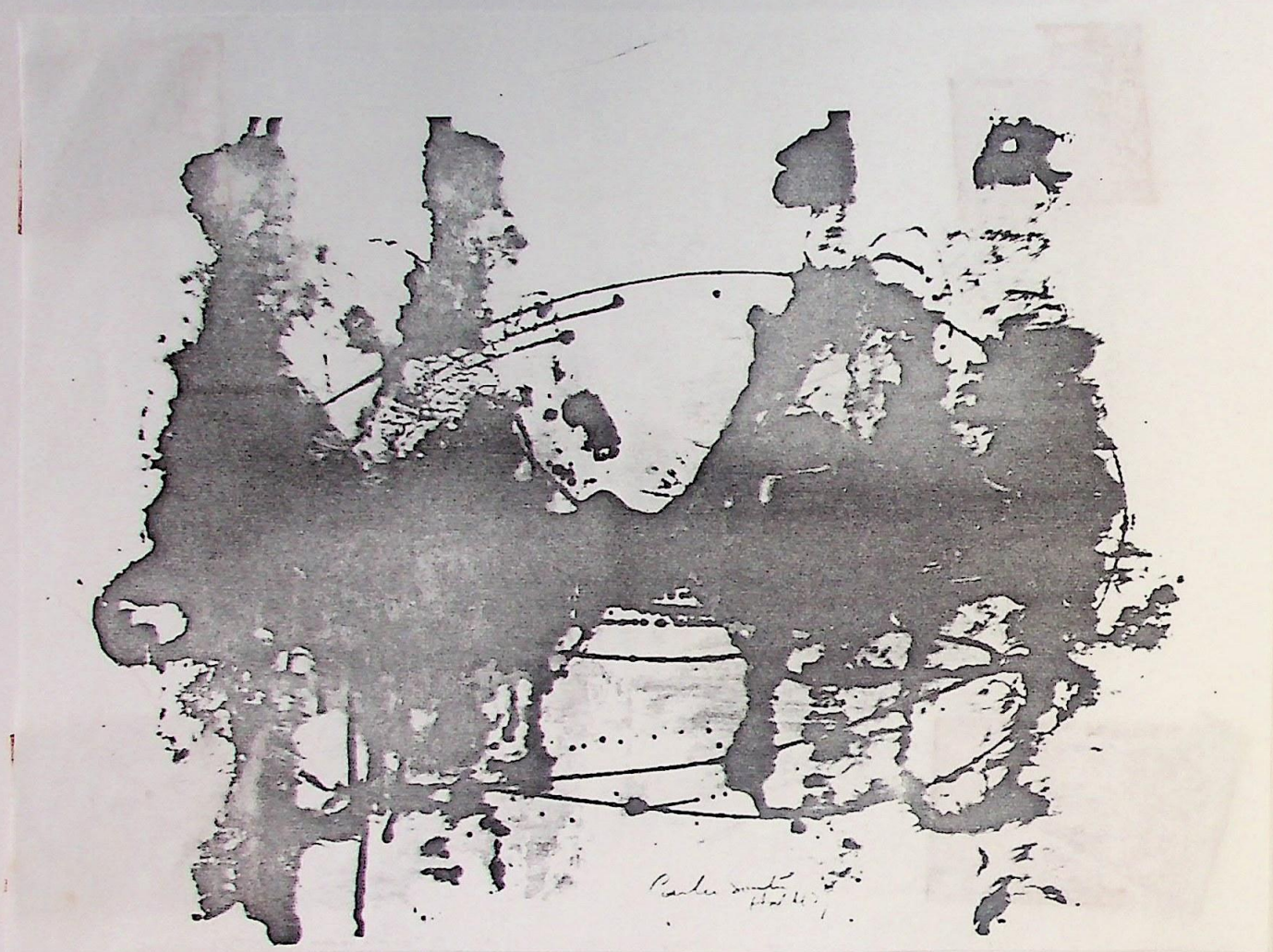
18.

Camille's landscape work has retained a great consistency of style over the years. Her work remaining smallish, intimate and full of tactile delights.

She still uses newspapers, tissue and brown paper to paint on, as well as 'art papers' like Japanese paper and Kraft paper, but to begin with, this ability of hers to make a sensitive creation out of scraps of paper was a necessity of poverty (as I have already mentioned), and now these same materials are used over and over again, and this time it is clearly a conscious and deliberate choice.

Though consistent in style generally, there is no steady development in Camille's work, as she uses whatever form suits her subject, and often refers back to a way of working that she may have used in earlier years. These works seem at first glance to be out of context. The 'Winter' pair of paintings, for instance, refer back to her early dribbled paint work, and yet they were painted much later, when some of her work was even quite realist. It was in Achill that Camille had begun to use great blotted forms, using aluminium paint, black enamels and red lead on paper, creating seemingly quite abstract landscapes, even when their titles suggested the real world, which prompted them originally. Camille has never drawn a definite distinction between abstraction and realism,





and she maintains that her paintings that appear most abstract are actually closest to reality. Usually these paintings are of scenes or objects observed from life, but from unusual angles that cause them to appear close to abstraction.

The singularity of her approach to her subject, coupled with her choice of title seem isolated on paper and can be misleading if not puzzling. To explain this somewhat, Camille has described her walks with her children on Achill Island as delightful days, peering into rock pools, studying lichens and stones and shells, but always from a child's angle, which is usually quite close to the ground. In fact Camille seems to feel that in her landscapes, the sense of space expanded, and her horizon line grew almost as the children grew bigger. So it seems that her studies of rock pools were simply seen and painted from an angle that naturally flattered or abstracted what was already there. The same angle, (viewed from above) that sometimes renders an everyday object unreal, when seen in a close-up, blown-up image, take for instance, the thumb tack head which looks every inch a colossal flying saucer. These 'abstract' Achill works contain the same sense of stillness that filled her two 'Winter' paintings, done in 1963. Achill is not painted in the grip of a winter squall, only still air, quiet sunny days, or mist and silence pervade these landscapes. 'Achill Rocks and Reflections' I and II '59 and 'Achill Volcanic' '59, (painted using red lead on paper) (Ill.19) and 'Achill, up the Brae', 1960 (Ill.20), all contain this particular timeless quality.





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"Achill rocks and Reflections I, of 59", seems to recreate a wet almost glassy, sandy shore, overshadowed by four giant pyramid-like, rock shapes. The paint is dripped and splashed and this seems to contribute to the overall 'wet Achill' feeling that only Camille seems to be able to create so simply. This is Achill Island at its most mysterious., a rock pool that summons to mind fantasy lands, inhabited by ominous looming rock presences. There is definitely more to these paintings, than her earlier glasshouse, abstract expressionistic style works. Forms are more important, and even though their edges are blurred and drip, they are beginning to coagulate, making the harder edges of the Italian pictures done in '61, unsurprising.

Achill, Volcanic, 1959 (Ill.21.), is painted against a background of blazing red lead pigment, consisting of a mass of black texture, flecked with subtle colours of blue and grey. The handling of the paint is again fluid and luxurious. At one moment we feel as if we are observing shallow space, and the next, our eye is drawn into the centre of the painting, a cavity, painted in fleshy pink tones. This painting is another that embodies the mysteries of the Achill landscape, large and small, depicted as a jungle of dark colours and interweaving hues, using an elaborate play of tonalities up and down the image which suggests





22.

spontaneity, but also discloses the patience and observation involved. We don't seem to read these 'abstract' landscapes in terms of objects, and relations between objects. Camille's awareness cuts through objects, it responds to rhythms, textures and to an interplay of forces. Where the Achill paintings are not specific, in descriptive terms, and are so much more so in painterly terms, the fantasy takes over.

Camille's more realistically descriptive works, done while she lived on Calary Bog, Co. Wicklow, in the Sixties are quite different again. The landscape itself being quite different from Achill and Italy. Though, 'Achill Up the Brae' 1960, and 'Calary Bog' 1962/3, do have similar elements, both being paintings concerned with texture, pattern and the earth, but differing sharply in colour and in how space is handled. Space in the Achill paintings is elusive, and it moves backwards and forwards often because of the surface lines, shapes are breaking up and changing even as we look at them. In Calary Bog paintings, Camille doesn't concentrate so much on fragments as before and at times (as in Calary Bog 1962/3 (Ill. 22)), looks down on the landscape from an aerial viewpoint, (also in 'Fields of Calary', 1964). In others the perspective is tipped up so that the eye takes in the background with as much detail as the foreground. All this seems to betoken a greater psychological distance from the subject, but not so, Camille is obviously still totally immersed in the landscape, to some extent standing back





23.

from her experience of it, and trying to regulate her account of it. Camille's efforts to do this result in something much more realistic. In 'Calary Bog', 1960, we are presented with an array of fields, some ploughed, some not, and bold parallel lines draw the eye out over the horizon line. 'The West' painted in 1964, makes use of the same repeated pattern, and the line of black stone shapes confronts us in the foreground (Ill. 17), and at the same time creates a very three dimensional effect in its solidity, set against a fainter, vague misty background, with the horizon line placed in the same high position as in 'Calary Bog'. Camille's delight in light and how it falls on the landscape bathes this painting with a luminous quality, not unlike another landscape painting of hers done in Mayo in 1979, and simply titled 'Snow in Mayo'. This small beauty captures perfectly the still atmosphere and vast brooding mauve-grey sky that preceeds a snowfall. The fields below are encrusted with a thick impasto of white paint, and the sparse winter landscape is, inhabited only by four dark, windblasted tree trunks. Traditionally romantic in atmosphere, but quite radical in composition, this small Mayo landscape is one of Camille's finest of her more realistic works.

In all of Camille's landscapes, she has the ability of catalysing all the ambient light, rarefying it and toning it down to the exquisite essence of, evening light and its muted radiance or early morning brilliance.



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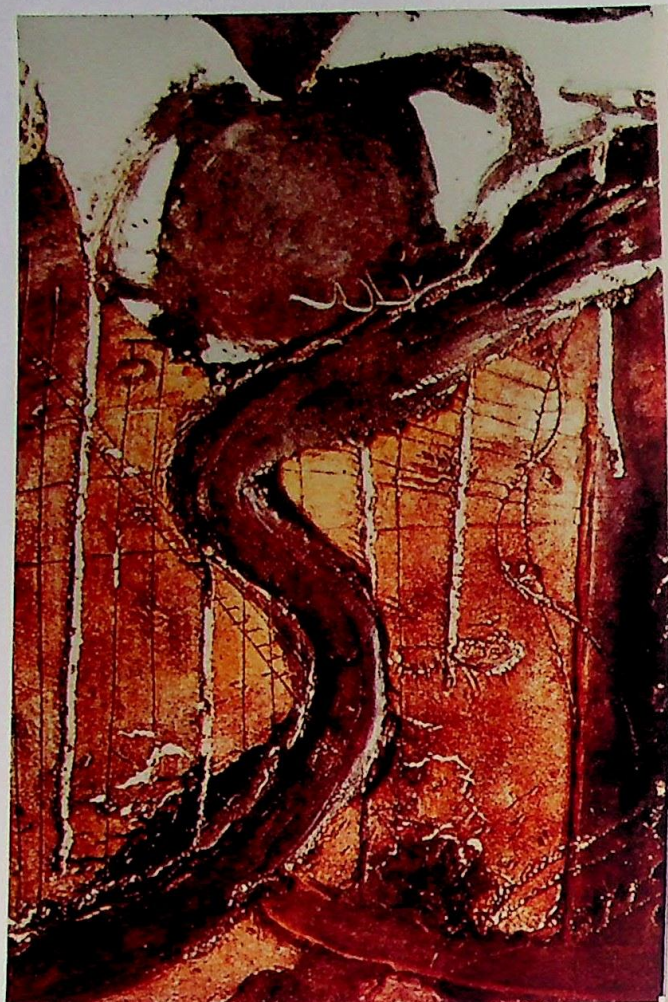


25.

'Forgotten Island near Venice' (Ill. 24), a painting done in 1964, while Camille was living on a farm at Calary Bog, Co. Wicklow, obviously remembering her second visit to Italy, contains that brilliant sunlight that characterises Camille's Italian work. Though in comparison with early Italian work from 1951, the colours in this work are much calmer, when one thinks of the sizzling pinks and hot oranges that made up 'L'Espresso', or in France, 'Pigalle', 1956.

'Forgotten Island near Venice' (Ill. 24), is quite subdued. A white heat covers the dried landscape, and bare trees, tall and gaunt, reach towards the sky. The entire composition is based on horizontals and parallels, the geometry of it all broken only by the finger-like branches of the banks of trees. Curiously enough, another painting, '50mph Coming up to Lucan Bridge', done around the same time, is more akin to Italy than Ireland, and the same cool, romantic and calm atmosphere prevails. As in 'Forgotten Island near Venice', the sun's position is ambiguous, neither setting or rising, but still shedding a glow over the water and reeds and derelict looking house, to the left of the composition. A haze seems to obliterate the line of receding elegant telegraph poles in the background, which seems to stretch endlessly, creating depth of space to wander into.





26.



27.

Just when one comes to the conclusion that Camille's work is becoming progressively more realistic in the 60's and 70's, she produces surprises once again that harp back to an earlier way of working, 'Autumn, Bed Ends', 1963 (Ill.28), is more in keeping with paintings like 'Lucan Fair', 1956 (Ill.27), or her 'Untitled' work from 1957 (Ill.18), both done on brown paper and newsprint, and similar to the work of Antoni Tàpies (Ill.26.) and other naive artists. 'Lucan Fair' is, in fact, an extremely simple depiction of a merry-go-round which her children used, when small, set against a mass of gay colours, that one associates with carnivals or fairs. 'Autumn, Bed Heads' is not surprising, considering a series of charming circus paintings which Camille began in 1961, though which had long been an interesting subject to her. In fact one painting, entitled 'Circus I' (Ill.29), dates from 1956. This delightfully simple work, depicts what seems to be a child, set against a backdrop of tent poles. Its simplicity is its charm, and one is reminded of the work of Paul Klee, (Ill.30) (Sceptical of the Bullock), its strength of imagery is contained in the minimum use of line. These circus paintings are alive and gay, and are painted with bright greens, yellows, oranges and sandy colours. Camille felt the circus and all that went on inside it was extremely paintable, the very roundness of the ring appealing and the simple yet complex skills of the acts fascinating. In 'Clown Acting', 1961 (Ill.31),





29.



29.

we feel as if we are viewing the entire scene from a high back seat. In the ring, coloured wheels are turning with yellow spokes, and tight wires and various other props combine to give the effect of a quirky piece of machinery performing and not a clown. These paintings are humorous, and their titles often give a witty gloss on the subject.

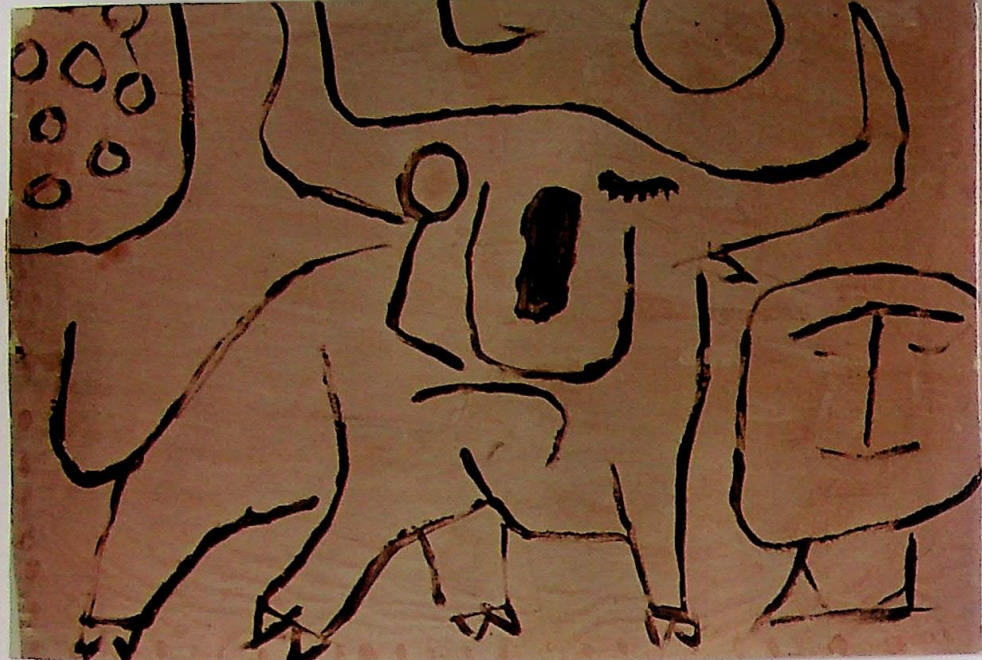
'Thinking of years back, circus, done in 61' also, is one which Camille, dismisses, as having very 'uncircus like colours', (Ill. 32) and is exceptional in that Camille does not dislike much of her own work.

"I don't like it, I think I'd tear it up if I had it back".

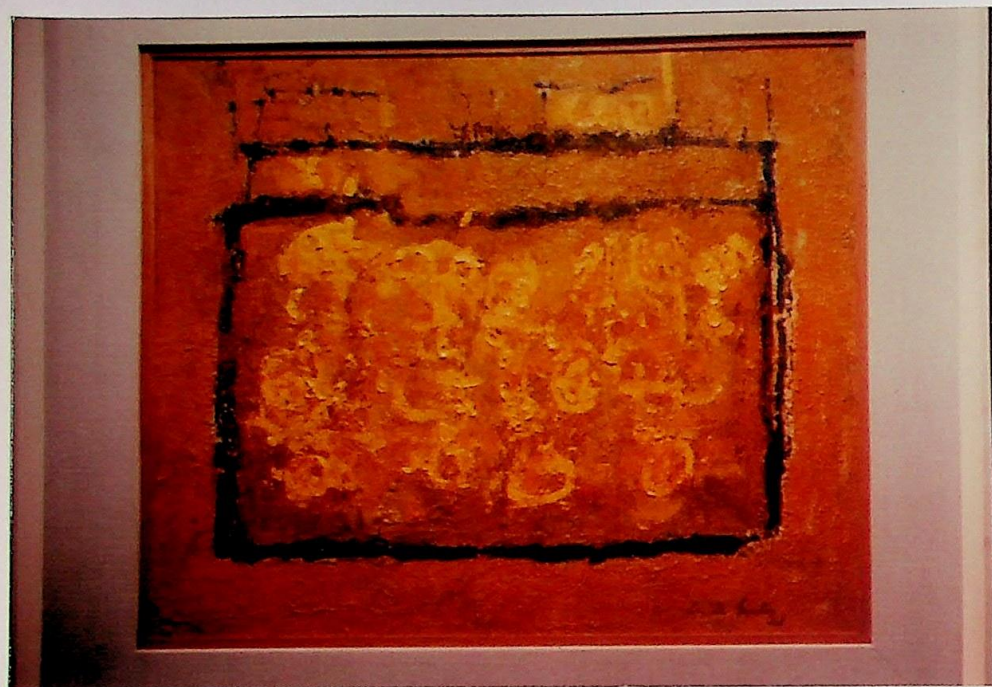
Again Camille's successful circus paintings, are almost throwbacks to her early Italian paintings like 'Cycling to Chioggia', (Ill. 5). The bicycle wheels motif is repeated again and the same gay, fun, colours are there.

It seems that almost every time Camille's children have been directly involved in her subject matter, i.e., cycling in Italy, and visits to the fairs and circus, the naive qualities and brighter colours appear in her paintings, almost as a direct influence of being in their company.





30.



30(A)



31.

Occasionally Camille uses her colour emotively in landscapes also. Her 'Fields of Arles', done in 1961, is painted in a brilliant Van Gogh yellow, with swirling brushstrokes reminiscent of his agitated style of landscape paintings. Two small farmhouses perch on the top of a blazing square field, and at one angle we feel that we are viewing the scene from the sky and the next we enter the picture at the bottom and proceed upwards, altogether a quite different expression of space from other more realistic landscapes, like those done in Belfast in 1973.

'Red Brick and it's not a Game', is one of the only paintings in which Camille feels she has made a social/political comment. She says about the work -

"I really don't feel it's the job of a painter to make political comments, except when it intrudes on the subject matter, which it did here".

The full title of this painting, which has never been used, is meant to imply that there are two opposing sides, symbolised by the two different kinds of red brick used in buildings in Protestant and Catholic areas in Belfast. 'Red Brick(s) and it's not a Game' has the eerie glow so often cast by Irish light as the sun tries hard to break through the cloudy sky. It is stark, and without human presence, and the image is one of isolation and loneliness combined with a kind of lyricism, broken only by the dense industrial atmosphere.

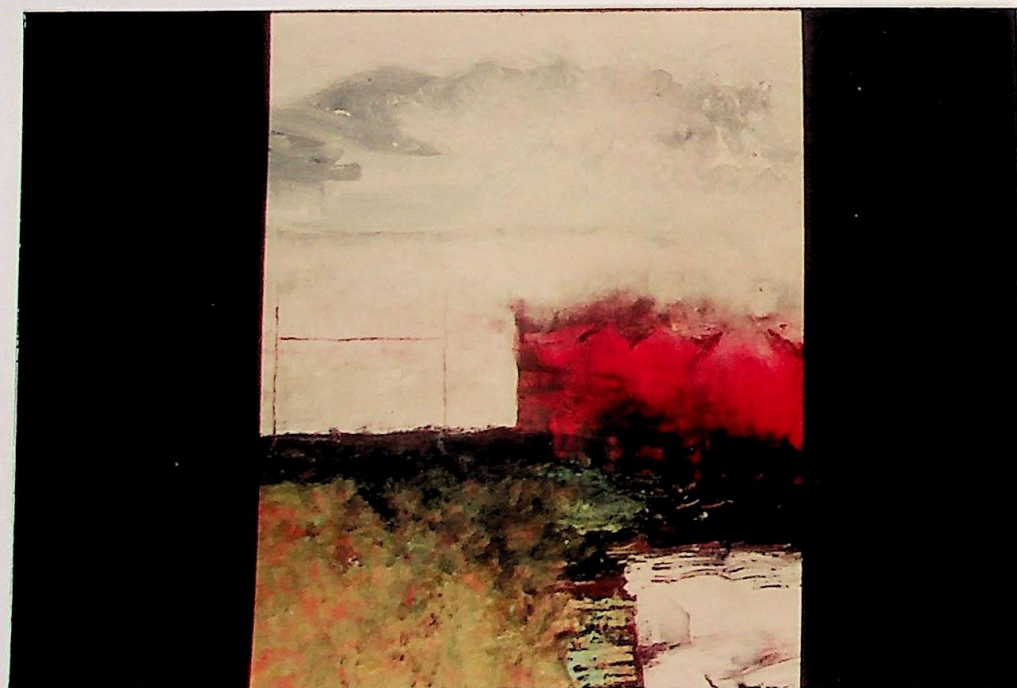




32.



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34.

Compositionally this is one of the few geometric paintings that Camille has done. It consists of an austere arrangement of rectangular shapes, the lawn, the goal posts and the rectangle of grey concrete paving. The austerity is lightened by the bright red and greens of the grass and industrial red brick buildings, and the lively surface pattern of brushstrokes, which softly dissolves the hard geometric shapes. Light and moisture seem to flatten the forms, and the resulting shapes have luminosity, transparency and lightness. Even though this is a city painting, the feeling of the countryside pervades, with the lush green playing fields, made vibrant with flecks of orange paint.

Camille's final image is one of desolation and bleakness and she was obviously affected by the tensions and the city atmosphere of troubled Belfast. She says -

"Belfast is dotted with pitches and the areas of discontent are so small, really, that they are like football pitches. I wish I could pen them all off, and let them play it all out as a game."

It certainly would be a more pleasant alternative.

Camille departed from landscape in 1965 to tackle a completely different subject matter.



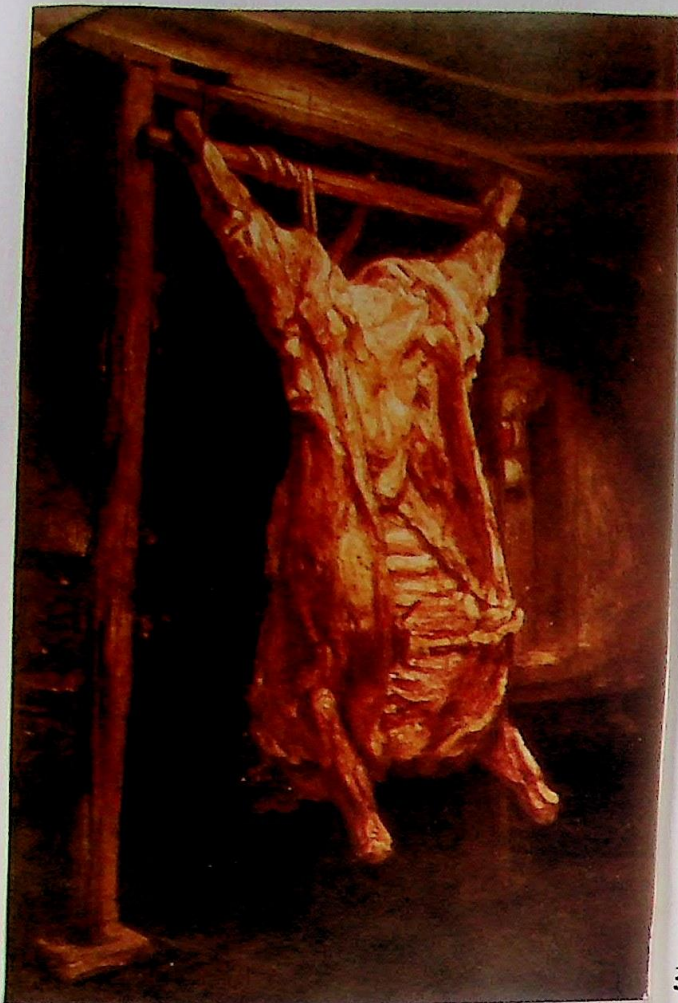
### C H A P T E R   I I I

#### FISH, SHARKS, AND MEAT

In complete contrast to the charming circus series of paintings Camille embarked on a very different choice of subject matter in 1965. Attracted by the carcass of a dead shark washed up near the harbour on Achill Island, and its gloriously coloured entrails, (she had already been attracted by animal meats in Paris a few years previously) she began a series of dead shark, butcher shop joints and fish paintings and continued doing so intermittently up until 1977, when fish works dominated her exhibition held in the Dawson Gallery, Dublin. Each of these paintings can be associated with specific colours, the rich reds of the meat and the silvery greys of the fish brought alive by crimson drops of blood colour curling down the paper.

Having studied as a nurse, Camille obviously was fascinated by the great bones and physical make-up of dead sharks and it was this that first excited her to make several splendid pictures, including Shark Series II, with its brushwork which moved about the forms giving the paintings very three-dimensional qualities. Camille's fish and shark paintings remain remarkably realistic, compared with her subsequent landscapes and her more decoratively orientated meat series.





35.



36.

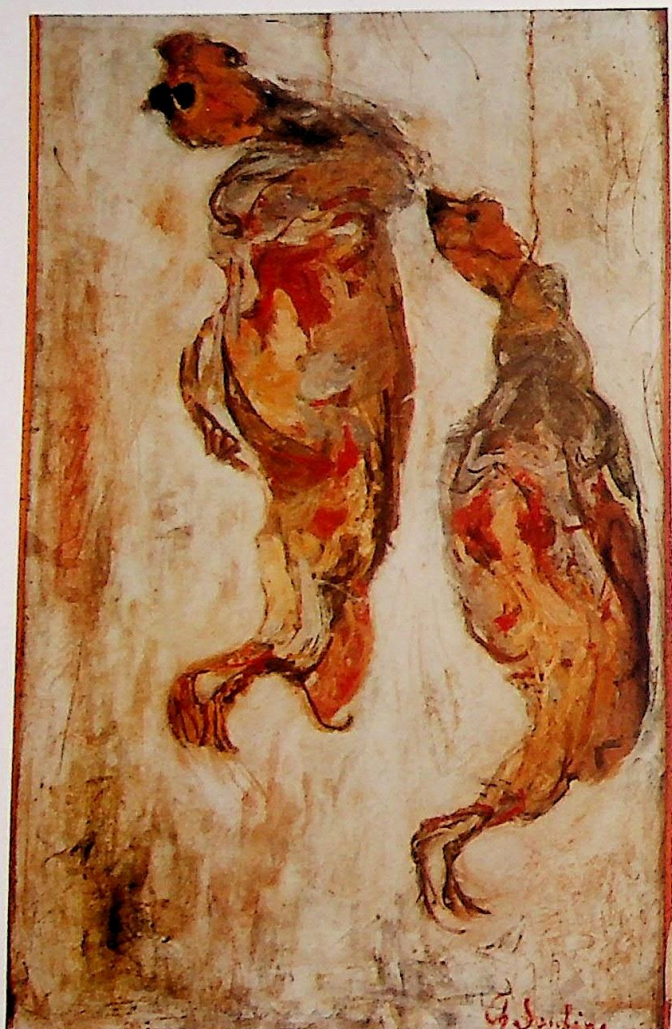
One is immediately reminded of other artists who chose the same subject to paint, each in their own different way. Inspired by Rembrandt's 'Slaughtered Ox' (Ill.35), in the Louvre, and his 'Flayed Ox', done in 1655 (Ill.36), Chaim Soutine, the Russian artist, tackled the same subject and everything in Soutine's work suggests that he saw these beef-paintings as master works. The giant scale and the almost incredible fanatism with which he worked at them proves this. The tale goes that in 1925 (as related by a companion of Soutine's) that -

"Soutine had a studio large enough in the Rue de Mont, St. Gothard, he procured the entire carcass of a steer, and it was this undertaking that grew legendary. He did at least four (large) canvases, ...as well as sketches and smaller canvases; and meantime the steer decomposed. According to the legend, when the glorious colours of the flesh were hidden by the accumulation of flies, he paid a wretched little model to sit beside it and fan them away. He got from the butcher a pail of blood, so that when a portion of the beef dried out, he could freshen its colour. Other dwellers in the Rue de Mont, St. Gothard, complained of the odour of rotting flesh, and when the police arrived, Soutine harangued them on how much more important art was than sanitation'.





37.



38.

In the Twenties one scarcely heard mention of Soutine and his meat paintings, without scandalised discourse about the gruesome circumstances of their production. When he lived in France, he had made friends with slaughterhouse employees and practised painting pieces of meat which he got from them. Camille also visited slaughterhouses in Paris and in Dublin, but her results were quite different to Soutine's meat paintings. There is not the same sense of tortured writhing flesh in Camille's work, nor is there a deeper psychological undercurrent in her choice of subject, instead Camille painted her meat as a 'beautiful to look at' subject exploring the most direct relationship between the paint and the subject, working as though the paint itself had become meat in her mind, as though yellow paint was fat, rather than the means to describe fat, and the red was bloody lean. Unlike Soutine's finely realised hollowness inside curved ribs of beef, Camille's joints appear less form conscious and more decorative as Anne Crookshank says -

"For instance not all her (Camille's) joints of beef would get into the oven, but all of them have the gory bloodiness of the old fashioned butcher's shop, so much better named in my Ulster childhood as the 'Fleshers'".





39.

Soutine's main concern was with the flesh he painted, and this is the passion that aligns him with Rembrandt, who was also a painter of flesh, finding in it an earthiness, an actuality and a spirituality. Soutine charged his meat with highly dramatic and personal intensity. The thrusts of paint, the representation of raw meat and nerves, became thrusts of emotion.

On one level we are given a clinical recording of the process and stages of slaughter and animal death, in Camille's meat paintings, whereas on another level, with the works of Chaim Soutine, the pieces of meat become metaphors for our own mortality.

It seems Camille saw a passive state that happened to an organism, and Soutine saw the death of his subject as an active process of changing sensation.

Soutine's meat carcass, is about suffering pain, cruelty and death. The animal is stretched out before us, freshly killed, showing its sputtering insides, its raw flesh and bones. The animal is a victim, not only naked, but clearly on display. This sense of victimisation and vulnerability seems absent from Camille's meat paintings. We are not shocked, and the meat image does not command our attention and awe. Rather we are presented with gorgeous red shades of colour and interesting and strange joint shapes on paper, but there is no significant personal charge or emotionally laden message.



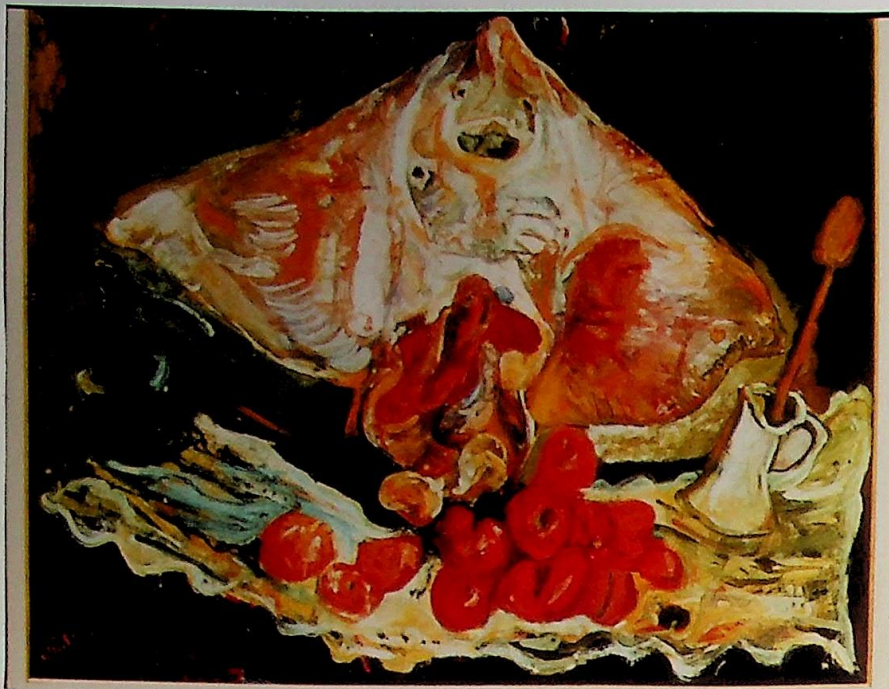


40.

Camille's pictorial attraction to the joints of meat and hanging flesh parts, for their texture, colour and beauty was very real, but the results are unagitated (as with Soutine's work) and the supposed image of death is transformed with pure surface pigment into a feathery substance rather than real flesh. With Camille perhaps the death image had penetrated too deeply and closely, and she chose to retreat from such an emotionally charged image, and paint it with a lighter approach. By painting her meat in such a way, perhaps Camille could distance herself from the obvious disturbing sensations that would have accompanied painting such a subject.

'The Slaughtered Cow Ten Minutes Dead' (Ill. 40.) 1972/3, is an exception from these series of meat paintings. In contrast to 'Untitled' (meat series) 1972, (Ill. 37.) and 'Untitled' (meat series) 1973 (Ill. 39.), it seems that Camille has captured in this painting the violent implications of the dead animal. This may be due to the fact that an entire and recognisable animal is placed before us to the bottom left hand side of this composition. A more realistic attitude is evident here, in how Camille has painted the dead cow. It has presence, and one can almost feel the sheer volume of its dead weight slapped upon the carving counter. Its open staring eye only heightens the horrific aspect of this subject, even though we are witnessing death static, and restrained and the after effects rather than its struggle to remain alive.





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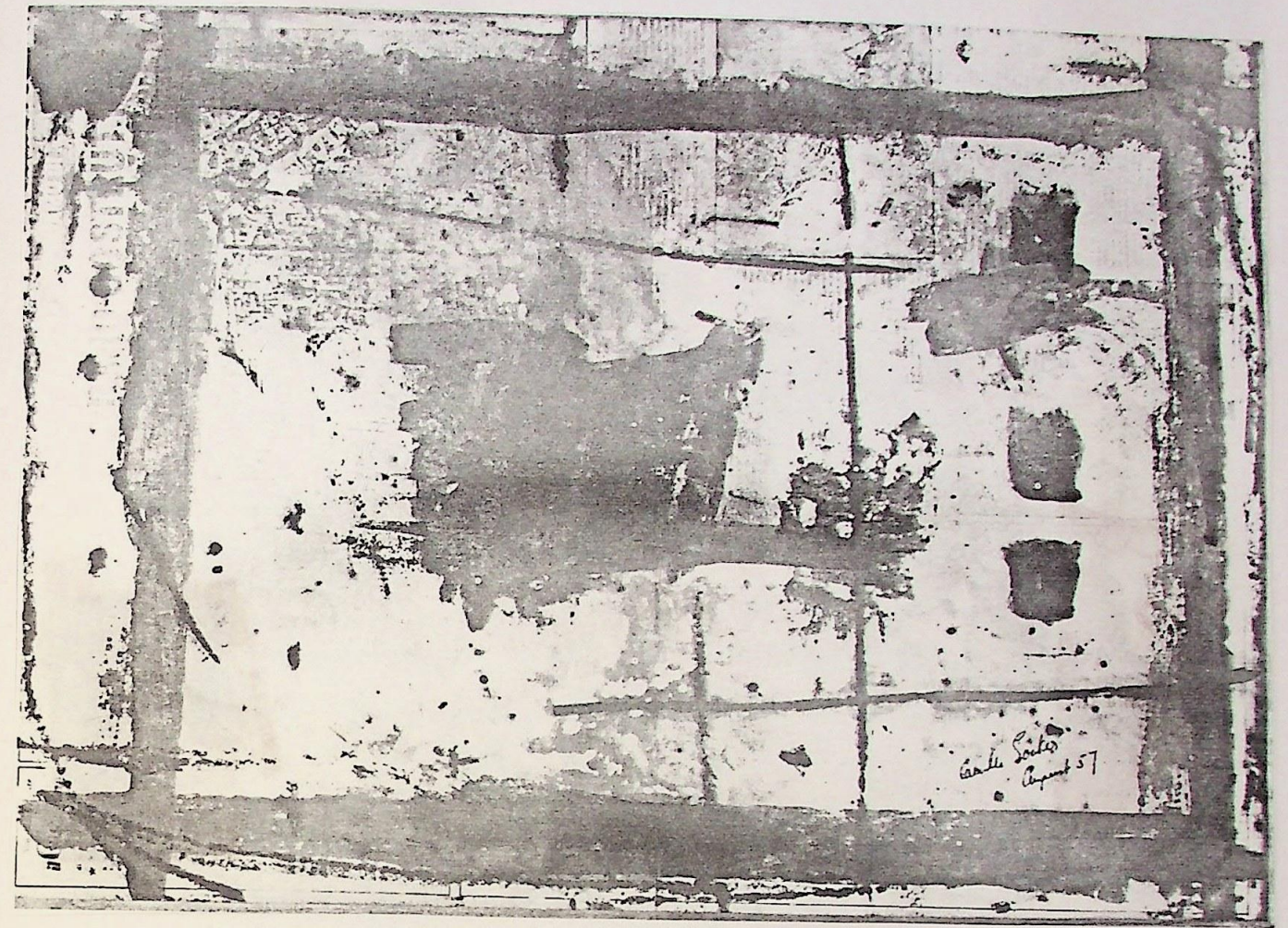
Both 'Untitled' (meat series), 1972 and 1973, seem meek in comparison. The effect is pleasant, the joints seem attractive, with their strongly accented rhythms of shape flowing across the surface, in curved hooks and curved shapes of meat.

The meat paintings are more in keeping with Camille's early work, where there is a definite underlying feeling for shape, which emerges in a free pattern of lines which often criss cross over the surface of the painting defining space, an obvious example being 'Thru' A Window' of 1967, (sometimes titled 'Out Of A Window'), and she uses the same idea with great effect in many abstract landscapes of earlier years, where the lines cross over the layered squares and rectangles of paint.

Compared with her meat series, the liquid forms of her fish paintings, begun a few years later, are remarkably more realistically painted.

In 1975/76, Camille painted small types of fish, pollock, cod, ray, and whiting. Sometimes she painted them cooked and eaten, sometimes with only a head, and sometimes visualised them swimming in the water. Again Camille's fish are quite different to those painters, who in the past, had chosen the same subject. Courbet's Trout, Chardin's Skate, and Soutine's still life's with Skate, (Ill. 42) 1924, all vary. Camille's image is very much her own and she eliminates any context of setting when describing her fish. Yet we are aware of a watery envelope, in which her subject lies, by her clever use of paint on tissue paper, which is





OUT OF A window. 1957. C.S.





44.

absorbed and conveys a sense of melting forms, as if almost seen through water. Space shifts between three dimensionality and two dimensionality, an endless murky tunnel of water changes to a simple flat background from time to time.

'Gutted Pollock II' (Ill. 43) 1976, has an oriental feel about it with its elegant calligraphic curling lines of fishes spine bones, and its asymmetrical positioning on the paper.

'Now Stop Eating Fish' (Ill. 44.) 1976, also is a lusciously painted head of a fish, with staring eye, and missing body. Altogether a less elegant and more pathetic image, in contrast to 'Gutted Pollock II'. Its title suggests that this painting serves as a reminder of the brutality involved in killing life in order to eat, or indeed Camille may simply be showing us how unappetising the preparation of the fish can be before the feast.

Like Camille's Cow, Ten Minutes Dead, these fish are solidly modelled from life and have real substance about them. Details are acutely observed and are described in fluid loose brushwork, using beautiful silvery highlights, and deeper crimson blood colours. These fish paintings are exquisitely executed and endlessly intriguing, and in general, are far more successful than Camille's meat series, where she seems to have only skimmed the surface of a subject that contains such dynamism and emotional association.





#### C H A P T E R   I V

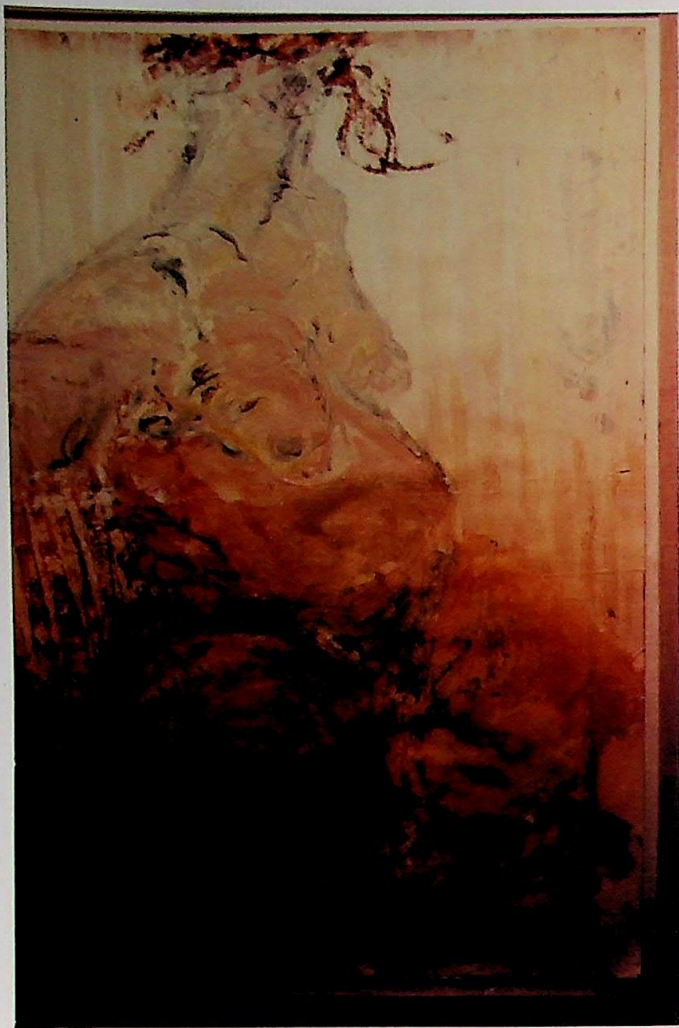
##### CAMILLE SOUTER.   FIGURATIVE PAINTER

Painting the human figure or face is not a subject Camille readily approaches, despite the fact that she is very attracted by the subject. Not much of Camille's work is figurative and in all I have seen only a handful of her figurative paintings. Anne Crookshank says that Camille is not interested in people. Camille will argue that this is not true, but that she finds confronting a live model to work from a difficult task that could be made simpler if she could observe her subject without being observed observing.

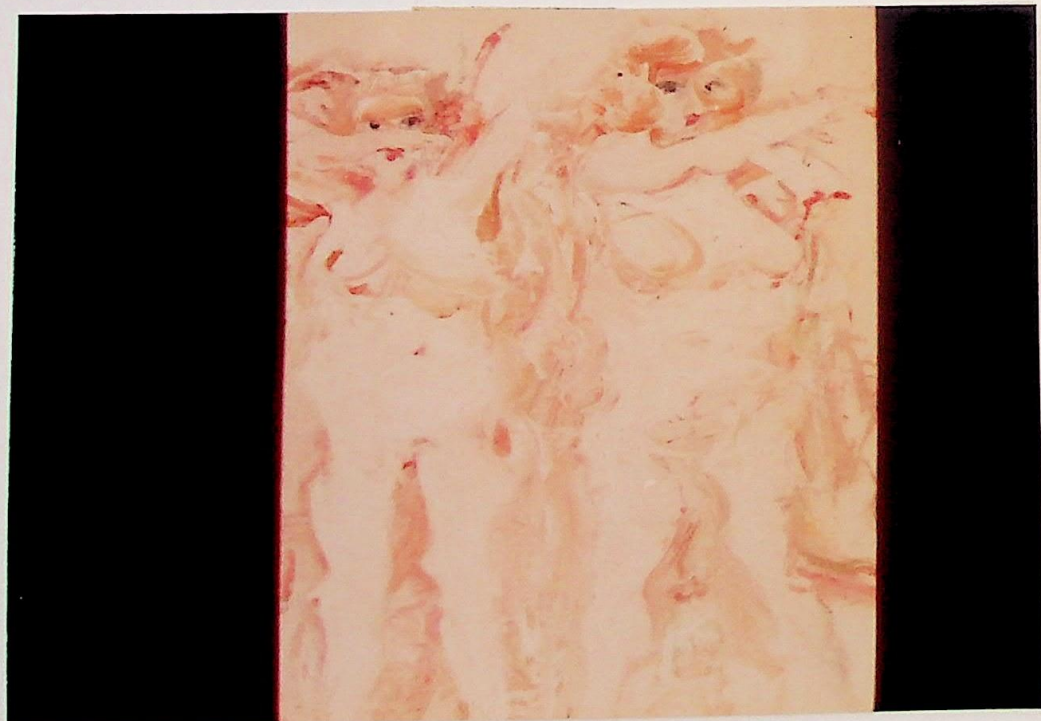
Camille tackles her figurative paintings surprisingly well considering her reservations on the subject. One of Camille's earlier figurative works done in the Sixties entitled 'Dancers' (Ill.45), depicts a back view of two robust, stocky girls in exercise leotards. Focus is centred on their muscley legs, pointed and raised. As with Degas famous series of dancers, the picture frame cuts off from view parts of the figures bodies, neither heads are shown or arms, and the effect is quite Japanese in its simplicity and in its unusual viewpoint angle, which seems to hover somewhere above the dancers. The uptitled floor and strange perspective reinforce this connection. Degas himself had been influenced by Japanese prints before he began his series of ballet dancers. As Camille says -

"One cannot paint dancers without thinking of Degas."<sup>40</sup>





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47.

Camille does not seem to adhere to any kind of naturalism in this study, save for the finely realised form of the right leg of the dancer in the centre of the composition.

The drawing is simplified and in places awkward, but this does not seem to detract from the painting, instead it adds a humorous touch to the work, emphasising the ungainly heavy movements of the unslyph like dancers portrayed.

'Pregnant Woman' 1969, (Ill.46) has quite a different feeling about it, though there are similarities. The same truncating device is used again which decapitates the sitter, and presents us with a voluptuous torso only. Similarly we are not presented with any real indication of the personalities of the models, almost as if Camille avoided such a confrontation through her own shyness.

In 'Pregnant Woman', Camille's expressionistic use of line, thickly applied paint and presentation of a far from idealised female nude, reminds one of early De Kooning<sup>41</sup> female nude paintings. In particular one entitled 'The Clam Diggers', done in 1964 (Ill.47). The same fleshy, almost rubenesque qualities are apparent, though De Kooning's rather acidic and sarcastic, later nudes are very different to Camille's results.





48.



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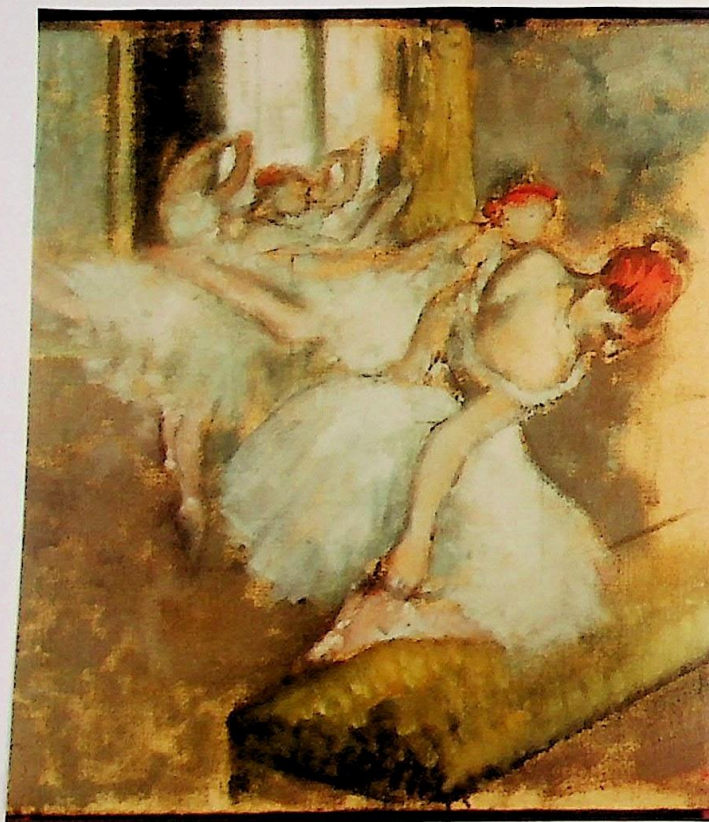
Camille's 'Pregnant Woman' is almost monumental, and seems to symbolise an 'Earth Mother' type with swollen belly. The role of motherhood receives only the utmost regard and respect in Camille's life, having devoted herself to her children for many years, as well as continuing her work as a painter.

So in a sense this painting epitomises Camille's feelings on the subject, having lived the experience of bearing children and raising them on her own, through many hard times. In both the nude and dancer paintings Camille's palette is characteristically subdued, using pink flesh tones, yellows and browns, quite different to yet another figurative work entitled 'Boxers', done in 1960, (Ill.48). The ruddy colours of her meat paintings come to mind when looking at this painting. The two small figures are placed in an eerie space that seems to be nowhere, locked in exhausted punches, their limbs bruised and their heads held low. Their futile and pointless combat is exaggerated by Camille's almost pathetic rendering of these two figures. George Bellows,<sup>42</sup> the American painter of the Twenties, painted the same subject in 1924, based on the famous title fight between Jack Dempsey and Louis Firpo of Argentina, on September 14th, 1923. His style was realistic, linear and monumental, with smoothly painted forms standing starkly silhouetted against a dark background.





50.



51.

Unlike Camille's painting, the boxers in this painting are glamourised as super heroes, their raw physicality is emphasised, and the atmosphere is one of heightened drama, as the hulking triangular shape of Firpo launches Dempsey out of the ring and into the audience. Camille's statement about the sport of boxing seems quite derogatory in comparison.

Daumier<sup>43</sup>, Bonnard, Degas<sup>44</sup>, Vuillard<sup>45</sup>, the 19th and 20th French tradition of painting, and the qualities inherent in their way of painting, are similar to qualities in Camille's figurative paintings.

'Bewleys 8,45, Filling the Sugar', and 'Two Aul Ones Tate Gall', (Ill.52) (Ill.53), could be almost considered genre paintings, of ordinary people, doing ordinary things.

Like Sickert and Degas, Camille must have found these interior paintings a challenge to her ability to register the effects of indoor and artificial light. Camille seems more concerned with recording the resulting elisions of form and shape than with observing the actions or the personalities of the figures in her Bewleys work. Her attitude to her subject matter displays again a withdrawal, and distance from the girl being painted, she seems almost incidental in contrast to the importance of the subdued colour, texture and beautifully captured early morning light, filtering through the coloured glass windows of Bewleys.



In 'Two Aul Ones', Camille immediacy and spontaneity in the handling of line, paint and a more close up view of the two old ladies chatting, seems to have done the trick in conveying character in these two figures. Camille captures their presence and gestures in a very telling and very summary manner. There is the freshness of a sketch preserved in this humorous painting, and a narrative quality suggested by the title. One wonders what the dear old ladies have to say to each other about the paintings hung about them in the Tate. Are they connoisseurs of art or lovers of tea and biscuits in the gallery restaurant? This painting remains one of Camille's most charming and entertaining works from her figurative series and stands to prove her versatility, when she departs from landscape, and attempts to portray the character of her models.



## C O N C L U S I O N

Throughout her life Camille's passionate concern has been directed with equal intensity at all things, be it bicycle wheels, stretches of landscape, iron bed ends, distant towns and cities, pregnant women, fish, or cabbages in the backyard. Her subjects have been reduced in, and by, her eyes to the fragmentation of understanding and then are transformed into paintings that always have a mysterious appealing quality. Camille's landscapes are so difficult to describe in words. They are quite conservative and she is by no means a revolutionary painter of the 20th Century, yet there remains an element to her work, both landscape and other subjects that resists description. Maybe this has to do with the fact that she does not choose the easy landscape, the obvious still life and her results are never picturesque, or sweet. She has sometimes chosen to paint debris and decay, the butt-ends of life, a subject with drab and sombre associations, but with Camille, the results in her paintings sing with light and colour. There is a richness to her tones, her colour contrasts are vivid, yet controlled and her composition seems almost intuitive, in that she places her forms and shapes always in an arrangement that is just right. The placing of low non-descript buildings along a horizon, the casual assembling of objects on a table, always has just the right measure of flatness, of the minor key, to keep within bounds the splendid assurance of her paint, both in colour and texture.





54.

Her subjects of human wastelands, dereliction and junk on the fringes of the city, are painted with a love for their simple existence, their life in the light of day.

Camille is a completely integrated artist, and this gives her a great flexibility in producing work that always indicates that there is an existing mind at work. Camille talks about her career as a painter as being -

"A rather ghastly job. There's no let up. The next painting is always the agony, and the agony is totally living the work and making that fit in with one's life. I feel terrible nervousness before work, mixed up with excitement, love and fear. The bonus of the job is that unlike many others you can go for a walk and be absolutely and totally delighted. I can walk for miles by myself completely contented. That's a bonus, isn't it!

"I also feel it's a condition one is born into, call it being a 'looker'. Paintings are not for those who don't work at it. You can't say painting must be for the masses, it's like saying Beethoven's late quartets are for the masses - they're not! I know it's very fashionable now to talk of art for the masses, but I think it's nonsense. Looking at painting demands a great deal of work."<sup>46</sup>





55.

As a 'looker', Camille sees her world about her and translates what she surveys into 'Ethereal fragments, and dizzying views of a luminescent reality'<sup>47</sup>. It is this insight and poetic vision that sets Camille apart from other Irish artists. Her own preference is for what she terms 'honest work'. By honest work Camille says -

"I mean truthful work, truth being equal to beauty and you're back to Wordsworth again! It's hard to define really, it's a quality of a painting - it's complex, Nano's (Reid) work is honest, she captures the essence.

"A lot of modern styles are not true work. They are literally copies and limited in their subject matter. Often it's not saying enough, even though it can be clever and very fine. I think it's sad today when painters have to put their time into painting a frightfully obvious thing like painting a cornflake box, or putting bits of wood around the place and calling it art. Indeed it may well be, but these are the sort of things we see everyday anyway. Surely the painter should be trying to do more." <sup>48</sup>



Camille it seems does more, by painting the not so obvious, and her work has stood the test of time, having been admired by other Irish artists, 'modern' or not so modern for the last thirty years or so. Camille's abstinence from the international mainstream of art, seems only to have made her even more unique as a painter. I asked Camille how becoming well known in Ireland had affected her and her reply was, not surprising, considering her personality and absolute devotion to her painting.

"I hate it, I absolutely loathe it. It upsets work and I don't like it. Recognition has nothing to do with my work, and it's just sort of embarrassing really. It's troubling, and anything else intrudes.

"Basil Goulding has the great wisdom to leave me totally alone.

"But I'm split on this point, ideally it would be best not to sell in your lifetime, and wait till you were dead before releasing work, but I equally think that one should live by one's trade. But because everyone has a touch of vanity, obviously it's quite nice now and then to have someone come along and say 'I like that painting'. But one should know when a painting is good or not oneself, even though it's hard to do."49



It has been fortunate that Camille has chosen the latter option, and given myself and others the opportunity to delight in her sometimes eccentric, shy, but warm personality and her intriguing paintings, that as Cyril Barrett says, -

"Only the crassly undiscerning could fail to perceive."

My research on Camille Souter, as a person and painter, seems to have been well timed, as during my final interview with her, her words were -

"I think I'm going to become a recluse actually." 49



## FOOTNOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. Anne Crookshank in, Monograph and Catalogue, published to coincide with the exhibition "Camille Souter", 8 June - 9 July 1980, at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin.
2. Camille Souter has requested that these series of taped interviews with her from December '82 - March '83 remain confidential.
3. Ibid. FI
4. Ibid. FI

### CHAPTER I

5. Lees Uhre, an acquaintance of Camille Souter and Gordon Souter; London 50's. Described by Camille as a 'professional bum'.
6. Lucio Fontana. Italian. B.1899. D.1968. Sculptor and Painter. Ass. with Miró, Brancusi and Tristan Tzara.



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER I (Contd)

7. Bill Fagan. Sculptor. Irish.
8. Hilary Heron. Sculptor. Irish. Worked in metal, wood, figurative and abstract.
9. Anne Yeates. Painter and friend of Camille Souter. Irish.
10. Patrick Pye. Printer, Painter. Lived and worked in Ireland. Uses religious themes in his paintwork.
11. Patrick Hickey. Irish Painter.
12. Frank Morris. Sculptor (Wood and Granite).  
B. Arklow, Co. Wicklow, 1928. D. 1970 .



F O O T N O T E S

C H A P T E R   I I

13. (Quote)  
Extract. Taped interview with Camille Souter at her home in North Strand, Dublin. December - March, '82/'83.
14. Extract taped interviews with Camille Souter (See F13).
15. Camille visited a retrospective of the work of Pierre Bonnard, London, 1966. Royal Academy.
16. Extract. Catalogue. Paintings from the collection of An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council; The Arts Council of Northern Ireland. 1972.
17. 92cm x 71cm, is the largest painting that I came across while researching Camille's work. Other work, like her canal paintings, have been lost or are in private collections, and may measure more.
18. Extract. Taped Interviews with Camille Souter. (See F13)
19. " " " " " " " "
20. " " " " " " " "



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

21. Klee, Paul. Swiss. Painter. B. 1879. D. 1940.  
Kandinsky, Wassily. Russian. Painter. B. 1866. D. 1944.  
Tapiés, Antoni. Spanish. Painter. B. 1923.
22. Extract. Taped interviews with Camille Souter. (See F13).
23. Extract. Quote Camille Souter. Irish Art 1943 - '73.  
ROSC, '80.
24. See F13.
25. Nano Reid.  
Nano Reid was born in Drogheda, Co. Louth in 1905. She won a scholarship to attend the Metropolitan School of Art (Dublin) where she spent nearly five years and studied under Patrick Tuohy, Leo Whelan, Sean Keating and Harry Clarke. Her early works were illustrations which were heavily influenced by Clarke, and in 1925 they were exhibited in the RHA. She then studied in Paris and London, returning to Dublin about 1930. She had her first one-woman show in Dublin in 1934 and although she included some portraits she concentrated



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

25. Nano Reid (Contd)

on subjects from the rugged Irish countryside (Donegal, Achill, Connemara) and her native Boyne Valley. She continued to exhibit with an increased use of watercolour. Her works were praised for their liveliness, boldness, directness, economy and invention.

Reid exhibited with the RHA during the 1930's, but from 1943 generally exhibited with the Irish Exhibition of Living Art, the Dublin Painters, and later the Independent Artists. She represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 1950 and has exhibited in many international shows including the Guggenheim International Award Exhibition. She won the Douglas Hyde Gold medal in 1972.

In 1974 a Retrospective Exhibition of her work was held in Dublin and Belfast. The works of Nano Reid are included in many major collections including the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (Dublin), Ulster Museum (Belfast), Crawford Gallery (Cork), An Chomhairle Ealaíon, County Library and Museum (Sligo), and Trinity College (Dublin).



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

26. Patrick Collins.

Patrick Collins was born in 1911 in the small village of Dromore West, Co. Sligo. He came to Dublin where he was educated by the Christian Brothers, and went on to attend the National College of Art as a part-time student. Even so, he is primarily a self-taught painter. He became a full-time painter in the 1940's, and first exhibited in the Irish Exhibition of Living Art in 1950. He had his first in a long line of one-man exhibitions at the Hendriks Gallery in 1956 and more recently has had shows at the Tom Caldwell Gallery.

Collins has been represented in annual exhibitions (Irish Exhibition of Living Art, Royal Hibernian Academy, Oireachtas Exhibition) and in important shows both in Ireland and abroad. These recently include Irish Imagination (Rosc 1971), Arts Council Touring Exhibition, The Delighted Eye (London and Irish Tour, 1980-81), Irish Art 1943-1973 (Cork Rosc 1980).

In 1958 he won the National Award in the Guggenheim Award Exhibition in New York. Collins' work is represented in major public and private collections in Ireland, including the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (Dublin), Ulster Museum (Belfast), Crawford Municipal Gallery (Cork), Waterford Art Gallery, An Chomhairle Ealaíon, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish Banks Ltd.

A major retrospective exhibition of Collins' work is being organised for 1982.



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

27. Brian O'Doherty (Patrick Ireland).  
B. Co. Roscommon, 1935. Art Critic..Installation Artist.  
Now living in U.S.A.  
Extract from Modern Irish Landscape Painting.  
Recent Irish Series. No.I. Frances Ruane.
28. Quote. F. Ruane. Modern Irish Landscape Painting.  
Recent Irish Series. No.I.
29. Jack Hanlon.  
Jack Hanlon was born in Dublin in 1913 and was educated at Belvedere College and the National University. He was ordained a priest at Maynooth College. While a curate in the Dublin diocese, Hanlon continued to pursue his interest in art. He won the Taylor Art Scholarship and the Hallmark Prize for watercolour. He studied art in Belgium and Spain and then in Paris under Andre Lhote. Earlier Lhote had been a teacher of Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone. Jellett wrote about him, explaining "with Lhote, I learnt how to use natural forms as a starting point towards the creation of form for its own sake; to use colour with the knowledge of its great potential force, and to produce work based on a knowledge of rhythmical form and organic colour, groping towards a creative organic whole, that is still based on realistic form." In this Andre Lhote tradition, Hanlon made



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

29. Jack Hanlon (Contd)

representational pictures (landscapes, portraits etc.) with an influence of cubism. The rhythmic composition is built up with the geometric shapes and patterns of cubism while never letting go of the original representational subject. It was a moderate, modified approach to cubism, which avoided extreme abstraction.

Hanlon first exhibited in the RHA in 1935 and had his first one-man show in Dublin in the Victor Waddington Galleries in 1941. He exhibited at the New York World's Fair in 1939. In 1943, with artists such as Nora McGuinness, Louis LeBrocqy, Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone, He became a founder member of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art.

Hanlon often painted religious subjects, but also did some fine still life (particularly of flowers), anecdotal pictures and landscapes. He is important for his active role in supporting those people who wanted to introduce the Irish public to unfamiliar Cubist modernism.



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

30. Norah McGuinness.

Norah McGuinness was born in Derry in 1903. She came to Dublin in 1921 to study at the Metropolitan School of Art with teachers such as Patrick Tuohy, Oswald Reeves and in particular, Harry Clarke. She then studied art in London and returned in 1925 to design stage sets and occasionally, costumes for the Abbey and Peacock theatres. During this time she continued to illustrate books in a style heavily influenced by Harry Clarke. On the advice of Mainie Jellett in 1929 she went to study in Paris under Andre Lhote (see biographical note on Jack Hanlon).

Norah McGuinness worked in London until 1939, holding her first one-woman show there in 1933, and a second in America in 1939. On her return to Dublin she designed windows and shop display for the Brown Thomas department store. These striking designs were influenced by shop windows she had seen designed by artists such as Dali in New York.

She first exhibited in the RHA in 1940 and was elected an Honorary Member of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1957. She was also a founder member of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art.



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

31. Colin Middleton

Colin Middleton was born in Belfast in 1910, the son of a damask designer. He attended the Belfast Royal Academy and left in 1927, choosing to become an apprentice in his father's damask business instead of going to the Slade to study art. During this time he studied part-time at the Belfast School of Art. Middleton's feeling for texture and material is often attributed to his early training in damask design.

Although his father died in 1935 leaving the responsibility of the business on Colin Middleton's shoulders, he continued to paint and was made an Associate of the Royal Ulster Academy. He first exhibited in the RHA in 1938 becoming a full member in 1970. He exhibited at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art for the first time in 1945 and with the Oireachtas in 1949.



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

32. Maurice MacGonigal was born in Dublin in 1900, son of a Sligo-born master painter and decorator. After attending the Christian Brothers School, Synge Street, he became an apprentice in the stained glass studios of his cousin, Harry Clarke.

MacGonigal became involved in Republican activities shortly after 1916. He joined the Fianna and the IRA and was arrested and interned. On his release he returned to the Clarke Studios in Dublin. He attended the Metropolitan School of Art in the early 1920's and studied under Keating, Sleator, Tuohy and Clarke. By 1925, when he began to exhibit at the RHA, his interest had turned from stained glass to painting. In 1937 he was appointed Assistant Professofof of Painting at the Metropolitan School of Art (later the NCAD), where he succeeded Sean Keating in 1950 as Full Professor. He remained teaching there for over thirty years.

33. Danny Osborne. B. Bournemouth, UK, 1949. Painter, Objective Realist.



FOOTNOTES. CHAPTER II (Contd)

34. Trevor Geoghan. B. London, 1946. Irish parentage.  
Realist Painter.
35. Martin Gale. B. Worchester, UK. Realist Landscape  
Painter.
36. Extract. Modern Irish Landscape. F. Ruane.
37. (See F36).
38. (See F36).
39. (See F13).



FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

40. Ibid FI3
41. De Kooning, Willem. American Painter. B. Netherlands 1964. Worked with Ashille Gorky and Stuart Davis, New York. Abstract Expressionistic style of figurative painting.
42. Bellows, George. (1882 - 1925). American. Realist Painter. Studied under Thomas Eakins, New York.
43. Daumier, Honore. (1808 - '79). Lithograph Artist and Painter. Political and Social Satire. Paintings untouched by any romantic feeling for picturesque poverty. Used calligraphic brushwork and intense light and shadow.
44. Degas, Edgar. (1834 - 1917). Pupil of Ingres. Influenced by Manet and possibly by Whistler and by snapshot photography. Used unusual viewpoints and purely contemporary subject matter. Painted a famous series of dancers in 1873, treating figures as investigations into light, colour and form.
45. Vuillard, Edouard. (1869 - 1940). Intimist Painter and Decorator, whose career closely paralleled that of Bonnard, but who in many ways, is closer to Sickert.



## FOOTNOTES

### CONCLUSION

46. Ibid. F13

47. Quote by Aiden Dunne on Camille Souter.  
Irish Contemporary Artists, by Roderic Knowles.

48. Ibid. F13

49. Ibid. F13



B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Arnold, Bruce.  
'The Irish Imagination'.

Ruane, Frances.  
'Patrick Collins'.  
'Modern Irish Landscape'. Recent Irish art Series No.I

Forge, Andrew  
'Soutine'.

Arts Council of Great Britain, 1982  
'Chaim Soutine'.

Knowles, Roderic  
'Contemporary Irish Art'.

Whitney Museum of Modern Art  
'The Figurative Tradition'.



C A T A L O G U E S

Cork Rosc '80 Catalogue.

'Irish Art. 1943 - '73'.

Douglas Hyde Gallery, Trinity, Dublin Catalogue.

'Camille Souter' monograph and catalogue  
published to coincide with the exhibition  
"Camille Souter", 8 June - 9 July, 1980, at  
the Douglas Hyde Gallery.

Catalogue 'Two Deeply',

100 paintings by Camille Souter and Barrie  
Cooke. 23rd October, 1971.

Carroll Building, Dublin.



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Sunday Independent: 21.11.'74, 'Camille Souter'.

Irish Times: 2. 8.'80. 'Interview with  
Camille Souter by Una Lehane'.

Irish Times: 15.12.'83, 'Basil Goulding  
collection by Brian Fallon'.

Sunday Press: 6. 7.'80, 'Letting in the  
Light. Interview with Camille  
Souter'.



T A P E S

Series of interviews with Camille Souter  
at her home in North Strand, Dublin,  
December '82 - March '83.  
Three 90 minute tapes.



E X H I B I T I O N S

1956 El Hobano Restaurant, Grafton St., Dublin.  
Clog Restaurant, South King St., Dublin.  
Redfern Gallery, London.  
Obelisk Gallery, London.

1957 Clog Restaurant, Dublin. Paris and Rome.  
I.E.L.A., and subsequently in 1958,  
1960 - '67, 1973.

1960 Independent Artists and subsequently in  
1961 - '64, 1967, 1971 - '72, 1979.

1961 One Man's Meat; M.G.M.A.

1962 Glasgow and Monaco.

1963 Twelve Irish Painters; New York.

1964 Montreal.

1965 Two Painters from the Collection of Sir Basil  
Goulding, Bt.; U.M.; 28 January - 27 February 1965.  
Paintings and Sculpture (1945 - 65) from Private  
Collections in Ireland; M.G.M.A.; 1 - 31 July 1965.



EXHIBITIONS (Contd)

- 1966 Paintings in Our House. R.H.A.
- 1970 Oireachtas Art Exhibition and subsequently  
in 1971, 1973, 1977 ; '78.
- 1971 The Irish Imagination 1959 - '71; Rosc '71;  
M.G.M.A.; 23 October - 31 December 1971.  
Two Deeply. Modern Irish Painting.
- 1972 Y.M.C.A. Wexford.  
Paintings from the collection of An  
Comhairle Ealaion/The Arts Council;  
A.C.N.I.
- 1973 R.H.A.
- 1976 Elements of Landscape; M.G.M.A.;  
30 January - 29 February 1976. Kilkenny.
- 1977 Some Irish Fish; D.G.; 22 June - 2 July 1977.  
Festival International de la Peinture;  
Haut de Cagnes. Grand Prix International d'art  
contemporain de Monte-Carlo, Monaco. Kilkenny.
- 1978 Claremorris National Art Competition,  
Claremorris, Co. Mayo. Ireland.



EXHIBITIONS (Contd)

1979 Women's Show; P.G.; 15 May - 9 June 1979.

1980 The Delighted Eye - Irish Painting and  
Sculpture of the Seventies;  
A Sense of Ireland; Dr. Frances Ruane;  
London; February - March 1980; and  
subsequent tour in Ireland.

1980 'Camille Souter' retrospective.  
Douglas Hyde Gallery, Trinity, Dublin.  
8 June - 9 July 1980.



ABBREVIATIONS

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ACNI    | The Arts Council of Northern Ireland                            |
| Cata no | Catalogue number  |
| Coll    | Collection of   |
| Col     | Colour  |
| DG      | The Dawson Gallery, Dawson Street,<br>Dublin.                   |
| IELA    | Irish Exhibition of Living Art, Dublin.                         |
| MGMA    | The Municipal Gallery of Modern Art,<br>Parnell Square, Dublin. |
| PG      | Project Gallery, East Essex Street,<br>Dublin.                  |
| TG      | Taylor Galleries, Dawson Street,<br>Dublin.                     |
| UM      | Ulster Museum   |



I L L U S T R A T I O N S

- Blood Utopia. 1956. C.S. (IA) Untitled. 1957. C.S.
1. Turn of the Year Early Summer. 1958. C.S.
  2. Pigalle. 1956. C.S.
  3. Dublin the Early Evening. 1958. C.S.
  4. Buon Divertimento. 1958. C.S.
  5. Cycling to Chioggia. 1961. C.S.
  6. Untitled. (or L'Espresso). 1957. C.S.
  7. Last of the Radicio. 1964. C.S.
  8. Chiogga all Changing. 1964. C.S.
  9. The Nun's Cove. Norah McGuinness
  10. Cows in a Field. Patrick Collins
  11. Outsider. Martin Gale. 1981.
  12. Landscape. Jack Hanlon.
  13. Gleesalia, Co. Mayo. 1963. C.S.
  14. The Bog after Winter. 1963.
  15. Winter. 1963. C.S.
  16. " " C.S.
  17. The West. 1964. C.S.
  18. Untitled. 1964. C.S.
  19. Achill. Rocks & Reflections I. 1959. C.S.
  20. Achill. Up the Brae. 1960. C.S.
  21. Achill Volcanic. 1959. C.S.



ILLUSTRATIONS (Contd)

22. Calary Bog. 1962. C.S.
23. Snow in Mayo. 1969. C.S.
24. Forgotten Island near Venice. 1964. C.S.
25. 50 M.P.H. Coming up to Lucan Bridge. C.S.
26. Untitled. Tapies.
27. Lucan Fair.
28. Autumn, Bed Ends. 1963. C.S.
29. Circus I. 1956. C.S.
30. Sceptical of the Bullock. Paul Klee.
- 30(A) Fields of Arles. 1961. C.S.
31. Clown Acting. 1961.
32. Thinking of Years Back. Circus. 1961. C.S.
33. World Cup Long Ago. 1965. C.S.
34. Red Brick(s) and it's not a Game. 1973. C.S.
35. The Flayed Ox. Rembrandt. 1655
36. Carcass. Chaim Soutine. 1925
37. Meat Series. 1972. C.S.
38. Hanging Pheasants. Chaim Soutine
39. Meat Series. 1973. C.S.
40. The Slaughtered Cow Ten Minutes Dead. 1972/73. C.S.
41. Pollock. 1976. C.S.
42. Still Life With Skate. Chaim Soutine. 1924.
43. Gutted Pollock II. 1976. C.S.



ILLUSTRATIONS (Contd)

44. Now Stop Eating Fish. 1976. C.S.
45. Dancers. 1960's. C.S.
46. Pregnant Woman. 1969. C.S.
47. The Clam Diggers. De Kooning. 1964.
48. Boxers. 1960. C.S.
49. Title Fight. George Bellows. 1942.
50. Soup. Daumier.
51. Dancers. Degas.
52. Bewleys. 8.45. Filling the Sugar. C.S.
53. Two Aul Ones Tate Gallery. C.S.
54. Untitled. 1962. C.S.
55. Natasha's Mannows. 1964. C.S.

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I L L U S T R A T I O N S (UNNUMBERED)

- Page 7. Shannon Airport Painting. C.S.
- Page 10. Untitled. 1956. C.S.
- Page 13. Still Life. C.S. 1969.
- Still Life. Pierre Bonnard.