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FOUR CONTEMPORARY IRISH EXPRESSIONISTS

ANNE-MARIE REGAN
4TH YEAR VISUAL COMMUNICATION
FACULTY OF DESIGN
MAY 1986

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Anne-Marie Regan

May 1986

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INTRODUCTION

Against all odds and quite unexpectedly there has emerged a body of Irish painters who have produced work that is authentic and credible.

(36)

There is an impressive brance of neo-Expressionism in Ireland which indeed has some indigenous roots in the 60s as well as influential shows of Egon Schiele, Karl Appel and the late Picasso in the 70s. As someone who usually dislikes the grandiosity of much recent Expressionism, it is hard to say why I responded to some of the Irish branch except that at its best it seems gutsier, closer to the lower east side than the more expensive versions.

(Lucy R. Lippard, 10.5.84)
(59)

Since the late Sixties the very idea of painting has been held in serious question by many commentators and practitioners. The international resurgence in painting goes under many headings: neo-Expressionism, bad painting, New Wave, New Image. Expressionism, if the term has not lost its meaning, is indicative of a particular attitude of mind, a purpose Expressionist artists feel strongly and seek to translate in as direct a manner, in full strength and in an undiluted form. Style does not enter into it. You either feel intensely or you don't.

In Ireland painters whose history goes back to the late Fifties and early Sixties are working with renewed confidence, which had been eroded and ignited by personal trauma and conflicts within the art colleges and art scene in general of the late Sixties and early Seventies. Many of those painters had not been exposed to the international New Expressionist Wave. If this painting in Ireland had not developed before, it at least evolved concurrently within Ireland itself. Philip Guston considered to be a father figure of American New Expressionism, did not turn to the figurative Expressionist mode until about 1970. In Germany, New Expressionists, like Baeselitz, began painting in the Sixties. It is probable that it has been going on in the background to some degree over a long period of time but only comes to light intermittently.

In Ireland this painting does not fall into a movement per se. Artists have in general tended to follow their own lines. A wide-angled view would be that they are figurative and expressionist. They have rejected the 'neo' tag, finding it misleading. They are artists very much concerned with integrity and content. They are not reacting to experimentation, they are working with a strong tradition behind them. To date, very little has been written on these painters. The only book on Contemporary Irish Artists, by Roderic Knowles, has practically excluded this phenomena in Irish painting. It is hoped that this work would be of some value in filling this gap.

As the subject of study, I have chosen four Irish Expressionist painters, Michael Kane, Patrick Hall, Patrick Graham and Brian Maguire. The intention is not criticize but to trace, compile and record information on the artists and their motivation. Sources include newspapers, catalogues and articles from both the Hendriks and Lincoln Galleries, where these artists have exhibited. Background history sources were taken from talks with Henry Sharpe of the National College of Art and Design, Bill Whelan, another source for the College, and legal documentation and letters in regard to the National College of Art of the Sixties.

I received biographical information from the artists and I have interviewed each one extensively. These interviews are a major part of and an important key to the study as they give insight into each painter. This is the first time that such extensive interviews have been documented on these particular artists. The object of the interviews was not to channel or cajole the artists but to allow them to open up, to let their perception, rather than mine, show through. Editing of the transcript was minimal. This permitted the interviews to stand on their own, to be open-ended rather than edited conversations in the format of 'snap' statements. It was hoped that this would avoid distortion and removal of parts of the interviews from the context. Unedited, the development of ideas and thought process runs more fluidly. This may often relate to the process of work and thus give us a fuller understanding of the painter.

Differences of temperament and approach to the subject matter of the interview demonstrates differences between individual painters, their priorities and aspirations. There are times when the meaning could have been brought out more clearly, had I stuck less closely to the transcripts, but by sticking closely to what they had to say, has preserved the very particular gestures of speech of these artists and these, after all, are an integral part of the meaning. Where artists have written papers, these were outlined and some extracts included.

Other important artists who are directly and indirectly related to Irish Expressionism of the younger generation are Michael Cullen and Michael Mulcahy, who are both a definite part of this painting but both are working abroad. However, I have restricted my study to those painters who are currently working within Ireland. Of the older generation painters, who would not be as overtly Expressionist but with some ties and inclinations in this direction are Brian Bourke, Charlie Cullen, James McKenna and Paul Funge. All of these artists, young and old, were part of the Independent Artists Group, which was set up in 1960, a group which was to be made up of artists, who had

a lively response to the age in which we live.

(83)

Chapter 1 deals with fundamental common ground and historical background which is important to consider in relation to the four artists and the evolution of their work.

Chapter 2 is devoted to Michael Kane, who is the oldest of these artists. He was involved with the Independent Artists Group in its earlier days. He differs from the other three in that he uses the print more frequently as his medium.

Chapter 3 deals with Patrick Graham, who is a very strong figure in Irish Expressionist Art and, although younger than Kane, has been considered the father figure of Irish Expressionism. He is an artists of great facility, which constantly defies its relevance to his own work.

Chapter 4 is devoted to Patrick Hall, who is the same age as Michael Kane. He often uses the myth as a vehicle of expression and he is a painter who is greatly respected by other artists.

In Chapter 5, Brian Maguire has been chosen as a key figure of the younger generation of Expressionist painters. He paints from personal sources to a broader political realm.

Finally, in the Conclusion, Chapter 6, an attempt has been made to compare and contrast these four Irish artists.

CHAPTER 1

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

Today we are encouraged to believe that art is indifferent or independent of so-called non visual values. The view that there should not be a social art in a time of social change is evidence of yet another way we are conditioned to police ourselves.
(28, p.18)

Art can be seen to exist on a purely visual plane, which was somehow exempt from the social and personal conditions under which it was made. This view is also expressed by Elizabeth Abel in relation to the visual and literary arts,

The aesthetic orientation of formalist criticism can underplay the role of history by positing a constant and determinative role for the aesthetic medium.
(22, p.68)

This tendency to divorce art from its historical context can distort and throw us into the position of believing, Swartz says,

that art has always been concerned primarily with its own conventions. Through a method of correlation of styles and influences these art professionals have pictured the history of art as being independent of the history of man.
(28, p.21)

These painters are concerned with the human element in their work. Patrick Graham and Brian Maguire both speak of the human element, choosing or accepting from various sources both their own and universal humanity. Brian Maguire draws constantly from human sources: such as in the painting, 'Six Grains of Rice, Uganda '82', *All Dublin gives its tinker kids its puss and glue,*

He paints figuratively because he wants primarily to communicate on a human level.
(40)

In relation to this point, Maguire quotes Kafka,

Our faces belong to our lives.
(86)

He is concerned with the language of human experience. Patrick Graham says,

*What I admire about the German Expressionists
is their generosity to their own humanity.*
(See Interview, 85)

It must be acknowledged that in this century there have been artists who have gone beyond the boundaries of style and syntax and who have used art to express a vast well of human values.

Throughout this century there has existed an art that expressed outrage at the castration of human life. It has often been lost in the shuffle of art movement and its creators have usually been treated as eclectic creators. However, its critics and historians, not artists, have failed to see that humanism is a unique artist intention.
(28, p.21)

It should be noted that the followers of this creed are themselves artists. Delacroix says,

Most writing about Art is by people who are not artists, they are full of false concepts and judgement.

The danger inherent here is to go overboard and to resort to a simplistic humanism which can be exploited and which floats on a tide of lofty impositions and confusion. As W. Lee Rensselaer says,

For if human beings in action are as Aristotle said, the theme of painting it follows that the movement of the body that expresses the affections of the passions of the soul are the spirit and the life of art and the goal to which the whole science of painting bends.
(18, p.36)

We are not concerned here with the figurative in a classical sense nor 'movement of the body, human form expressing affections and passions of the soul'. What we are dealing with here operates not through refinement but quite the opposite: the raw, the awkward, the violent. The human intention here is a different story entirely. It does not transport in a romantic sense but confronts regardless of reaction.

John Berger in 'About Looking' speaks of La Tour and quotes from a catalogue illustrating La Tour's public image after the war,

yet those who have eyes to see and heart to feel

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John Berger in 'About Looking' speaks of La Tour and quotes from a catalogue illustrating La Tour's public image after the war,

yet those who have eyes to see and heart to feel

will come to recognise the nobility of their aspirations, their search for truth with prejudice, without compromise, driven by an emotion of sympathy which unites all men.

(4, p.61)

John Berger contrasts this image with the lack of emotional and sympathetic content in his work. Of a painting of The Blind Beggar, he says,

the man's flesh was painted as if it were the same substance as that of his leather shoes.

(4, p.62)

Berger goes on to say,

The sight not experience: for as I have emphasised these images are seen entirely from the exterior.

(4, p.63)

This emotional detachment is the other side of the coin from Caravaggio who painted with involvement,

He lived in the underworld of Rome. He painted those he lived beside. He painted them with his own emotions, he saw his own excesses in their very condition. That is to say, he is in the situation he paints.

(4, p.61)

This correlates subject matter and real rather than implied experience. It evolves around artistic integrity a consideration which is paramount to these painters.

When you have a facility with paint you can become its slave, it enables you too easily to become the kind of artist others expect you to be..... I have never trusted this facility. In me it got in the way of painting with integrity.

('83)

The integrity of human experience and humanism, in terms of labels may seem nebulous but in terms of paint, artistic intention and on grounds of achievement, it recognises many artists who have been

tossed and lost between movements.

Swartz say,

The historical importance of such diverse artists as Earnst Barlack, Kathe Kollwits, George Grosz, John Heartfield, Edward Munch, Oskar Kokoschka to humanist tradition has been overlooked as part of a larger misunderstanding of Expressionism, which is wrongly treated as a style rather than a manifestation of a particular humanist intention. Similarly, the influential works of Bechmann, James Ensor, Alberto Giacometti and many Surrealists, particularly Matta, and all the German Expressionists, have not been seen as part of the humanist whole. Because formalists believe that newer movements make older ones obsolete they have failed to recognise that many superceeded forms are still vital and when combined with fresh and original content, they make for very fine works of art.

(28, p.21)

The human intention has been ignored, sidetracked or even dismissed. Barlach talking of Kandinsky, says,

To believe that points, lines and spots evolved in Kandinsky, a deeper emotional shock that is one going beyond an aesthetic reaction to the decorative.

(18, p.238)

He goes on to say,

I must be able to emphasize .

(18, p.238)

Significantly, he uses the German term that reflected the human condition,

Ich muss mitleiden können.

(18, p.238)

To Michael Kane, Patrick Hall, Patrick Graham and Brian Maguire, the Expressionist mode itself is not the all important factor. As Brian Maguire says,

I don't think it is a matter of how you make , of how your brush strokes.

(86)

Patrick Graham writes in a paper in 1982,

As I live more and more within the world of art the logical defence of such surface awareness requires that mere facility takes precedence above all and one then pushes facility to the lengths of experimental or creative nicety. Only highly intellectual rationalising ability on the part of the artist allows for the belief that we are looking at fine art here and not the most banal surface reflecting. One must then be led to believe that there is more to this than meets the eye, but how can this be so if the eye alone is entertained at the expense of subjective reality? This is not art of risk or change but of fashionable surfaces.

(45, p.2)

Here Patrick Graham expresses the belief that if painting is only concerned with surface, the major requirement becomes facility and thus it forces painting to a level of experimentation 'creative nicety'. This puts the artist into the situation where he has to employ a procedure of intellectualising and rationalising, or in other words, a justification process which will establish painting as fine art, and not merely a surface. In order to do this, Patrick Graham feels that one must prove that there is more at stake than an entertainment for the eye. He feels if the 'subjective reality', that is, the inner subjective reality of the painter, has been sacrificed at the expense of creating a fashionable surface.

By the same token, the words by which these surfaces can be explained, and the whole intellectualizing, slotting into a style reduces art to a surface within a fashion. A movement becomes nothing more than a prolonged fashion season - This 'surface reflecting' is irrelevant to these artists as it ignores the whole subjectiveness of their work. Thus, according to Patrick Graham, in terms of being 'art of the times', while missing the whole point of 'time and timelessness' of subjective enquiry, critics then tend to criticise painting on the basis of their experience of time and in the world of what is going on in art.

Their plain point of criticism becomes one of content

or subject and its place in the art world context, thus missing the whole personal process of growth and perception of the artist himself as a whole or at least as someone with willingness to enquire of himself as person and then as a painter.

(45, p.2)

In pursuing a term of reference one must be careful not to deny the emotive raw communication, that does not operate solely in the intellect, or as a reaction to a previous art movement. These factors may or may not participate, but they are by no means conclusive. The trapping of painting into movements, the need to categorize, can deny the painting of its most fundamental raison d'être. A good doctor must also listen to his patient: then apply knowledge for diagnosis. One must listen to the painters thus avoid a situation of 'not seeing the wood for the trees'.

Picasso, a painter who went through several art movements, gathered several influences, says,

I would like to reach a stage where no-one could say how any of my paintings were painted. Why do I want this? Very simple, I only want feeling to be transmitted.

(78, p.37)

AN EVOLVING TRADITION

The light done cleaving the air in her free flight - and feeling its resistance might imagine that her flight be still easier in empty space. It was thus that Plato left the world of the senses and ventured out beyond it on the wings of, in the empty spaces of pure understanding: He did not understand with all his efforts he made no advance meeting that might, as it were, serve as a support to which he could apply his powers and so set his understanding in motion.

(3, p.136)

Kant's light dove craves an impossible task - the resistant air is not a handicap, but a pre-condition of freeflight - the notion of

being a creature in a vacuum is not just impossible but incoherent. This 'curious creature' of Expressionism in Irish painting did not occur in a vacuum. To retrace its origins some might go back as far as Jack B. Yeats, who worked in a fluid Expressionist style which had few stylistic precedents. Yet Yeats was less concerned with expression than with paint. More recent history revolves around the National College of Art and Design in Dublin.

Brian Bourke said to the dissatisfied students of the National College of Art and Design, when he was invited to lecture to them in the 'alternative' College which set up in Trinity Arts Society in the late Sixties,

*You'll get all you ask for. You'll win your fight.
You'll get a very efficient machine for chopping
your heads off.*

(84)

In a sense, he was right; for many there were years of isolation, loss of contact with their medium. But now a few are returning, holding their severed heads on sticks; it has been a long, slow process.

It has been said of Brian Bourke, 'he does not paint for pleasure but out of necessity'. This urgent relationship with paint was not the norm for Brian Bourke's generation.

Some Irish artists have hungered for internationalism and felt that they could play the big boys by painting big. Michael Farrell's Celtic Motifs are an example. Such work is living proof that it is impossible to paint pale carbon copies of what is going on elsewhere authentically, as if it really matters. In conclusion, this concern with the international mode produces a false situation where "Art works a game. The trick is not necessarily to believe in what you are doing but to behave as if it really matters.

(39)

Somewhere behind the backdrop of all this when galleries tended to look across the water and tried to match up an Irish equivalent of whatever was the current trend, quickly flashed from OP, POP, Architect Art, Abstract Art of either the Expressionist or 'Hard Edge' variety. There was an art which never fully emerged from the

shadows. The smooth formularised surfaces easily spread, were easier to digest than the rough awkward, native painting that was as painful in subject matter as in form.

A group of artists of this time were loosely connected - they all adhered to an interpretation of the figurative image. They would have all rejected the 'Celtic twilight' and the bog, yet neither did they, as they saw it, jump on the international bandwagon or assume the 'quick buck' attitude of the new capitalist Ireland. Politically, their tendency was towards socialism which was often coupled with a sense of nationalism. Artists of this breed would be Charlie Cullen, Brian Bourke, John Behan, Paul Funge, Alice Hanratty, James McKenna, though these in no way constitute a particular formalised group.

This obsession with the human form seems to have soaked through the bones of a younger generation: Michael Cullen, Cathy Carmen, Brian Maguire, Mick Mulcahy, Eithne Jordan. Gene Lambert, Joe Harly, Cecily Brennan and Robert Armstrong have perhaps more tenuous links. These artists are now mostly in their thirties.

Student rebellion was a hallmark of the Sixties throughout Europe and in the United States. This climate for change had its own particular breed in Ireland and showed its head in Trinity College, U.C.D. and all the major colleges, and particularly in the then National College of Art. The National College of Art of the Sixties was physically wedged between Dail Eireann and the National Library. The teaching system employed there was based on the A.T.C. system (Art Teachers' Certificate). This consisted of a long series of two and three-hour examinations in different areas, which, after collecting about 12 or 14 certificates, qualified you to teach Art.

There were plaster casts which had once been beautiful and interesting objects, but were covered by layer upon layer of white paint, which was laid down over the years and had rendered their surfaces insensitive and sterile. The students spent long hours in the sanctuary of the white-washed Greek and Roman Cast Room.

The Greek, Roman and Renaissance statues in the cast rooms were conceived by their makers as rhythmical, harmonious and three-dimensional entities. No understanding of this was encouraged and the students were advised to look at these in strictly two-dimensional terms and in terms of correctness of proportion. All was held together and given form by means of shading, the more stylish, the more successful.

The human figure was approached in much the same manner. Students drew an ear, a nose, an eye and then the entire head. The same principle was applied to the drawing of the body, hands, feet, legs, torso, escalating towards the full figure in the Third Year of Study.

The whole basis of this education was to divide a whole unit into separate parts, then to specialise in each part. This being accomplished, the student was somehow supposed to bundle it all back together again in order to produce the entire unit.

Rumblings which had roots in the Fifties took form in the late Sixties and early Seventies. Teachers such as Charlie Cullen, Alice Hanratty, Ruth Brandt and Paul Funge, some of whom were products of that same establishment, understood the conflicts, which they themselves had a taste of under the MacGonigal/Keating R.H.A. era. MacGonigal and Sean Keating were consecutively Professors of the School of Painting in the National College of Art. Keating was President of the Royal Hibernian Academy of Art and MacGonigal was an active Academician. The R.H.A. was incorporated by Charter of His Most Gracious Majesty, George IV in 1823. The four teachers worked on a foundation course which was loosely based on the Bauhaus, though not run as strictly by the book as was the then newly set up Dun Laoghaire School of Art Course.

When the students of N.C.A. rebelled against what they saw as the old stagnation, these teachers supported them; and when they were sacked for this relationship with the students, in turn, the students supported them. Eventually, the teachers were reinstated.

and abstract expressionism were in vogue. There was also a follow up of what was happening in England. This was perceived by students of the time as the Colonial influence left over from the R.H.A. Patrick Gillan went on to say,

An art college should actively encourage individual expression..... I believe a college can function properly: It requires honesty and a commitment to art from all involved.

(90)

This concern with honesty is something that would be life saving line for Maguire, Graham and Hall. Paul Funge in the same broadsheet contends,

Art affects us whether we like it or not. Consciousness is the common denominator of humanity. Art is the expression of consciousness. It is the great leveller of humanity.

(90)

This would also appeal to the socialist tendency.

The arts are to the artist the expression of belief in existence to the spectator the communication of this belief; the artist is the witness to universal consciousness; the picture, the testimony.

(90)

This similar to beliefs held by Hall and Graham and it was out of this atmosphere Maguire and Cullen came.

This dust will not settle in our time; and when it does some great roaring machine will whirl it all sky high.

Samuel Beckett (2, p.46)

CHAPTER 2

MICHAEL KANE

Michael Kane was born in 1917, in Dublin, and brought up in Ashford, County Wick. His father, Henry Kane, had a small grocery shop.

As a young man, Henry Kane had run away from home to join the British Army. During the First World War, he served as a stretcher bearer with the Irish Guards. He was wounded in the leg and spent some time in hospital.

After the war, Henry Kane returned home and worked in the family grocery shop. He was a very hard worker and a very good man.

Michael Kane was a very good student and a very good worker. He was a very good man and a very good friend.

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CHAPTER 2

MICHAEL KANE

Michael Kane was born in 1935, in Dublin, and brought up in Ashford, County Wicklow. His father, 'Henry Kane, had a small grocery shop.

As a young man, Harry Kane had run away from home to join the British Army. During the First World War, he served as a stretcher bearer with the Irish Guards. However, his inclinations were musical and much of his military career was spent as a bandsman.

There was great respect for music and literature in the household. His brother, Tony, was an avid reader.

I got from my father a sense of values which can only be described artistic - his admiration for the fine voice, his concern with a certain standard of music. He had great admiration for the virtuoso performer.

(27, p.38)

Michael claims that as a child he was 'a sort of mother's boy'. He does not have any romantic nostalgic feeling about his youth though it was a relatively happy one.

I can see in an early photography of my youth there's a sort of smirky, ingrating expression on my face.

(84)

Having been through the school system,

*I went to the two worst schools in the world,
I would certainly say, in Ireland.*

(17, p.33)

He left school, having an unspecific leaning towards art:

At the age of 17, I would have been perfectly happy to have been a monumental stonemason, a copywriter for an advertising agency, a cartoonist, or say somebody making fashion drawings.

(84)

In 1955, he secured a job in the telephone exchange at night and went to the National College of Art in the day. It was through the telephone exchange (Patrick Hall's brother worked there) that he got to know Patrick Hall and John Kelly. Without these encounters the story might have been entirely different,

They were important to Kane for their total dedication to their work. John for the eternal cheerfulness which he accompanied a fairly strenuous struggle to survive materially - Pat because of the amazing integrity of his work and his way of approaching it.
(Sharpe)

The approach to the making of art used in the National College of Art left Michael Kane cold:

He was not alone in this - Certain of his more demanding and gifted contemporaries felt something similar. Brian Bourke had already departed the College, even before Kane's arrival, metaphorically shaking the dust of the place off his feet and vowing to make it as a painter anyway.

(75, p.32)

Kane was a hard working student,

I used to rather like the Cast Room because it was often quiet and one could sneak in there and be alone and work quietly and nobody could see how bad your drawing was.

(84)

Kane, like Brian Bourke, had a certain amount of respect for the old values. Charlie Cullen said,

Kane went through some terrible despairs. I remember him destroying canvases, very depressed by his work. He didn't know how to break out of the straightjacket that had been imposed on him by the College.

(89)

In the College of this period, Sean Keating was Professor of Painting. He was a warm, affable character, though, according to Henry Sharpe 'a sort of artistic ostrich'. Sean Keating

took some pleasure in debunking, as he saw it, the false gods of 'Modern Pantheon'. Keating has been called 'a front man' for the R.H.A. and this position was later permeated by Maurice MacGonigal, his successor, well into the Sixties. Kane and his contemporaries, such as Bourke and Cullen found themselves confronted by a Romantic Celtic from an age which had faded and had long since been replaced by an urban industrial social reality.

Michael Kane had taken as much an interest in the work of Cezanne as in the work of any expressionist. His keen interest in Cezanne has been with him for so long that he does not remember from where it came.

So I think I picked up the name, Cezanne, and I remember wondering how to pronounce it. It probably came from the novel by Aldous Huxley, which devoured my attention in my mid teens. Then in a Dublin bookshop, I discovered this little book which was within my economic range at the time. Cezanne had been a sort of magic name and here he was. I remember the effect it had on me - it was absolutely overwhelming, it was a totally plastic experience. I remember the blues, and that ochre colour - ochre to orange that was characteristic of that region (Aix-en-Provence) and there was something in that bud of awkwardness which at best he could translate into fluency - the extraordinary tension that there is between incompetence and absolute mastery of the medium. Somehow all of these elements were immediately apparent to me though I could not have said so at the time.

(84)

Several years passed before Kane could confront problems raised by Cezanne and later, Picasso. The College of Art offered no answers. Kane left the College and set out for Spain with a friend, called the Major. He managed to leave painting behind in Ireland and turned much of his energies to reading: authors like William James, Edmund Wilson and Albert Camus. The combined effect of these three certainly brought about a total loss of path. He questioned old values:

When I saw the behaviour of the local Spanish bourgeoisie in the churches, they all seemed so irreverent and so unconscious of what I would have preferred to



Fig. 61 Tree, 1967, gouache on paper (490 x 370mm)



Fig. 2 Girl Undressing, 1960, oil on canvas (1,090 x 721mm)

see as a spiritual event and so conscious of only the bourgeois social intercourse, they were carrying on with, that I remember turning to the Major and saying, 'That's it, that's the last time I'm going to Mass'. Once I walked out of that church in Madrid, the whole combination of new experiences and whatever sort of intellectual development that had taken place, hit me in terms of sudden removal of conscience, the Super Ego - the two eyes that seemed to have been staring at me from the heavens since childhood were suddenly removed and there was an immense sense of relief. (26, p.27)

The symptoms of a particularly Jansenistic Irish Catholicism had departed. After six months Kane travelled to Italy where he met up with Ruth Brandt, whom he was later to marry.

By 1959, Kane had returned to Dublin. He took up the position as a designer in the offices of John Skelton. While Kane worked for the agency, John Skelton, exercising considerable generosity and understanding, encouraged Kane to paint, even during office hours. The work, which evolved out of this era, had a predominantly grey palette. The work was tightly held together and built up with a series of crabby palette knife marks. They were bleakly puritanical. Encouraged by Skelton, he had a one-man show in the Brown Thomas Gallery - the work was not well received. The next move was to the more prestigious and up-market, David Hendrix Gallery. In April 1960, the show opened and David Williams (later David Hendrix) classified the works as 'grey religious painting'. Indeed, they were adorned with religious titles such as 'The Way to Jerusalem', 'Ecco Homo', 'Pieta'. A religious feeling in the broadest sense was implicit in all of this work, this being conveyed by an atmosphere of sombreness which emanated from them, rather than by subject matter. Of these, Kane says,

They weren't really religious in the sense he understood them to be - they were actually an attempt to be a distillation of the spirituality of Atheism. (84)

'Girl Undressing' would be typical of paintings of this period. This painting bears a strong similarity to 'Girl Standing' by

Matisse. Kane's figure turns her back on us. There is a similarity in tone and space. The torn bed breaks the vertical on one side. The whole ethos is cold, bare and brittle as if no sound could crack the deadened silence of the space. There is no comforting warmth from the floors, the walls, the prison-like bars of the torn bed.

The show was a celebrated success. A reporter in Focus Magazine wrote,

I look forward to seeing more of this man's work and I am confident that he will take his place amongst the important artists of the Sixties. He is without doubt an artist to watch.

(83)

In October 1960, Kane was invited to participate in an Exhibition of Five Irish Painters of Distinction. His co-exhibitors were part of the 'Celtic Twilight', an ambience in which Kane felt very uneasy - the title of the show gained the dubious nickname of 'Five Irish Painters of Extinction'.

Throughout the Sixties, Kane's work developed. He kept taking in and considering, turning over, examining new influences. He worked through these influences, confronted them: the Fauvist, the pre-Cubist, Picasso and so on. Dublin itself was changing:

Old moulds were being broken, new alliances were being formed.

(26, p.33)

Kane became involved in all of this. The Independent Artists was the chosen title of the group which was formed. It was to be composed of artists having a lively response to the age. True independence bears a lively witness to the freedom of intelligence in the face of change. Henry Sharpe's comment on this was,

Laudable sentiments certainly but hardly the stuff to keep the academicians, or indeed the bourgeoisie of Dublin, awake at night.

(26, p.31)

Group 65 in certain respects was an offshoot of the Independent

Artists. It was a tighter, more genuinely radical grouping than the more general organisation. Group 65 arranged two shows, 65 and 66 respectively. The work was predominantly figurative.

John Behan, Charlie Cullen, Brian Bourke, Joseph O'Connor, Edward Mooney, Marianne Hanskerk and Alex Sadowsky showed in exhibitions held in the Irish Times Gallery, Westmoreland Street, though the majority of this work was predominantly self portraits, and landscapes. The catalogue had a more radical score. From the 1965 catalogue:

The majority of members of Group 65 belong to what constitutes for the first time in Ireland, the nucleus of a school of painting. Adherents and Patrons of the R.H.A. and the Living Art take note! This phenomenon has arisen independently of the aspirations of the people, in much the same way as the Rising of 1916.

(48)

Strong stuff indeed!

Being very much in the current of events of 1967, Kane became involved with Project 67 at the Gate Theatre. This venture, which was essentially an experiment in cross fertilization of the arts: drama, music, paint, led directly to the foundation of the Project Arts Centre. Kane devoted much time to the emergence of the Project.

Although the three organisations, the Independent Artists, Group 65, and Project 67 were not overly political, they took up a radical stance. Kane often employed his pen as opposed to his brush as a means of demanding more for arts, and at the same time, managing to get a dig at the establishment. Kane would have supported his friend the sculptor, James McKenna:

From the earliest days as a student, James had been a radical. We were driven to a radical stance and to a particular political philosophy, mainly through our dealings in the promotion of art. It began to become apparent to us that there were forces totally



Fig. 3 Example from Structure and motif used for the Independent Artists' 1971 Catalogue

opposed to the kind of ideal we seemed to represent. When you are young and not politically minded, you wouldn't see the reactionary nature of such bodies as the Arts Council as it was then, and maybe the Cultural Committee of the Department of Foreign Affairs. And it wasn't until we came up against it as practitioners and as people who were hoping to do more for artists, and to try to get across to the public in a more direct way 'Man' had been possible before, that we began to realize how seriously opposed we were by those people.

(84)

STRUCTURE

In 1972, Kane launched the magazine 'Structure',

I wanted it to be an art magazine as well as a magazine for literature. I called it a 'magazine of thought'. I found that most art magazines were pretentious rubbish and were written for people who were blind.

(84)

Finance was an obvious problem so Kane with his experience, both commercial and artistic, knew that quality need not necessarily rely on expense. It was here he applied the lino cut and cut-out paper forms. He made use of these on the cover and interspersed throughout the text. Etchings were also used on the cover but not to such a successful degree. However, motifs in lino cut and woodblocks were a fresh approach. It was with the wood block and the linocut that Kane found expression. (See examples from Structure Magazine).

Kane also put the pen to work in an editorial, a light at the end of the Old Bog Road begins,

The problem that confronts me here is not so much the sincerity of the thing but to avoid writing an editorial. Editorials are abominable things, a dangerous business like all proclamations and declarations and speeches from the heart. Because despite the fact that I have long since ditched or have been ditched - or certainly left in the lurch by current interpretations of concepts like morals and integrity, there is a persistent internal nag that warns us off propaganda (mainly I suppose because it bores people). Luckily therefore, I don't think



Fig. 62 Untitled, 1973, linocut (255 x 210mm)

*I have to prevaricate. I am afflicted by belief
I have been accused of optimism.* (51)

Kane's handling of the linocut developed throughout the magazine from minor side illustrations to full blown illustrations and covers. (Note the flowerlike head beneath the diver's mask).

Ten editions of the magazine were published between Spring 1972 and Winter 1978. Prose, fiction, verse and articles on many diverse topics were printed, alongside these ran reproductions of many artists' work. Amongst these were included work by Alice Hanratty, Charlie Cullen, Ruth Brandt, Paddy Graham, and Patrick Hall. Boglandia, a satirical poem by Kane was printed in this magazine.

Whilst many of Kane's block printing has a charming quality, the direct straightforward imagery which wood block printing could produce, suited Kane's strong immediate graphic leniency. It is here he achieves an unique form of imagery and an urgency of expression that is strangely his own.

I realized the society we were living in demanded that we simply rely on our resources and even if we were reduced to a very primitive method, this is a more honest way to do it. So I began to produce those linocuts. I then got a great kick out of picking up old bits of abandoned furniture and making wood cuts from them. Again, it got away from the whole mystique of fine wood cuts etc. I went in to a shop near the Ha'penny Bridge, run by a Scotsman who sold all sorts of things. He was selling a little set of Japanese tools. They weren't tools for the Japanese method of woodcutting, they were Western type, North European woodcutters' tools. They came in a little cardboard box and cost half-a-crown. I used this and the lino and cheap wood. Then as I got into the thing, I realized a better set of tools might improve matters. I investigated better class blocks. (84)

Very much at home with this medium, Kane went on experimenting, using as his subject matter the whole Irish religious dimension and a continuation of what he refers to as the 'spirituality of Aetheism'.

I found that the wood block especially gave a terrific possibility for monumental work. I developed that in a certain personal way. I don't think I developed special techniques or anything like that. As far as I was concerned I got into a plane of plasticity which was, in my opinion, equal to that which could be achieved by painting. So therefore I did not feel that I was losing out in neglecting painting.

(26, p.53)

Indeed it was with the use of the wood block that he came into his own. For this reason I shall concentrate mainly on the wood block and linocut.



Fig. 4 Baptism of Christ in the Dodder, 1977,
colour linocut, (310 x 260mm)

Study for the 'Baptism of Christ in the Dodder', 1977
Colour linocut, 310mm x 260mm

This linocut, coloured with bright reds and blues, has an air of ludicrous irony, offset by an inward, painful, conflictual element. The print uses the expressive qualities of the hacked lino. It is a three-colour print on white stock. The use of the complementary -reds and blue consolidates the confrontational force of the print.

The portrait is a self portrait which seems to imply, 'I'm Christ, so is everyman', and simultaneously this aligns itself with the mockery and the absurdity in the title of using the River Dodder as a place for the Baptism.



Fig. 5 Torso, 1978, colour woodcut

'Torso', 1978

Colour Woodcut, 1978

This woodcut used the complimentary reds and blues with an underlying black/brown, employing three colour prints as in the 'Study for the Baptism of Christ in the River Dodder'.

The torso is of a very strong featured woman. There is a defiance in the full frontal pose. The textural hacking of the wood is combined with a lyrical curving line which gives it a sensuous sense of volume. A defiant sexuality is expressed through the use of reds on the breast and lips. This defiant air, however, does not dominate.



Fig. 6a Interior with Figures, 1979, colour woodcut (380 x 310mm)

'Figures in an Interior', 1979

A sort of... figure...
large side...
old tone...
overall...
an inflated...

The woodcut...
uted, El...
intermittent...
dominates...
The overp...
if some...

Another view...
shows the...
female form...
in a diving...
a Cindy Doll.

The colour has changed. The red and green become deeper and
a rich yellow colour is introduced. The forms are more
defined and the overall effect is more bland than the former
one.

(380 x 310) colour woodcut, printed as at right 2.018



Fig. 6 Figures in an Interior, colour woodcut (440 x 330mm)

'Figures in an Interior', 1979

A sort of psychological butchery presides. A female figure hangs side by side with a carcass of meat, as in a butcher's cold room. A bespectacled man with a lumpish nose presides overall. The female figure has the curves and volume of an inflated doll.

The woodcut is in three prints on white stock. There is a muted, fleshy pink and green in the background, which intermittently appears on the figures. A blood red predominates. The whole print produces a rough, cynical ethos. The overprinting inside the form of the head has a confusion as if several images were mixed up together.

Another version of this print, 'Interior with Figures', 1979, shows the same two figures taking part. This time, a second female form flanks the carcass. Her hands are upstretched in a diving position, maintaining the posture and essence of a Cindy Doll.

The colour has changed: the red and green become deeper and a rich yellow ochre is introduced. The forms are more defined and the overall effect is more bland than the former one.



Fig. 7 Study of Salome, 1979, woodcut (240 x 150mm)

'Study of Salome', 1979

Woodcut, 240mm x 150mm.

A graceful gliding movement is achieved with the form of the figure in this woodcut. The hand is raised, the head gives the direction of movement to the right. The hands and arms are strong and rounded. For visual verity only, one breast would be visible, the other would be covered by the forearm, yet both are visible. This gives way to the upward sweep of the raised arm. The head turns away from all this movement. The angular hat and long, straight hair adds to the severity. The grain of the wood runs horizontally, reinforcing the left to right movement.

This figure is repeated in Salome, with head of Gottfried Keller. She gesticulates towards the old bearded man, Gottfried Keller, the Nineteenth Century novelist and Town Clerk of Zurich. Putting both together was bordering on the whimsical. Here, the figure of Salome has an awkwardness and does not have the harmony of movement of the former woodcut.

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Woodcut, 240mm x 150mm.

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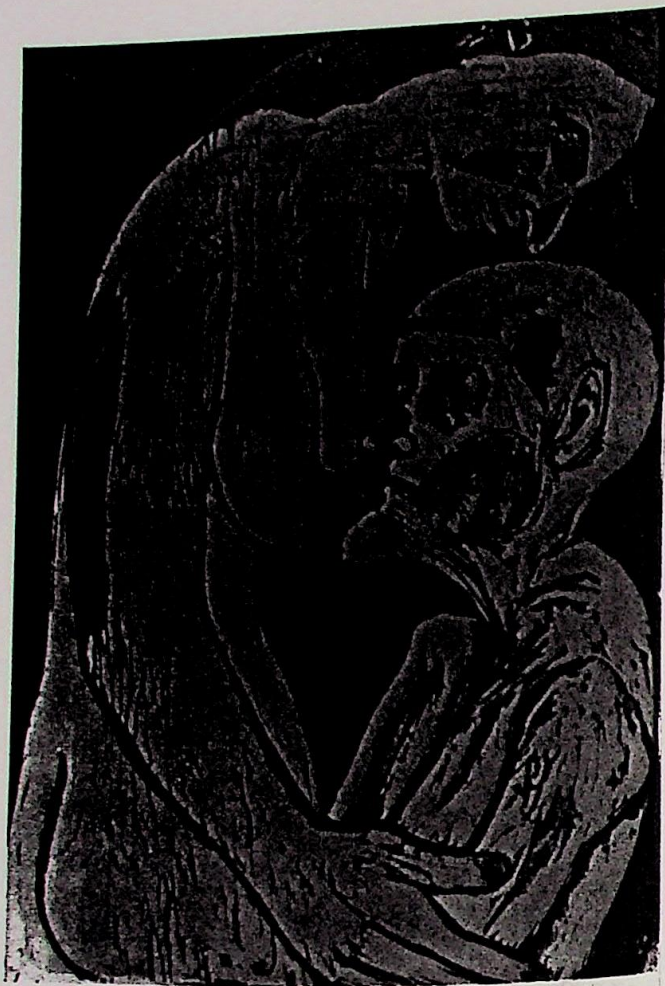


Fig. 8 Lot, colour woodcut (440 x 330mm)

'Lot'

Colour Woodcut, 440mm x 330mm

Here the theme of 'Unmatched Lovers' is used. This brings to mind the misogynous humour of Northern European artists, such as Lucas Cranach. The suave young woman presents her breasts to the wizened old man, who is depicted in a pastel yellow shade. He is simply the puppet; the woman bows her head with an expression of benign contempt. This is based on the story of Lot from the Book of Genesis. Lot is forewarned of the doom to befall the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, his wife and two daughters flee the city, Lot's hapless wife looks back at the rain of fire and brimstone and is turned into a pillar of salt. The old man and his daughters, believing themselves to be the sole survivors take a drastic course of action. They decide they must conceive and bear children: the only available male is their father. The incest taboo is lost on the two ladies, who proceed to befuddle their father's wits with wine and have their way with him.

Kane takes to this type of theme, a combination of malice and female sexual prowess runs through many of his works. The reaction instils repulsion.



Fig. 9 Car Park, 1982, woodcut (1300 x 2200mm)

'Car Park', 1982

Woodcut, 1300 x 2200mm.

This triptych is almost verging on the cartoon. It is a virtual re-statement of the themes of the 1976 prints, with the female nude and hanging meat carcasses. This time the victim is male. The male figure hangs upside down. Behind him are ominous city buildings and a Volkswagen car. In the right hand panel, the same figure is kicking to struggle free from the boot of a car. In the centre panel, the male hangs naked from the waist, his wrists are outside of the picture frame. His tongue thrusts out of his mouth.

It is difficult to ascertain the cause of his obvious pain, a pert female profile, however, passes by disconcerted.

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL KANE

(abbreviations: M.K. = Michael Kane; A.R. = Ann-Marie Regan)

A.R. You were saying the difference between Matisse and you was the 'edge'.

M.K. The difference is probably the fact that for him the human element was a motive to produce some kind of great decorative monumental art at its best. This is something we all want to produce and something I think all artists should aim for - the production of decorative monumental art but for me, the human figure must be a human that feels, it must be a creature whose predicament is recognised so that the ultimate result is not ignored.

A.R. Is this feeling, your feeling?

M.K. You see, you choose a theme. It could be anything. It could be from last year showing a sequence of woodcuts on the theme of Agaememnon and his return from Troy, but obviously one has to project either personal experiences or imaginative situations: situations which one imagined would be the case and one has to put one's self into imagined experiences in order to be able to express those things. To that extent, I suppose, it is expressionist alright.

A.R. Does that resolve something for you, or is it didactic?

M.K. Well, I hope it would be both. I would hope that the whole process of art both the ordinary business of working and these imaginative states would bring about certain resolutions of conflict. I feel that this has been the case and I feel that this is one of the reasons why people devote so much passion to art, if not only that - It's dangerous to think it's just a therapy - it's more than that but there must be some change of this kind to make it valid.

A.R. But what about the viewers?

M.K. Well, I would hope that the viewers would be the same as I am. They are human beings as well so they must be able to project themselves into those situations also. I mean I suppose that was the old Aristotelean aesthetic that one appreciates the pity and the terror of the tragedy and comes away purged in some way.

A.R. Politics, where does that come into it?

M.K. That is a difficult one. I always found myself ... what's the phrase, at some kind of angle from politics. I always seem to hit it indirectly. You know I can't see myself producing very many works directly inspired by political events. In a very clear immediate sort of

way - there's always an ambiguity somewhere because politics again is just another part of one's general experience of humanity. It's a very important part but it isn't the only part. That I think is the difference between propagands, pure propaganda and art, which is much more comprehensive though I do think it is possible to make propaganda works which are great art.

A.R. Like what? I can't imagine that is so.

M.K. No, I think it is. I think if it were done properly. If it were done well.....

M.K. I think yes.. I think there were very great paintings produced in Russia after the Revolution, and in Mexico also around the time of the Revolution. People like Cicero and Rivera, especially you can see the art itself was so great that it transcended the didactic purpose, and in that sense almost all great art was propagandist. You know, when something was commissioned by a prince or a pope in the Renaissance, it was obvious some kind of propagandistic purpose was there: Giotto's murals were didactic in their purpose but because they were great art it doesn't really matter what the motivation was.

Personally I am not a political animal. I cannot devote that much passion to politics as a pursuit, as an interest but it has to be there. I think that is the element, that to some extent has to be present in art because of all this complexity ... to make it valid, is irony. One has to approach subjects with a very sort of sceptical view. Nothing can be that pure, you know.

You cannot take things that seriously. Humanity has so many little flaws in it that nothing is perfect. No ideal is - how should I put it - I mean a pure ideal will probably never be realized. There is always that - slight contradiction that you have to take into account.

A.R. You know the woodcuts you did of women (a lot of them are very edgy) were flanked with meat carcasses - a lot of them. I find them repulsive... I don't know what the word is ... but raw. I lot of your wood cuts, not so much painting, portray women in this manner.

M.K. Yes, well I probably do due to a personal failure I was going through and there was a certain unconscious attitude towards women in general, or maybe towards one or two women in particular that may have become predominant at that time... As I say again, I wasn't theoretically very articulate with myself about why I was doing these things and in fact, some of them. I am not particularly keen on myself anymore. That happens with all work at a certain stage. You just outgrow something or you just get beyond it. You may come back to it twenty years hence -

but you don't see it in the way you saw it then.

A.R. So this was more a violent expression from a personal experience.

M.K. Yes, certainly in some of them. In the ones that came out of experiences occurring around the late Seventies. Certainly the ones of the last decade and a period of time I spent in Zurich. They were very much rooted in personal experiences at the time. Others then were probably expressions of unconscious tendencies in my own psycho-sadistic impulses and so on, which I suppose everybody I think, they are part of everybody's psyche. You know sometimes we don't acknowledge their existence and when they do come up, they come up in a rather ugly way.

Even though some of those works may be deeply personal, I don't think that any human being can be so personal that he is not like anyone else - we share the same structures of psyche etc. and so on.

A.R. You print, write and paint. It is a very diverse to be able to do so...

M.K. Well, actually, I don't think it is. At the present moment I don't really write very much at all. Whatever literary activity I engage in now, I am trying to put it all into one box (rather large) work, which be a sort of personal testament in a way - in a way only - the only way I could mix graphics or the visual element would be to illustrate it in rather conventional or old fashioned ways and that would be a satisfactory production if it worked out the way I would like to do. In the past, I wrote I think, or as far as I can recall, I wrote verse or some prose, usually during intervals between bouts of painting and printmaking. It seemed as if the energy that was there to be expressed, rushed in the vacuum that was left if I wasn't painting. It was a curious kind of thing that way so one alternated with the other. Then, in recent years the poetic muse seems to have departed altogether and it may be due to the fact that I do not have very many bouts of prolonged inactivity in visual works.

A.R. Is it not strange that they should all be separate - that you do not put words on painting or mix them all together.

M.K. Yes.

A.R. Traditionally as an artist you paint, can sculpt or you dance, sing, whatever.

M.K. They don't cross over theatre and so possible more.

Well, cinema is the one thing that I often thought would be the one synthesis of all these tendencies yet it is not a unique set of talents or whatever you would like to call it. I mean, most painters are very good writers

throughout history that has been the case. I don't know why that should be so - maybe I suppose it is because they have a developed visual sense. They see the world in terms of images.

M.K.

... and because they are ordinary, human beings with flaws like everybody else. They tend to be articulate so they articulate things in terms of their visual experience. That is what I find about my writing. I am describing images all the time and people in them, little images of people running about. The difference is that in literature they talk; in the painting they don't. The idea of painting words on the picture has often crossed my mind alright but these are very complicated things, you see..... like writing, painting graphics and so on. They are there because they are traditional categories and it's very hard to get away from traditional categories - it is very hard to invent new forms because the old forms are so satisfactory anyway.

It is only in recent years that people have begun to see cinema as an alternative to distinct forms. People have begun to mix up categories in all sorts of ways and not all together in a satisfactory way. I find sometimes you go to the theatre and you told this is an astounding, mind billowing audio visual experience and in fact what you get is a load of rubbish because it's neither one bloody thing or another. There is no narrative line, there's no clear image because everything is thrown together without any cohesion, and obviously not much intelligence put to it so that I don't know if that's a very satisfactory explanation.

We live in Ireland in a very literary society - the whole pavements ooze literature, especially Dublin so it's hard not to be involved in some way in literature and I think there is no harm in that but you know it's just that one belongs in a literary tradition, one is a painter, and one tends to do both but basically I am a painter. Now graphics is something I've never felt that there should be conflict between painting and graphics. Throughout history you always got that alternation between one art and another. You had extreme cases like Michaelangelo and he went through everything in the visual field - from drawing some certain graphic forms, painting, sculpture right up to architecture. So it's really nothing odd.

A.R.

What about the thing about painting versus graphics: graphics being printed matter - being able to get across to a wider audience. You don't have to go through the gallery system.

M.K.

Well I tried to exploit that - Actually that is how I first began to develop the wood block printing as it turned out. First of all, it suits my style. The

reason why I began to experiment with the block printing was I had began to produce the magazine, Structure. That was some kind of an attempt to bring art into a more accessible relationship with the public and living in a literary city, it was an obvious thing to do. It would give free reign to my literary and my artistic interest and the wood block especially, in black and white, was easily and cheaply reproduced. Of course that brought up other difficulties. As well one had to finance the magazine, one had to get literary contributors, one had to maintain high standards of production and content. So it wasn't really bypassing the gallery system that much because you were up against just as many obstacles as you would be in trying to get your work shown on the walls of a gallery. What I think that it did, during the limited time it existed, it got across to people who might not normally have been exposed to certain sorts of expression. I would like to have been able to continue that and I would like to have been able to do it all the time. There are all sorts of ideas about broadsheets and one thing or another but, as I say, it takes up so much time and energy that you feel you are not doing other more important things that you want to do - maybe more essential to you - but it's something that I regret having had to abandon because graphics do, as you say, relate very strongly to literature. They are part of the same thing.

A.R. You have said that Irish artists are afraid to say what they think and that a lot of them are actually morons. How important do you think the intellectual element is?

M.K. It is absolutely essential. You see, any artist has to be intelligent. I think the whole basis of what is regarded as talent is in fact simple intelligence. Intelligence is a relatively simple thing - most people are intelligent, some people are clearer in their minds than others but when it comes down to it, intelligent people can express themselves in a certain way, at a certain level - that becomes art.

A.R. But were you not talking about appealing to mind more?

M.K. No. That was a very particular reference to a certain attitude that commentators had to art. It was a comment on artists than on commentators of art and it wasn't confined to Ireland. I remember a quotation of Picasso's, I cannot remember the occasion on which I quoted it - that artists were expected to be unbiassed with a paint brush, that talent and things like genius were supposed to be phenomena that came from nowhere, that you really didn't have to use your brains, that you could be like a monkey - and produce.

A.R. ... and emotion?

M.K.

Ah well, maybe emotion was something else you were supposed to be able to have, emotion without brains. You were somehow supposed to be able to get yourself across without actually having to think. It was a sort of romantic thing. It caught on especially in France and elsewhere between the wars. It took off very strangely here. It was easy in the Forties and Fifties here. You had a peculiar situation. Most of the people who went to art school were girls who actually could not get into other professions because they hadn't been given the kind of education that boys were given. It was only boys, who were expected to enter the professions. Girls were considered to be the kind of people who just hung around waiting for the rich man to marry them and the result was you had a load of semi amateurs in the art schools, and you had rich suburban ladies after their marriage with the leisure to indulge this 'thing' called talent. This was encouraged by their husbands who did not know their arse from their elbow as far as talent was concerned. They did 'nice' decorative little things and everybody thought these were lovely little things. They were feminine and 'art' was feminine. This was an insult to women more than anything else - but if you come out and address it, it's a very delicate problem, because if say it in public someone is going to come up and say that's anti-women. But in fact it is not so, it is pro-women because I demand exactly the same standards from women as I do from men but in those days, art itself was considered sort of feminine so you had men painting kind of feminine pictures as well. I won't mention any names - just to be different for a change, but this was the situation that you had so that if someone came along who actually had ideas and who was prepared to express these 'ideas', write about art in a clear minded way and use his intelligence, he was considered to be a bit odd - 'Oh, he's an intellectual, not a painter', as if there was some difference. That's what I was trying to say, then maybe I expressed it a little too glibly and too crudely but it was something of the period that one found oneself very much up against. The education was different too. You went to art school and you were expected to learn to draw. Other than that nobody took much interest, and I don't remember people writing theses or anything like. There weren't that many books, there wasn't any library in the College of Art, for very few people read books. You weren't supposed to have very many theories about art. You know, it was all something that happened on a different level somehow. What I demand of art is what I demand of any other activity, either in the arts or out of it, that is a high degree of intelligence - just ordinary clear thinking.



Fig. 13 Self Portrait with Roses
I want to be the flower not the gardener.
 Paddy Graham



PATRICK GRAHAM

Born in Mullingar, Westmeath, in 1903, Patrick Graham's family was poor.

He hadn't enough work to be working about.

Early life in Mullingar presented a number of problems, as Graham says.

At the age of seven I discovered that my emotional was terribly shortening.

A brutally guarded man who was to remain with him for several decades as he retreated into a silent, bordering on unresponsive from which to view his fellow men with safety.

Patrick Graham's antipathy to intellectualizing goes back to his school days in Mullingar when he grew up surrounded by lakes and rivers.

But in place of learning about babbling brooks in terms of nature and poetry, and I thought education was missing the point.

His artistic abilities were apparent from an early age. Around the age of fifteen he was taken under the wing of local teacher Robert Larkin, whom he still remembers with gratitude. Together Larkin and Graham painted some for local theatrical groups. Larkin introduced Paddy to drawing, pigment mixing and grinding, a valuable foundation for his future career.

In 1925, Paddy got a scholarship to the National College of Art and there he was called as the new boy genius.

All I was doing was imitating myself and all I could possibly do was become a better and older.

As the years went by it became very confusing.

CHAPTER 3

PATRICK GRAHAM

Born in Mullingar, County Westmeath, in 1943, Patrick Graham's family was poor:

We hadn't enough work to be working class.
(85)

Early life In Mullingar presented a number of problems, as Paddy says,

At the age of seven I discovered that to be emotional was terribly threatening (26)

a basically guarded mien which was to remain with him for several decades as he retreated into a silence bordering on moroseness from which to view his fellow man with safety.

Patrick Graham's antipathy to intellectualizing goes back to his school days in Mullingar where he grew up surrounded by lakes and rivers.....

but in class we learned about babbling brooks in terms of metre and rhyme, and I thought education was missing the point. (85)

His artistic abilities were apparent from an early age. Around the age of fifteen he was taken under the wing of local teacher Dermot Larkin, whom he still remembers with gratitude. Together Larkin and Graham painted sets for local theatrical groups. Larkin introduced Paddy to drawing, pigment mixing and grinding, a valuable foundation for his future career.

In 1959, Paddy got a scholarship to the National College of Art and there he was hailed as the new boy genius.

All I was doing was imitating myself and all I could possibly do was become slicker and slicker.
(85)

As the years went by it became very conflicting:

There was an emotional side of me which no-one knew. All they could do was push the skill.
(40)

Within the School of Painting, then dominated by the R.H.A. he received a good deal of attention and encouragement, an experience which he found oddly unhelpful and at times, counterproductive.

I expected from the College that what we were going to talk about was humanity and all I got was a drawing board. 'Continue to do what you are doing and you'll be fine'.
(40)

He was not 'fine' - for Paddy there was an essential part which facility did not reach,

I never understood this facility in me. It got in the way of painting with integrity. I never understood what painting was about until I began to understand myself. Students must come to terms with that: to understand they are alone.
(85)

Paddy Graham was being pushed into the limelight in interviews and given all kinds of alluring promises of making it as a member of the R.H.A. at thirty:

Because of my background, it was implied that this (his skills) would break a bit of the social barriers.
(85)

The National College of Art has been a barren experience for Graham. The vacuum and lack of spirituality was filled by a resort to alcohol. The quiet country boy became as explosive as a fire cracker. In 1964, he was awarded his Diploma. During the years that followed he continued to drink heavily, this habit became paramount:

I did not know how not to be skillful and from this evolved a pattern of being destructive.
(85)

There were a number of hospitalisations. Curiously he regards these periods of 'incarceration' almost with affection and speaks of feeling safe - presumably from a world where he was continually required to perform and fulfill:

I learned through drinking, a kind of spiritual dimension and I suppose the foundation of courage.

It took me nearly dying five times (I admit openly that I am an alcoholic). I have not taken a drink in a long time - but eventually when I did stop - everything had to change, if I did not want to keep on repeating this tragedy, this was what I had to do.

(85)

Eric Fromm, in an extract from 'An Insane Society', with regard to health, marks out in a curious way the road which Graham took,

Mental health is characterized by the ability to love, to create by the emergence from incestuous ties with clan and soil, by a sense of identity based on one's experience of self as the subject and agent of one's powers by the grasp of reality inside and outside ourselves, that is, by the development of objectivity and reason.

(13, p.166)

This objectivity and reason does not operate on some higher level outside of the self but as an integral part of the whole person. Painting was an objective emotional means of dealing with 'self', the reality which Paddy Graham had to face. From 1974 onwards, Graham's work develops, matures. This is apparent through the exhibitions held year by year, and it is possible to see this process of language, the means of expression being built up.



Fig. 10 Joe, Notes from a Mental Hospital, 1974.

EXHIBITIONS

Throughout the years which followed as Patrick Graham began to adjust to himself, he strove desperately to find what he felt was a 'truthful' means of expression.

He has established a mixed reputation: he is seen as a bitter cynic at war with the world and, worse, as an artist wonderfully gifted by nature,

*who has spent the past decade or so kicking
his personal gift horse in the teeth.*

(85)

The opposing point of view is that he is seen as an artist par excellence, who demonstrates great courage in abandoning his gift, which certainly would have opened all kinds of easy options for him.

'Notes from a Mental Hospital', 1974.

During the early Seventies, Paddy Graham began to paint and draw again. He also began to write avidly,

in order to explain myself.

In 1974, he held a one-man show in Walter Cole's Emmet Gallery.

*Fear, anguish, dejection were expressively portrayed
in the faces and the figures of the unfortunate
patients. It was not an exhibition one could
easily forget.*

(69)

With a series of spontaneous and roughly wrought drawings, it demonstrated a violent effort had been made to put the slick and superficial academician to rest. 'Joe', a study of a patient in Mullingar Mental Hospital, is an expressive drawing, solid as the work

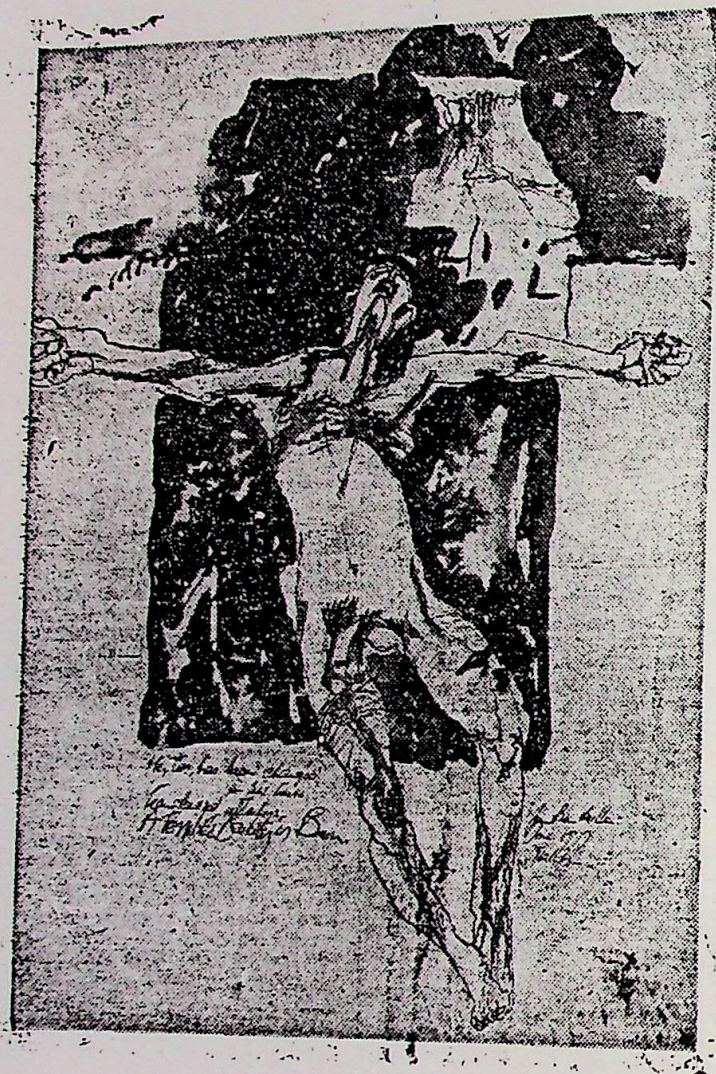


Fig. 11 Terrible Beauty, 1976.



Fig. 11A Early work, 1974

of Kathe Kollwitz. The blackened head sets on negative space, darkly contrasting with the large expansive hands, in the way she achieves a mass with expressive impulsive line. In 1976, Paddy Graham had another show in the Emmet Gallery. The work was drawn from wider sources. Paddy had spent some months in Sligo and there he had begun to question the Irish identity. 'A Terrible Beauty is Born' - the naked, broken body stretches out as if on a crucifix. Is it male or female? One wonders if the androgynous form is giving birth. The words from Yeats' poem, scribbled across the work, cry out:

*And all has been changed, changed utterly
A terrible beauty is born.*

(58)

Brian Lynch, in an article makes reference to the draughtsman-ship of the painting as:

*...little more than heavy pencilled male nude
and Art is indeed a muse: it couldn't care less
about the artist and his problems; all it cares
about is how well it is served.*

(58)

A lofty statement indeed! This was a service to which Graham could not devote his life.

'Munch's Tie' displayed that Graham had an interest in the work of Munch. Patrick Glendon says,

*His sense of colour his free handling of it, and
the quality of drawing rather than expressing
themselves directly speaks to the viewer. They
draw questions rather than answers, then set a
riddle, and do not stay for the answer.*

(45A.)

The painting 'Festival'. (This work was later to be framed with another painting and shown in the 'Making Sense' Exhibition and was renamed 'Notes from a Mental Hospital and other Love Stories'). The pregnant woman gives birth almost as a performance. It relates to 1969 when his son was born. He remarks that he remembers on visiting the hospital how the celebratory attitude geared the incident and process of child-birth towards the visit of the male. This was negation of the

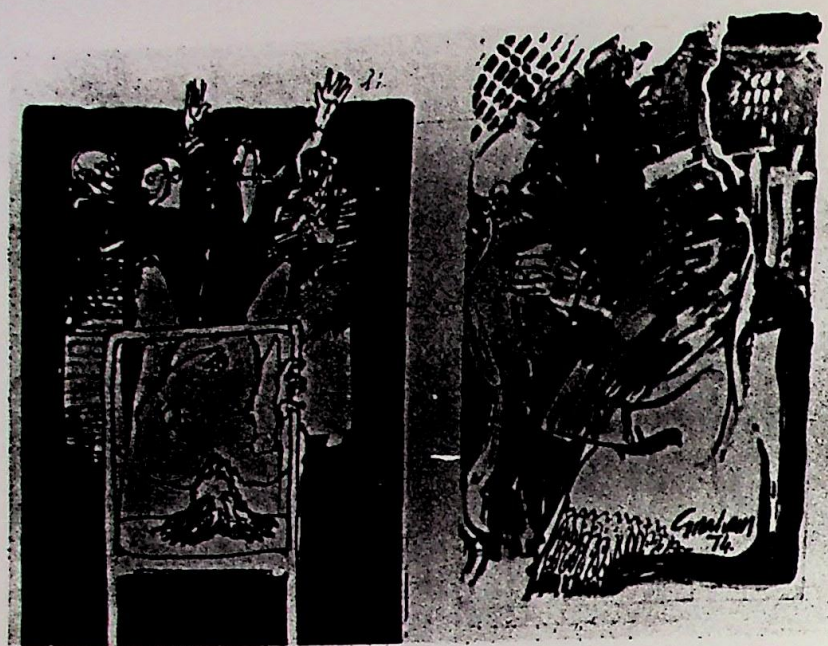


Fig. 12 Festival, 1976

realities of the pain, and the real personal sacredness of the situation. There is a sceptical dig directed at the role of the Church. The four figures at the end of the bed clasp their hands, throw their hands to heaven, welcoming the next lamb to the flock. In a country where, up to twenty years ago, the post natal woman was still 'churched' after giving birth, it is perhaps relevant.

The soft, but strong form of the woman is encased in a rigid rectangle, the inner rectangle is encased by the longer rectangle into which she gives birth. Into the midst of a receptive evil and applauding group, this painting in its re-framing is flanked by another where the priest lays his hand on the shoulder of the naked almost pliable woman. The woman's hands are held by her side with the attentive resolution of a soldier.

In 1977, at the Mews Gallery, Graham showed with Tim Hawkswork, a painter with whom he worked and who later went to America. This painter is currently showing with Paddy, Brian Maguire and Patrick Hall in Boston.

In 1978, a show was held in Keany's Gallery, Dun Laoghaire. Blaithin O Ciobhin commented,

I was unprepared for the shock or violence which confronted me.

(71)

In these paintings, Paddy Graham uses parts from magazines, unattainable women who tantalized from the pages of magazines were integrated into the canvasses with fragments of painting and drawing. Words were scribbled across the page with an angry black marker or a splash of paint, acting intentionally or unintentionally as a censor.

'Burning Bridges : A Diploma of 1964 from the College of Art' has a red 'cancelled' stamped across it, surmounted on which is a self portrait. The eyes are gouged out, leaving catastrophic

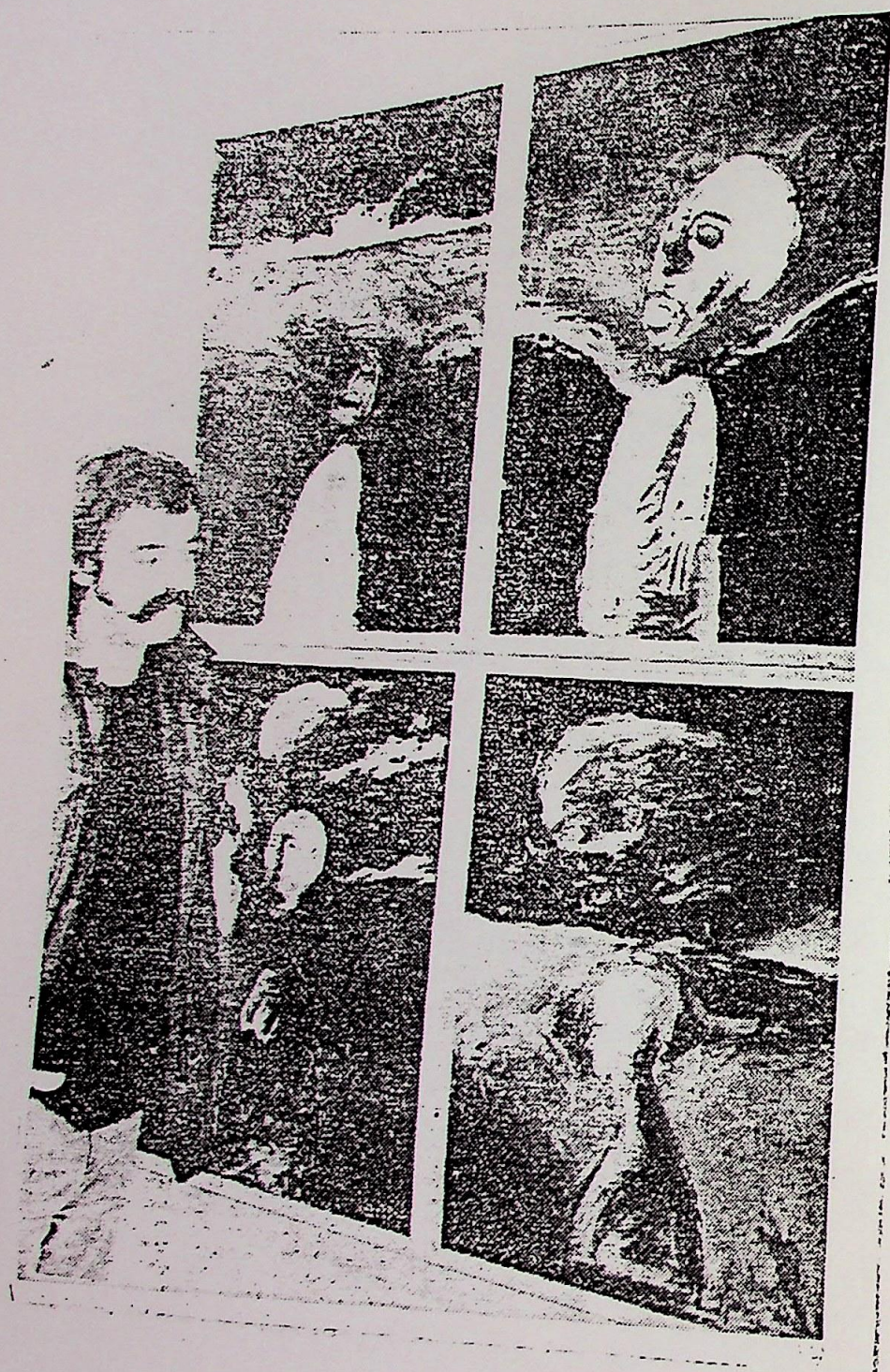


Fig. 14 1943 1980, oil on canvas.

chaos of paint in their place. In this, it seems, he makes an ardent effort to turn his back on his own academic education.

In 1980, Paddy Graham was the winner of the Exhibition Award of the Independent Artists, held in the Sir Hugh Lane Gallery. This work was composed of four rectangular paintings, together forming a square. In the first section, the head is about to be submerged in a wave-like formation. In the second section, the figure is brought up to the foreground, the cloud or wave performs a decapitation on the figure. In the third section, the cloud-like element is reduced and appears above the head which is suspended above the body form. In the first section, the head rejoins the body, the cloud remains above the head but there is a separation - a horizon line and land mass through which the united head and body walks, ominously aware of the cloud. In this painting Patrick Graham attempts to deal with his life from 1943 - 1980. (Patrick Graham has said that for him the painting is 'home' and in this painting he demonstrates that concept).

Painting a picture is like those moments when you achieve total unity with yourself and think you understand everything.... But they pass and are gone and if you go looking at them again and try to explain them they lose their meaning.

(78)

A certain ease, a more articulate use of the expressionistic language of this enters the work and in comparison to 'A Terrible Beauty is Born', this period of work marks a change towards articulation, a less desperate handling of the medium. This may be due to the fact that Paddy had begun to come to terms with his personal problems. For Patrick Graham, painting is 'a language for me about myself and how I see things. I would like people to trust it, to make contact with it'. Later he would define this for himself:

In essence my painting is concerned with the conflictual no-mans land between the two realities; the realities of being in the world, as against the not 'I' or the spiritual sensation of a hidden 'I'.

(45, p.3)

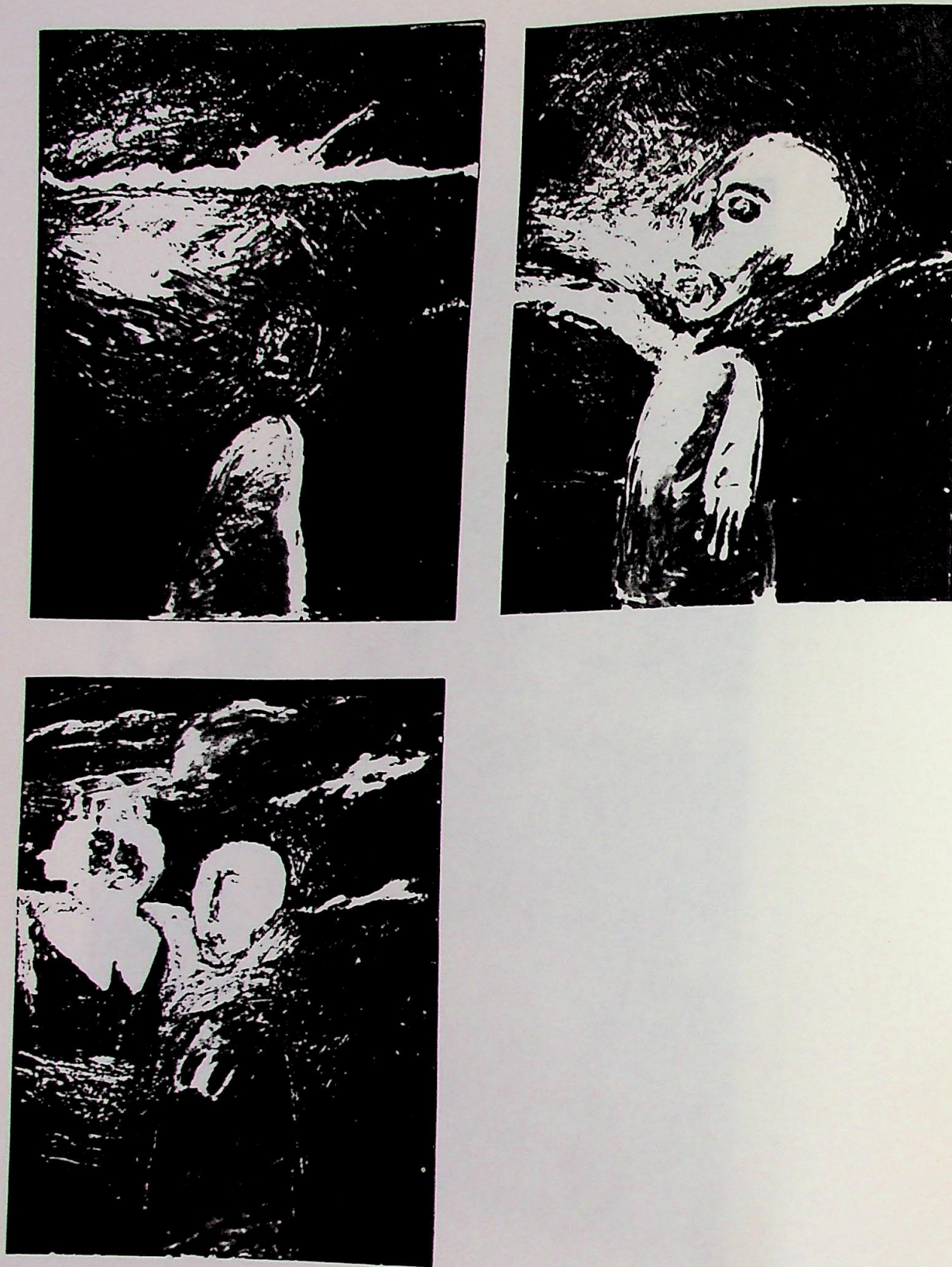


Fig. 14A Three sections from Fig. 14, 1943 - 1980



Fig. 15 Yahoo, 1982, collage and mixed media

'Yahoo Exhibition', Lincoln Gallery, 1982

In 1982 he held the first one man show since 1978:

Here Graham depicts everything we love and hate in our country from sham hypocrisy to the real anguish,
(71A)

Blaithin O Ciobhin says in an Irish Press article of 1982,

We laugh sometimes as we view the painting, more from a sense of hilarity - our politics, religion and all we live by, are revealed in works which do not compromise.
(71A)

Yahoo! - The yahoo Irish personality, the violence, the sexuality are all shown, fierce, uncompromisingly, bleak. Brian Fallon writes in an article of 15 April 1982,

Where the exhibition succeeds is in its innate strength of personality and a kind of unconventional courage. This man is not entirely sure of what he wants to say or where he is going but the energy is undeniable.
(43)

Some critics did not know how to take this rough expressionistic style which was always in the background of Irish painting:

Paddy Graham's paintings have a rough, rude vigour that speaks of great reservoirs of energy.
(40)

Aidan Dunne describes the show as

A junk yard of history. It provides us with an ironic account of what we would like to be the case. It mocks us in revealing our dreams as scrap, our best ideas rushed and crumpling monstrosities. It is made frighteningly clear now with the best intentions we can pervert and destroy dreams, ideas and things. It is no less passionate but now the expression is less ordered and deliberate. The emotions are seen from a distance tinged with satire, irony, even hurt. This is an important show and a milestone in the career of an important artist.
(35)

Emotion and politics were often separated in Paddy Graham's early life and he became a total intellectual as a self defence

ploy. Later, he began to come to terms with his deep sense of isolation, guilt and despair. Some of these feelings, he connected directly with Ireland and its past. He talks of what political oppression does to people, and how they form a protective sense of self. He believes that the identity formed by the Irish people under British Rule had more to do with Catholicism than anything, even before Nationalism.

If, because of political oppression started, to say, 'I am a Catholic', the Catholicism became the sole purpose of living and identity. The type of Catholicism which abounded at this time was different from the rest of Europe, it was very strict and very Jansenistic.

(85)

Graham perceives that this type of religion was not so much about spirituality, rather than a type of identifying principle, and focal point, a magnet towards which they were drawn. Because of the rigid position, the humanity of the people became frozen. Suppression of sexuality, then the very basis of survival suffered, and alcohol assumed great importance. Graham believes that if your identity says you cannot do this, you must do that, something happens, you build up an internalised system about being human. He believes that this is bred from generation to generation. These are the unmentionable things with which he deals.

RECURRING THEMES: IRELAND/WOMEN

The woman appears in roles of religiosity: the Virgin Mary, Mother Ireland, Mother Earth, Seile na Gig (ancient Celtic Goddess of Fertility), the Mother of the Land, the Four Green Fields, Kathleen ni Houlihain, 'The Old Sow that eats her Farrow'. Almost always the woman relates to Ireland and to his own life.

Sexual repression during the Forties in Ireland was permeated through the 'Mother Church'. The Mother was a good vehicle through which the Church worked. A Catholic boy would repent and confess his sins in the darkness of the confessional. Conflicts occurred between the reality of sexual impulses and the rationalisation in terms of dogma, as being something evil, ugly and perverted. Out of this suppression, women became a threat to Paddy, he had to keep a safe distance from the

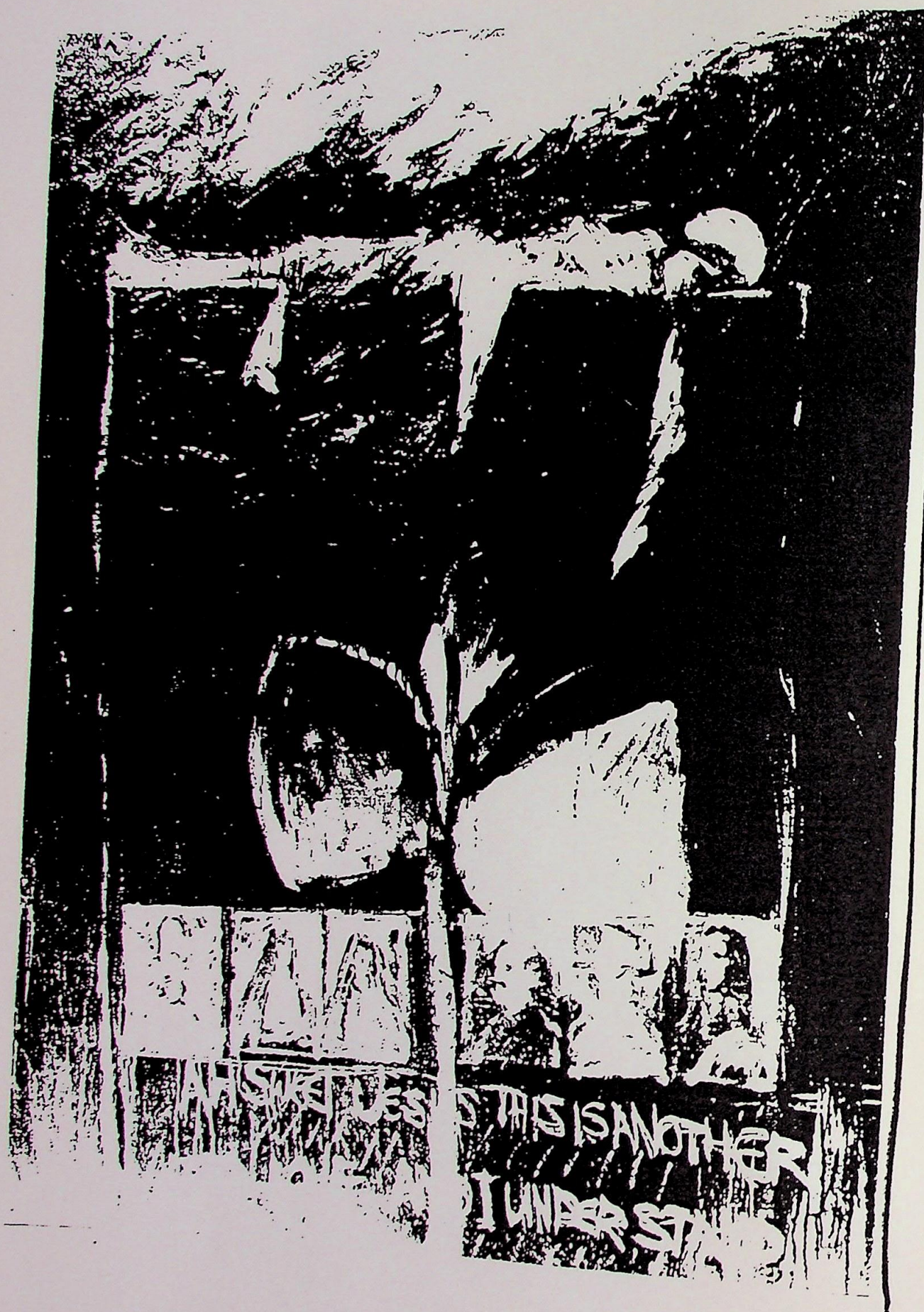


Fig. 16 Ireland 2



Fig. 17 Ireland - Mammy



Fig. 17A Mammy (finished piece with lettering)

He says he was 'starved and illiterate' emotionally. To overcome this, to understand both himself and the cause of his problem, women, he did so in the only way he knew, through paint. Historic, political, personal sexual and emotional elements are torn away in a quest for some reality, some sure ground from which to advance. The force is brutal, destructive, ugly.

The painting, 'Mammy' depicts the woman with the head decapitated into the background landscape. Along the side is inscribed 'Ireland Now', and 'As Irish as - ', in big childish writing under the figure is the word, 'Mammy'. All are pitched into a heightened plane of emotional painful questions:

*I do a lot of painting about my mother. I want to
get to know her, what it was like to be her, to remove
the parent thing.*
(84)

Paddy Graham's work is very much the child of his own Irish upbringing. This was, according to Paddy, the all too typical small town Irish Catholic family, deeply ingrained and incarcerated in religious and social taboos. His father was an alcoholic and was away from the family home. This left Paddy to be reared by his mother and in the company of his sisters. He maintains that the experience of having grown up in a household dominated by women, is a factor of great importance to his work and has a strong influence on his portrayal of some of the female figures in his work. Paddy Graham explores the immense power held by Irish mothers such as his own. He felt that fathers were grey figures compared with their spouses. Religious and moral opinions were moulded by mothers, whose dominance was absolute.

*Men were scared shitless of them. It was okay in their
eyes to kill and shoot people but to do anything sexually
was out of line, was the fucking pits.*
(84)

In place of warm, unquestioning love and open tenderness, he was given dogma. Graham portrays this rigid strength, the strength of the oppressed. 'Mammy' is a torrid figure, which sits, rigid, hand clasped on knee, the decapitated head recedes in to the background landscape in a roaring shriek. It echoes his own figure, 1943 - 80. At least he gives himself the same treatment.

Fig. 16A Ireland 1

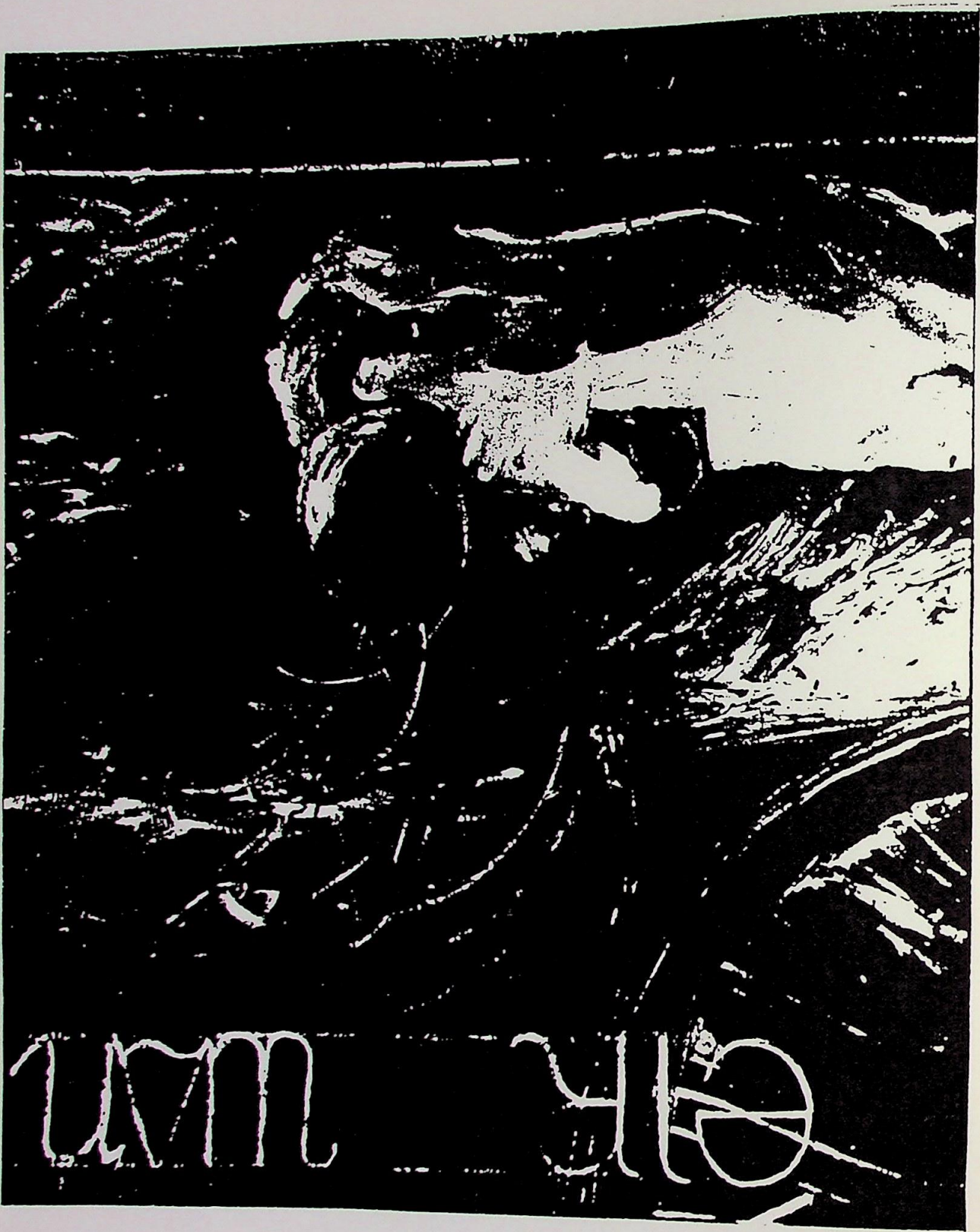




Fig. 18 Bog Woman, Memories of the Land, 1980, oil on canvas

'Bogwoman: Memories of the Land' was shown in the Lincoln Gallery in 1982. A female figure, naked from the waist, apart from black stocking, lies in a dark brown bog landscape. Above the rich organic land mass is a stormy sky. The thighs and lower torso are a tightly constructed mould, bone and muscle are shared in a fully tactile manner. The upper half of the figure is treated more fluidly, arms, torso and head virtually merging. The wet, tacky landscape is painted freely.

Graham has a great love of the land. He recalls at a very young age taking off his clothes and lying down in the Westmeath boglands - submerged in the sensuality of the experience. How this strange enigmatic image evolved is recorded by Patrick in a series of photographs. Originally there were two figures, lovers locked together in a tight embrace, painted in a primitive manner and resembling a large amoeba. Beyond the figures an ocean stretches out, indicated by streaks of blue, and above that, the sullen red sky is broken by a stormy discharge. The ocean disappears and is replaced by orange and dark blue clouds of the final image. The figures have lost their pink fleshy essence and are resolved to a linear, more taut structure. In the final stage, they are replaced by the sexual female described above.

'Towards an Exhibition', A Paper by Patrick Graham, July 1984

Patrick Graham tends to work from his experience. This is demonstrated in a paper in which it can be seen how his own whole personal tragedy and the need to find truth (something that for him was a means of survival) colours his whole thinking with regard to the Irish nation and the art of that nation. Out of having to face the contradictions in himself in order to survive, he faces the contradictions of a nation, of religion in a hope that it will produce a positive effect.

Graham sees his own race as being 'creatures of oppression'. He sees this as the tragedy of the Irish condition:

This repression of ourselves was a needful response at one time - but that it should still manifest

itself in so many areas of the Irish psyche is denying ourselves a vision of ourselves as we truly are.

Repression follows oppression.

(46, p.1)

Graham contends that the repression has been used as a self protective gesture,

for survival both on an individual and national level. If a race is oppressed physically and politically, what is being attacked is the sacred right of that race to retain identity and a sense of separateness and its spiritual response to an idea of self.

(46, p.2)

The response to the threat of such a need is withdrawal and to

build a protective wall around this identifying last wall of defence.

(46, p.2)

Thus he sees this as an imminent evolving tragedy,

Bred from generation to generation a perverted self and national identifying process continues. Dogmas and rigidity begin to shape the psyche of the nation.

(46, p.3)

What once came about out of the need of the oppressed now becomes the foundation stone of repression, where that most inquiring of instincts, the nation's humanity becomes the threat. Paddy Graham uses this 'threat' to confront himself and the humanity of humanity. Here we see again how Paddy Graham forces an internalised structure of examination on himself and the nation:

There are many threats seen and responded to by behavioural change - but the subjective emotional response becomes the greatest threat - and the inner nature of the people now becomes the even bigger threat, than the oppressing external force, threatening that great emotional, creative humanity of such a nation as ours, which is sacrificed to the rigid, dogmatic response now seen as the only means of survival.

(46, p.4)

So it appears for Graham the subjective, the emotive equals truth because for him outside forces have produced rigidity and dogma. Thus he sees as a false identifying process and a false response to deny our true feelings towards events of great subjective importance.

A legacy of conditioning over centuries leaves us feeling guilty about Nationalism, embarrassed about sexuality, judgement and wholly rational about things of emotional or subjective intent...

So-called civilized behaviour becomes a mimicry of the countries' most despised and/or liked (as some nations come to need an oppressor just as the child of cruel parents clings to that dependent need). This again is the response to denied humanity.

(46, p.3)

A nation devoid of humanity, Paddy Graham feels, becomes rational/intellectual; it has to because of guilt of the oppressed, its own terrible anger and its crushed spirit,

At the other extreme it mimes its master or gives it status beyond its worth. Rationalist activity is considered clever and civilized by certain groups of Irish Society. These groups are actually only reflecting a denial of who they/we really are, and see themselves as civilized citizens of the greater world, embarrassed by Irishness.

(46, p.3)

Patrick Graham has now arrived at a situation of rationalizing the position of the rationalists and is in danger of falling into his own trap. In terms of paint, in terms of human values, it seems he is willing to employ any means at his disposal. Graham wants to tear away the layers of surface false identities: false, according to him because it does not recognise its own emotional history. He speaks of these people:

They point to the future, the external, denying the past has meaning, or that history is to be understood, felt, resolved before the truth of ourselves and our creative group are heard of for 'our' truth, political, cultural and social. We avoid truth at the expense of becoming a dumping ground, a cap-in-hand agreeable partner to deceit in all aspects of our being.

(46, p.3)

Graham insists that the posturing of the 'cultured, rationalising

intellectualizing' does not recognise Irish writing and theatre (an area unlike the visual arts, where Ireland has managed to retain some semblance of truth to identity),

The truth of Irish writing/theatre has given credibility to Irish writing as truly international. What is truly international is our own idea of ourselves which has nothing to do with international good taste.
(46, p.4)

With this idea of Ireland which Patrick Graham tried to uncover in exhibitions such as 'Yahoo' and 'Ireland' (mentioned previously), he spurns painting in an international style and see those who paint in this manner as being the supporters and practitioners of international mannerism and rationalizing this as the right approach is only consolidating a view that only survives appalling ignorance and/or a conditioned response of a nation bereft of its own belief of its place and its own valid notion of itself.

Paddy Graham see this as a challenge which is, that one sees this conditioning itself as the disease - risks must be taken in understanding the source and response of such conditions .

The challenge is not to fill this vacuum in ourselves with all the shiniest toys of style and trends from abroad and turn the country into the cultural junk yard of England, America or anywhere else. What in fact, the rational elite are saying is that we have had a virgin birth, so to speak artistically, and avoid art as a process of struggle. We can arrive fully fledged on the international scene.
(46, p.4)

This cloning of something that looks vaguely international, he sees as an insult to international art and artists. He constantly strives to call back to base, to examine what is on his own doorstep. He wants to find primarily his own language and secondarily, an innate Irish cultural visual language.

To deny a process solely, the right of an artist - nation - in understanding its own complex arrival at visual solutions to its own place, its own psyche, social and political identity... By ruining this will say a lot about ourselves.
(46, p.4)

He feels that the Arts are important in that they establish a country's spiritual identity, a confidence and sureness of being... the declaration of individuality. He talks of the major international shows abroad, funded by Irish money as showing this immaturity in its worst light. As a comfort, and ironically too, recognition is coming from abroad. Critics such as Elizabeth Sussmann, Institute of Contemporary Art, in America, and Lucy Lippard are recognizing the uniqueness and energy of the new Irish Art. Certain Irish artists,

believe in creating out of their own environment and understanding of the national psyche that we owe a gift to ourselves, our integrity and our confidence, which paradoxically is a true gift to international art in real terms.

(From 'Towards an Exhibition, P. Graham, July 1984)
(46)

Patrick Graham eventually came upon a position where, not only as a painter but as a human being, he could come to terms with a national and personal emotional history. With regard to history, he believes that many people,

understand it intellectually but actually miss the whole emotional side of it. You do not have several hundred years of oppression and get rid of it in fifty years with a semi-free political identity: there is a whole emotional side which people are afraid to touch.

(46)

Much of Patrick Graham's work comes from his ability to respond to his own humanity which he believes is the secret of how to look at his paintings. When he begins to paint, several things start to happen. Firstly, there is an emotional response ignited by something he has seen or heard. Within a week or two,

up come all these ghosts,

which he allows to come through 'to see what happens'. He employs his craftsmanship (for he is a conscientious craftsman),

*I have years of knowledge of painting and drawing.
All this goes into it.*

(84)

When he has a response to something, whether intellectual or emotional, and the response stays within him long enough, he pursues it through painting -

I am interested in why it bothers me. (84)

When the painting begins, objectivity becomes part of the process. Emotional response does not necessarily imply that he approaches his work emotionally,

Otherwise you do not make a picture, you make an emotional splurge. (84)

The skill which had once imprisoned him, does not any more, he commands it, he does not allow it to dominate,

paint now does generally what I want it to do. (84)

The expressive qualities of the work might give the impression of images splashed on to the canvasses according to the dictates of the moment. This is not the way in which he works. Patrick Graham says,

My paintings are very considered things. (84)

Paintings are usually built up, layer upon layer. He often paints a number of pictures and disregards the ones which he does not want before arriving at an image with which he is satisfied.

Much of the artistic intention and skill of Graham's work has been misunderstood. For example, Roderic Knowles, in his book on Contemporary Irish Artists writes in a directory of contemporary Irish artists in a listing at the back:

Another quasi-expressionist figurative style in which imagination is minimal and the lack of basic skills seems proposed as a virtue. Compositional elements include clumsy drawings or markings and chaotic smearing of colour. (54)

Graham's intention is not to display skill. The use of skill is apparent in many paintings (See Fig.). This section shows the tacky texture of background which contrasts with the sweeping strokes of paint. The use of soft pinks, the breasts and mouth of the figure is picked up by a more aggressive tone of reddish orange which glints from the eyes. This is picked up by the mouth from which the tongue licks out a subtle fine line of red traces, the nose in profile adding tension to the point of contact between the figure. The sweeping sensuous use of paint lends itself to the subject matter. The skill and intention of an Expressionist painter is grounded in an emotive visual language of its own. Without an understanding of this, it is difficult to grasp, to restate what was said in the introduction. You either feel intensely or you don't. It is obvious that Patrick Graham does and wishes to share this experience with other people because he believes he is being more truthful to himself, and others as human beings. For him the matter is entirely up to you - you can take it or leave it.

Patrick Graham says,

*I am not in the prison of what other people's views
of what Art should be. Therefore, I am more likely
to make good art rather than fashionable art.*
(85)

Through the years from 1981 to the present day, Patrick Graham has exhibited in group shows and in one-man shows, which were usually housed in the Lincoln Gallery.

'Making Sense', a group show held in 1981 in the Projects Art Centre brought together many of these painters, who had hitherto been exhibiting intermittently in scattered galleries.

Patrick Graham recently exhibited abroad in a two-man show with Brian Maguire, in Belfast and in the Pentonville Gallery in London in 1985. In 1986, he is exhibiting in London, Boston,

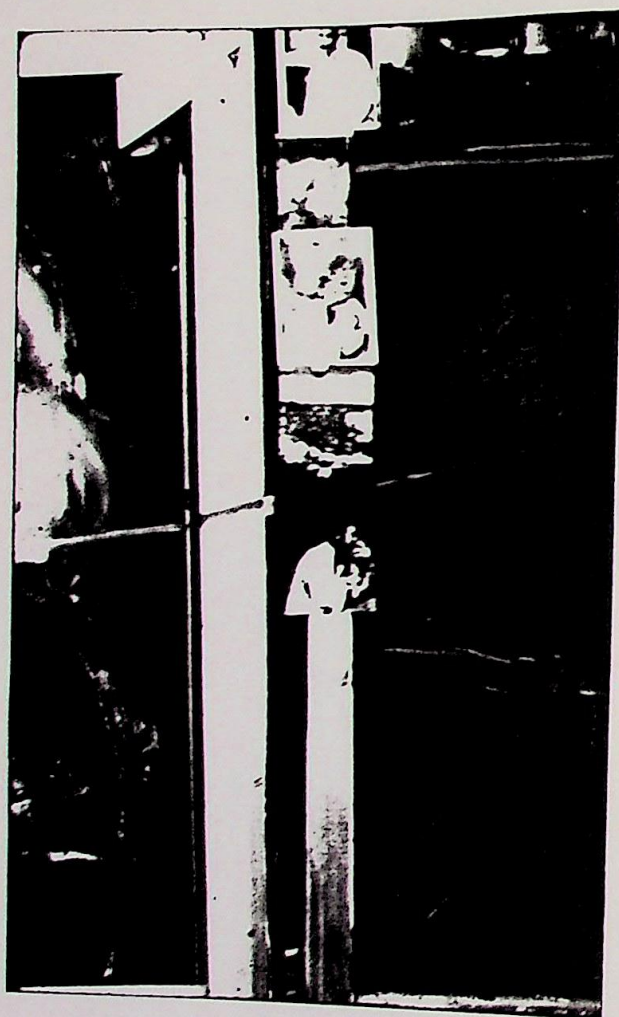


Fig. 19 Virgin Mary takes her Son from the Cross
19A Detail

New York, 1901, and the artist was
applying a whole

a painting by the artist
at the foot of the cross
from the Cross
Canvas is used
frame. A self-portrait
out solemnly, the
timber of the cross
expose what is
what reveals the
a whole-like figure

The photograph

the right, however, the artist's portrait
of a figure is a
figure from the other direction,
and is a landscape. This figure
is a landscape, the best photograph
of himself, that

the figure is painted in a way
to be seen as a figure in a
way of a figure and a figure. The
figure is a figure, the figure is a figure
the figure is a figure, the figure is a figure

Fig. 19 Detail from Fig. 19
Fig. 19 Detail from Fig. 19



Fig. 19B Detail from Fig. 19
19C Detail from Fig. 19

New York, Los Angeles, Edinburgh. Certainly he is now applying a whole knowledge of painting.

A painting by Graham in the Independent Artists Show held at the Bank of Ireland, depicts the Virgin Mary taking her Son from the Cross. In this work the reverse side of the canvass is used. Photographs are nailed to the stretcher frame. A self portrait with 'Daddy' written on it, looks out sullenly, his arms handless, are poised on the upright timber of the stretcher as if pulling back a sliding door to expose what is behind it. There is also a circular line, which extends from one hand back to the other. This enhoops a ghost-like figure, which is headed by 'INRI'.

The photographs which are nailed to the frame are photographs of Patrick, first facing to the right, towards the self portrait. This is inter-spaced by a coloured photograph of a figure in a landscape. The next photograph faces the other direction, inter-spaced again with a figure in a landscape. This figure is but a silhouette in the background. The next photograph on the frame is a black and white photograph of himself, this time facing to the left.

The Virgin, who embraces the figure is painted luxuriantly and passionately. The paint is built up and allowed to drip in place. There is a mixture of pink and slate blues. We can identify the great colourist, the great knowledge of paint which Graham possesses. The self portrait is roughly expressionistically painted with splashes of red.

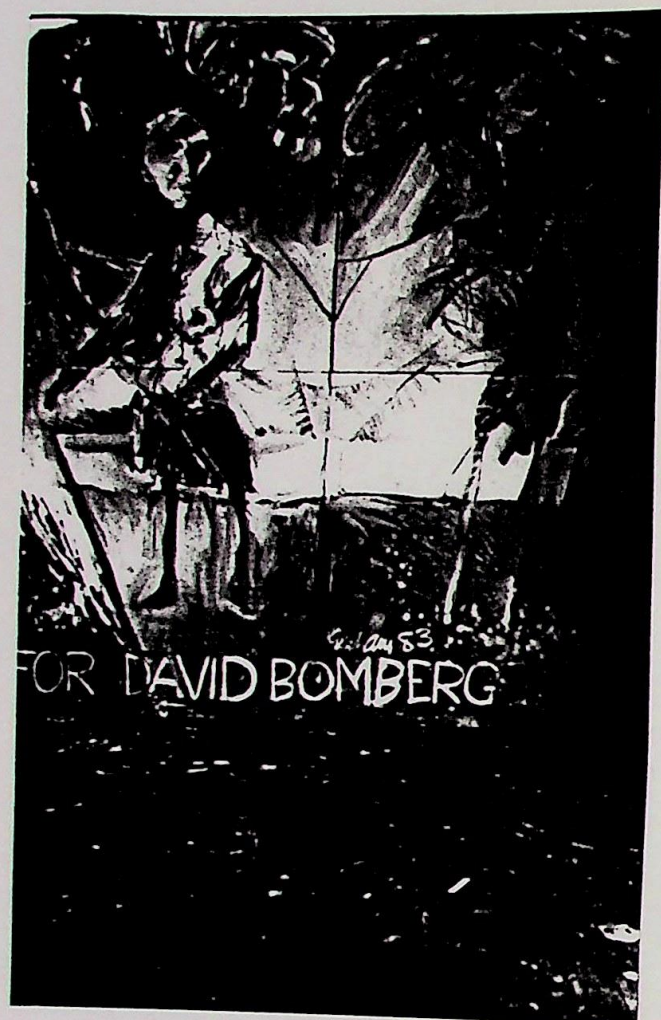


Fig. 20 Homage to David Bomberg, oil on canvas, 1984

'Homage to David Bomberg'

David Bomberg was an English painter, whose fall from favour was directly related to an expressionistic development. Serious assessment of this painter did not take place until after his death. In this painting, rich luscious surface lends itself to its subject matter, romantic in essence, concerned with the business of painting (using paint in a meandering movement), with difficulty and with the woman who stayed with him. The use of the paint meandering in swoops across the surface confounds the theme: the wearing of one's heart on one's sleeve. He comes 'up front' with what the painting is about: luxury of surface and emotion is being interjected and demanded.

He squares his conscience by declaring his intentions.
(66)

Graham often holds strong commitment to the notion of love and its expression, not in a sentimental sense but in its persistence and vulnerability to endure in the face of even the most painful adversity:

There's always someone pointing the finger at you.
(85)

Graham has used the same angular and elongated forms as Bomberg. Note in the self portrait, there is a similar use of quick sketchy lines; the treatment is similar.



Fig. 21 Was this Suicide? 1980, oil on canvas.

'Was this Suicide?'

This ferociously expressionist painting rebukes the intensely intricate representations of the Crucifixion. Here, he introduces the archways which in the words of Henry Sharpe,

slyly mocks one of the cows of the Twentieth Century aesthetic theory, the cult of the surface.
(75)

The legs are bent upwards, the arch of the arms performs the outlines of other arches, which extend beyond the frame. At the point where the arms touch the arch they change colour and glow in golden yellow and white. From the waist down, the body form changes into the skeleton: The flat bones of the pelvis and the wound in the side reflect the heavenly light which surrounds the head. A strong sense of irony is engraved, which is reiterated by the title, 'Was this Suicide?'

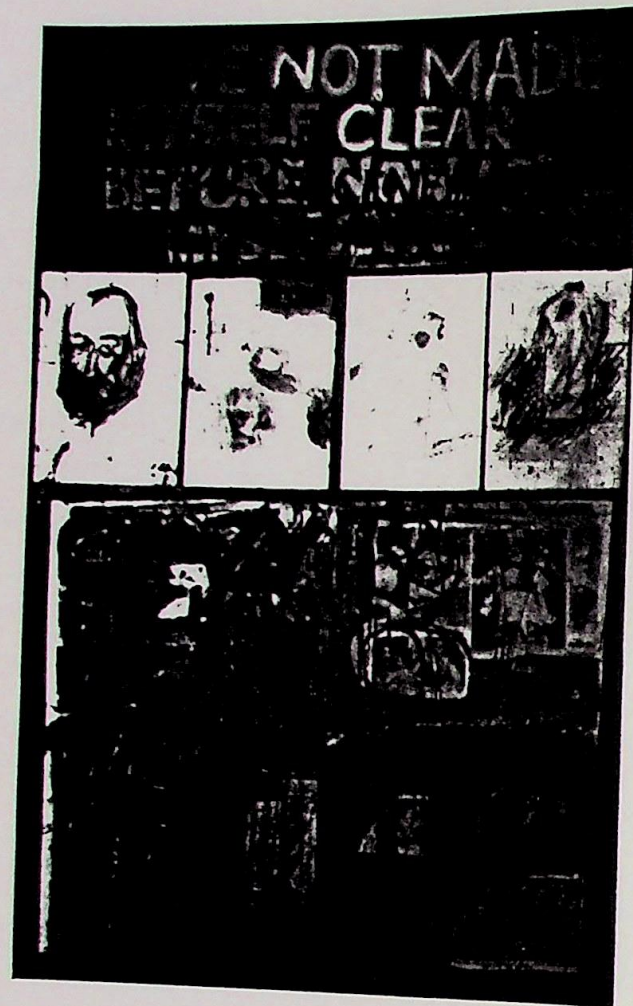


Fig. 22 Scenes from the Life of Christ, 1984, mixed media.

In the collage studies, 'Scenes from the Life of Christ' Graham writes,

if I have not made myself quite clear before now.

Four drawings are systematically placed down: the portrait of Christ is followed by studies of nails and notes scribbled down; in the next section, the top of the body, gauntly rendered, looks on to the next drawing, the mouth is gaping open. The fourth drawing shows a torso, head, arms and legs, amputated with criss cross lines of red and blue, drawing the viewer's attention to the fact. Energy is concentrated in the abdominal region. The lower section of the painting is made up of newspaper clippings of a Northern Ireland victim: a man lies sprawled, a newspaper photograph of him happily holding his child are encircled in red. Politicians with their mouths open are shown roaring. The words, 'crazy fuckers' are sprawled across one side of the canvas. It is an agonising depairing reaction to the situation in the North, questioning the supposed Christianity of both sides of the divide.

The underlying composition is set down with strength and clarity. The top quarter makes the statement, 'If I have not made myself clear before now'. Superimposed on this, in bright red are the words, 'Studies from the life of Christ'. A red line divides this from the section containing the four dashed down drawings. The lower section contains the newspaper cutting. These are confronted with lashes of paint and glue, mingling together in an angry emotional storm.

Patrick Graham says of this painting,

Because the emotional thing came from my roots, I became a Republican for three minutes - I had to struggle hard for my pacifism.

(85)

This canvas is a witness to that struggle.

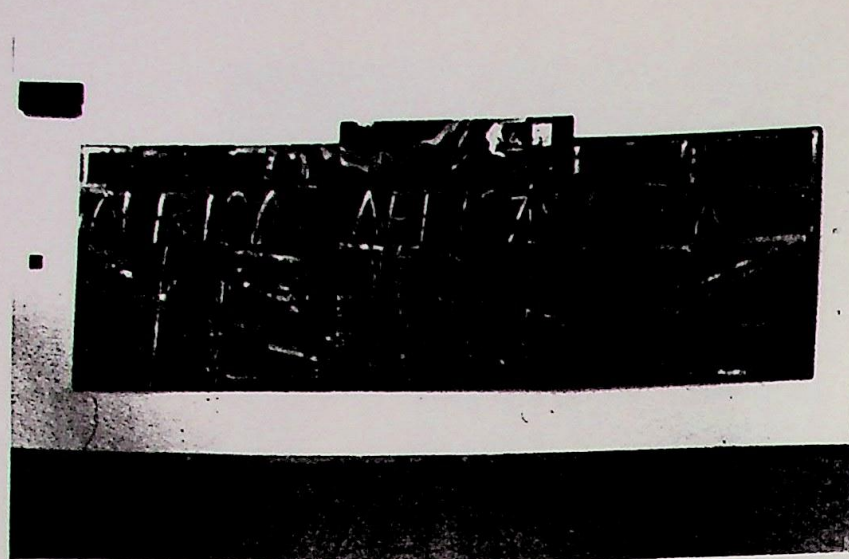


Fig. 23 Africa, 1985, oil on canvas.

'Africa'

In the first panel of this triptych, two figures appear. They could be natives with pots on their heads; they could be settlers arriving on a small craft. The mass behind them is in constant turbulent motion. Motif lines come down the side, a red line with notches, a marking bearing a resemblance to barbed wire. The word, 'Africa' and the suggestion of an 'N' which could be read as 'African' is written across the top section of the painting. Superimposed across the end of the characters, is the word, 'prologue'.

The centre piece shows the word 'Africa'. An imposing figure stands in front of the 'A', replacing it with his presence. In his hand, or in front of him, is the barbed wire motif. Around his head is a halo, suggesting that he is a missionary. His gaunt figure is re-echoed in the narrow tree stump. This suggests the land. The figure and the tree stump are separated by the barbed wire motif which also is reminiscent of a crude rope ladder. Above the lettering and almost growing from the tree stump is a florid curvaceous shape, painted in browns, reds and greys. This is also suggestive of land mass such as the tip of South Africa, the Cape of Good Hope. White paint drips and flows across the end of the centre. Written in white lettering on a black background are the words 'There is to every season'. The white paint is allowed to drip down on to these words.

The final section, 'Afrilogue' shows the tumultuous sea of white continuing over the black surface, turning into white lines of zebra-like stripes, which also suggest the ridges of wood on the hull of a boat. Out of the 'C' of 'Africa' something appears to have been slit open and black linear figures are coming out. Across the background of the word 'Africa', a black figure appears with hand raised. It has been said that when Graham was carrying out this painting someone enthused about the quality of the surface, the beautiful surface. He was so angry that they had missed the point of the South African question, that he wrote the words, 'Africa, Africa, Africa' all across it in dripping white paint. This painting was shown in the Independent Artists Exhibition in the Guinness Hop Store in 1985.



Fig. 24 Untitled, oil on canvas (6 x 8ft)
24A Detail



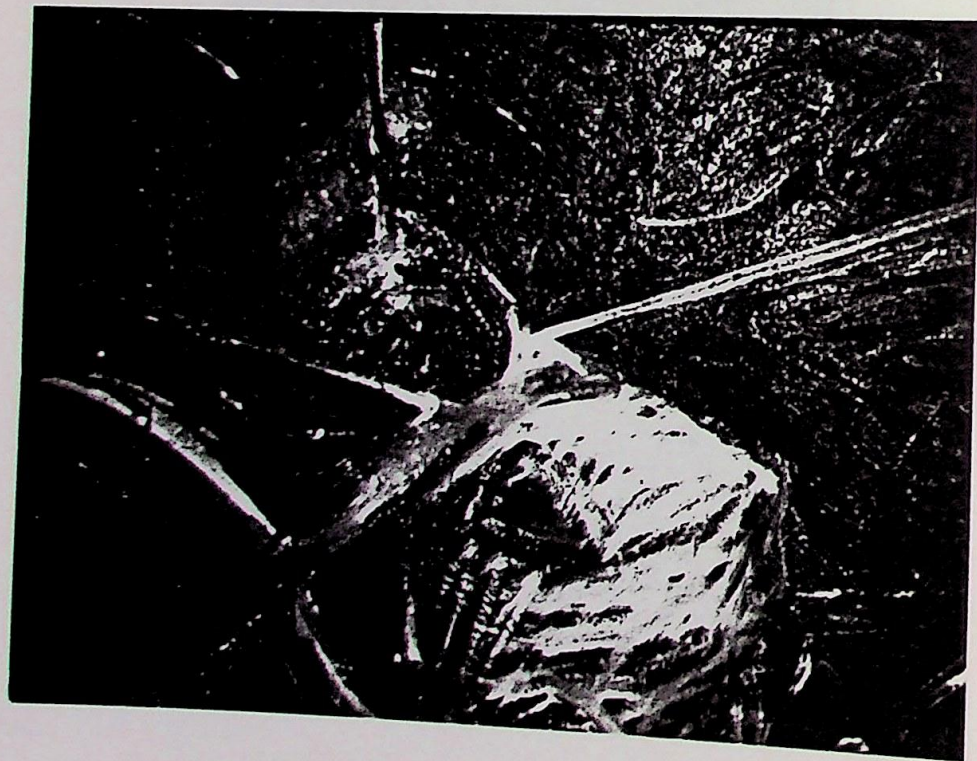
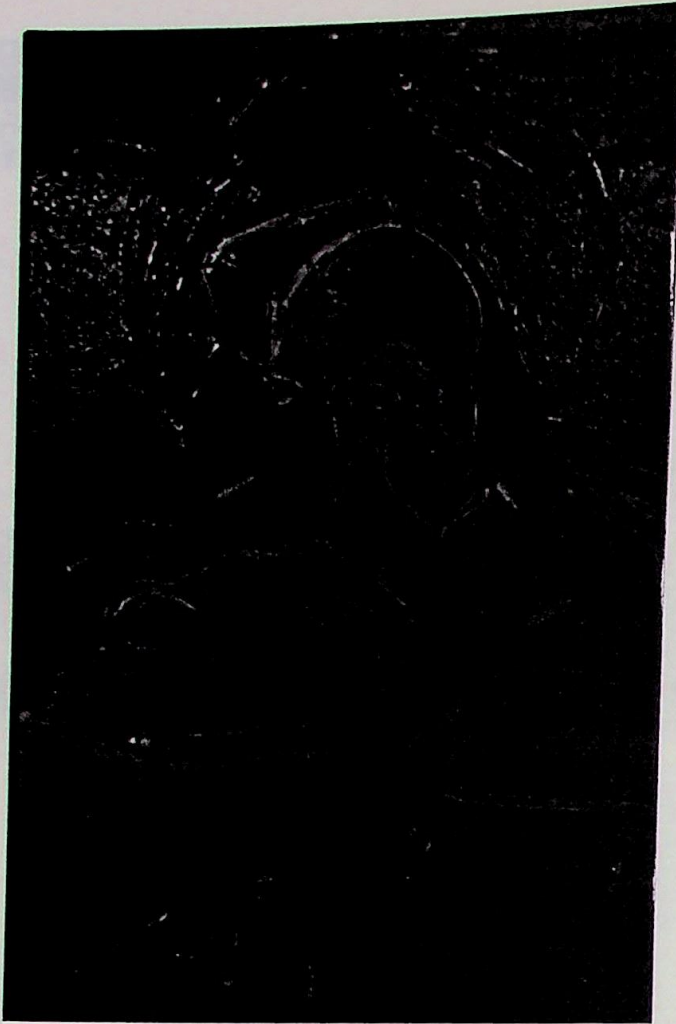


Fig. 24B Detail from Fig. 24
24C Detail from Fig. 24

Cannibal 2

The Virgin, blue-cowled reveals her breast and vulva (Cannibal 2). She is a woman - a sexual being. The male figure who confronts her is neither sinner nor penitent, is overcome not so much by awe of the divine but by sheer impotent rage. The contradiction facing him, such an essential part of his heritage, is no longer to be contemplated without protest. The sexuality of the Virgin Queen denies the existence of a separation of sexuality and purity: the power of the Sexual Woman versus the Pure Chaste, the paradox of the Virgin Mother. These are strategies to undermine popular and comfortable culture.

The negative self-contradictory female archetype occurs in many of Graham's paintings. She is the Mother who bites viciously as she delivers a tender caress. She is Aphrodite, posing as the Virgin Mary, the whore in a nun's habit - she is Mother Ireland. However, for all the ugliness, the violence of confrontation, his painting can be erotic or tender.

'The Songs of Solomon'

Chapter 1, Verse 2,

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;
for thy love is better than wine.*

(17)

This is an extremely rich painting. The verses of the Song of Solomon are rich in imagery of sensuality, lush fruit and flower in full bloom are called upon to give body to the song of praise. The senses are aroused, taste, touch, smell, the sounds are evocative. It is a song of love, of mutual love:

Chapter 4, Verse 14

*Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon,
with all the trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes;
with all the chief spices*

Chapter 4, Verse 15

*A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters
and streams from Lebanon*

(17)

The centre-piece of the triptych is like the main altar, two candles are lit. They are placed in brass candleholders, the bases of which are coiled in a phallic-like shape, which ejaculates through the amoeba, vulva-like shape at the base. This, for all the direct effrontery of composition and content, does not offend. A rich luxuriance of colour and surface reflects the ethos of its biblical source. Curtains pulled back bear echoes from Chapter 2, which begins,

I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley
(17)

The curtains are draped and tied up; they are painted with free vigorous brush strokes in soft pinks and whites. On one, the right hand side, strings of slate blue tie back this curtain like semi-transparent veil; on the left side the drape is given more volume of colour:

*My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart:
behold he standeth between our high walls;
he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself
through the lattice.*

(17)



Fig. 25 Songs of Solomon, oil on canvas, 1986



Fig. 26 Transfiguration, oil on canvas (6ft. x 3ft.)

On either side of the triptych, like two side altars or the wings of a theatrical stage setting, are two similar figurations. They could be phallic, they could be female or even a decapitation. Strange shapes are attached to a T-square like cross shape by means of a halo. Across the top of the triptych runs a narrow strip. This is divided into three sections, each corresponding with the main canvases. The purpose of this addition is to crown the triptych with a temple-like archway.

'Transfiguration', like the 'Song of Solomon' has drawn from biblical sources. This time it is the New Testament. The 'Transfiguration' relates to the Christian celebration of the Transfiguration of Christ on the mountain, where Christians believe he was transfigured from an earthly presence into a heavenly light.

In this work, Graham is the iconoclast. This monumental painting is over six feet tall. It bears a marked resemblance to a monumental icon. The subject matter of lovers, perceived in a crude animalistic fashion is juxtaposed against the rich, epical effigy. To the foreground we see the lovers. The male, with the head of a crude ass, holds one hand to the gaping wound of his heart, his other hand holds his penis. The female is roughly executed. She is groping with one breast bare, exposed and highlighted. Above them floats a small foetus, enclosed in an arched alcove-shaped womb. This is attached to a half-animal, half human form by what could be an umbilicus. The two forms are interlocked, embracing. The lower half of their bodies is set in an oval shape mass of tiny jewel-like beaded brush strokes. Around their head is an arch of solid gold leaf. This again is crowned by the free but well rendered lettering, spelling out the word, 'Transfiguration'. This lettering is reminiscent of wrought iron lettering seen above the gates of many Irish churches, convents and monasteries. Growing from the height of the gold archway, the lovers in more human form are transposed into the ecstasies of the firmament. Little gold droplets form a pattern against the blackened sky. These are naive in execution. On either side of the word, 'Transfiguration' are also other little naive and cynical touches. The four-leaf clover emblem of good luck. Repeated

along the frame is the word 'heroes', 'heroes', 'heroes', another half mockery. Gold is again used on the outer frame.

In this painting Graham correlates the ecstasy of religious spiritual experience with the ecstasy of lovers. By doing so he puts them both on the plane of the urgent, the needful, ecstatic. In visual terms you are confronted by this feast for the eyes, of black and gold. It is the same visual language of certain churches and temples, while at the same time the crudity, the animal, the naive, mocks you. This is a device which prods at the emotions, which raises questions about the ecstatic experience.

Paper: Patrick Graham, March 1982

In the paper written by Patrick Graham in March 1982, he talks of the spiritual. He tries to work from inner spiritual sense, using spiritual religious themes as in the 'Transfiguration' and the Virgin taking figure from the cross (which will be discussed). There is always a reaching out towards what is not tangible - where painting can operate beyond the surface. The use of religious themes is often intermingled with the more earthy themes of sensuality.

In essence my painting is concerned with the conflictual no-mans land between two realities, the 'I' of being in the world as the not 'I' reality or spiritual sensation of a hidden 'I'. In this first and most obvious of realities I am confined to paint physical, obvious and objective forms with the very humanity my being presents against that spiritual 'I', which only silence observes. I work like a messenger between these two dimensions of reality just as I seem to live my life between the two. The physicality of the paint, the in the world 'I' explores the spiritual not 'I', each dimension of reality uncovers the other.

I attempt to translate that experimental subjective reality which silence alone knows by means of a surface skill at the expense of a confused and silent truth, while knowing that the truth is somehow larger than life. (45)

Truth to the self, honesty in a cultural emotional sphere are the last straws at which Graham grasped for survival. Having disco

the spiritual space in another 'I' of 'I' thee and thou (Buber)
and a reality that is mostly memory, Graham concedes that

*in the world, reality is best described for the moment,
it is fleeting in time and genital in nature.*

For Paddy Graham words do not function on the same level as painting,

*At this superficial level of reality words are only a
defence against the unease of fashion. I feel that
when a picture becomes convincing by word, something
has been lost, whether it is in the artist or the observer,
I am not sure. This can be an understanding of a defence
of very little.*

*There is a natural disposition (chronic in some ages) to
escape from existence into the aesthetic.*
(45, p.2)

Paddy Graham could not afford this escape from existence. The
link with existence or reality of self was his key to survival.
He had to paint in a way that was honest, emotionally technical in
form and content. This was the language and he found the language
within himself.

*From this place my painting begins and goes, by recog-
nising the conflictual 'I' in the world, already more
than half done, as against the more lasting reality of
the not 'I', which even now only vague memory serves
whatever faith I have left. I can only name the
paintings in general terms. To do otherwise would be
to force your attention on seeing this or that as a
jigsaw, where content is resolved by titles. These
pictures only hint at humanity and spirituality and
belong to your understanding alone.*
(45, p.3)

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK GRAHAM

(abbreviations: P.G. = Patrick Graham; A.R. = Ann-Marie Regan)

A.R. Do you express to communicate to others or do you just paint for yourself and hope that others will get the meaning from it.

P.G. Now going back to talk about aesthetics, if you paint for other people's opinion, essentially in the language of aesthetics which is art about art. Now I've done that for a number of years and, as I say, the end result was disastrous - personally, emotionally, every way: physically, mentally, you know. So when I came out of the last mental hospital I'd learned something in there which was to change my life - literally. I also had to change my thinking, my views on art, everything else, and one view was, that if I didn't paint for myself the thing was meaningless because having painted for everyone else, for everyone else's notion of what was good for what was bad, you were dealing entirely in aesthetics. You were talking about a beautiful drawing, or a beautiful colour or beautiful this or beautiful that - It was meaningless, there was nothing in it, you were simply drawing from your elbows down, it didn't go beyond that.

A.R. Does that matter to you?

P.G. No. All I know is, and this goes back to philosophy, which I started at the stage of learning to survive, I used to look at very complex kind of philosophy. I approached this despair, a cliché word, I know, but that is what it was, of life, of living, of any meaning or purpose in it and eventually came through with neither a past nor a future just where I was at the moment. I began to read philosophy and after reading maybe one or two pages I knew exactly what they were talking about. Especially people like Martin Buber, Kierkegaard, and a number of others. Essentially really what it said was that if I was as fully human and painted for myself, being that human, someone else was bound to respond in that human way. So, in that sense you could anticipate and interpret it but you never solicit it, like aesthetics would - AESTHETICS IS SOLICITING. So as you know, there is an audience of maybe a hundred people at an opening, and I will see one person who drops the kind of mental defence against what is going on, who talks in aesthetic terms and is actually touched by it. Now that is a unique response and is totally different from what I actually pointing out at the time. But it won't be that different, there will be a key that people will respond to in a recognisable way, in an identifying way with the artist. The artist actually becomes real. He becomes a person not just a work of art or art object anymore, to admire about surface, about paint or colour and things like that.

That is part of it. That becomes not an end in itself. It actually becomes about five per cent of what you are at, and that's fair enough really.

A.R. You use painting as a way of exploring your own feelings?

P.G. Yes, essentially at the beginning I only explored my kind of survival, in a way, and that meant all the baggage of history. That I'd reached such a point that it really was no use to me anymore, not only that, it nearly damned well fucking killed me. I had to find out in a way why, in case I picked it up again because you know it is very easy to pick up something that is safe even though it is not good for you. Something you know is better than something you don't know. And that's where I learned creativity as well. Creativity is about not knowing. The terrible kind of dilemma I was in in College and for a long time afterwards. Everybody said you must know what you're doing. That's fine, but I knew everything I was doing and I was still doubting. There I know that we were talking about different things. Again, we are back to aesthetics, about self as an artist, somehow or other, and that not knowing was the greatest buzz you could get. You jumped and hoped for the best. Aesthetics would never allow me to do that, to be able to perform.

A.R. It was putting the cart before the horse?

P.G. Yes. The question would be asked, if I couldn't answer it I was a failure, not only to myself, but they also thought I was a failure. Now, as I can say to you, I am not talking about the painting. It's wrong for me to talk about the painting in the sense that it is an ever evolving history and you would be only getting one part of it. You could say, line up all my paintings over the past ten years and you'll say, 'Yes, there is something happening here, this is the kind of literal direction in painting'. You see the way the paintings change. But in the sense you were talking about, it is almost a self obsessed type of thing. Yes, that went on, I suppose, quite a while. I was subject, I was content, I was everything. But in the end that can become just total self obsession, and you lose all objectivity. In the end again, people would say that what I was painting was non-objective. But they would be wrong in the sense that I have to move in to an objective thing, that through what I discovered in myself, then emphasised with what I call injustice outside or dishonesty outside. These are the main things that interest me. Dishonesty in religion, what religion does to hurt people - or politics. I'm not talking about religion itself. I would never paint religion or politics. I would paint the effect on people who are, if you like, hurt by those things. So therefore yes, I became very objective. It is subject in the sense that I am still the author of the feeling that happens in me about other people because I am

relating to my own experiences. It's like the Northern Ireland question. I can't paint fucking soldiers, or I.R.A. men. I paint human beings affected by history or by the present, or whatever and in the sense about my own developing sense of respect for myself. I can no longer call people Orangemen or British soldiers. I have to say, well if you take off that mask or that lump, you'll get an individual there, that individual has a face, has a family, has little secret traits, has little mannerisms, he's a real human being, rather than just an Orangeman or a British soldier. And in that sense I lend respect to an individual human being, because I have found it very hard to lend respect to myself, both as a person and as an artist. I mean, I had to struggle very hard for that so there is no way I will let myself down any more by saying 'Orange Bastards' or 'English bastards'. I will still say it but at the back of it, I will, I mean, I am still totally recovering. I am still very religious but cannot practise the religion that was fed to me. I find it detestable, it is about power. All politics is about power, nobody sees humanity. I paint politics in the sense that if you call Russians, Russians, all the time you are calling something a lump. You call Nicaraguans, Nicaraguans, you never see the struggle of individual people. Therefore, you can blow the shit out of them. It is very hard to stand up to another human being, knowing they are as human as you are and then kill them. So I individualise every aspect of humanity and being an individual or 'The Individual' to which it flows, that understanding. That's the nature of what I paint, how I paint. So you see it's very hard to say 'this painting is about...' they all go in a flow just to take in religion and politics all jumbled up together. It's actually just about humanism.

- A.R. Do Brian Maguire, Patrick Hall and other such artists have something in common with an artist like yourself?
- P.G. You're into a hugely complex kind of thing here. Here is about integrity of experience. There are a lot of painters who will ... I'll admit that actually our stuff is being turned into an aesthetic style, you know what I mean, and when that happens.....
- A.R. It never started out that way.
- P.G. No, it started out as totally opposite to that, but that is the inevitable consequences of history, in a way, now the integrity of experience is vital to the kind of painting I do, otherwise you are into pornography. You're actually doing a kind of painting about invented emotion which to me is pure pornography. There is an awful lot of people doing that quite simply because style makes it something to do. Kids of other artists

young artists will see this is the way, the public are interested in this. So it becomes style and therefore it is imitated. I find that sickening now. Before I was egotistical enough to be flattered by it. But now I find it obscene and it makes quite angry. But that's not just in College, the Germans do it. You get a kind of painting that comes out of survival, that comes out of need literally to make a language, to explain, fuck it, what the possibilities in life might be, or the hopes in life, or what the hell has nailed you down and you've no traditional painting to come out of. You're not reacting to painting, you're not reacting to the world of some kind or another, you're reacting to a black hole, so the language actually evolves from that. German and Italian painting because they are so established, is just simply young people bored with conceptual minimalism, it's just a reaction. So therefore, you get these young fellahs like Chia, like in Germany, Fetting, and they really to me have invented a language about art, not about a real human kind of experience, just art about art. It's more aesthetic game playing. There are a lot of people in Ireland doing that. And again, going back to what we were talking about earlier, I mean, this language was essential to our survival. I would know or believe Brian's experience as being essential to go this way, but for a lot of people it seems to be a kind of painting where you don't need drawing, you don't need order, you don't need to understand colour. I've a huge knowledge of drawing and colour and all that kind of thing and it all goes into that, otherwise it's chaos. You're just kind of vomiting over a bridge. And that's what you tend to get from younger people, like some of the people in Germany. You get this hyper colour, you get this painterly kind of thing, you know. That's actually art about itself. So I'm a bit sick of it, myself.

A.R. In a way, it's nearly unfortunate that it has become fashionable?

P.G. Yes, I find myself swamped down. I've walked into collection points for exhibitions and find it hard to find my own. Some of these are almost, I regret to say, direct copies. I mean, you find words scribbled on things. That was essential to me, they were my last little trick of putting order to what I was doing, you know, before it escaped me. This is style to them, this is the thing to do, it's a visual trick. What started out very honestly turned into a game. Yes, I get annoyed about it, but I know my painting will evolve, it's changing all the time and where are these guys going to be then. Yes, that's one of the lovely things I find, you either evolve with what you are finding out or you stay there, I mean, I could never continue to paint the way I paint. It would kind of kill me. Because I know I've learned the excitement creativity. To stop now I might as well put a gun

head. And I do like the summers you know, I like walking around the place - and that's what I miss. That's the tragedy, that people have no conception of creativity. They don't do me any honour, they do themselves an awful disservice - they've missed the whole fucking point. You know the famous Augustine saying, sitting there in front of about twenty people and he is talking about God and he's saying.... trying to describe what God is. He points to a tree and says 'That's God' and then to a load of trash, 'That's God', and a voice from the crowd shoots up, 'You mean to say a load of trash is God?' St. Augustus says 'Yes' but if you don't believe that you have missed the whole point. It is the same with these people...

They just take a style. They've missed the whole excitement of structure, watching the language come to develop, all that, which is what art is about. I'm just as interested in colour as I always was. I'm as interested in drawing today, the drawing has shifted but I would consider the type of drawing I'm doing now as good as any of the polished, glossy, shiny academia I was doing years ago. It's as good, and actually better. For quality it's as good. There is a different emphasis on line, on weight, all that, but it's far more exciting anyway. I had to struggle for it, which I love doing. We're very skill orientated in this country. We believe it's God, and I know for a fact that skill counts for about 5% of what talent really means. Talent for me is the person who has a skill and makes that skill work. That skill serves the person. The person doesn't serve the skill. I can name you a number of artists who do that, who are very famous, but it's the wrong end of the stick, it's like that Augustine thing. If you believe that you've missed the point entirely. Certain people do beautiful, skilled, kind of awesome things, 'Oh Jancy, look at the eye on that' You have to be a cretin, because it demands an incredible inability to think. You just sit there and do it. Bit by bit, by bit. There is about as much creativity in it as a used contraceptive. It is the pits! Yet, that's still regarded as the ultimate in experience in art for an Irish audience. That's why I show stuff outside the country. You have to get out of here to survive!

A.R. Why do they like it outside, is it because they are used to that kind of work?

P.G. There are people with a tradition of painting. They know when a painting is about painting. They know when somebody has kind of stopped a thing and gotten off, and maybe come out and let something happen. But also they don't feel the need to be confronted by the subject matter we deal with. It's a defence, if you

like. They say 'Oh, that belongs to Ireland'. So therefore it's acceptable. But in that sense, Ireland has something tremendous to offer the whole world of art, I'm not just talking about Ireland. The capabilities are here for the kind of nation we are, to discover what has happened to us, about oppression, repression and all that. Which is a very human thing and to me art has lost its humanity. For a long time now, we're a very tired jaded country with Europe and America. It's all about style, fashion, you know, what's the latest thing so there is none of this painfully, evolving humanistic art which people are prepared to do here and suffer, if you like, years of isolation, where people call them idiots, and arseholes. I mean, I've been called a pervert etc. and people say I can't paint and all that. Well, you either succumb to all that or decide that it's irrelevant and that the whole thing you make is irrelevant. Well, you know painting is your life's blood and that's what you do and if you don't do it as honestly as you need to do for yourself, forget it. But that is what they see outside, a revival of humanism, they are not willing to throw words like neo-Expressionism in fact. they are much more ready to say that this is not neo-Expressionism, that this is something with integrity in fact. I could show you letters to that effect from the States and England, amazing types of letter, and then, I won't go on shouting about that here. I'd love to, I really would, I'd love to go into O'Connell Street and say, 'Look you arseholes' but that is playing the game with them and I refuse to play that game. It would kill you, and then yet again, don't get confused. Some people will say, 'Oh, you have tremendous courage'. How can you have courage doing something which gives you a buzz all the time. You don't need courage to keep on doing that, you just need, not be thick, you know, that all. I remember initially when we were putting on a show, one of the first shows, an exhibition which dealt with sexuality, and I got the kind of response I was frightened of, but the minute I got the response, I said, 'So bloody what, I'm still standing up here, I'm still able to walk out of here', and I found that the authority of the knowing body, had none in the end. I was the only one who lived in the studio, who worked in the studio, so that was it. They became irrelevant, there is nothing about courage. Don't ever become confused about that. I hear people saying that and they are as wrong as.....

A.R.

Maybe they mean the courage to face yourself?

P.G.

Yes, well... the first step always take a bit of courage, but after that you discover that it's a huge buzz, you know. It has its own kind of romance and actually to stop it, you are doing yourself some kind of damage, you know, but that is it... Anything else? (Laughter).

CHAPTER 4

PATRICK HALL

Real painting is a mysterious and continuous struggle with change; mysterious because of the very substance of the paint when used this way it can make such a direct assault on the nervous system; continuous because the medium is so fluid and subtle that every change loses what is already there in the hope of making fresh again.
(Francis Bacon, 3, p.38)

Born in 1935, in County Tipperary, Patrick Hall studied at Chelsea Polytechnic and the Central School of Art, London.

Patrick Hall has been painting since the late Fifties. He began painting under Patrick Pye, a highly austere structured painter, whose own paintings were an unlikely blend of medieval form and Cubism. Pye's paintings were concerned with a sombre, mystical Christian contemplation. The mystical concern and a certain, if not a lot more fluid concern, with structure was still evident in a lot of Hall's later work. Hall remembers having to analyse a number of Renaissance paintings so that their structure might be used as the basis of some abstract painting.

Hall brought his study of painting in the Sixties to London, studying at Chelsea Polytechnic. The work of Samuel Palmer made an impression but also the varying works of Lucien Freud and Francis Bacon. In 1966, Hall headed for Spain. There his main source of income was acquired through teaching English. The paintings produced in Spain possessed a strange almost monastic manner; the murals, with strange mythical birds and beasts, the portraits and still lifes all emanated a curious ancient obsession. The form was flat and coerced into nervous arabesques or forced into brittle angles. A meticulous surface built up of small precise brush strokes sometimes animated by a calligraphic style. The colours are rich and intense, sometimes brilliant.

'Cypresses and Moon', 'House Olives Moon'

Looser work was achieved during the Seventies with brush drawings. These nocturnal Spanish landscapes are somewhat freer in feeling.

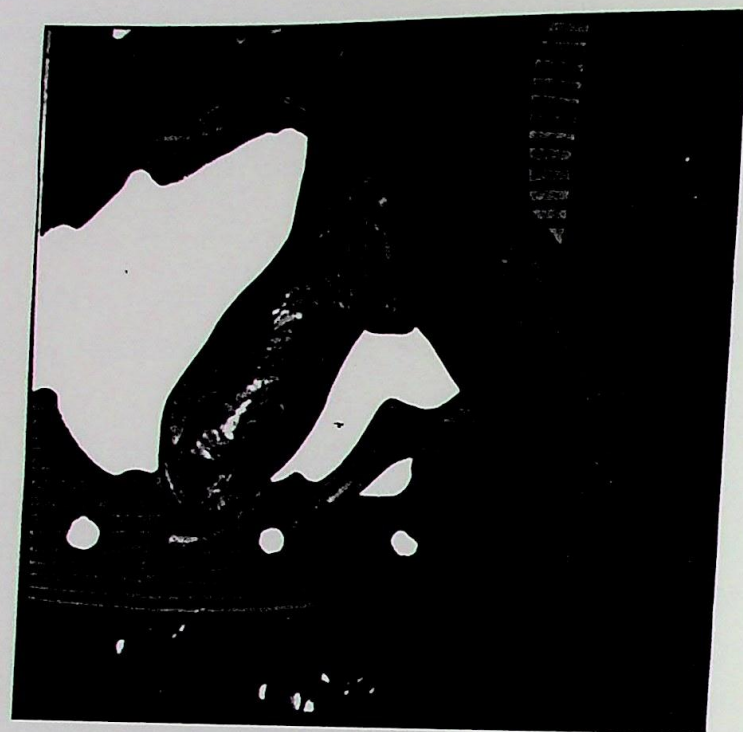


Fig. 27 Lover of Horses, oil on canvas (4ft. x 4ft.)

and structure than the more menacing oil paintings of the same period. They, perhaps, paved the way that his painting was to go on his return to Ireland in 1973.

On his return to Ireland, he settled for a few months in Wicklow before moving to Dublin. He renewed his old friendship with Michael Kane. In 1976, he began to exhibit with the Independent Artists. By 1979, he was delving into his own consciousness as a source of subject matter. These paintings mark a period of release in his life and acceptance of self, particularly his own sexuality.

The following paintings are like selected sections - the selection provides the statement.

'Lover of Horses'

This painting uses the device of selection and confronts the viewer. The male figure is lying on a mattress. It is a plain view, the treatment of the painting has a richness of colour which is reminiscent of Indian painting, with its strange use of colour and pattern and rhythmical use of line on the figure. The head and shoulders are chopped off, forcing it into a more aggressive mode. This is not a motif nor an inverted letter 'Y'. The head has been removed, there is no face to ponder upon, we are simply left with the erect penis to confront - and that is the contention.

I tend to come up with certain images which run counter to social forms, because for one thing where there is a social norm, its opposite is usually more real and grabs the painter's emotions. For instance, the emotional incoherence of the things that go on in public lavatories is far more meaningful than most conversations, and I feel that that particular incoherence has surfaced fairly coherently in at least one or two of my more recent paintings. I'm thinking of the painting I did recently which I call 'The Sediment of Grief', and also the one called 'Homage to Schizophrenia' which was in the 1980 exhibition. It's this odd angle on things that makes the Crucifixion remain a fascinating theme in western art. Grunewald's syphilitic Christ fills one with wonder and admiration, not disgust.

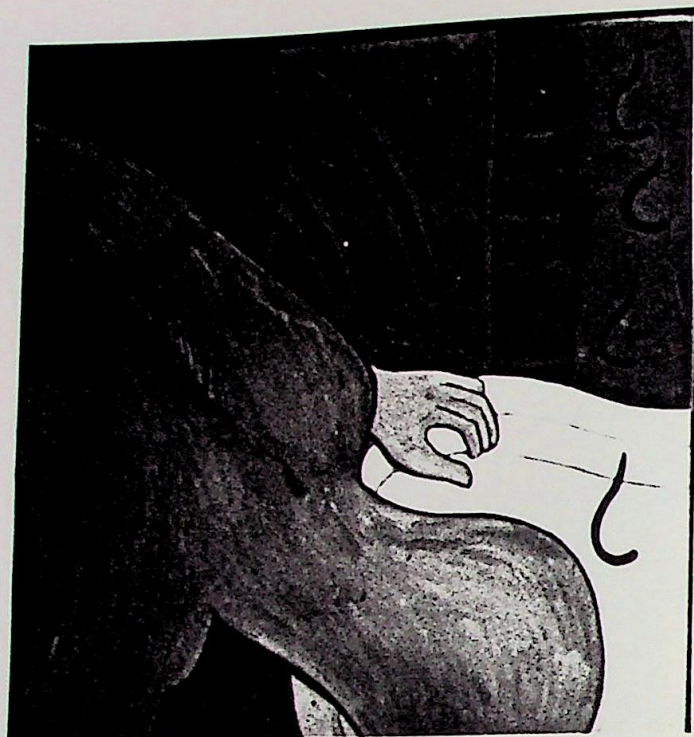


Fig. 28 At the End of the Night, 1981, oil on canvas (4ft. x 3ft.9in.)

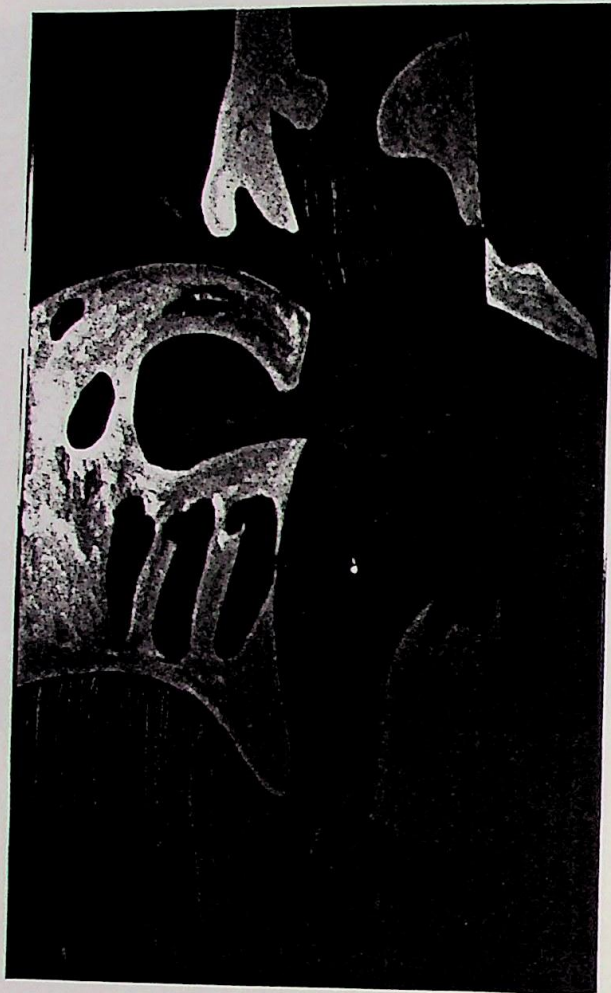


Fig. 29 The Sower, oil on canvas, (183 x 114cm)

At the End of the Night', 1981

This work depicts a figure vomiting into a handbasin. Again, the head and shoulders are selected. The downward stoop of the head over the basin is accentuated by the black, curved motifs, inverted question marks, they form a vertical line the right hand side of the painting. This painting, like 'A Lover of Horses' is practically square which adds to its uncompromising statement. For all its shocking subject matter, it is treated sensuously, only the head and the shoulders are shown - there is a sense of flesh value about the bare head and shoulders - the sexual connotation which is ever present.

The only way I can get this abstract energy going is by using something that is a thousand miles away from abstraction, namely the life I know.

(49A, p.7)

Much of this earlier work shows a similarity with Mick Cullen's work at this time, that is, the zaney use of lively colour and motif. Another painting which deals with male sexuality shows a male masturbating. This marks the initial stage where he deals with sexuality. There was a painful openness which was as explicit as it was direct. Male angst confronts our eyes. However, these works do not have the power of paradox of Hall's later work. The paintings were somewhat difficult to take - the effrontery is so blatant. Having reached this stage of blatant confrontation, the paintings then begin to break up into a looser, more painterly, rich and luxuriant surface. Later works such as 'The Flaying of Maryas' (which will be discussed later) uses the sugar coating of luxurious painting to seduce us into an encounter with the subject matter.

Patrick Hall feels that the element of autobiography should not be of particular interest to the viewer,

I think modern art is the power of the aesthetic and I think it is more powerful than any message you might want to get across in paint because you are involved in something open-ended - nothing is closed off and when you put a brush on canvas your hand can go this way or that. It's absolutely free and it's that openness and potential for change, which I think is the most powerful force in art....

and that is why modern art is so relevant to people's lives. Where there is a concept of permanence and concept of openness, where nothing is closed, nothing is definite and nothing is final, this is so important to the survival of man in the Twentieth Century.

(87)

This concept of open-endedness is apparent in the more fluid lucid style followed from paintings like 'The Sower' which with its use of large scale rich browns and greys, are a step towards the later paradoxical element. Patrick Hall talks about the change in his work,

It took a time before the Southern Spanish light was replaced by the duller light and colour of Dublin.

(49A.)

His work in terms of colour changed in the decade from 1973 - 1983. There was a change from the

the Platonism in youth to the thing itself later on. In reflection a form of Platonism and embracing material reality the source of my emotional energy changed. I began to realize some basic facts about what you might call social norms and their essentially repressive character.

(49A)

The change in his work is therefore related to personal demands and a search for a means which he found necessary to deal with in social norms. The change evolved,

as my own personal situation demanded resolutions and dilemmas involved both in living and painting.

(49A.)

Hall's present way of working brings to mind Bacon's mysterious and continuous struggle with change. How the painting comes about - Hall talks about how he works and how the work evolves,

During these last few days I haven't had an idea as to what is going to happen and I didn't know what I wanted to happen. Those pictures which I did yesterday and today are more disparate. It sometimes happens as has been happening over the last week, that I put a mark on the canvas and nothing happens, the line isn't alive, from which the painting can grow... it always starts from the mark of the brush on the canvas and what that suggests to me: Where my hand will go is related to the nerve that the initial mark touched, the emotion

is created on the canvas. There's a picture at one level of consciousness beginning to build up of what the finished canvas will be.

(49A.)

From a Paper by Patrick Hall: 'For Art and Politics',
A Symposium at the North Eastern University, Boston, 1986

Hall talks of two factors which are inter-related and affect the relationship of art to politics. One, he says, is the existence of an all pervasive art market in our consumerist society. The second factor, which he sees may have arisen out of experiences of misinterpretation, is the fact that the artists have to address themselves

to a public whose ever-increasing appetite for art is matched by a progressive deadening of the receptive senses.

(49)

Galleries tend to appease the public's demand for the immediately discernable painting, the 'quick buck' communication onto which lands the red spot on opening night. Hall feels that

the artist who can work unsubdued by the demand of the art market while still depending on it for a living is very rare indeed.

(49)

The public, in turn are influenced by 'official culture and education' and those members of the public, whose feelings and inward vision have not been dominated by these forces, are, he feels, equally rare.

To Hall, it is the nature of art to functions

primarily on the level of feeling and energy.

(49)

This includes politics so whatever the function and the message, the raison d'etre of the painting it can only operate effectively

When it touches those feelings, when the heart is moved.

(49)

So that the political force moves through the aesthetic,
emotional and intuitive medium in art,

through the aesthetic laws of the creative process.
(49)

Politics is channelled through these means and becomes integral to
the contemplation of art,

*Art does not have a political message tacked on,
as is the case with second rate Expressionism.*
(49)

You don't apply the politics later. Patrick Hall perceives that,

*The energy of art is itself political by its power to
impel the viewer to a new reality.*
(49)

It is the power to transcend that makes art a political force for
Hall but he emphasizes strongly this is essentially an aesthetic
and solitary personal experience. The power of art to make a
person (a spectator or artist) go beyond himself is asking for a
rare response:

*The problem is that most of us are hardly capable of
making that response or even feeling strong enough to
make our own feelings significant.*
(49)

To Hall feeling is the germination of imagination, creative will,
without feeling our lives are impoverished. As Herbert Marcuse
says,

*The truth of Art lies in this, that the world really is
as it appears in a work of art.*
(49)

Brecht says,

*A work of Art which does not exhibit its sovereignty
vis-a-vis reality and which does not bestow sovereignty
upon the public vis-a-vis reality, is not a work of
Art.*
(60)

Going from this premise, from Hall's standpoint, two things are
requisite:

1. *A work of art which creates another reality, and*
2. *A public whose innocence and imaginative response are of sufficient quality to create an altogether new dynamic.*

(49)

In a world where art has become necessary, Hall feels, it has become inaccessible, even devalued. Art is now seen as a career, a means towards success. Art colleges also hold some responsibility: they teach

inventiveness, still mesmerised by the fruits of the technological revolution, while the imagination atrophies.

(49)

This attitude is, he feels, accepted by most art students who are not sceptical enough to question it, but pragmatic enough to exploit it in career terms. In art colleges, he feels, that art is used as a path towards upward mobility, in which the imagination is stifled and regarded as a disruptive force.

The emptiness of Art is also attributable to another factor according to Hall and that is the illusion that art is for everyone. He sees it as part of the 'American Dream Syndrome',

When an experience is exceptional, it must be multiplied for the multitude and soon it ceases to be exceptional. If everyone can be an artist then an artist is nothing.

(49)

This he feels results in a situation of the phenomenon of an art market

characterized by cynical manipulation of art by the artists themselves, and by the political interests of the business entrepreneurial system, which exploits the artists for its own profit, and performs an aesthetic swindle on society.

(49)

By this token the artist is a mere cultural 'collaborationist':

The ultimate problem for the bureaucrats as well as for the business man is how to get passable Art from the most compliant.

(49)

Thus Art becomes the compliable production of the compliant, and

*that essential inwardness, the spirit of the artist
counts for nothing, not to mention the aspect of
the permanence in any work of art which is basic.*

(49)

This writer went to see Patrick Hall at the Temple Bar Studios, where he was showing numerous canvases. The first striking thing for me was the undeniable and extra-ordinary beauty of the painting. This, in itself, tends to jolt one, as beautiful painting is the last thing that is expected in the context of what has been labelled, 'Neo-Expressionism', 'New Wave', and 'Bad Painting'.

Patrick Hall had lined up the canvasses all around the space. His use of rich reds gives off the same sense of redness as Rothko's 'Red Room' in the Tate Gallery. Beneath, or coinciding with this powerful beauty, an emotional sense was achieved by the use of paint and a 'shocking' dimension, that is, the subject matter, 'The Flaying of Marcyus'. When I left the studio, those paintings stayed in my mind, the shock and the beauty haunting me simultaneously. It has been said of Patrick Hall that his admirers are other painters. This is understandable for he has managed to operate a paradox in paint. The impact of these canvasses should be seen in their raw state and in their correct scale.

Hall's work correlates to Existentialist philosophy, and as Iris Murdoch says,

*'The Doubter sees the world of everyday reality as
a fallen, bedraggled place - fallen out of the realm
of being into the realm of existence. The circle does
not exist; but neither does what is named black by
'black fable' or could the relation of these words to
their context of application, shifting and arbitrary.
What does exist is truth and nameless. It escapes
from language and science, it is more, and other than
our description of it.*

(4, p.269)

'The Flaying of Marcyas' like the Crucifixion has been a myth and a personal constant in the lives of artists since they began

painting. Marcyas himself is that human animal, the satyr who succeeded in playing music better than Apollo and paid the price of his own life by being played alive. Patrick Hall was inspired by the life of George Jackson, the black American who was assassinated in San Quentin Prison, California on August 2st, 1971.

There are ten paintings in all, numbered in chronological order from one to ten. They interrelate in terms of tempo, form and mood. The theme which they share is very strongly present but the loose, open-ended composition does not point the finger at specifics or pin anything down. The fluid motion of the free-flowing forms achieve an undulating intensity of rhythm far removed from the demands of representation.

These paintings prod the memory of old masters. The whole gory tale is intimated through an ambiance of comfortable languor. Patrick Hall has said that he was impressed by a painting of Titian of the same title and subject. Titian presents the hapless satyr suspended from the branch of a tree. The onlookers are other mythical figures. A curious, leisurely disengaged air runs counter to the cruelty of the tale. Titian's view is that of the theatrical public prosecution. The paradoxical luxuriance draws its substance from the fact that Titian is a paragon of all that is sensual in painting. The surface buffers, enfold the sanguinity of the painting in a womb-like softness: fluidity. So much occupation with the rich, fleshy pigment concentrates on the limbs and torso and brings the sensual reality to a pitch where it dominates over the virulent narrative. The awareness of this process is utilized to great effect, muted browns and greys add to a sombre classical essence but through the darkness shots of warm pinks and soft shades are woven. The pigment is built up giving a volume of colour. Colours are then run into one another, half-mixed on the canvas they are allowed to sit. This provides an open-ended half statement. Here and there a streak of line flashes across a spread of vivid red and enlivens the surface. The lines will cut out an area, define a shape, lead the eye in a given direction thus emphasizing volume.

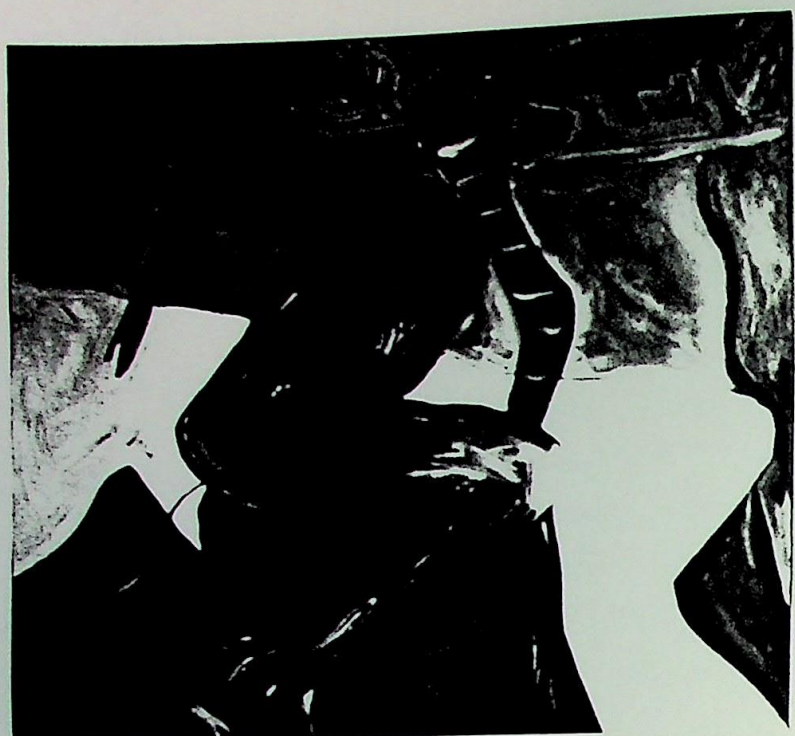


Fig. 31 The Playing of Marcyus 1, oil on canvas
 Fig. 32 Marcyus 2

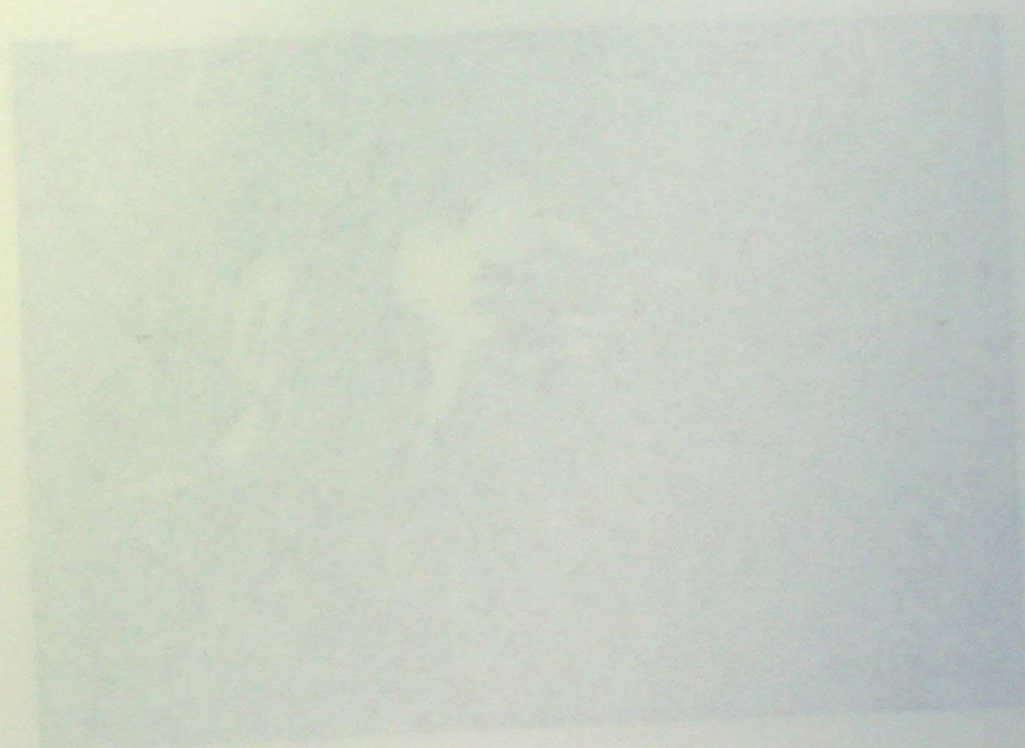
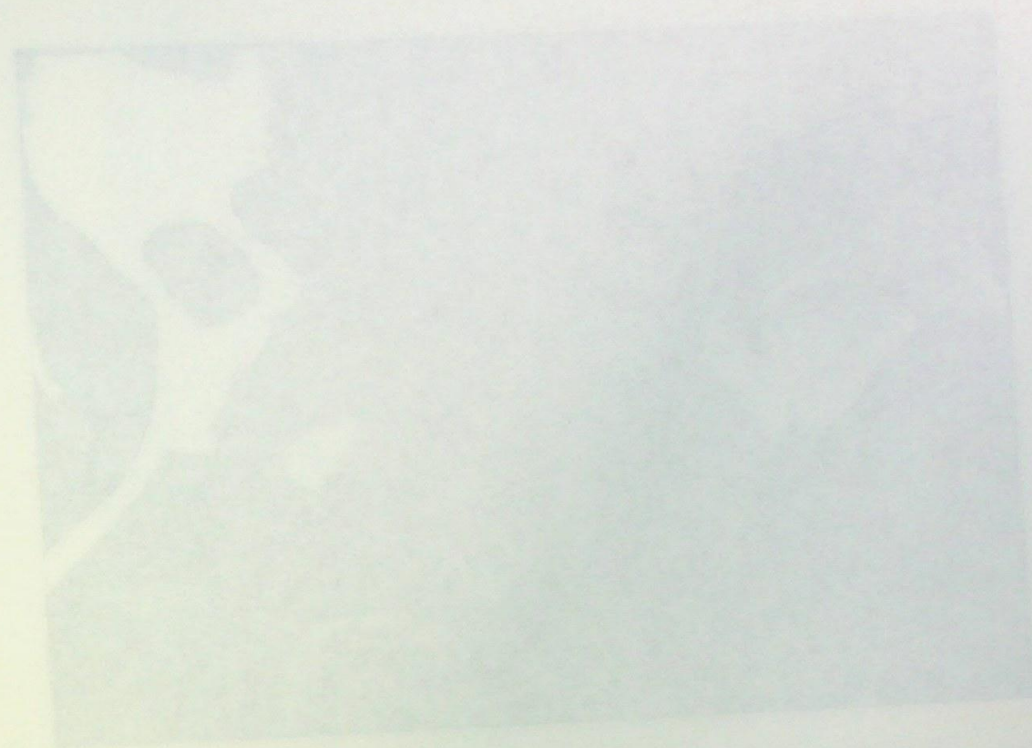




Fig. 33 Marcyus 3
Fig. 34 Marcyus 4

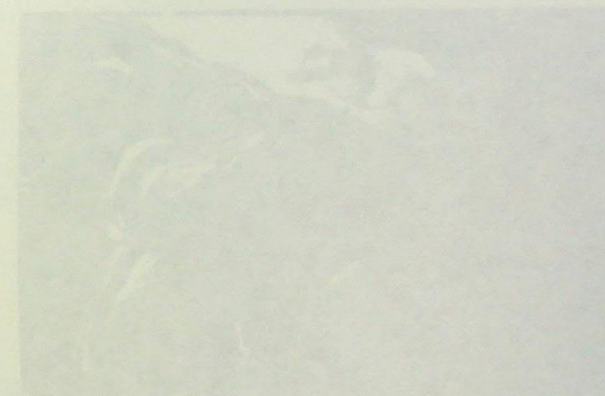


Fig. 35 Marcyus 5
Fig. 36 Marcyus 6
Fig. 37 Marcyus 7

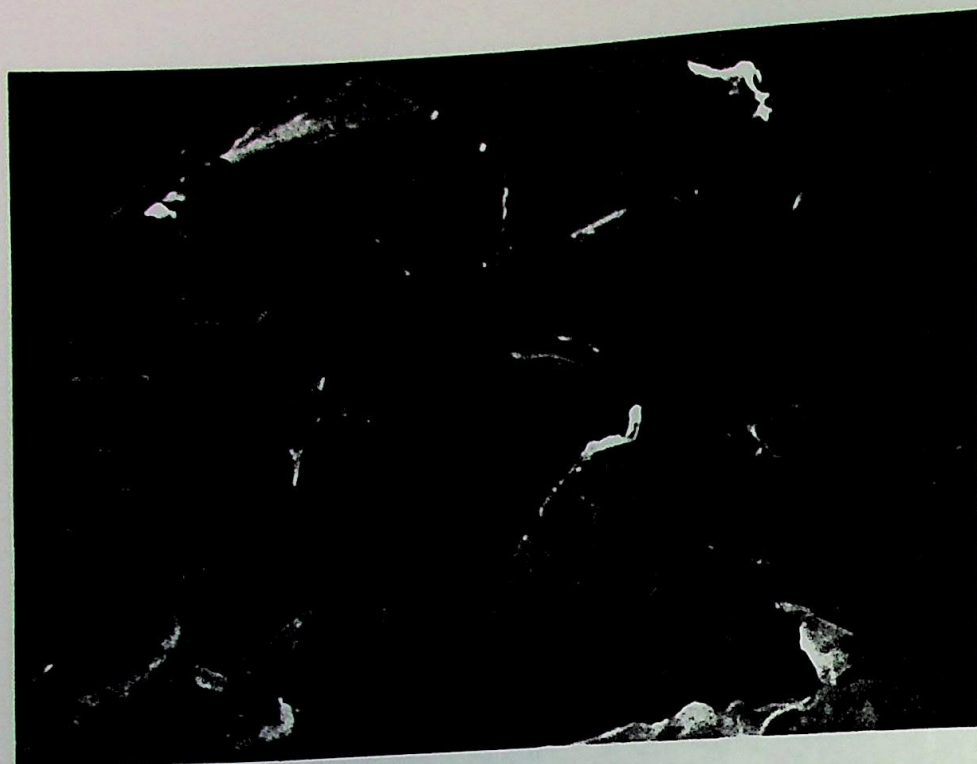


Fig. 35 Marcyus 5

Fig. 36 Marcyus 6

Fig. 37 Marcyus 7

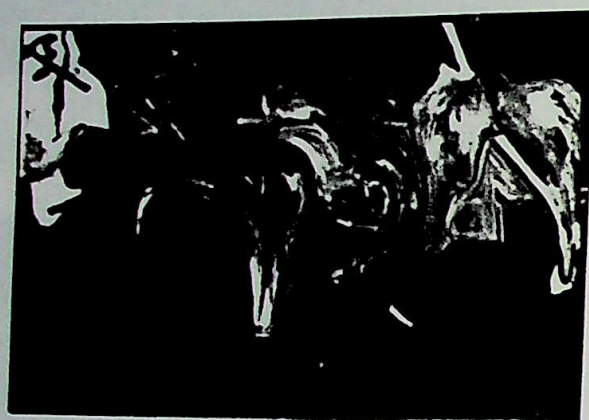


Fig. 38 Marcyus 8
Fig. 39 Marcyus 9
Fig. 40 Marcyus 10



Fig. 30 Faust, oil on canvas (5ft. x 5ft.)

There is constant movement, violence, even figures 'stretch, stoop, sprall' across the painted surface. All those are held frozen for a moment though by means of a seduction, a silent sombre use of rich warm colours. The violence implied in the title could be read as tenderness. Hall is concerned with the violence of emotional life and the physical side of love.

There is a subjugation, a frozen, contained presence co-existing with the raw reality of subject matter in Hall's work. Then I asked about working between the two opposite poles : the action, the pain on the one hand, and the subjugation on the other. Hall stretches himself very far in terms of paint,

*Sometimes I am afraid of becoming too subjugated,
of castrating myself completely.*

(87)

Patrick Hall works as an ever prevailing catalyst between the silence and the scream:

*We have to deliberately and constantly remind
ourselves that a painting is an act of war,
that art must be an axe, for the frozen sea within us.*

(87)

During the course of the interview, Patrick Hall deals in terms of the paradox: first of all, there is the violent, the shocking versus the beauty; this is a paradox, and he speaks in paradoxes.

He speaks of painting as being constant movement. Just as in order to remain in existence, the earth is in constant motion. Patrick Hall sees painting as being in constant movement towards the unknown. That is what we 'aspire to'. (See interview).

Hall also speaks of the permanence of movement. In this is also implied a paradox, it goes back to the idea of the earth, nature etc. being in constant motion and yet there is permanence. The permanence of movement is what Patrick Hall sees as the 'Classical'. The use of the word 'Classical' also implies a paradox in the context of modern painting. The notion of the paradox is tied up with Existentialist philosophy.

H.J. Blackman in 'Existentialist Thinkers' speaks of the paradox in Existentialist philosophies where the true and false co-exist.

There is a sense in which all philosophies are true and all are false: false as undertaking to tell the truth about Being, whether negative or positive; true, as inviting or throwing one into some kind of experience, since thought cannot think existence, its business is to initiate and interpret experience.
(6, p.78)

The idea of transcendence - going beyond the limits of ordinary experience - is also brought to bear in Hall's thinking,

It's that transcendence that you are trying to deal with, it's not the actual, the imminence,.. it's not what is imminent exactly, it's what's transcendent.
(87)

The notion of transcendency is also compliant with modern psychology. Eric Fromm links transcendency and creativity,

Man is thrown into this world without his knowledge, consent or will. In this respect he is not different from the animals, the plants, from inorganic matter. But being endowed with reason and imagination he cannot be content with the passive role of the creature, with the role of dice cast out of a cup. He is driven by the urge to transcend the role of the creature, the accidentalness and passivity of his existence, by becoming a 'creator'.
(12, p.96)

In relation to painting, why would the use of the violent encounter be taken up as a tool of the creator? Eric Fromm proposes an answer:

There is another answer to this need for transcendence. If I cannot create life, I can abstract it. To destroy life also makes us transcend it.
(12, p.107)

Destruction, the violence of encounter is used by Patrick Hall to share the same plane (the painted surface) . As the beautiful (richness and harmony of colour, fluidity of movement) it thus places side by side transcendence and paradox. The transcendence is part of a paradox.

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK HALL

(abbreviations: P.H. = Patrick Hall; A.R. = Ann-Marie Regan)

A.R. You quoted the artist in conspiring with the audience, creates a subversive group opposed to the authoritarian group of the known. Can you explain that - Is your painting subversive in that (if you will pardon the expression) it's beautiful?

P.H. It is subversive in that it's not that it's so much beautiful as real.

A.R. But it is also beautiful.

P.H. It could be, but beauty is not an essential part of life, not an integral part of life, it's energy really that painting is about. That's real, that's reality, that's truth, energy.. It's not that it cannot be beautiful, it's not less because it happens to be ugly, it's just as much life as when it happens to be beautiful and that is what painting is about. The beauty is used and the aesthetic approach of the painting is used as an introduction to, as a seduction, just the same as when you are making love with someone, you try to make yourself look as nice as possible because that is a seduction to love. It is not the end of the process, it's not the end of the operation but it is the means by which you hope to increase life. You use the material at your disposal to create a greater life.

Beauty comes into it that way but it is not a thing I like to emphasize but at the same time (as I said in one of those articles) where there is real energy, it is always beautiful. I don't know whether I used those words but it's something like when I was talking about Van Gogh's paintings - now used to decorate boardrooms. But that's a long way from the conditions under which those paintings were made. At the same time it's not contradictory because where there is real energy, and real life - it is always beautiful. I don't care how ugly it is, it is still beautiful. Simply because it is life, not because it is beautiful ... it is vital, it has life, it is the most basic thing there is. You know it is like people who have suffered the most appalling lives, they still don't want to die. They'd do it all again. That is the known norm. That to me is very important because what a painting is doing is substituting another reality to that which most people accept as reality. You are trying to create an alternative reality. Now that word 'alternative' has been debased - you are creating another reality and it's just as real. It's more real in fact and it's that compelling thing, that's why art fascinates me. That's why art always goes on, no matter what. There could be the most awful conditions after the fall of the Atomic Bomb - someone will begin to scratch out again something which is not necessary.

It is because art is not necessary that it is necessary. You know what I mean, it's because it is not the urgency of the moment, it is just when you are all together at a given moment, that you will reach out into something. something which is beyond your own experience and create a reality which has not yet existed, but which you imagine, you fantasise whatever affects the human in you, the something in you to reach beyond the known reality, and it is the acceptance of that known that is anti-subversive because it is the acceptance of the known that leads to status to non movement. Because, once you accept the status quo, once you accept that now I'll have two children and we'll have to put our resources together, we'll buy the house here, with the mortgage. Then eventually after twenty years, we might buy a cottage in Connemara and then we'll have a couple of holidays and all the rest of it. Everything revolves around that, in a sort of a way, and for most people even though it seems banal, it does come down to that because when you look at your life, most of your energy is devoted to the known. We're trying to get enough money to the pay the E.S.B., you're trying to get enough money to eat and pay the rent. You know you are not dealing most of the time with the unknown, even though the thought of the unknown is the most important, you're dealing with the basics, the basics of survival.

A.R. And is that why the unknown is so important?

P.H. That's why the unknown is so important because there is something in you - you have to leave that door open all the time. To the unknown, because if you don't, you're just the same as another... and that's what art is all about - keeping the door open to the unknown; and it's that part of it, that is more than real, than the actual part of it.

A.R. Is it a spirituality?

P.H. It is a spiritual thing. It's an inwardness. It is a spiritual thing and that is the dimension of it that matters, that makes the human beings we are. Otherwise, we are the same as the cows, that is the difference between the cow and the human.

A.R. Does that connect in with why you use mythology?

P.H. Well, you use mythology if you want... but I don't use mythology normally. It is not a normal thing of mine but the concept of the myth as such is important because that's the kind of thing I have been telling you about. It is something which is beyond the individual capacity of the human being. It is something which is beyond the individual experience. It is like the crisis of life, when you don't have recourse to your own energy to pull you through. It's like Cezanne says about theory ... in the bad moments of life, when the painting is not going well, to save you from falling through the hole in the floor - you have to have theory. Now theory can kill you.

It can make you a kind of hard core, complete academic but at the same time, it's necessary to have it there for those moments when it wouldn't be possible to survive otherwise. Then you just fall through that hole. It is these critical moments of life, even they are only odd moments of life, which determine what you are, and who you are, not the everyday things of trying to grow up, enough money to eat. That's not it - the cows are doing that.

We all have that instinct. These critical moments which decide and that when things like a Greek chorus comes into it. You take over, well society takes over when there's a moment, when it is not possible for an individual to carry that moment, and that's what I mean by myth. It's the perennial dialogue with society and with the energies of the universe if you like. That something you call God or whatever, and it is that energy, that you have recourse to, which comes through society and through dialogue with you and I and thou thing of Martin Buber, and that is really what art is about. Art is not me, it's a dialogue with me and someone else, or something else; that energy which generates between two beings; it is that connivance with the artist, it's the sort of connivance that the importance of the idea of subversion comes in, because you are against the status quo, you are against the non movement, so you're subversing the movement because you accept the movement. You don't want the non movement, and the movement is essential. The laws of nature are the laws of movement; and that is absolutely basic. If you accept that fully and all the consequences of that, then you're into movement; you are not into non movement, you are not into status, status is stagnation and death, so you're moving and that's more uncomfortable but it's more vital, it's life, it's living and that is the subversion I am talking about and that, you are asking your audience to come with you and conceive with you on that...

A.R. You said art is about human weakness and man was weakened by social and personal alienation. Does that recognition of the weakness make it more easily dealt with?

P.H. Yes it does.

A.R. Is that a reason for painting? Is there a human thing in human terms?

P.H. Yes, I think that is a reason for painting. But it is very easy to put your finger on that exactly because I don't think you paint by choice. I don't think painting is something you do from choice, it's something you do when everything else has been taken away from you and you don't have anything else. It's kind of different from any other occupation - just to look at it on an occupational level, because in every other occupation you are dealing

with some kind of accomplishment, to be a doctor, to be an anything. To be a painter in the academic sense, it's with accomplishment, it's with the tricks of the trade, the tricks up your sleeve, that you can apply for the demands of any particular moment. Painting is the complete opposite to that. Certainly painting in the twentieth century is. It's the denial of accomplishment, it's where accomplishment ceases to be valid any more. Accomplishment becomes totally inadequate when it comes down to art in the twentieth century. At the time of the Renaissance it wasn't - it was accomplishment. The whole meaning of art was accomplishment, the same as in any other trade. But after the Renaissance, accomplishment became more and more meaningless. When it came to art and certainly, in our time, accomplishment is an actual obstacle to art. That is what I mean by technique in art. Technique is no technique once you have technique in art. That's the whole meaninglessness of art schools. Really, you only paint when you have absolutely nothing - a good painting is made from absolutely nothing.

A.R. Does it always have to be from the depths of some problem?

P.H. I don't think it's a problem, it's from the depths of living, because I don't think living is a particular problem. Living is a state.

That you move from day to day, from moment to moment. It's just creating energy and applying it and getting it back - it's a circular process and that is the weakness you are dealing with here. I remember noticing that on television one time, there was a programme on Miro - and Miro is a painter who doesn't happen to inspire me, but anyway it was a very good programme. He was about 80 or 90 years of age and all his life was built around eating, having sex, going to the lavatory, resting, working all the time, but simply existing. There was no particular motive in his life. He wasn't out to serve humanity, to be a doctor in a poor area of Barcelona - he was doing something that was absolutely selfish in a way. He was just existing and the painting was just an expression of that existence - now there was nothing spectacular about that existence. He was just simply doing the ordinary things that an animal would do, almost. But he was aware of them, and the painting was the expression of the kind of awareness of that kind of existence.. and that's the value of his painting, and since that programme I enjoyed his painting much more (chuckle). It's like those water lilies of Monet.. Manet.. Monet, who is it? Monet, those huge big canvasses that he was doing at the end of his life. He had them spread out - he had a kind of garage-studio at the back of his house - and he had them spread but on the floor and you could see when you look at those water lilies that he was just coming in and he would put a bit here and he'd walk around. But it was simply a witness - doing those paintings was simply witnessing existence,

his daily existence. It held no great potential than it wasn't trying to be great painting. He wasn't trying to paint the crucifixion. He wasn't trying to paint the myth of Marcyas, it was simply a kind of witness of his life, so that people could say afterwards. Well, yes, Monet did put that point there that day, and that was all. It had no other meaning, and yet they are extra-ordinarily powerful canvasses but there is nothing in them. There is absolutely nothing in those canvasses, and that's why they are powerful. And it's that kind of weakness that the opposite of strength because, as I said somewhere, if you are strong you are not going to be an artist. It's only when there is absolutely nothing when you are rapped out of your brain, then you become an artist. Art begins with a great wound - now sounded very romantic in the Nineteenth Century.

A.R. Can we come back to that thing of the double element: your work seems to operate on a double element - passion and denial, beauty and violence, a paradox seems to be there all the time.

P.H. Is that the silence of the painting we were talking about earlier, and..

A.R. And yet, they are not silent..

P.H. Yes, that paradoxical element - because it is the silence you are aspiring to, I am aspiring to and at the same time, the painting is about encounter. There is violence, the encounter of opposing forces, the encounter of every moment of your day, the painting is basically about encounter and, at the same time, its expression is in silence. But the raw material is encounter rather than expression, its encounter, its actually meeting the situation. The existence of your life, every moment, and the people you meet, and the dialogue of living, the dialogue with the energy that you're meeting every day, whether its people or things or whatever around you. It's an encounter of violence, kind of when there was an ordered society and when there wasn't a problem of individual existence, when there was only group existence. Well, there was only societal existence, we say, like in the Middle Ages or up to the Renaissance. But we have this violent thing, we have this because the order of reality, (reality in inverted commas), is a violation of individual existence. You're pulling against that all the time. Even in your own life, in order to make it more durable and to make it more possible to live and more endurable, you're trying to impose order and at the same time order violates something deep and integral in you and your whole purpose of painting is to violate that order. And, at the same time, the whole thing in the painting is to impose order on that violation because outwardly, obviously, the old or classical adage still holds true, that art is about ordering the raw material of the chaos kind of thing, like God breathing on the water, and so on and, at the same time

it's that disorder that it's about, and that's the paradox. That's the kind of pulling apart of reality.. and the fictional element in art, because it's like the thing you aspire to, is not yet true, therefore it's fictional. It's not real because why art continues to hold the attention of human beings and of human kind, is that it is not real, because if it were real, people would lose interest instantly. Yes, it is that that holds you because you know there is a part of your consciousness that is trying to grapple with something that has never, never been experience, yet by you or by anyone else, and that is the unspeakable, unutterable kind of thing we are trying to give utterance to.

A.R. You were talking the last day about the classical element and used words like permanence. That would seem to imply status.

P.H. Really, we are talking about the same thing here but from a different approach as if we were going around a kind of a stone and looking at it from different angles because we were using terms like classical and permanence, and that is the kind of thing again, about the the reality we were talking about, the reality in art, and the static reality of contained existence; that there is no door open in our own consciousness because our whole culture and our whole background has made us want status. It's like as if for millions of years, people thought the earth was fixed and all the other planets and the Sun went round the earth, and Galileo came along and then found that everyone had to revise their thinking, but everyone resisted from the Church downwards, when they threatened to burn Galileo.

But at the same time, we have been going on for millions of years, thinking as it got into our blood, that it was fixedness, non-movement, that was the ideal state. So really when that was known, it was only so far stuck into our brains. We accept now that the earth moves, we are moving all the time in order to remain alive from second to second. What was the question again?... Yes, it's like the permanence of movement, the permanence of the unknown, the abyss of the unknown, because once you go into the unknown, you are moving you are never static. There's nothing to keep you there so you just... and it's that permanence of movement and that's the kind of frightening thing. That's the element that you try to face in the painting, and that is what I mean by the Classical element, funnily enough (because Classical brings you up to the Renaissance) because that is what is classical to me. It is the permanent, the enduring aspect of the painting, that's what I mean by Classical rather than, shall we say, Expressionist, that is why I use the term encounter rather than expression because expression is simply encounter.

A.R. You said that Art is not for everyman - is that not elitist?

P.H. It's a fact that most people are not that bright when it comes to art.

A.R. Now, is that not being banal? That may not be because they are 'unbright'..

P.H. When we are looking for the reality that is in a work of art, it means that you are trying to keep the door open in yourself

P.H.

Most people don't think really, and it's not because they don't have as much raw material as anyone else. It's because the consequences of thought are very heavy, and the consequences of thought are, above all, loneliness for one thing. Because if you think you are going to think yourself into absolute solitude and solitude is seen as loneliness... (solitude is something with which we punish criminals). As Kierkegaard said, that it is seen in our society as something of a punishment simply, whereas solitude is a condition that most people refuse to come to terms with. Most people end up in front of their gas fire, sort of alone, which is a premonition of death. That is actually how most people spend their lives, no matter what your social, economic, intellectual or spiritual level. That's how most people spend their lives and this is something that most people will not come to terms with, they see this as a violation of their lives as something you have to fight against and reject; where it is something you have to embrace and integrate and make an essential part of your energy, in facing the world and facing yourself ... that the elite element... Because people will not accept loneliness or that thinking which brings all those consequences and that is why Hugh MacDiarmid, the Scottish poet, said 'you cannot get more than two per cent of the human race to think'. That is a fact and he said he was an Elitist, and he was one of the very few Western intellectuals who stayed in the Communist Party during Stalin's time.... when the Communist Party became the 'un' thing to do. You had Stalin's theory that he was an elitist, as well as a Stalinist, I think, but in that sense he is definitely an elitist... As in that American article I wrote, I said that is a kind of debasing of the whole thing that J. McKenna had about bringing art to the people years ago. When he was trying to go to the people as a candidate for the general election, I spent about an hour out in Ballyfermot working for him in the rain at the Shopping Centre but I'm afraid my heart wasn't in it even then. Now, I would definitely would not do it. It would have been more honest if I hadn't done that. In fact, you cannot bring art to the people, people must come to art, people must come to that thing in themselves but you can't present it to them and say this is art, this is culture, you should be living more sophisticated, nicer lives than you are. That's a debasement of art. It's in that sense I mean elitist because I know that most people won't actually face that void... won't face that darkness if they don't want to. I think that is the meaning of culture in the true sense, that little germ that all of us have could be cultivated. It doesn't mean that everyone is born with tremendous intelligence, simply by not using it, or because you were born to poor parents, they have to fight all the time for a living and so on, that this thing wasn't developed and nurtured, that it died. I don't think it is just that, I think it's more complex than that. It's the energy, people have certain quotients, certain people are capable of creating energy, more energy than others - I don't know what it is... and it demands that

energy all the time to face that void, to actually live under those conditions. People want to rest, rest is more comfortable, than expending energy all the time, than all the time striving, and it's that. That's within those sort of terms of milieu - elitist - and why I always react when on to the populist kind of thing, I react in a deliberately confronting kind of way sometimes because it creates a spark. The populist kind of thing just makes me irritated because then you only want the Duke of So and So to buy a painting, or a millionaire like Tony O'Reilly, or the local rich. That's the whole market business, in making a painting, your slotting yourself into the market, just the same as I often said (or as Orphen said) you write a poem and then you try to market it. I think that in trying to market it you actually are making the poem stronger, in its own way, because you are kind of giving the poem muscle, or you are giving the picture muscle. That's the difference between a person who has painted on the basis of life rather than shall we say, that is why certain painting becomes part of history, rather than simply gratuitous. We say the amateur painter, the lady with the private income or the gentleman with a private income in the Nineteenth Century, who painted swans on the lake - it could have been a fantastically beautiful painting but it's a one-off thing. It doesn't mean anything in terms of life, in other words, it's totally gratuitous, it's irrelevant but in fact there could be inferior paintings painted by Velasquez or Goya, but these are more relevant, and that's the difference between the amateur and the professional in that sense.

A.R. You know this thing of new expressionism, where do you relate to that?

P.H. Well I relate to that in the sense that given the violence of our existence, or the way we are living, if you're trying to but.. there is an awful amount of violence involved, because at this time in the Twentieth Century everything seems to be... there's a compulsion for order starting at the most basic, most personal level, right up to the organisation of the state. There seems to be less room for the individual to breathe, because forces have taken over that are greater than the individual. And they have actually taken over now, so that we're more limited and the expressionism comes in because in trying to break through that, a certain amount of violence registers in the paint on the canvas and that's what makes expression, that there is actual violence in the paint on the canvas in that sense (anti-order). Painting is an act of war, painting must be that are to smash the frozen sea within all of us, to keep that consciousness, that awareness alive, and to keep that awareness of universal existence, and that violence and... expressionism is expressionism. New expressionism is new expressionsim because of that violent element, because otherwise, you are painting minimalist stuff, which is the opposite of expression. Let's just take a thing that we are familiar

with and there is no expressionism there simply because there is no violence, there's no threat to the known reality in minimalism, where there is in so-called expressionism, just to use those critical terms..

A.R. *Then do you consider yourself an expressionist or a new expressionist?*

P.H. *No, I don't, but there is an element of expression as I have defined it in my work, yes, but to define myself as an expressionist is totally inadequate. It is a half truth at best, and half truths can be very distorting. It's not totally a lie, but it is a half truth because it is like saying Goya was an expressionist. Okay, Goya was an expressionist but it's meaningless to use it, and I think it's meaningless to use it in terms of Munch, or any of the two or three great expressionists who were historically, actually expressionists, according to the art historians. I mean you could use expressionism about the second rate expressionists. I think that's true enough because it may cover them but I don't think any term can define group painting because it's simply a critical term.*

A.R. *The human element, does that come in, is that very important?*

P.H. *Yes, the huge element we are talking about is humanist..*

A.R. *Would you say the that the humanist element is more important than expressionism, which in itself is just an expression? Is expressionism just a means towards which you are trying to do and not in itself, what you are at?*

P.H. *Why you are painting at all is to intensify the quality of your life, to make reality more real, to make a new reality. But to make reality more real you are trying to grasp reality, and that's why you are painting at all, and reality is what being human is about, being alive as a human being, because it's the nightmare of unreality you are rejecting, and it's that you're not accepting - that nightmare because otherwise you would be a bank clerk, or you would be a doctor, or you would be whatever it is, but you wouldn't be painting, you would be dealing with the known, and as a painter you are not dealing with the known, you are dealing with the unknown. It's the transcendence that you are trying to deal with, it's not the actual, the imminence (I think that's the word), it's not what is imminent, exactly it is what transcendent, and that's the fictional element, that is the unknown element, that's my contention, that's why I'm saying it in paint. That it is the quality of the humanist, you know, it's like, ... and that's the difference between Twentieth Century art and Classical art. Classical art was working within terms of a certain known formula, if you like. It*

wasn't actually a formula but it was a known world, and it was an acceptance of that known world, where as we are working in terms of our being, of our humanity, not in terms of paint, so that in a way, painting is... in a paradoxical way, painting is less relevant, as an object. That is a definition of modernism really because modernism is a rejection of the known world. It is the fact that what you are doing is more important than the result of your doing it, in other words, where you are. What you are as a person at that particular moment of painting is more important than the result on the canvas. That is paradoxical but that is the essence of modernism, the act of doing it as a witness to your existence at that moment is more important than the picture. The picture is only a witness to it, the picture is a window on to that moment of existence, and that is the validity of the picture in the Twentieth Century: that it's simply a window on to that moment and that's really what modernism is about, compared with Classical art which may be an objet d'art, which may be a beautiful picture, a Titian, or a Mantegna ..

In a curious way, modern art has certain things in it in common with classical art and that element of being the window on that moment of existence, it does accept certain tenets of classicism. To get back to the old thing of classicism which makes it an object in the classical term because ultimately the only value that the picture has is going to stand as a painting, and everything I'm saying now is a paradox. I am aware that I am contradicting myself and at the same time it's true because it's only this is like the waves coming from the pebble that dropped in the water.... because basically everything is a paradox. Modernism is the opposite of Classicism and at the same time being absolute Modernist, it becomes classical, in other being absolutely a witness of existence, it becomes classical. Ultimately, that's all Botticelli was about... or if you look at Velasquez or Rembrandt you are aware of the existing man who painted that picture.

A.R. And so it's the permanent?

P.H. That's the permanent because you know that Rembrandt is as alive today at that moment. When you look into Rembrandt's eyes, as he was when he painted that picture, and that's the classical, that's the permanent element, that's the enduring element.

A.R. What do you hold in common with say, Paddy Graham, Michael Cullen, Brian Maguire?

P.H. I think what we have in common is that Expressionist element again, just to use that word kind of thing; that encounter with reality as a violation, as a violence to one's own being, and the expression of that incorporating that violence, which makes the expression of it, expressionistic.

We encounter our own reality, which is so different in each individual, but we are encountering it in a way that incorporates the violation of that encounter, and the violence of that encounter, that is why, because that's the only thing I think we have in common. But apart from that our lives are absolutely different, and our temperaments are absolutely different, but then as the same time our temperaments are not so different. I mean I would prefer to be in the company of Paddy Graham over a dinner table, say than with..... (laughter).



CHAPTER 5

BRIAN MAGUIRE

Anger runs like a bright vein through his history.

Anger is my predominant emotion. I would hope that there would be some social value in my work, that it would be of some value for people. It is important that it is not just self indulgent.

(75)

Born in Bray, County Wicklow in 1951, Brian Maguire disliked his schools, both primary and secondary. Though he was not a poor scholar he was always at odds with authority. He was rebellious, disruptive. The secondary school he attended, C.B.S. Bray, did not have an art class and he was expelled from the Chemistry lab. Quite typically he continued to study both of his favourite subjects on his own.

As a child I was isolated, shy. I found it very hard to accept quietness in me. I think through much of the rebellion I was trying to find a public imate. Now I am quieter and happy with that.

(86)

The youngest of his family, he was a sensitive, highly strung, emotional character. Maguire talks warmly of his father and values the times his father spent with him teaching him algebra. These were like monumental moments to him:

It certainly gave me great enjoyment of abstract learning.... any contact with your father at that age is really something.

(75)

After doing his Leaving Certificate, Brian Maguire went to the Dun Laoghaire Vocational School, which later became Dun Laoghaire School of Art. Here he studied on and enjoyed the course run by Eoin Butler, which was based on the Bauhaus method. Having built up his portfolio, he applied for and was accepted on to the Foundation Course at the National College of Art, which he found somehow more diluted than the previous course. He found some of the teachers very stimulating. He remembers Paul Funge telling him that he must be either very good or very bad, no middle course was acceptable.

That never left me... I listened to him.

Initially, the School of Painting refused to admit him, the rather abstract work did not appeal to them. However, after submitting more figurative work he was eventually accepted. The academic approach to painting did not appeal to Maguire. He was, of course, influenced by what was going on around him. In the large free studio space of the gallery, students such as Bill Whelan, Paddy Gillan, Dymphna Mullen, Michael Cullen were painting large expressionistic paintings. They worked with acrylic straight from the tube.

T.C.D.'s Exhibition Hall mounted many shows. The Picasso Exhibition ran from May - August 1969, showing some of that artist's great emotional works: three versions of 'Weeping Woman' from 1937, and 'Cat with Lobster on the Beach'. The Karl Appel show made another great impression. The large heads blocked out in pure colour of acrylic paint appealed to Maguire. He could identify with this way of painting. He began to paint large heads, using pure primary colours. Unlike Appel, Maguire allowed the paint to splash and dribble, mingling on the canvas. The negative areas were painted out in white.

*All that energy was in my head. I had to get it
out there.*

(86)

Maguire painted on energetically. He maintains he spent very little time in the Life Drawing room, and the odd moments, he did spend there he was like a cat on a hot tin roof, drawing energetically.

Brian Maguire was at the centre of student unrest in the College. He was always politically inclined - his politics were Left Wing Republican. He took easily to Student Union politics. He was very much the strategist behind the scenes, while others were the front men. Maguire, like the vast majority of students, put a lot of energy into trying to procure a more up to date system of education in the College. He talks about all this with a twinge of bitterness.

*We thought we could change things, both in College and in
the country... I feel guilty in relation to the College..
We started off to improve an educational system and were
tricked in defending the right to criticize.*

(75)

He witnessed the fall from power of the influence of the R.H.A. and the rise of a new power, mainly imported from Britain. There seemed little cause for celebration. Maguire was awarded his Diploma and he departed from a College which was on the verge of a changeover.

After College, he worked in various jobs, teaching, signwriting and painting intermittently. He painted a large, ominous pint of Guinness six foot high, urban landscapes, flat shapes of churches and houses against a night sky, paint dripping down, and also some portraits. Life became tough and dealing with it, difficult. After a lot of pain and misfortune, he began to pull himself up.

Maguire was offered a show in the Lincoln Gallery and he secured a commission with a trade union to paint, along with Charlie Cullen. This was the beginning of a very active period for him; he worked obsessively in an autobiographical mode. He painted several self portraits, inquiring, confronting moods of anger, frustration and self doubt. Sometimes, like others such as Charlie Cullen, Brian Bourke and Paddy Graham, there is an element of self mockery in his work. Brian Maguire has drawn on his own history, he has painted people, 'Jimmy B. in Dublin', 'Dee Outside White City, Bray', people who echoed his own plight. He explored his own relationships, however painful, with people and himself through the portraits.

To take one's stand in the human situation is to engage oneself in the tasks and pursuits of life in the world without illusion, taking upon oneself death, suffering, conflict, fault as bands and bounds....

(4, p.196)

The Mexican poet, Octavio Paz (Voices, Thurs.17), spoke of the need of modern day man,

We must face the tragic in us.

(83A)

This is what Maguire has done: Maguire executed a formidable series of portraits. Of these, many are warm, open, affectionate as well as

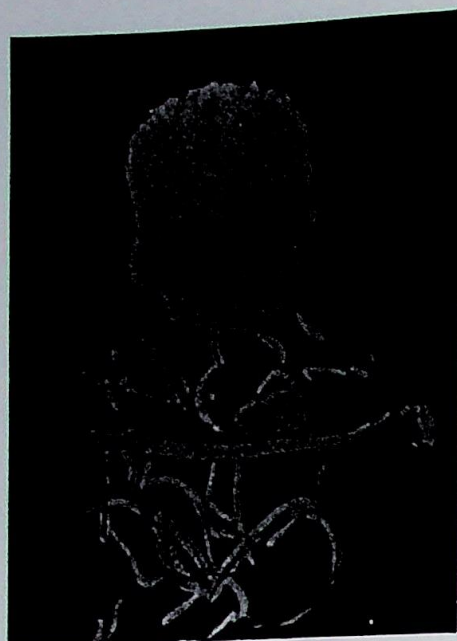


Fig. 41 Baby No. 3 (90 x 80cm)

figurative experiments. He feels that he is an underdog, both home and artistic, through these works, but what he has done to understand his home satisfied him. He felt that he had to be avoided.

If you repeat yourself you're like those theologians who need to argue about how many angels could fit on the head of a pin.

Yet he wants nothing to do with the new, that is, making something new. He wants to do with the unique, the paintings that celebrate them.

To do it he has to be very, very about.

Require painted over the old. These are with studies, concentration, and a child as a human being, not a child as a human being, because of this emphasis on the child, the child comes to life for us.

'Alone', Chryslis' master on paper, is one of Requir's two favourite pieces of work. The body of the male lies back on the coffin-like single bed, the penis is erect. Brian Requir has often talked of John Requir's 'The Dark', which deals with a similar theme, that of isolation and sexuality. The human legs, the legs of the bed are depicted simply, instantly. The figure is treated roughly, expressively, quickly. The blackness of the bed stretches back into the rectangular bedhead. This seems to give original dimension as if the suffering will never stop.

The work was done in 1971, alone, and was his last work.

I had a conversation with a group of poets yesterday, who said you were phallicentric. What do you think?

Requir replied:

I don't mind the label, it's the content that I find hard.



Fig. 42 Alone, charcoal and ink wash, 1981.

figurative compositions. He feels that led to an understanding, both human and artistic, through these works, but what he had come to understand no longer satisfied him. He felt redundancy had to be avoided,

If you repeat yourself you're like those theologians who used to argue about how many angels would fit on the head of a pin.

(66)

Yet he wants nothing to do with the cult of the new, that is, making something new for its own sake. The distaste has more to do with the uniqueness of individuals and hence, the paintings that celebrate them.

To do it again would insult what they're about. It would insult the persons.

(66)

Maguire painted several portraits of babies. These are warm studies, concentrating on the child's personality, seeing the child as a human being, rather than a cute, cuddly nonentity. Because of this emphasis on the child as a human entity, the child comes to life for us.

'Alone', (Acrylic crayon on paper), is one of Maguire's own favourite pieces of work. The body of the male lies back on the coffin-like single bed, the penis is erect. Brian Maguire has often talked of John MaGahern's 'The Dark', which deals with a similar theme, that of isolation and sexuality. The human legs, the legs of the bed are depicted limply, inanimate. The figure is treated roughly, expressively, quickly. The blackness of the bed stretches back into the rectangular bedhead. This seems to give external dimension as if the suffering will never stop.

Tim Lynch said to Brian Maguire:

I had a conversation with a group of women yesterday, who said you were phallogentric. What do you think?

Maguire replied:

I don't mind the label, it's the accusation I find odd.

(66)



Fig. 43 Parental Relationship, oil on canvas (3ft. x 4ft.)

Maguire does work from a personal history. Artistic, sexual and human alienation and isolation were the personal wells from which he drew. Maguire does not hide much in his painting, often things are graphically stated.

'Parental Relationship'

In this painting, the child is painted in bright orange and yellow, yet he has no arms, they are almost bound by some outside compulsion to stay rigidly by his side. The father's face is gentle, yet his entreating posture is also armless. All tension and movement forms in the ghost which overshadows them. It is a feminine form, it is the portrayal of absence as the determining presence.

This painting is about a realization of his son's view of him, as being that of 'God Almighty', as opposed to the actual contradiction of his own knowledge of himself, his shortcomings: a moment of truth.

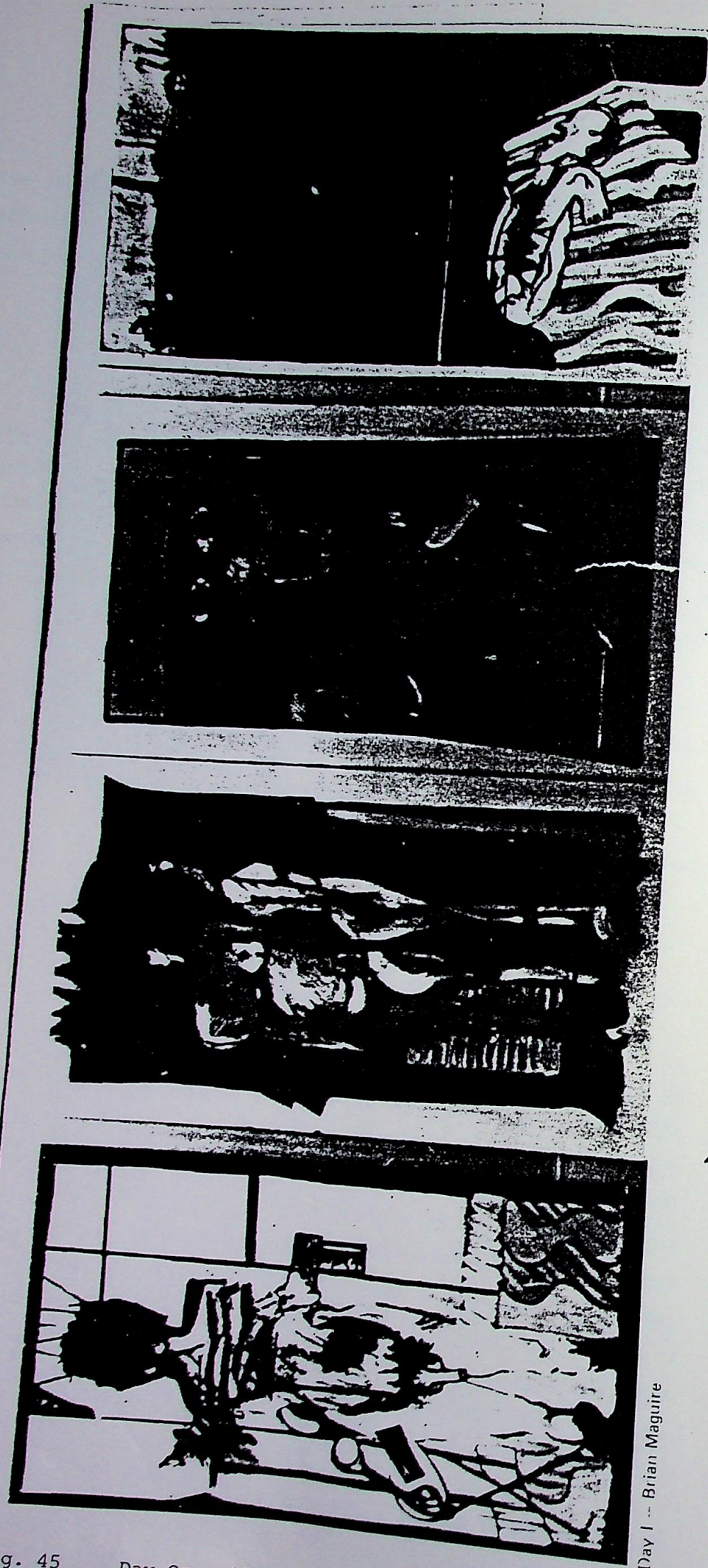
The trigger which ignites imagery for Brian Maguire is

Something that affects me strongly. It could be a story, more often or not, it's something I see or something which has happened to me...Whatever it is gives me a bang, a bang in the chest.

(86)

It is the shock of discovery, of recognition. Looking around his studio with far flung papers, improvised canvases, paint brushes, Maguire pulls out huge canvases. There is a lively, nervous energy and an active commitment to painting. When he talks about the work, his terms of reference do not go beyond their terms of creation, his involvement with them. He rushes over to pull out and show you a work. There is an unco-ordinated sprawl towards a great co-ordination in paint, which is at once human, emotive and surprisingly clear thinking. Brian Maguire is a compulsive painter, and a quiet thoughtful talker. He often rationalizes his own position or an outside position on canvas.

For a case in point, note the series, 'Day 1'. The figure is stunted, his arms cut off. The red lines on the chest and head



Day 1 -- Brian Maguire

Fig. 45 Day One, 1980 (150 x 336cm)



Fig. 46 Alone and Still Mother

represent pain, the hole in the stomach, the absence of aim. The waiting, the raw nakedness accentuates vulnerability. Is the telephone off the hook? Or is the figure waiting for communication?

In Section 2, one figure faces forward, the other is about to walk away. This is indicated by the red crayon line encircling the feet. Section 3, the clock indicates the passing of time: two eyes stare out. Two figures sit at a cafe or bar table, another face, like the clock, stares out.

Of Section 4, Jim Lynch says,

I see in this a portrait of a traumatised infant. He or she (could be a vagina or an inverted testicle), has experienced a severe unthinkable break in continuity. A gap yawns. Across the black hole, two streams of liquid feed intravenously into the heart and stomach. What were the sources of food and love? The mother's hallucinated breasts tower overhead. Life is a clock-work of forced feeding.

(66)

There is much rationalization going on, sorting out, devising methods to deal with trauma.

'Alone and Still Mother'

In the painting, 'Alone and Still Mother', we look down on the mother as a mother would look down at a child in a cot. The mother lies alone in an empty space, an empty 'buggy' is lined up beside the bed, the mother's body is shaped like a coffin. Where is the infant? The perspective could easily be that of the infant looking down at the mother, or vice versa. The overall perspective is twisted. This is achieved by the dark lines, which indicate the separation of the walls from the ceiling. The room is bare save the window, the buggy and the bed. The buggy is childishly wrought and accentuated by the quick, scratchy diagonal lines. This is reflected around the edge of the single bed, where the coffin-like figure lies. From the end of the bed, paint drips down. The paint is layered on, yellows and white are laid. The



Fig. 47 Family Group, 1982

window is scratched out of the white, revealing the reds and blacks beneath them. A sweep of paint encircles the buggy and shoots up to the right hand corner of the painting. There is a simplicity, childishness almost which is interpreted in an emotional, expressionistic language.

Brian Maguire's urgency is communicated in the way in which a painting is executed. They bear the scars of their own creation. Maguire uses the paint to fulfill his own need and purpose of creation. The medium only serves to 'get it out', yet he feels great affinity with paint,

I have a love-hate relationship with it.

(86)

Painting has held a crucial role for him, it has served as a key with which he can free himself,

Painting was the only means I had to explain and understand.

(86)

This he says quite flatly, matter-of-factly, without melodrama. Maguire has built up an emotional, visual language for himself. He has often scribbled in sketchpads, visual perception of how to express and articulate an emotion.

'Family Group'

The infant gazes at its mother from afar, the child sits in the high chair, one figure in darkened colours faces up front, the figure of an infant, arms outstretched, forms a motif in the head of the figure, who confronts the viewer. The figure up front is a self portrait, whilst at the same time it bears an uncanny resemblance to the figure in 'Alone and Still Mother' - even the image of the bier is behind. Is the child in the high chair, the artist grown up, or is the child motif in his head his child, his conscience? Is he placing himself in the position of his own mother? Is the woman, the child's mother, passing, equally removed and disconnected? Is the figure in the foreground turning in mourning for the dead and turning away from the living?

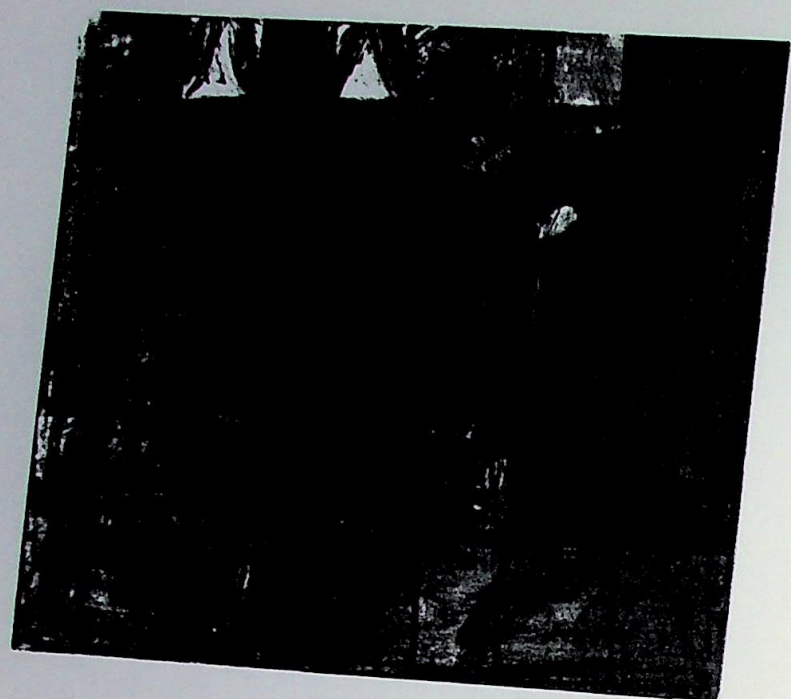


Fig. 63 Hester Got Sacked and Died, Was She Murdered? 1983
acrylic on canvas, (116 x 132cms)

'Hester got sacked. Or was she murdered'

Small stories become so huge in my mind that they stand for everything. The specific has a physical reality, the general is vague.

(86)

The story of Hester goes back twenty years, when he noticed a woman on Windmill Road. He recognised her as someone who had worked in a local shop with his father. Now she was stooped, depressed, withdrawn in herself following the loss of her job.

It isn't necessary to know why things happen but it is necessary to art.

(4)

The picture of the raincoated Hester remained with him. Lucy Lippard says,

When I left Maguire's studio, I said I'd be haunted by Hester and I am. Hester got sacked and died. 'Was she murdered?' is the title of a depressing 'Memorial' painting that shows the fatal effects of unemployment on the proud poor.

(56)

Maguire is a vibrant colourist. In this painting, the bright blue raincoat stands out, the decay imbued yellow/white stooped head is lit up in the darkness. The strange cockerel-like shape follows her as she passes the railings of the wet Dublin street. The homes are lit up, a warm glow comes from them, flecks of red surround the frames. Red repeats itself in the thin lettering of the name, 'Hester' which is set on to a wet tacky puck. It is a monument to Hester, whose forced early redundancy left her without a way of life and played a part in the taking of her own life.

Maguire sides with the defeated, those whom the system has worked against, and tried to destroy. This is not to bemoan or to make propaganda, these people reach out to him. Their dignity, the integrity of experience, its human significance is important to him. His pictures are a record, a tribute to the endurance in both their lives and his own. In the painting, he shouts out angrily at Dublin,

All Dublin has to give its tinker kids is puss and glue.



Fig. 48 Young Man with Machine Gun, 1983, oil on canvas
(152 x 81½ cm.)



Fig. 49 Provo Victim, 1981 (90 x 120cm)

When Brian Maguire talks about Munch and his painting, 'Jealousy', his eyes light up,

That is a powerful painting. In that yellow face he actually painted jealousy.

(86)

His admiration has nothing to do with Munch's way of working, his facility. For Brian Maguire, the big achievement was in the emotion he actually portrayed. This illustrates Maguire's priorities.

POLITICAL WORKS

Political Works dealing with Northern Ireland.

1. 'Young Man with Machine Gun', 1983
132 x 81½c.m.

The young man stands alone, alienated, isolated by his attire, his black lifeless eyes. Maguire says,

There are young lads in Belfast, they come from good homes, they are ordinary people but they become killers. It's a no-return situation for them.

(86)

The young, white face determinedly set looks out. There is an awkwardness about the way he handles the gun. Fear and emptiness are stated. There is an awkwardness about the clothes and boots - they are too big for him. Yet this does not diminish the terror we have of him: in semi-awkward innocence, he is still lethal.

2. 'Provo Victim'

The grey, green coated body lies huddled on the muddy black blood-mixed soil, crumpled like an inanimate object on the side of the road. It is a simple painting, the message as direct as the act itself. We are reconfronted with the image, we are not allowed to forget the words, matter-of-factly coming from the television news:



Fig. 50 Roadside Assassination, 1984 (169.5 x 186cm)



Fig. 51 Foreign News, acrylic on canvas (129 x 229cm)

*Found... body of Crossmaglen factory worker,
Anthony Shields, four miles from Crossmaglen.*

(49)

3. 'Roadside Assassination'

This is a painting that is expressively wrought. The colouring again is somewhat subtle: pastel greens, browns. The gunmen are faceless, remote, only their legs appear. The viewer is brought down to the level of the roadside. The reality of the act hits us. A deep hole is gouged out in the neck of the helpless victim. We are spared nothing: the blood pours out, drips down and spills out of the canvas frame. The bright tabs around the victim's hand indicate that he was trying to grasp something to hold on to.

In these paintings, Maguire violently confronts us with the reality of what the media drums out day after day. He is not allowing immunity. To Maguire the political is the personal, the personal is political.

'Foreign News'

This work is a reaction to the news from abroad. Maguire says,

The women and children always seem to be the victims.

(86)

He is trying to show his reaction in the painting: The mouth stays open, spewing out the news or in sick reaction while limbs fall from bodies and terror reigns. The colour in this painting is very different from the usual bright, primary colours. Here the colour is of subdued pastels, pinks, overlaid with white, while black gives depth in places.

'Homage to Orwell's 84'

The idea from this diptych draws its resources from a particular incident, when he went to see the film '1984'. Finding it unbearable to watch, he left the cinema and some of the audience were so engrossed in the torture scene, that they grumbled intolerantly as he made his exit, unwittingly reproducing the ugly emotions that the film was exposing. This diptych draws together both the memory of the event and a graphic description of the sexuality that caused the torture of the protagonist. This conveys Maguire's belief that society is unwilling to accept real human feelings. The painting can be seen in a paradoxical light, the reality of the sex act is shown as possessing fear and carnality. It is full of violence, like open wounds and severed limbs. The woman at the top of the painting could be decapitated, the whole figure could be seen as a violated woman.

In contrast to that, is the sweet harmonious togetherness shown in the couple on the right. This painting holds the paradox of gentle lovemaking and the violent, tortured act.

*If you are involved in the gentle, the loving, you
cannot contemplate gouging someone's eyes out.*
(86)

This is dealt with in 'Violated Newsreader, Public and Private Image'.

'Uganda, Child Looking for 6 Grains', 1982
(183 x 122cm.)

This painting is executed in acrylic paint, a medium which suits Brian Maguire's quick urgent style. The paint is lashed on and scraped off. Where this happens, the undercoating reveals an earthy surface. The black muddy cross, which is slightly off centre sprawls out, drips into an irregular mass. The blood red figure of the child reaches out to grasp the six grains. The body of the child is an awkward, round bellied motif. No detail is given, only the bare essence, thus accelerating the



Fig. 53 Homage to Orwell's 1984, acrylic on canvas (183 x 305cm) 1985



Fig. 54 Child Looking for 6 Grains of Rice, Uganda,
acrylic on canvas (183 x 122cm) 1982



Fig. 55 Child Looking for 6 Grains of Rice, Uganda,
acrylic on canvas (122 x 103cm) 1982

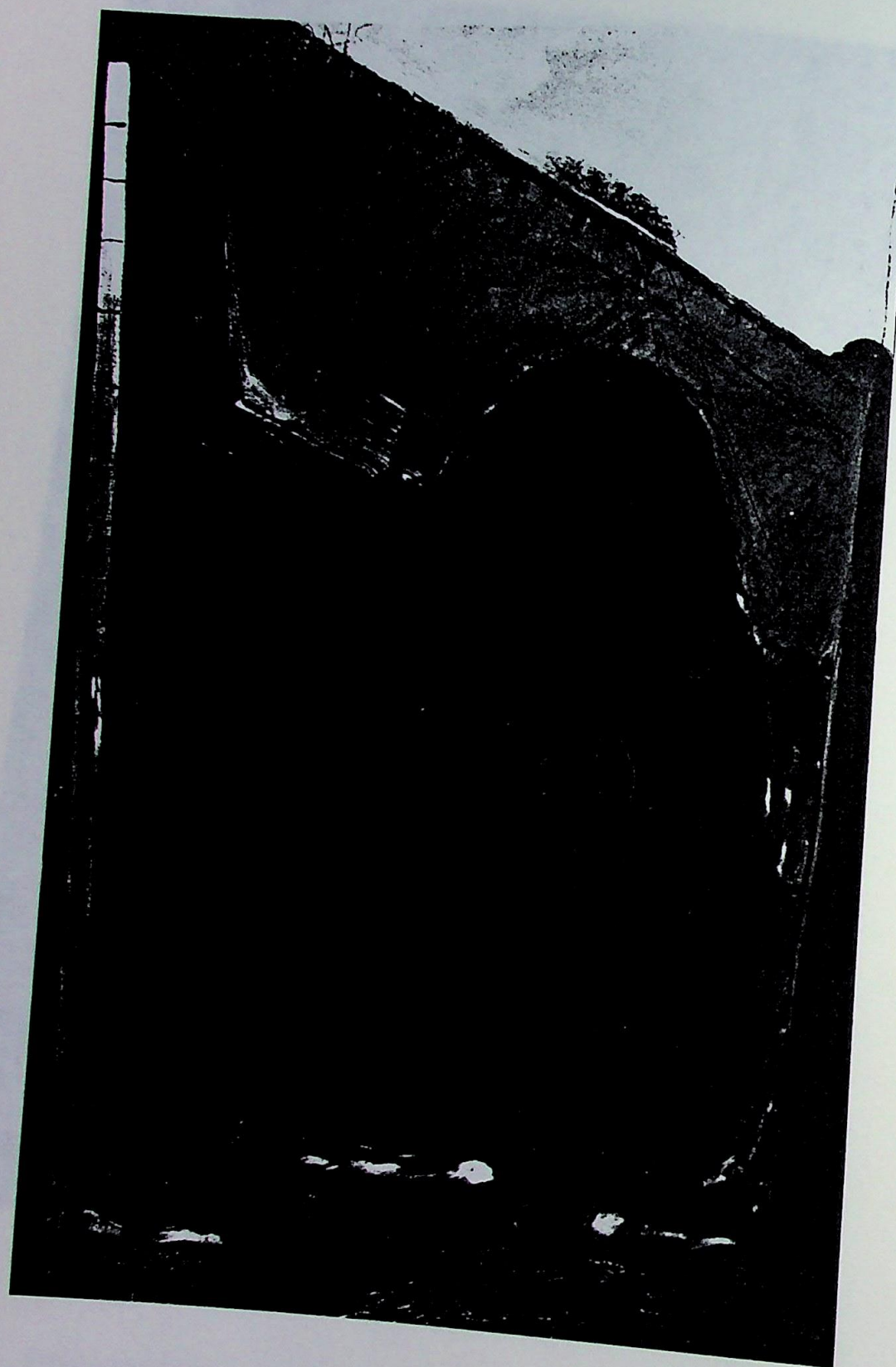


Fig. 56 Liffey Suicides, acrylic on canvas (153 x 102cm) 1983



Fig. 52

Child Praying before Catholic Statue,
acrylic on canvas, (220 x 150cm), 1984

emotional impact. The six grains of rice trickle through the characters of the word, 'UGANDA 82'. This simple graphic device works effectively. The word and the date are in the style of graffiti, replacing Uganda as a slogan in an environment where more negative terrorist statements are regularly seen.

'Liffey Suicides'

This demonstrates much of Maguire's coherence and command of paint. The murky green/grey palette is reminiscent of the Irish Landscape painters, such as Camille Souter. The perspective is grossly distorted and places the viewer in the position of looking up to the top of the imposing overhanging bridge, where a huddled group of fascinated onlookers beam down on three bloated bodies floating in the flotsam and jetsam of the river. Down along the left hand edge of the painting is a wedge with markings. This is like the planks of timber in rivers and swimming pools which indicate depth in Ireland. This is a reference to statistical data and painted when he was told that when the authorities are called to investigate the discovery of a corpse in the river, they almost invariably discover another body hitherto unnoticed.

'Child Praying Before Statue', 1983/4

Here the simple form of the child kneels before the crucifix. The penny candles glow in bright yellow. This pretty, fascinating glow is surmounted by the image of the Crucifixion; the blood from the feet of the Christ flood down on to the child. Maguire says kids are told by priests that they caused the blood on the Crucifixion. The background is blurred with washes and dribbles. The washes are muddy blacks and grey against a glowing yellow background.



Fig. 55 The (Imaginative) Pit, 1985,
acrylic on canvas (153 x 214cm)

'The (Imaginative) Pit', 1985

Maguire describes this in the interview as a time of artistic lull. The self portrait of the artist as he sits with a hole in his stomach. The red lines of pain in his chest are repeated in the large circular close up of the pit, where the waif-like figure floats. A dash of yellow sweeps across the top of this section. It is in turn repeated on the face of the artist. Flecks of white are interlaced, highlighting the 'Imaginative'.

This is a very strong painting, a powerful conception of the falling dream. It illustrates modern man's lack of a stable identity, which springs from a personal source. Whatever Maguire chooses to paint, his technique is rough, violent - relentlessly unbeautiful but always infused with compassion.

I'd like to think my paintings were akin to tombstones,
(66)

he says,

*I find it hard to live with the reality of life, so
I want to mark these incidences in some way,
however inconspicuous. I don't want them to be
forgotten.*

(66)

*The very essence of spirit is activity: it realizes
its potential - makes itself its own deed, its own
work - and thus it becomes an object unto itself.*

(4, p.379)

INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN MAGUIRE

(abbreviations: B.M. = Brian Maguire; A.R. = Ann-Marie Regan)



Fig. 59 Untitled (work still in progress)

B.M. The paintings come from a number of sources, the simplest being what I cannot deal with, what I cannot accept. To put it another way is that I believe that the most pleasurable moments are generally forgotten. You don't actually remember very much about the enjoyment whereas the opposite remains with us. We remember, they continue to bug us and .. you know resentment? Re-feeling and re-feeling that hurt over a long period of time, grows into hatred. You don't have the same feeling, with say love, you love somebody on Tuesday, and by Tuesday three weeks, you haven't seen them but that love has become really solid and sound. That doesn't fuckin' happen but if you hate them, the opposite will happen and from that way humans seem to, or at least I am anyway, that the things which have hurt me or shocked me or whatever, they last and one way of dealing with them is to paint them. And in the painting of them, it's quite often that an understanding of all the elements in the situation comes about - and my feelings have changed...

A.R. When you paint, do you change those feelings by yourself?

B.M. Yes, because when you're painting whatever you paint you think about. I think on a very conscious level, so sometimes I cannot force the evil character in my mind to be evil in my painting..

A.R. You cant?

B.M. No, one thing that is difficult to do in painting is to go against your intuition, to cut out the intuition your intuition is like your subconscious. The paintings are not really very rational, they're not thought out and designed like a poster, so in this particular area that I am talking about in working from memory of situations, they go through a process.

A.R. It's like opening up old wounds?

B.M. Yes, I do that. It is all a very healthy thing because you know, you begin to realize what's going on, things become more clear or alternatively you are more politically orientated, stuff like that, the Ugandan picture there, it's not that Uganda becomes okay, but that a statement has been made.

A.R. So something has been done about it?

B.M. Something like that. A lot of the pictures I described the last time as 'Memorial' pictures, like 'Hester', the 'Liffey Suicides', that one in a sense, has made a bit of a mark. However the importance of such a mark depends really on the rest of the people. I do the best I can.



Fig. 64 Violated Newsreader, Public/Private Image, 1985
acrylic on canvas (168 x 183cm)

A.R. How do you mean? It depends on what they take from it?

B.M. Yes, it depends on how people respond to the pictures, how people see pictures. Whether they are done well enough to actually be worthy of what they are about. I can't answer for that. I do them as best I can and carry on.

There's a huge, well not huge, there's a strong trait of autobiography or self portraiture through the work - and you see, in a way, I've always been impressed by painters whose work gives me a sense of who they were. I think this is really important. I suppose that's what I am trying to do with those now - let myself see the value of that again is probably questionable.

A.R. No, really there is a value to recognising the human element.

B.M. Yes, I know that is what attracts me in writing, the belief that I'm reading another person. I'm a very inquisitive person about other people. I want to know every single thing about them. I am a bit like Thomas...

A.R. The Doubting One?

B.M. Doubting Thomas, Yes, I never thought of Thomas as being anything other than inquisitive Thomas. The way he put his fingers in.... He wanted to know for himself.

I think when I choose to paint other people, I would hope the principle of empathy would function. That I would empathize with the person through the painting and I hope that the reverse would happen when people deal with the self portraits. That would give them a value, the value of being the experience of the viewer.

A.R. Would you hope they would see what is in you, is in themselves and identify with it?

B.M. Yes, that is it exactly. The painting is a specific painting of a specific happening to a woman in Seattle. This woman appeared on television, she was good looking and had been raped by this man, together with about five other women in the town. He was eventually caught. The effect on the victims is so great, it's like a sense of loss. It is so great that they get into the cupboard, and become afraid of the outside world. What struck me about the programme was the duality of image of being on the television and that image of her at home in the flat, hiding amongst the shoes. I wanted to make a picture which would relate to the effects of rape on a woman. I got a woman in to model for it.* It's an attempt to say graphically what it's like to be a painter - There's a self portrait sitting over there with me, cigarette and a big hole in my stomach because I cannot find for ME the way to express what I want to say.

* Brian Maguire is referring to 'The (Imaginative) Pit'

Each picture has been like a time of rest in a falling dream. You know, the one we all have of falling and falling. Each picture for about the last two or three years has been something to hold on to. You just ground yourself and then you're off again. I tried to paint in that part of the picture. You get very scared of stretching canvasses because I don't have a philosophical ground to be putting one foot in front of the other. A lot of pictures are rejected. They're not done, you know, I just don't bother. I just don't bother to paint a lot of pictures.....

A.R.

You don't bother?

B.M.

Yes, the ones I do are taken from the feeling or subjective area, not an incident.

That painting, the one of the child against the adults, I believe it shows that you can do things with paint that you can't do with anything else, in the painting's ability to communicate - that it can communicate very humanistic things, that words (except perhaps poetry) cannot reach, and music too. It's a non literal means of communication.

There is an intuitive sense of colour which is used to create mood. The whole design in the picture is intuitive - and yet, there are the same technical considerations such as tone or shape, space, that there would be for any type of painting.

A.R.

You are an Expressionist, or are you? Where do you think that people like yourself, Patrick Hall and Paddy Graham are different from or resemble each other, or compare with New Expressionists?

B.M.

I don't know, I honestly don't know that I have the answer to that. I've seen 'Salome's' work, the Englishman, what's his name, used to be a performance artist. He was in the Greek show, a lot of it anyway is very seductive.

A.R.

Do you think a lot of that stuff is playing with paint, rather than... Is that the way you would be different?

B.M.

(Rather indignant). I would hope so, in the sense that I suppose I get attacked on the basis that the subject matter is of too much importance over the means to achieve the content. You know, that was the gist of McCrumm's thing when he said we should do posters. I was doing a poster this morning - it doesn't look anything like my painting... I know I have been fortunate to have done a good deal of travelling lately and have visited big cities and their major museums and in them small pictures from the turn of the century.

A.R.

Like whose work?

B.M.

Like Van Gogh, Nolde, Soutine, Kokoscka, Beckmann and Giacometti. These are the pictures I like to stand in front of for a long time. I don't like to see too many of them because if you spend a half an hour in front of pictures for eight hours you get tired... I can name the pictures, I can bring them to mind and those are the guys who say everything. Like Van Gogh, who is the grandfather of Expressionism, and Nolde is the father, and there are sons and daughters appearing now. But the thing is that the New Expressionists didn't come from nowhere in Germany: Huidiche was teaching (The Independents showed him this year). He was a strong influence on the Berlin Academy. He taught Fetting, Salome. The thing never disappears. There are always people everywhere painting in an Expressionist sense.

I don't think it's a question of how you make your brush marks. In fact, I remember being in Rome three or four years ago and in a Modern Art collection, there was absolutely not one figure out of maybe two hundred large pieces. Now you can go into the galleries and there might be one without a figure... not in a collection, because a collection takes a lot of years to produce in a city, but that was the Italian collection. There were just no figures, it was purely based on American-dominated abstract Expressionism and minimal art. Maybe I am very conservative but given a choice between Van Gogh's 'The Poet's Garden' and Bernard Newman's 'Stripes', I would walk by Newman's work to look at the other.

A.R.

So where do you fit in?

B.M.

I used to think there was something very wrong with me doing that. I don't think so any more. I think it's just the way I am. So where do we fit in?..... I suppose you'll find out if I ever get a chance to show abroad. People abroad could decide for themselves. You could see Salome and Fetting up against Graham and Hall. I am not sure why but I seem to have a clear and strong belief in regard to painting that is not contemporary. I seem to be governed by doubt in dealing with contemporary work. Perhaps the passing of time is necessary in order to see works objectively. People will see that there is a big difference here too..

A.R.

And where does the art market play a role in it?

B.M.

Well, you cannot look at the judgements of the day without being aware that business plays a very strong role in affecting the way in which a painting is judged.

I'll give you two incidents of this:: The Goethe Institute carry (I don't know if they publish it or not) a German Foreign Ministry Cultural Magazine, (like our 'Ireland Today' is its Irish equivalent). It contained an article



Fig. 60 Untitled (Sleeping Figure) (work in progress)

which consisted of a graph, like a store price index. The years were printed up one side and Deutschmarks were set on the bottom, with the name of each artist, showing the 'value' of their painting, say for the years 1981 - 1984; 1981, being in green, the change shaded in grey. You know, like the change of the value of the pound! That was the financial value of the picture. This was the relevance the German Cultural Institute placed on the works!

A.R.

How does Ireland relate to the market?

B.M.

We are very isolated here. That's the way business works. Now, I don't really have much to add to that other than an awareness that there is no more or no less corruption in the art world than in the pharmaceutical world. You know, you don't have so much corruption in Ireland - there isn't the scope for it. (Laughter). There's practically no market at all. There's a certain amount of people controlling the public mind, who have done so over the years and they certainly aren't very fond of the fact that we don't get foreign exhibitions. We saw one contemporary German show in the Bank of Ireland (three pictures by one person) and there was one show of Bolde's in the last twenty five years. There was a minor Picasso Show. We are a bit like Crete or Sardinia in terms of what we get from abroad.

It makes a positive answer to your question about the New Expressionists impossible. I've seen painters, whose work I really liked, like Max Neumann but I haven't seen a lot of them. I liked Fetting, two portraits of whose I saw in London - that's just two you know. There's a sense of ease about the German stuff. It looks as if it's done with constantly no problems at all. At times, but not always, I like to achieve a result which looks like it was put together slowly as in the painting of 'Sleeping Figure'. The face was painted slowly because the figures are asleep, but the children are squaw-ways because that's the way children are. The form follows the content. The way the thing is painted comes from the way the painter sees it in reality. Van Gogh talked about getting the essence of reality. He squares off the picture he has done against the picture in his mind. In a sense I do a lot of that and I destroy an awful lot. When they look finished, as if they are run off - there's a year's work in that (Maquire points to a painting in the studio) and yet you'd want to see it, knowing that.

A.R.

You don't do much autobiographical painting now. Why the change?

B.M.

When I came back to paint in 1979 or thereabouts, the Winter of '78, things were much easier because I had been away from it for six or seven years. I'd been through a lot of things. It was all source material.



Fig. 58 Mother with Head of Dead Hunger Striker, 1981
(120 x 90cm) acrylic on canvas

I was under a lot of pressure, an awful lot of pressure and I had no difficulties about what to do because I'd tackle this today and this tomorrow, and I'd never actually done much conscious work. It was very easy for the first couple of shows I put on. The subject matter was all there. It's different now - as if it's moved away from the first autobiographical novel type thing to something that is much more considere.

A.R. Do you think the work is necessary?

B.M. I feel that the act of making pictures which are rooted in a vulnerable human reality is a definite act against the war maker, be they large (as in the United States) or small (as in the Provos). A musician or a lover does likewise.

A.R. What do you mean by a 'musician'....?

B.M. When a piper plays a tune for his kids, it won't stop the B.32's, or bring them down, but it stands as an act in time against the technology that bombs people.

A.R. I see what you mean, your titles on your work are emphatic.

B.M. Kusbitt pointed out that my use of titles inhibited the viewers perception of the image. He pointed out that 'Mother of a Dead Hunger Striker' could be taken as an image of human tragedy rather than an image from Ireland, that it was stronger without the title.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The four painters discussed in the previous chapters were all born in the same homeland, they have points of similarity and contrast. Besides the broad Irish historical and cultural background, they evolved through roughly the same artistic circles, namely, the Independent Artists, and with the exception of Hall, all were students of the National College of Art. All the artists paint figuratively, drawing from the sources of the human condition. These four have stood out to question the status quo and have attempted to awaken us to our vulnerability and questionable places of sanity. The translation of the truth, as these painters see it, is their intention.

Maguire and Graham have much in common, including a mutual respect. They both make art from the raw stuff of their respective lives: self conscious autobiographers. Neither is afraid of pictorial ugliness. They both have been struck with similar misfortune in their not so distant past. Both have recovered. For both these men, painting was a help in the process of recovery. They have both entirely different personalities. Graham is gregarious, articulate. (Aidan Dunne says of him, 'He is a fast and dangerous talker. He burns ideas like fuel'). For all that, he has a lively glint of humour. Maguire possesses that too but when he speaks he seems to consciously imbibe through the heart. He is quieter.

Graham is the iconoclast, letting up at the nation, religion, raising questions of sexuality. Maguire's sources are more particularly drawn from everyday encounters, an event that sparks off something in him.

Small stories become so huge in my mind that they stand for everything. The specific has a physical reality, the general is vague.

(66)

You could say that for Graham big stories become small. He knocks their grandiosity, placing the grandiose beside the natural. For example, the lovers in the Transfiguration.



Fig. 65 Portrait of Paddy Graham by Brian Maguire



Fig. 66 Portrait of Brian Maguire by Paddy Graham

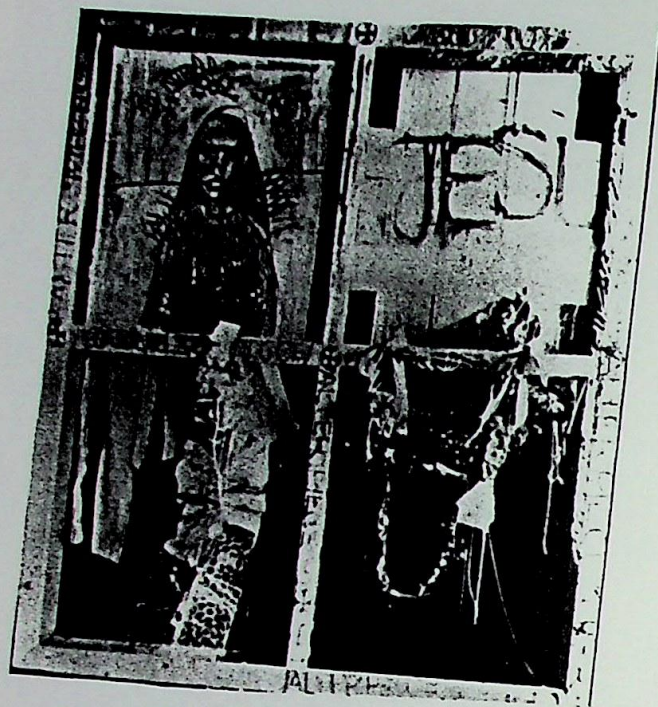


Fig. 57 People's Altar, mixed media

As well as liking people like Munch and Nolde, which he shares with Maguire, Graham also says he has a depth of reference from Giotto to Pietro de Francesca in later works. This interest in Classical art is in turn shared with Hall who looks to Velasquez. Interestingly enough Rainer Fetting says,

I think my roots are not in Mortiplatz: My influence, my development goes back to Mortiplatz but my roots are not there, my roots are in Classical Art.
(78, p.27)

The interest in Classical art maybe shows through in the use of rich colour and muted tones in both Hall's and Graham's work. Maguire generally uses bright, vibrant colour, offset at times by muddy tones. As far as Van Gogh and Munch is as far back as Maguire looks. Michael Kane looks to Matisse as well as Beckmann. In common, all four share respect for the German Expressionists as opposed to the neo-Expressionists.

Graham stands out from the group in that he has used the three-dimensional as in the 'People's Altar' where he used wire mesh, concrete, blocks, plaster, in conjunction with paint. Maguire also uses words as in the 'Uganda' painting. Hall has not used words so far. Kane has only used them in graphical works where they are functional rather than a means of expression.

Kane and Hall have both used mythology as a means through which to channel human expression. Patrick Hall says,

like a Greek Chorus... you take over, well society takes over when there's a moment when it is not possible for the individual to carry that moment.
(87)

Kane says about Agamemmon and his return from Troy,

one has no prospect, either personal experiences or imaginative situations, which one imagines would be the case, and one has to put oneself into imagined experiences in order to be able to express these things.
(84)

Kane is direct, up front in his use of the print paradox. The fundamental goal of Hall, is also used at times by Graham and

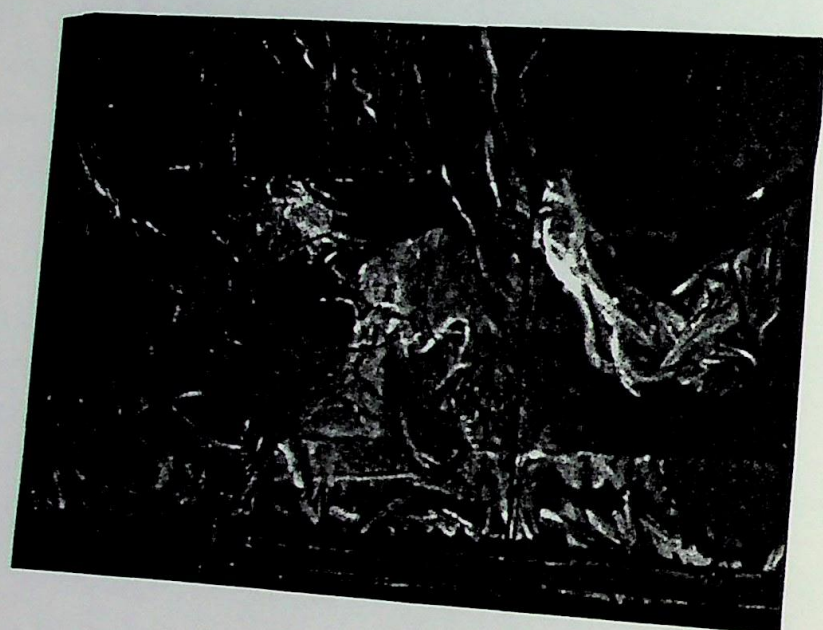


Fig. 67 *Flesh and Blood*, 1983-4, (185.5 x 171cm)

Maguire. 'The Public Versus the Private Image of Violated News-reader' illustrates this. The paradox appears again in 'Homage to Orwell's 1984': the gentle lovers and the violence of torture. With Graham, in the painting he uses the figure of the nun, who is naked. This a paradox. He also uses roughly wrought self portraits, which are interplayed with flowers.

All these painters deal with sexuality. Hall deals predominantly with the male angst; Maguire portrays women in black and white terms, the mother, the prostitute, and the girlish innocent. While Graham also uses women as subject matter, he also depicts sensuality. One situation where Maguire has dealt with the sensuous in a positive light is in the painting 'Houseing Estate'. Here he depicts a couple (obviously himself and his wife) lovemaking in the room of a semi-detached house. The colours he uses to portray the couple are warm reds and yellows. In other rooms in the house, his children who are lazily lying in bed, are painted in these warm, glowing colours. The house is in the Chinese perspective. We see the inside of the house from a plan view. Other houses in the estate are treated with European perspective and an odd warm glow twinkles from some windows. Out in the dark street, a fight is being carried out. The vicious knifing contrasts strangely with the security behind the walls of the houses.

Graham in his 'Songs of Solomon' and the 'Transfiguration' treats the subject of sensuality much more lavishly. Both painters use an undercurrent: Graham's is the religio-sexual and Maguire's is the violence versus the security and sexual love.

There are similarities in the work of Graham and Maguire such as in 'Festival' and 'Alone', though they have totally different themes, however, the way in which the compositions are arranged is similar. The figure on the bed, retreating back into the rectangular space is similar; 'Flesh and Blood' in this painting, the female figure in profile carries the cross; in 'Hester' the stooped figure with the birdlike shape; there is a similar use of the female in profile. There are other similarities: Maguire's figure is an old lady within an urban landscape. Graham's is the faithful female seen at



Fig. 68 Girl with Bird, 1979, linocut (320 x 270mm)

close quarters.

Thematic content often similar is treated in different modes. Graham goes in close to capture the moment as in 'Was this Suicide?'. Maguire brings the subject of the 'Crucifix' again to ordinary life. He depicts the child praying at the shrine which is surrounded by candles. The child looks up to the Crucifixion. It is the every day reality crystalized, open for investigation. Graham's investigation is more philosophical. Each shows a very different treatment of the same subject matter.

Kane depicts women generally in an unsavoury light. The more vicious, he says, come from particular personal experiences such as 'Lot' and yet there is great female tenderness and strength in 'Girl with Bird', 1979.

Kane, though not a political animal always seems to 'hit them indirectly'. Maguire is concerned with the political in that he sees the political in terms of human relationships,

*relationships between political parties, countries,
are like relationships between people.*
(86)

Graham is political in that he applies the same truth as a means of survival, through himself first and then to demystify religion, and the spheres of the national ethos. Hall, not being overtly political, sees politics in terms of art and the artist.

*The artist, above all others, knows that the fate of the
individual, of the person is more important than the
fate of the whole world, that each person is answerable
for the world and for all men.*
(87)

It can be said that the work of these painters is the art of the individual and in that too, it is of general human interest. Shown in their own words is what they individually demand from art: comparison and contrast speak effectively. Graham says,

What I want from Art, is myself.
(85)

What we see is mainly what we want to see: the aim makes the work. My aim is colour and form of such intensity, such centering, then movement and passion are left behind or rather caught, and there is only the silent brilliance of the sun, the silence of the stone. You can see this in Van Gogh's boats or Velasquez' mast and ribbons. What makes me want this silence in my painting is that in some unknowable way, it feeds energy and passion while being the denial of them.
(Patrick Hall, 49)

What I demand of Art is what I demand of any other activity, either in the arts or of art, and that is a high degree of intelligence, just ordinary clear thinking.

(Michael Kane)
(84)

The things which have hurt me or shocked me or whatever, they last, and one way of dealing with them is to paint them.

(Brian Maguire)
(86)

In conclusion, this painting is distinctive in that it went on in the background in Ireland regardless of reaction from all quarters, evolving through a largely indigenous tradition. It differs from its international counterpart in that it is incisive, particularized, homing into content through the emotional. Although hard attacks are hammered home, rough raw usages of paint rant and rage, surface tissues are scarred and scraped, it is not playing with surface for the sake of itself: there is no enigma. Questions are faced, which no one wishes to face. It is healthy in the way pain is healthy and it warns us to pay attention.

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