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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

PRINT AND PRINT-MAKERS IN BELFAST TODAY.

A Thesis Submitted to:

The Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies

And

In candidacy for the degree

FACULTY OF FINE ART

DEPARTMENT OF PRINTMAKING

By

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Third level courses in the area of Art and Design tend to be comparatively longer in duration than many of their counterparts in other study areas, and in many colleges art students have found to their peril, that the post college situation is given very little practical consideration.

While most Irish universities have career guidance sessions to help their students establish or find a place to work on completing their studies, the same level of professional discussion and advice is often absent in the art school situation, consequently this thesis was compiled chiefly for the benefit of art students, to give an indication of a number of post art college situations.

Specifically, consider for example the case of a fine art print-maker. The initial financial outlay for even essential equipment, where or how does one gain access to etching presses, vacuum presses, lithographic stones, etc? Each item singly bearing a price tag of hundreds and in some cases thousands of pounds. Naturally in each city and regional area in Ireland the availability of facilities differ, thus in this thesis I have centered my investigation in a specific city, Belfast. The area's potential as a centre of print-making, the studio opportunities available, and an analysis of specific established artists currently working there. Belfast in my opinion is a particularly appropriate centre for this study for three specific reasons.

Firstly the only Printmaking Residency fellowship in the thirty-two counties is offered by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, located at its headquarters in Belfast. Secondly, this unlikely spot, notorious for its society torn with war ridden angst, has become a haven for many foreign printmakers of note. Lastly as I am very interested in the human predicament that results from the political situation in Northern Ireland, I was quite curious to establish the viewpoint of these artists on the Northern Ireland situation, with specific concern to confronting the issue in their work.

Basically in Chapter One, I have examined the role of the Northern Ireland Arts Council in the area of Printmaking, namely the establishment of a print workshop and a residency fellowship scheme. Areas such as origins, current facilities, future plans, and print related schemes are discussed.

Chapter 2, 3 and 4 centre on three print-makers working in Belfast over the last year. Firstly a Mexican, Alfonso Monreal, secondly British born Anthony Davies, and lastly Diarmuid Delargy, an artist of native northern extraction. I wish to make students aware that print-makers of noted proficiency are indeed working in Belfast today, there is thus a vast sea of as yet, largely untapped knowledge and talent. Monreal currently holds the fore-mentioned Arts Council residency fellowship. Delargy is the forthcoming 1988 recipient. Davies has abandoned the "system" essentially, he has established his own private print studio. While Monreal and Davies give an insight into the traditions and culture of their origins.

Delargy discusses his "own place" - Belfast, and its influence and significance in his work. Each artist essentially different in his work practice and outlook, the common denominator or bond being Belfast and their confidence in it as a thriving centre of creativity.

CHAPTER I

Title: Print and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

The search for a studio, the need for access to resources and skills, and the desire to find some kind of creative integration into society, are by and large, the major concerns of any artist who wishes to seriously pursue their art-life work. With few exceptions it is precisely in these areas that both young and "middle ground" sectors find themselves in a problematic situation. Statistically one finds that many potentially creative people, when confronted with the desperation of this reality, simply opt for the fine art of subtle compromise.

Thankfully over the past number of years there has been a shift of emphasis in the Arts Council of Great Britain's approach to the support of artists. A general movement towards support schemes which encourage artists into constructive contact with their contemporaries and the public has been achieved (residencies in universities, factories, forests etc.). By contrast the situation in Northern Ireland, while as yet undeveloped in the the areas of painting and sculpture, has a competent print scheme, operating a studio workshop and residence fellowship for printmakers. In fact as mentioned in the introduction, it is the only full-time artist-in-residence scheme presently operating in Ireland, north or south.

By contrast printmaking facilities were very different in Northern Ireland 20 years ago.

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In the late sixties and early seventies one witnessed an upsurge of printmaking in Great Britain, consequently in Northern Ireland a dozen or so artists, among them David Barker, Bob Sloan, and David Croft endeavoured to finance the establishment of a print studio in Belfast. Because of the initial considerable financial outlay involved, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland were partitioned by the group for support. Eventually they were offered a basic financial contribution and studio space in the old kitchen of the Arts Council Headquarters building. Thus the print workshop at Stranmillis road was established, and over a period of time when the original initiating committee disappeared, the Arts Council gained total responsibility for the day to day monitoring, running, and administration of the workshop.

Today it provides specialized equipment and facilities for artists who wish to make prints in the areas of etching, screen printing, and stone lithography. As well as the usual hot plates, acid cupboard, aquatint boxes etc., the etching studio has three presses, (a rochat copperplate press 48" x 28", a Bench Model Press 36" x 17", and an 72" x 36" etching press). Included in the screen room facilities are a print-down frame with metal halide lamp (50" x 50"), a vacuum table (60" x 40"), and a drying rack (43" x 30"). This is perhaps the least developed of all the studio areas offered. The lithograph area has a competent selection of stones, and a motorized press with a 40" x 30" bed width is available.

Additionally they have received about five commission projects in the last number of years, recently creating and producing a hundred prints for Belfast's New City Hospital. As is normal when undertaking a project of this type, the initial financial outlay is divided equally between the commissioners and the council. It is hoped in the near future to be in a position to extend the workshop space area, but at present because of planning permission disruptions, a portocabin may be only solution to cramped space conditions.

The main advantage of working in this type of group studio is naturally the economic viability of the opportunity compared to self-financing the equipping of a personalised studio space. Naturally though, one must be able to work in the company of other people. As the workshop is operated on an "open" application system, artists from areas outside of print may apply to use the studio space too. In cases like this a portfolio of work is submitted to the workshop manager, and a certain competency and artistic creativity must be seen in order to be accepted for studio membership. In special cases like these, until a ~~level~~ of technical competency is acquired, the person is tutored in studio procedure by the workshop manager or technicians. This highlights another advantage of working in a group studio, technically a lot of extra knowledge is available to the artist, whether through the staff as listed above, or through contact with fellow members. Without doubt, all these favourable considerations aside, the present manager Jim Allen recognises the importance of maintaining the workshop on as competently, a professional level as possible.

At present there are twenty artists availing themselves of the facility, among them such established printers as Diarmuid Delargy, Kent Jones, and Alfonso Lopez Monreal. The present membership fee is eight pounds per year plus an hourly fee of twenty pence while the artist is actually working in the studio. Printers availing of the workshop on a constant basis throughout the year, may pay a lump sum of fifty pounds instead of the hourly fee if they so desire. The purpose of this hourly fee is to cover usage of the equipment available and the cost of basic printing materials, the major exceptions being metal plates, expensive papers and photographic stencils. Because of the obvious security consideration in Northern Ireland, the workshop is only available to members from 10 am to 5 pm., Monday to Friday, and on Tuesday and Thursday evenings until nine p.m.

The studio was granted a budget of £23,740 for 1986, this money is controlled initially by Jim Allen, who is the present workshop manager, but in the areas of policy and extra-budgeting decisions, Brian Ferran, visual arts director for the Arts Council must be consulted. Excluding running costs, the manager's salary, and that of two part-time technicians must also be deducted from the money available. In order to create extra funds the workshop has embarked on a number of projects over the years, not least the introduction of an editioning Silkscreen service. Also all Arts Council Posters etc. are printed on the studio's high speed litho press, and printing in this area has also been undertaken for the linen hall library, a local charity.

While the workshop provides facilities for artists to extend their graphic range by working in the various print processes, the Art's Council's continuation to operate there a residency fellowship in Printmaking, has been influential in making Belfast an important print centre. This fellowship scheme was first introduced three years after the studio's origination. Jim Allen was the first artist in residence back in 1977, his contract with the council, originally for a year, progressed into three; today he's still there, now as workshop manager. Other notables such as Kent Jones, Mary Earl Powers, Steven Barreilough, and Ephraim Ehrari have all been resident artists at Stranmillis road. Currently the fellowship is held by Alfonso Monreal, a mexican artist who has been its recipient for the last two years, but in 1988 Diarmuid Delargy will become the first Belfast born artist in residence. Last year among the Arts Council's touring exhibitions was "printmakers in residence", this comprised a selection prints by the five artists who held the fellowship.

The primary aim of the Residency Programme is to allow the holder a degree of freedom both in terms of time, space, and money in the pursuing of his/her own work. In fact the Art Council financial committment for 1985/86 was £5,600 , while the resident artist also availed himself of the studio facilities to work in, and the Arts Council gate lodge as living accomodation. Invitations for applications from suitablecandidates for the residency post are published every year in national and international newspapers, and magazines. Candidates submit a slide selection of recent work, these are shortlisted, eventually a select number are interviewed for the position. Jim Allen and Erian Ferran are permanent members of the four man interviewing panel, the remaining places being filled by Arts Council committee members. Initially the chosen printer is invited to the

workshop for a year but he may re-apply at the end of that time for a concurring fellowship extension. To date all recipients have specialised in the areas of etching and lithography, the studio has never had a major screen printer as resident artist, but Jim Allen is confident, if such a silk screen applicant could be found, whose work was of a comparatively high calibre, the case would be viewed extremely favourably by the council.

It is somewhat surprising to learn that this residency is awarded without any attendant obligations, apart from the obvious one of using the workshop facility. While I agree that the primary aim of the scheme should certainly be to allow the artist more freedom in the execution of his/her work, I think communication/education has to be a vital component of any such programme. Such a scheme should provide the opportunity for as wide a spectrum of interested people as possible, to meet and work with a full-time practising print-maker. In fact in Great Britain residency fellowships quite often commit the holder to a specific number of teaching hours, lectures and demonstrations, as well as an involvement in the organisation of exhibitions. Indisputably the Arts Council itself organises various exhibitions which provide that very essential opportunity for encounter between the artist and the public; indeed a one-man show of Monreal's work (current fellowship holder), has just finished a month's run in the Council's gallery at Bedford Street, Belfast. But I feel that unfortunately, so much more could be achieved, if the scheme was expanded, and developed to the framework of its British counterparts, to allow the general public alike to ^{appreciate} printmaking as a potentially major art form.

Indisputably the Arts Council through their funding of the print workshop and residency scheme, have promoted the cause of printmaking in Northern Ireland. Indeed it could be said they are the sole resurrecting financial factor in this area of the fine arts. But it must not stop there,

it is to be hoped that their schemes and financial assistance will not only continue but expand to educate the person in the street to the great possibilities printmaking furnishes, and allow him/her the possibility, if he/she so desires, to experiment with it.

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CHAPTER 11. Alfonso Lopez Monreal.Introduction:

Alfonso Lopez Monreal is a Mexican born Painter/printer working in Belfast. Since 1986 he has also been artist in residence at the Arts Council Print Workshop, Stranmillis road.

Born in Zacatecas, a rural village in the Bufo mountains of northern Mexico, he enrolled in an architecture course at the University of Guanajuato in 1969. "It was my first contact with art history. When we studied the Renaissance I was looking less at buildings than the paintings. "(a) . Realising his vocation lay elsewhere he left college, spent time in San Francisco, and Barcelona, before discovering the Print Studio of William Hayter in Paris. There Monreal was introduced to etching. Four years ago he moved to Belfast with his Northern born wife Marian Clarke. "It was important for me to realise that someone from Zacatecas could have a place in the wider world", (b), "Now that I have been in different places, the more I travel, the more I realise how unimportant where you are is really, as long as you have the possibilities of working".(c).

In 1984 he returned to Mexico for a brief period to organize the exhibition of 'Artists from Belfast', "After all this moving around and playing around, I suddenly re-discovered my home", (d). This realisation has had a striking effect on his most recent work, (for example 'The Beautiful Frida', and a series of Crouching Males with Bulls). "Rather than trying to put everything in, I'm trying to take more out". (e).

Edited Interview:

- A.P. : What have been the advantages of being artist in residence?
- A.M. : For any artist it is always a struggle to survive. One must find money to live. With this fellowship I can be much more relaxed, and at least forget about financial pressures for a year or two... Also I can now undertake projects that I otherwise couldn't because of lack of time, this especially is a wonderful feeling.
- A.P. : Ted Hickey said that since you have come to Belfast in 1983 "your prints have become progressively more and more Mexican. The imagery seems to reflect the Pre-hispanic Myth, it's past and it's characters." Why do you think this happened? Do you think it's something to do with the Artist in exile syndrome?
- A.M. : Yes, it now amazes me to see my own country from an outside position. When you live in a country sometimes you are blinded in a sense, you take many things for granted. It is a funny feeling now to see newspaper articles and television programmes about Mexico. At a distance you discover a lot more clearly Mexico's differences with Europe (cultural differences etc.). This is very important. For myself and lots of other Mexicans that's the struggle we face. What precisely it means to be Mexican. I never think of making my work essentially Mexican, it just happens in a natural way.
- A.P. : Hickey also defined your work as 'Magic Realism', firstly would you agree with this definition, and if so, elaborate on what magic realism is to you?
- A.M. : Yes, I agree completely. Magic realism has been



A

used to define a literary movement in Latin America. For us, as for many Third World Countries fiction is very much part of our reality. For us the distinction between fiction and reality is of no importance; we live equally in both: both are part of our everyday existence... Critics always need to define themes; however that is not precisely what it is about, but yes, yes it can be.

A.P. : William Hayter you said "taught me to rely on my subconscious", is your subconscious the core of your work?

A.M. It plays an important part in it. When I am working everything comes at the same time, I never really know at the beginning what the end result will be. That is why I believe very much in working as a discipline. To think about masterpieces is just not enough.

A.P. : In Belfast, where social issues are so prominent whether it's the political situation or whatever, do you feel at any stage the need to make a conscious comment about what's actually happening?

A.M. : This may happen in time but it's another thing I don't want to force... Since the present problems began a new generation of artists have grown up in Northern Ireland. They are very aware of the whole social/political situation, thus the visual art scene has changed completely in the last ten years. What is important for me now, is that I discuss with these artists that particular issue; so it is a constant presence that I am always aware of. Presently, I don't feel very much part of the situation up here, I'm not from here so...

A.P. : So you don't rule out the possibility that it may come into your work though?

A.M. : It may come; but if it comes, it comes naturally. The northern influence, if it happens, will appear as subconsciously as my present reinforced Mexican one has. I don't really believe in making statements about things in my work, political statements, but maybe my prints already contain some essence of N. Ireland... Firstly I'm an Artist. I work through my art; if through my work this type of political reference eventually appears, then it appears. Give me time.

A.P. : You said "I have so much religion in my life that I reacted against it, not an intellectual reaction, but an instinctive one". Please discuss this concept, it goes back to growing up in an old Convent;... the idea that entered my head was the 'holy wars',... very simplistic as to what's happening now I know, but I wondered if that had entered your mind at all?

A.M. : That is a bit too simplistic... As a child I was very involved with religion, I even went to a seminary for a time. Since the time I was fourteen I have never entered a church but still religious images are ever present with me. This refers back to the importance of my early education and influences. When any particular image comes about it's always to do with this 'education'. Generally, Mexicans have a very religious education, but the system is very different to that in Ireland. Mexican Catholicism needs to be flexible in order to attract, basically this goes back to the Spanish imposition on the native Indians etc. To an extent, we have created our own

branch of religion; much of our behaviour in this area, is to do with the ancient God's rather than Catholicism as Europeans understand it.

A.P. : In some of your prints you've simplified God like images, some I thought resembled Aztec Symbols; maybe as if you'd developed your own...

A.M. There is no such thing as popular art but the popular expression of art. Many 20th century Mexican artists have been influenced by the Aztec's; it makes me happy. The possibilities for inspiration in our traditions and culture are endless. For me it's almost like a defence against all these new business magazines, television, etc. Sadly we have a new generation of artists now, who are it appears, totally influenced by American Magazines... I would rather be influenced by whatever I have in my own roots.

A.P. : If you had to define your strongest influences...

A.M. : There are many. In Mexico we are very much aware of the European Art Scene, but at the same time we need to know about our own artists. Picasso, or 20th century French Philosophy, are important, but so too are Rafael and Pedro Coronel and all our ancient Gods. This mixture is precisely what 20th century Mexican art is composed of.

A.P. : Do you see your art as a vehicle of communication?

A.M. : Absolutely, that's what it is all about. It can become a very egostic situation if you're not careful, but eventually the work has to leave the studio: it must go somewhere, it must be viewed by other people, and it must definitely try to say something. It must mean something to other people



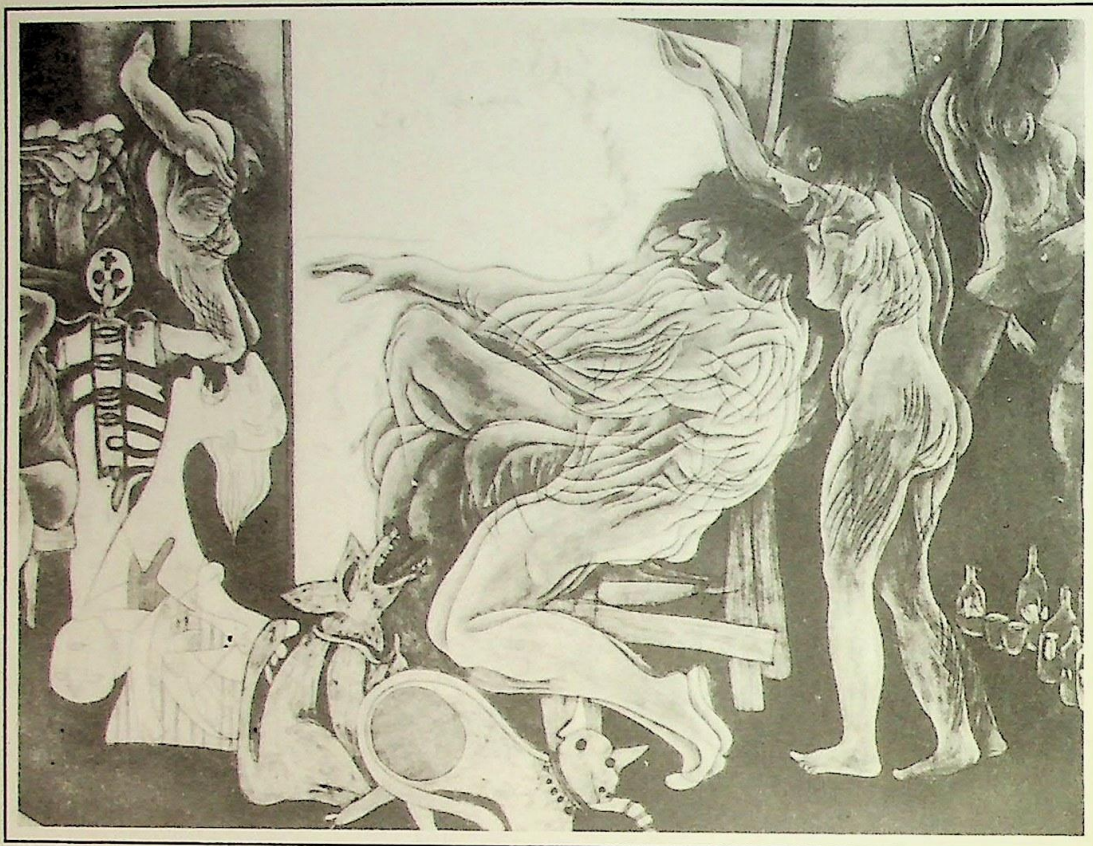
"ATA"
Engraving 240 mm × 280 mm
Belfast 1983

B

if one is to succeed. I don't know how much I succeed myself but I do definitely try.

A.P. : I've chosen two pieces of your work to discuss, 'Ata' and 'Atelier'.

A.M. : Firstly, 'Ata' this is a spanish word, it means to tput together in order to find a clue, a game really. At this time I was working mainly in college. When I arrived in Belfast I spoke very little English, so every time I went anywhere, to the supermarket even, all I saw were these words and names on products. Everything was a collage. Thus in my work I chose this medium to more or less put things together in a deliberate way, in order to get a better understanding of different situations. With that particular piece "Ata", even though it was executed in Belfast, my thoughts at the time were still very much in Barcelona. Originally when I moved to Spain, General Franco had just died. The whole mood in Barcelona was changing, there was a lot more freedom for people. A certain craziness erupted. There were a lot of important changes in the area of sexual behaviour, a new openness, there was now more and more eroticism around. I lived in the old part of Barcelona, renowned for it's small dark streets, it's drugs and it's prostitutes. These images infiltrated my work in the form of collages, collages of different images I've tried to spin together. Their influence is still established even in my new work. Thus when I arrived in Belfast directly from Barcelona, I had all these pieces of information, all these images, all these material. "Ata" is one of the resulting pieces. You find in this particular print some small drawings based on 'my street' in Barcelona. There were public showers and baths on it, these for me always relate to some erotic type of thing. People going in and



ATELIER (Detail)

C

out of these places, it was very erotic you know, and I just tried to put this down.

A.P. : We've established you could define your work as 'magic realism'. Here you are making a social statement, you making a statement in your own way even though youre not judging.

A.M. : Naturally, my work is always based on some level of reality. One must work from the experiences one had or knows about. Always in my work at least the starting point is to do with some sort of experience.

A.P. : Even if fantasy then takes over.

A.M. : Eventually everything takes over.

A.P. : The other print 'Atelier'; you have handled totally differently technically?

A.M. : Yes, this is a very new piece, I've now actually gotten involved in mezzotint.

A.P. : You seem to work a lot with this technique (mezzotint), is this because of it's atmospheric qualities?

A.M. : It suits the mood of my images, I feel happy about them. I only started doing mezzotint since I came to Ireland.

A.P. : Well there is obviously a dream like quality. Was mezzotint practiced in the Art Council Workshop?

A.M. : No, nobody was working in that medium, I always wanted to try it. You find qualities that only Mezzotint can give you. Actually I was surprised

to find one of the greatest mezzotinters in the world was an Irish man, James McArthur.

A.P. : Yes, it was a traditional technique in Ireland - 'Atelier', this was executed more recently in Belfast.

A.M. : Yes, but part of the imagery I used in 'Ata', I've reused again in 'Atelier'. Probably I based them both on the same drawing or something. Again, it's very much to do with this Collage thing. In one sense the two pieces of work you've chosen are very related, in that this piece has a lot to do with Spain as well. This one is to do with confronting art. When I came to Spain I saw for the first time the original works of the masters, Goya, Picasso etc. When you're actually standing in front of these paintings the impact is unbelievable, those images have staged very much in my mind. 'Atelier' is a metaphor, a metaphoric way of portraying the artist confronted with his own work, in his own studio. It's part of a series entitled 'Artist Studio'. If one looks at the history of art, this is a subject that's been there for generation after generation. As I said I can be very egotistic when I'm working, (I like to work alone). Just myself and the canvas. So this print is all about the artist working, I've based it in a painting by 'Courbet', 'The Artist Studio'. I've just changed the whole thing around.

A.P. : You've interpreted it in your own way?

A.M. : Yes, for example on the easel in my painting Diarmuid Delangy has helped me incorporate an Irish landscape motif. It was a nice experience asking Diarmuid to add an obviously Irish touch to my work, while at the same time in my own contribution I was thinking of

Zacatecas: of all my personal heroes, my childhood toys etc. Naturally the question of religious infiltration again arose. 'Atelier' is again a collage in a sense.

A.P. : So the residency has been an advantage in that you've come in contact with Irish Artists who have had an input into your work...

A.M. : Very much so.

A.P. : You've both learned from one another.

A.M. : Absolutely.

A.P. : In Ireland print-making tends to be regarded very much as the poor sister to printing and sculpture.

A.M. : This is a big mistake, all over the world print-making is taken much more seriously. Artists must realise that through the medium of print, one is given a much more excessable way to communicate. Prints are editioned, thus they are cheaper and more easily available; they are also quite easy to transport... Prints have also had a very consequential social importance, originating from the civil disturbances in Paris in 1968 for example you will find the most wonderful prints. Established artists, gallerys, and college of art must press for change. You must have more print exhibitions etc. Only then will you have more talented artists producing prints.

CHAPTER 11Conclusion:

In Monreal's print-work his inventiveness overflows into bewildering, lavish detail, but the detail is carefully harnessed to enhance the main thrust of image or meaning. Without exception, regardless of whether the artist's subject matter is bulls or bull fighters, or reclining nudes, he finds a centre point of rest or poise, bringing a fresh eye to familiar themes and even familiar compositions.

Monreal's use of mezzotint in his printwork is quite a recent development, and indeed he has handled it with an enchanting degree of delicacy. In my opinion, the strength of his work lies in his use of mezzotint, it's subtlety and variety of texture, combined with a powerful modelling line.

Monreal epitomises for me, the growing trend of foreign printmakers, who are congregating on Belfast, undeterred by the political situation existing in N. Ireland.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 2.

Title: Alfonso Lopez Monreal.

(a), (b), (c), (d) Alfonso Monreal

(e). Introd: - Paul Muldoon.

Conversation - Jamshid Mirfenderesky.

Pub : A Fenderesky Art Gallery Pub. - No.2
1985.

(f). Alfonso Lopez Monreal - recent prints, 83-86

Text : Ted Hickey

Pub : Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

(h) + (j). Alfonso Lopez Monreal

Introduction: Paul Muldoon.

Conversation: Jamshid Mirfenderesky.

Pub: A Fenderesky Art Gallery Pub: -No. 2
- 1985.

CHAPTER 3: Anthony DaviesIntroduction:

Anthony Davies was born in Andover, Hampshire in 1947 and since 1983 has been living, teaching, and printing in Belfast.

Davies I felt had to be included in this thesis because he is one of the few, if not the only printer of any note in Belfast today not availing of the Arts Council Print Workshop facility, indeed he has established his own full equipped studio space.

Davies works mainly on series of work, exploring different facets of a theme until it is exhausted, he is a prolific artist though never merely repetitive or obsessively exploring slight variants. His prints encompass equivalent scenes of direct and indirect savagery, the ultimate urban angst, - the struggle of the very young and the very old, the consequences of divorce and diminishing health facilities, the struggle of women for equality and the rape of our natural resources, are all among the many injustices that have been propelled into his work.

As a print-maker, Davies is very conscious of the importance of preparation in his work, in particular the importance of drawing as a basis for his printwork. "The drawing is like building a house, that is something that's worked on, if it doesn't work its changed, so then when you come to work on an etching you can simply be spontaneous, you do need that sort of solid ground work to start with".

Davies own style is quite similar to Beckmann's in his use of distortion, it's all about emphasis, it's something that I started to do when I was a student and it stuck with me."

Edited Interview:

A.P. Explain to me the situation you were in before you arrived in Northern Ireland and why you originally decided to come to Belfast:

A.D. Firstly I moved to Wales in 1978 and I set up a print workshop in Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff.. Most of my teaching experience was within England and Wales. An opportunity arose to do some part-time teaching at the Ulster Polytechnic. I came to Belfast on two visits and basically I liked the place.. My work had been going in a social political way. In South Wales I was very interested in the Rhondda Valley, (the decline of the steel work's/mining, etc.). At that time there were the riots in Brixton. Also the death of Bobby Sands. This took place on the 5th of the 5th, a date I've always remembered.. But the actual death of this guy was something that hit me. It was a political move, and when you come from the South of England something like that is incredibly rare.. I've incorporated a lot of graffiti into my picture's, sometimes the graffiti has political connotations, sometimes its just names.. One day I saw graffiti called 'Brixton/Derry I struggle", that was something that I was looking for at the time, so I put it in.. In South Wales there was always this great thing about giving birth or dying. Where I came from in rural England nothing seemed to happen, people seemed to live for ever. This was my first introduction to a working class situation. I'm more or less middle class...

A.P. So the position coming up in the Polytechnic was a Godsend for getting more in contact with reality...

A.D. I think so because my work is about reality. Being an artist one is always an observer. For me there must be this sort of integrity and integration in art. The position in Belfast came up, and at that time I particularly wanted to go and be in Belfast. The situation in South Wales was getting a bit too cozy. I needed the change.

A.P. Too enclosed?

A.D. It was in a sense but also other factors arose... There I felt an outsider somewhat, perhaps because I was a print-maker... In Belfast I got a little house on the Shore Road. It's quite a heavy protestant area, but I felt within it...

A.P. You felt part of the community...

A.D. To a certain extent... People always know me/remember who I am. I feel artists should be a bit like that but naturally you have to get the work out. Basically your talking about being on the scene one month and being in the studio for six.. But yes, coming to Belfast was very important. When I arrived, I didn't have a studio, so I had to decide where to work...

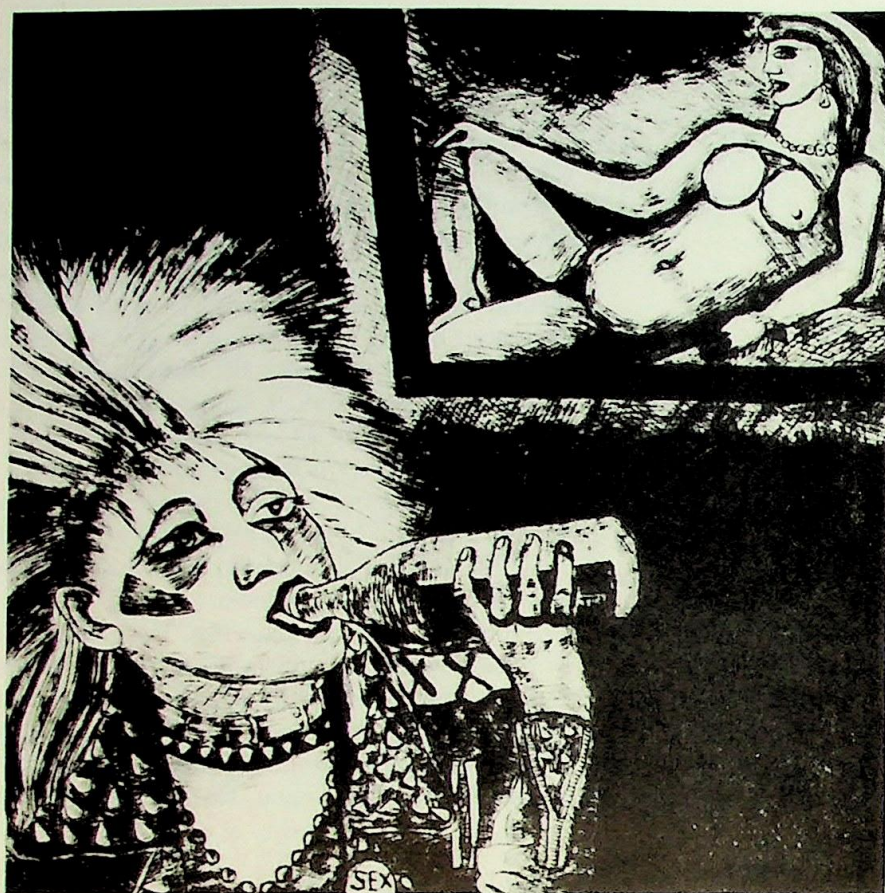
(My ambition is to produce a series of work every twelve or eighteen months). Firstly I went to the print Workshop (Shanmillis Rd.,). It was then I realised that everything in Northern Ireland is controlled by the door attendant. For security reasons access to the workshop was limited; it opened at ten-thirty and closed at five-thirty. This didn't suit me... Personally I like to start early in summer because of the light, and I work through until seven or eight. Also I've always worked at the week-end's... I have to work alone; I do tend to get a bit light headed when I'm printing. Also I'm temperamental. I don't want to impose that on other people. So basically I had to find some where else to print. (I couldn't work in the Art College, they were only building it at that time)... My present workshop is like a doctors operating room. I must know where everything is, it has to be spotlessly clean; I can't work in a shit heap basically. Because at that stage I didn't have an appropriate studio to print in, I worked on a number of projects in my home. Firstly a series of twenty-six drypoints: 'The Urban Portrait, 84', and 'Les Miserables'. Everything had to be done with a dry-point needle. I could draw on a plate and proof them just using ink at home. I also started a series of twelve lino-cuts, 'The Wasteland'.

A.P. Tell me about moving into your present studio



Urban Portrait '84 No. 18 drypoint (copper).

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F



G

A.D. The studio is in the Queen's Street area of Belfast, over the road is the Artists Collective. They actually had a couple of floors here which were not in use, and due to the help of Jim McIvor and Alfey Crilly, I managed to acquire the space.. These men in their own way are almost patrons of the arts... I needed a space which was very secure, obviously now I've got a lot of equipment here. I've always had a great admiration for American/German artists who've got their own fully equipped spaces.

A.P. Self sufficient?

A.D. I've got my own library, obviously I need a lot of references. Actually when I go to Art Schools, and see students with base area's/personal spaces, sometimes they have not even got a postcard up. I just don't know how they work without inspiration around them.

A.P. For most people would the only option be to work in the Art's Council Workshop?

A.D. Yes it would be.. The whole thing about print is the economics. I'm fortunate in that I managed to work on the buildings sites for two years and then I bought my presses. I think for a lot of people that is just practically impossible. I gave two years out in which I didn't do a single print. Now obviously the print workshop can be a good place to work. I needed privacy. Also you have to consider what you think print-making is about where you see it in the world of art in general...



H



"URBAN PORTRAIT '84" No 21
drypoint (copper) 28 × 28 cms

J

You must realise who you want to work with. Who you compare yourself with... I'm not in the business to make pretty pictures.

A.P. Would you class your class your work as social realism?

A.D. If you want labels its expressionism. I like the idea of combining not academic drawing but study, with something that's quite free. I admire Beckmann, Grosz, Dix, english artists I suppose Edwards, Spencer, ^(b) I'm impressed by German new wave but that's more the dynamics, the mechanics of being an artist.... I like the idea of something being fanatical. (With the artists I've mentioned it is about fanaticism, they just breath their work...).. I do have this great social political thing, I'm not a raving socialist though. I prefer to class myself as a humanist. I'm interested in the human predicament. The miners strike was very interesting especially because of the women's movement that developed. Women rule, and this is very prevalent in Northern Ireland too. Men become involved with the I.R.A. or the various protestant military organisations; they are in prison for five or ten years; it's the women that are left behind to bring up children up etc... I couldn't think of making a picture without figures, although I have approached the idea since I've been in Belfast. I've used flats; if I put a particular drawing of a flat complex in people will recognise the area, Shankill, Fall's Road, Divis Flats etc..

A.P. Would you class your work as an emotional autobiography?



K



L

A.D. Yes, it is all about me really! A percentage of it is varies series about the break up of my second marriage. It is like an exorcismj. If I didn't print, I'd probably be in prison somewhere because I wouldn't know how to express myself... Being an artist is the most wonderful thing. It's about freedom; you can basically draw anything you want etc..

A.P. Edward Lucie-Smith wrote of your images, "they seem both prophetic and completely contemporary, perfect statements of the moral discomfort of our time, " (c) , any comment?

A.D. The role of the critic is such that they can make your or destroy you. Someone like Edward Lucie-Smith I particularly admire... Following the showing of a group exhibition last year, 'Built up Areas', the art critic's said I was the voice of the 80's. I haven't consciously worked in that direction, but if people see it in my work - great. The idea of my contemporary is very important to me. We do live in quite depressive times, but I believe out of this depression great things will come... In 'Les Miserables' for example I made a conscious effort to deal with the problems/situations my son was experiencing. He was a skinhead; dabbling in the National Front; covered in tattoos. Unlike my father's generation, (who really would not want to know), I've got to understand my son. Now in particular his involvement with the National Fron, that was something I could comment about in my work. 'Les Miserables' was thus a very personal series: its about him and his generation. It wasn't dealing with the sort of people who go to Art school; who have the O levels and A levels. Instead it centred on the vast majority of

People who've got very little...

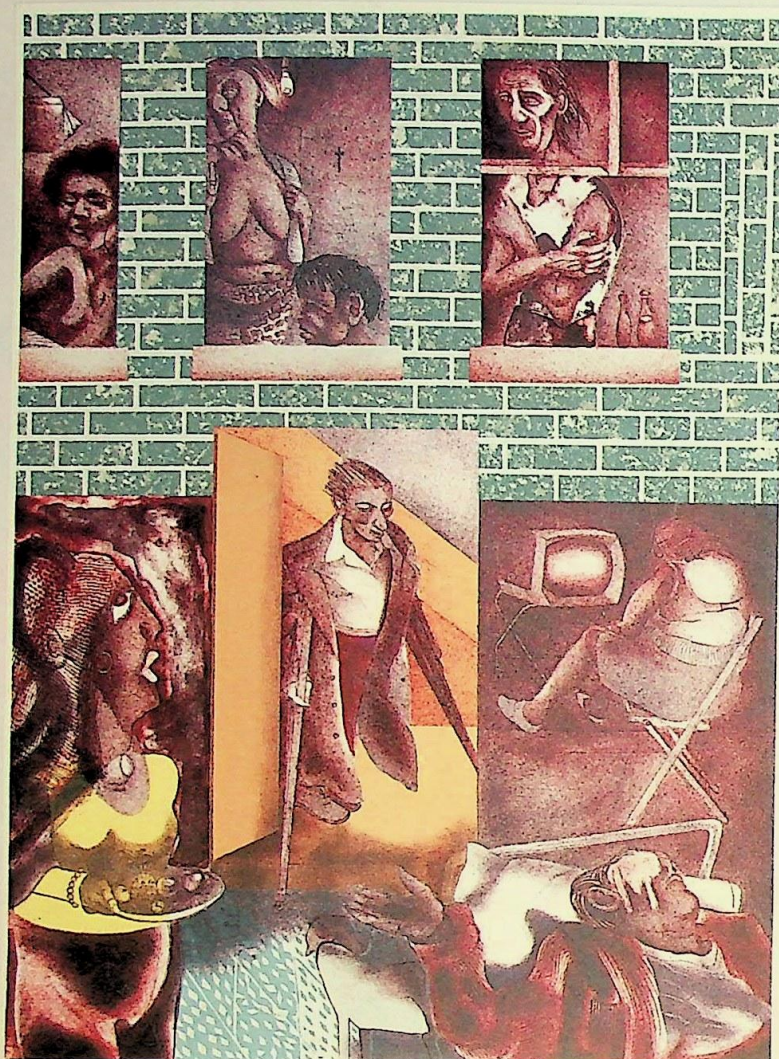
A.P. A danger of your work becoming too illustrative/propagandist?

A.D. Propaganda, that's an interesting word. I don't know because that could be linked with a political stand, and I don't know where I stand on that ... Propaganda, well for artists who worked in the depressive years, in the 30's in America for example, (Bellows, Levine, Shan^(d)), I think it must play some part. They could probably turn their hands to a lot of things. For other artists who continue in the very same vein, you sometimes find their work has no communicative value at all. He/she has to turn towards the public; not bending over backwards, but it is about communication. When people say that they don't understand my work, that annoys me. My pictures have many pathways leading into them; there is many things one can comment on... It's important to me that people either like or dislike my work; to be dismissed /ignored would be the ultimate insult...

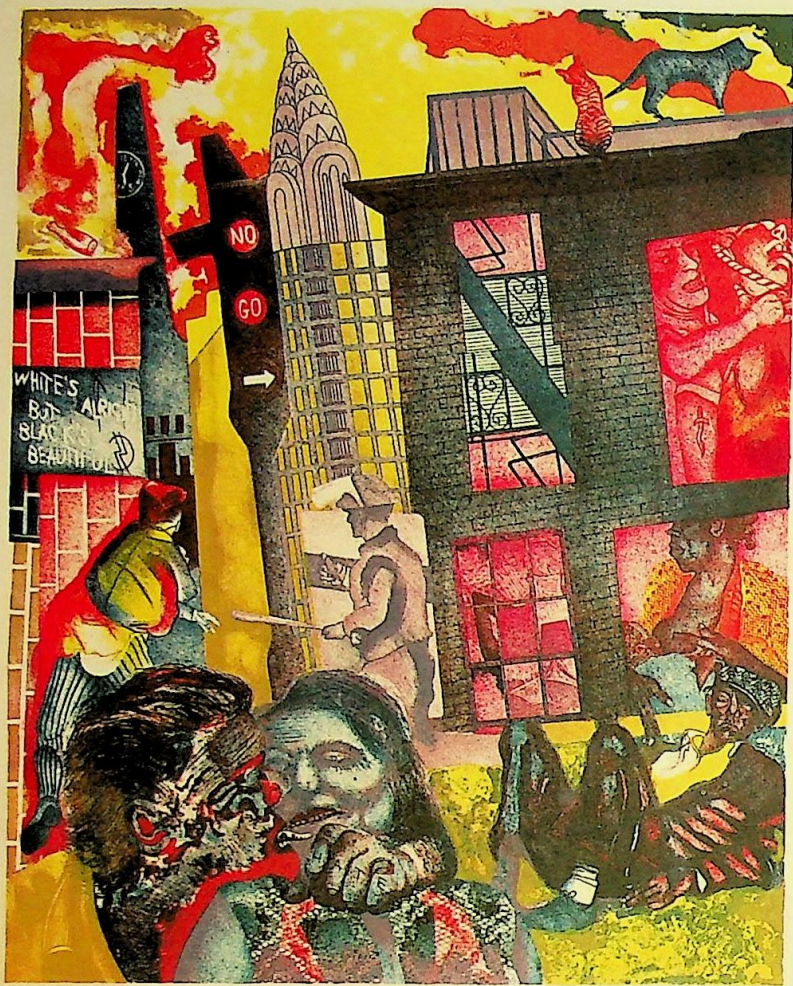
A.P. A reaction whatever it is...

A.D. Yes. My work tends to be a bit strife ridden, thus it repels some people, while others acknowledge this angst and strife, and are fascinated.

A.P. I interviewed Northern Ireland artist Dermot Seymour ^(e) last year. He was of the opinion that outsiders who came over and used Northern Ireland as a reference in their work were simply:



M



"gathering information to illustrate preconceived notions".
 Comment? also ideas you had about Northern Ireland, have they changed since you came to Belfast?

A.D. I agree with Seymour. In a sense I'm treading on dangerous ground too. I've only been here four years, but the angst ridden situation is something I've been dealing with in my work for quite a long time. The whole fact of being in Belfast helped to develop it and naturally in a sense I do approach it from a different stand point now... This is a violent place, not just political assassinations but the treatment of people in general; when people are murdered you have to think about what's left behind. Also the level of intimidation that exists (through the likes of Robinson (f) etc). The whole issue of security; people are frightened, but they still managed to retain this amazing traditional natural friendliness. This coupling is represented in my present series. It concentrates on the protestant movements; the link they've got with Scotland; the sort of Presbyterian Calvinist influence. There is a very deep religious thing. I now think that the protestants are the ones who are scared in Northern Ireland, not the catholics.

A.P. Most of the people I've interviewed to date, I've distinctly known where their sympathies lay...

A.D. Well, I am but a guest in their country. People could accuse me of having a slightly mercenary stance. I think this is fairly true. I'm not any different to a reporter or someone who is doing a documentary.

A.P. Would you agree that there is a lack of political commentary in the visual arts in Northern Ireland? The only artists we seem to see down south are Seymore and the Delargy's.

A.D. I don't know if I would want a lot to come out in a sense, one can go overboard about it. Obviously you've mentioned a few artists there, they attacked it in different ways. I was very conscious with my present series that it was a bit up front... I started it the first of June and I'm pretty well finished now. There was a time in August when I thought, this is being a bit heavy,... Almost like the sort of steel fist in the velvet glove, that sort of undercurrent thing.... If you feel it then you have to put it down; perhaps in my situation I don't talk too much about it but I do it...

A.P. Does your work make a comment on the impossibility of authentic social relations?

A.D. Yes, what I've always been very strong about is that being an artist it is quite an exciting life but for the vast majority of people life is a pure routine... The whole thing about modern society is that people just want to grow up too early... Boys don't want to be boy's, girl's don't want to be girls.

A.P. So we're never happy with our lot...

A.D. Yes, people on the tube, they've got smart gear, they always look as if they are in a hurry and doing interesting things.

You walk around the streets of Belfast or Cardiff. You'll see many young girls with two or three children looking not exactly knackered... The continuation of the race really. People always have this great thing about having ambition when they're young, then it slowly sort of evaporates... When I was living in Seabourne Parade (off Shore road, Belfast) the street was full of old people. They would come out and clean the step and grill in the morning about half eight. Then they'd go in, and sit by the fire. That was their day, the meals; the main thing to keep them going... I don't talk very much about artists, the people in my pictures tend to be anybody really.

A.P. You said "Printmaking is my means of expression, the way I wish to communicate my thoughts, fears, solutions, to the public", (g), expand on that, why print?

A.D. Well, initially wanted to be a sculptor. What I liked about sculpture was you had something to work on something physical, I've worked a lot on the buildings, that's the physical thing that interests me a great deal. With print-making I found I could get a sheet of steel or zinc and work through a process. I've only been using copper for the last ten years... I could work on a series; I've always worked on a couple of plates, never working on the one precious object. I like the whole idea of a print workshop, the equipment, the aquatint boxes, the acid trays,... People ask why I do not paint... I can achieve everything I want to say through the medium of printmaking (basically doing etching, lithography, lino, whatever)... The only thing is the size; that does bother me..

I'd like to work on a big series of wood block's or lino cuts. Something that I can be a bit more physical with. I've got an idea of doing this next year, but then you've got to consider the cost of hand-made paper.

A.P. You said you'd find it "difficult to recommend even one British print-maker", ^(h), I want to get back to why you thing print has this poor sister image ?

A.D. Its basically because of the Art school situation, the people who teach it, students are very young people. They need direction. In Art College I was taught by three people, Bill Crosier, John Bellamy, Norman Ackroid; people who were doing a lot of work, showing it, and having great fun at the same time.

A.P. Do you think that would sum up the situation in art colleges in Belfast today?

A.D. Well firstly, in the world of art in general, print-making tends to take third place along side painting/sculpture... I will spend my life trying to put that right. In specific the art college situation, you have to have a personality in the place. I think that's one thing you've got in Dublin; if nothing else Steve Barraclough ^(j) is a personality. The art business is about a strong romantic thing with a hard streak of realism (about how you're going to succeed)... I think its very easy for people to spend five years in college printing, then disappear.

In my own case its been quite a steady gradual thing; but I'm still long way from it.. You have to be consistant; you're talking about being consistant year in, year out. That's the disadvantage of teaching too; you can be there, its a very nice situation, you can be surrounded by people patting each on the back. But it is in the studio when you're just completely alone with your self-motivation, that what counts.

A.P. Exhibiting opportunities in Belfast?

A.D. I want to exhibit when I want to exhibit. I'm not particularly interested in mixed shows. If they are open in the mainland, they are abroad, or they are prestigious, thats alright. I'm showing a new series in 'On the Wall',^(k). I like showing there because the gallery administrators are very professional, and they've obviously got links with Dublin. Dublin is a very important area. I'm having a show there in the Hendricks Gallery in June ... I basically want to show on my own... You can become too exposed in Northern Ireland; people just seem to show in everything. That does'nt interest me.. Also for each exhibition, work must be framed, so you're talking about a practical thing. Even so I do show in quite a few print Beinnials all around the world.. I think the gallery situation over here is very good, but if somebody's bought a couple of pieces of your work, then that's it... The percentage of buying public is very small, but there is commitment here, especially compared to somewhere like South Wales.. I mean particularly in the private galleries. I don't really want to say too much about the Art's Council.

Anthony Davies.

Conclusion:

Anthony Davies is indeed a prolific and skilled printmaker. His work is both technically competent and ambitious, and especially in his stone lithography one finds an ingenious use of colour. Indeed though to be critically articulate one must add that in some lithographic pieces, especially for example *The Modern City, and New York, New York*, technique seems to be over emphasised. There is no attempt to make the medium of lithography into anything other than a reproductive technique with certain attractive properties. The creativity and spontaneity seem stilled at times, perhaps Davies, has to remember that technique alone is not enough. From the point of view of this dissertation though, the print student is given unsurmountable opportunity to acquire an immense technical printmaking knowledge.

Davies has declined to define his work as Social Realism, and I would agree in that his prints are not in any sense a realism of direct observation. Rather they are edited compilations of images, drawn from the city streets of the world; centering on the working classes and the plight of the ghetto. Images of New York, Brixton, Ebbw Vale, and Belfast are edited and interspersed to give a complex "inner-cityscape", editing of quotation and illusion. Indeed far from being a social realism in any normal sense of the word, he is concerned with the impossibility of social realism, and as such the impossibility of authentic social relations.

He boasts "my print room is like a doctors operating room", and from my encounter with the space I consider this comparison apt. In fact I would go as far as to say that in the consideration of space, light and organisation, it was far superior to that of the Arts Council print studio at Stranmillis Road. In these days of economic recession and curtailed government fundings, Davies studio is a monument to the determination of one man against immense odds. As was stated in the fore-running text, he laboured on the buildings sites to acquire his printing presses, all the while nightly working on series of drypoints and wood-cuts. Indeed a guiding light to all students and young artists. Granted as he will freely admit, Davies is something of a fanatical character, but he has paved the way for printmakers especially, to get up off their behinds, and make things happen for themselves. In the Belfast of 1987 or indeed the Europe of 1987, determination, initiative, and genuine hard work must be common place on the road to facility development, and thus naturally, artistic recognition. Davies set out on this bumpy road in 83, acknowledging his own capabilities, turned his back on what he considered unacceptable Arts Council facilities, worked outside the boggling institutions of red tape, and today has not only a private studio space on a par with that in any Irish regional art college, but has attained the potential of a first class printmaker. A man to beadmired in the face of so much apathy and defeat.

FOOTNOTESCHAPTER 3

Title: Anthony Davies.

- (a) Artists Collective.
Set up by collection of ex-students
needing studio space.
 - (b) Beckmann, Max (1884-1950)
Grosz, George (1893-1959)
Dix, Otto (1891-1969)
Spencer, Stanley (1891-1959)
 - (c) "Peter Grimes and Urban Frontiers"
An exhibition of prints by Anthony Davies
Text : Edward Lucie-Smith, April 1982.
 - (d) Bellows, George (1882-1925)
Levine, Jack (1915-)
 - (e) Dermot Seymore, Interview (A.P).
Dublin - 8/4/1986
 - (f) Robinson, Peter
Unionist M.P., Northern Ireland.
 - (g) + (h) Quote from Anthony Davies
"Some problems with printmaking",
Jill Nunn.
Circa No. 28. Belfast . May/June 1986.
 - (j) Head of printmaking dept. N.C.A.D.
 - (k) Art Gallery, 99 Botanic Avenue, Belfast
BT7 1JN. Tel: 231222.
-

Chapter 4 : Diarmuid Delargy.Introduction:

" I regard myself as a European artist , and at this point in time I find it very difficult to recommend one British printmaker", (a). When Anthony Davies made this statement to the Royal Society of Painter, Etchers, and Engravers in 1985, he evidently omitted to consider the work of Belfast born printer Diarmuid Delargy. Although still in his late twenties, Delargy's work has matured and developed to such an extent since the completion of an M.A. course in 1983 (Slade, London), that he is now accepted as one of the foremost adverseries of print-making in the British Isles. Anthony Davies also infers that there zre "no British printmakers worthy of one-person shows in Cork St., the I.C.A., or wherever". This I find hard to comprehend when even in Ireland alone there are half-a-dozen major printmakers whose work stands comparison with the best printers (Davies himself, John Kelly, and indeed Diarmuid Delargy are examples). The Arts Councils recognition of Delargy's talent was substantiated in 1986 by the granting of a two thousand, five hundred pounds bursary, enabling him to work for a year in the 'Artists Union' workshop in Berlin, West Germany. Also he has been awarded the artist in residence fellowship at the Arts Council printworkshop of Northern Ireland.

Delargy's conceptions and ideas in my opinion are definitely more directly party political than that of Monreal or even Davies, this follows through into his work, (party political in a world where cows and pigs represent people). Although from a nationalist family tradition himself, with the mass influx of protestants into catholic areas in the nineteen-sixties, he grew up in a loyalist ghetto. The connotations of this boyhood experience, (antagonism, segregation, etc), are still quite evident in his work. "The old Ulster poet John Huet said, 'these stars are ours as well surely,' at one stage I thought they wanted to take my stars, and they thought I wanted to take theirs, but I don't" (b). Thus because of this political situation which has existed in Belfast since the late sixties, week-end retreats to the country became quite common for young Delargy, this is also recaptured in his work today, having a striking effect on the imagery he uses.

Edited Interview:

A.P. Your Subject matter, its essentially rural; - landscapes, animals, etc., why coming from an urban war-torn society are you using this sort of imagery?

D.D. There's a North Antrim connection in a sense because when the troubles got bad in 1969, Dad took a small cottage in Robridge. A famine house. From '69 to '78 we'd go down... Belfast became like a vacuum, kids getting

sucked into paramilitary organisations like cannon fodder,... its simply as a kid I worked on various farms, thus I have a whole rural sort of ambience in my personality.

A.P. so your imagery isn't a cop-out ?

D.D. No there is a connection. Essentially the work is some sort of a metaphor or an analogy too, I suppose the human experience.. The use of the human face and the human head for me has presented some difficulties which I'm still trying to refine. There is the whole classical image, the modern trends, hair-do's, fashion, and essentially one tries to transcend modern fashion... You try and find the common statement. Most of us up here are trying to solve the problem of visual vocabulary that says something about here and everywhere... You try and find the international image/universal image of the cuban, male or female. Maybe that was a reason for me to date to delve in the world of pigs and horses and landscapes.

F.D.(c) The north contains within it everything that is going on globally... For this reason it is important that I and my brother, and lots of other people, are trying to use our place as a starting point.

D.D. Why get into internationalism's. Why get into New York concerns. We've got enough problems up here...

We've got something sitting on our front door, do we walk off and ignore it?... To be other than what we are is as absurd as a black south African in Johannesburg painting like an abstract expressionism in New York. Considering the concerns of the New York art scene, its just absurd... That guy is not facing his responsibilities... This is as good a place to start as anywhere, as long as we allow ourselves to be influenced abroad... As long as the essential subjective themes in your work are not being interfered with by formal considerations.. If you see something in Japanese prints, which may help you develop your compositional style, do it. It's good to absorb, but don't get into it superficially.

A.P. Do you find in your etchings a need to put a personal statement across as well as making the visual image work, or is making the visual image work your main prerogative?

D.D. I never set out to visually answer any question. My work is solely intuitive, its spontaneous. All my images are realised on the etching surface. I don't contrive the works. I do a lot of drawing and the work comes through an intuitive sense, hopefully the sublime.. Spontaneity taps the sublime. There is no contrivance at all but I'm well aware that the sublime taps experience. Your subconscious comes through. It's like drawing your dreams.... From a political reference its always on the sublime.

A.P. Would you class your work as an emotional autobiography?

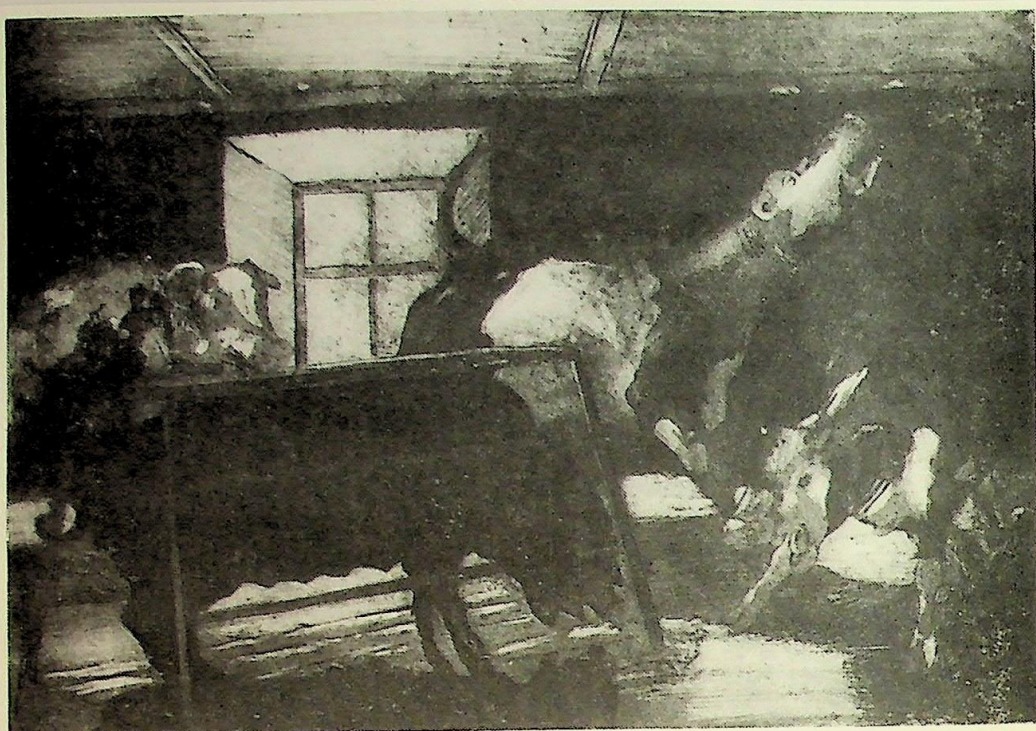
D.D. ... Art is more relevant when the years in which it was created are past... You can get objectivity to art in retrospect.. Art for me is a diary, just like a large visual diary.

A.P. The use of the horse images in your work, does this have have a relevance to the loyalist tradition, the Loyalist symbol of the white horse ?

D.D. Absolutely none, thats the first time I've ever been asked a question like that. In rural trips of my childhood I looked at the horse and I drew it as a baby. It ws a challenge for me as a drawing. (I was intrigued). But beauty is in the eye of the beholder, if you think its right thenit is right.... There is not the same political reference as with Fergus, 'White Horse Wild and Free'; it's not. It's something that I've only observed in retrospect... Also I realise in retrospect the other implications of using the horse, Picasso talked about it as something representing the people. I am well aware of those symbolisms. They don't irritate me.

A.P. 'Linnegan's Kitchen', in a dimly lit interior several cows rampaged around a crated sow, are the animals here (and in 'The Grey') being used as symbols for the different traditions in Northern Ireland ?

D.D. 'Linnegan's Kitchen' I and II, is a reference. Earlier on I talked about my parents taking a house, a typical Irish cottage. The inside of the house in Linnegan's Kitchen.. Its something to do with global suffocation in a parochial sense. Perhaps not being able to get your point of view across or anguish (mental anguish). Its a statement of suffocation or intimidation.



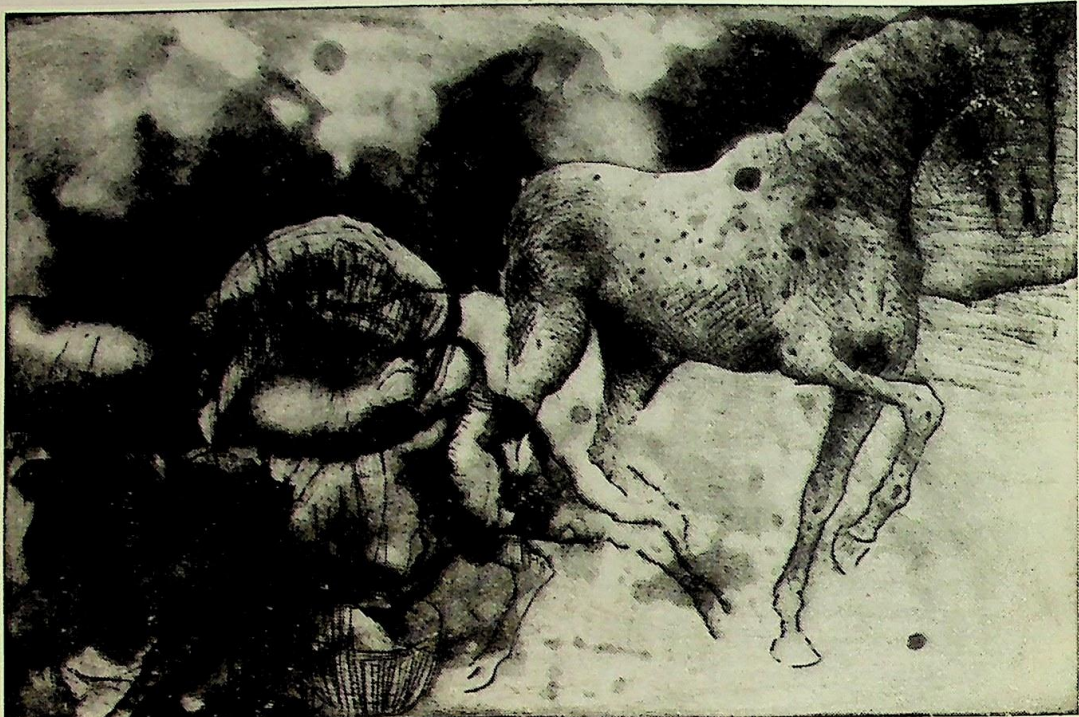
"LINNEGAN'S KITCHEN I" (ed. 30) 33 × 22.5 cm 1982

0



"LINNEGAN'S KITCHEN II" (ed. 20) 24 × 23 cm 1982

P



"THE GREY" (ed. 30) 29.5 × 19.5 cm 1984

Q

A.P. The ways you use the image of the cows and the crated sow..

D.D. This is open to interpretation. I could be the one that's screaming at the cow. (I think in an awful lot of human situations we all experience this.) We could all be the pig screamed at, but again not necessarily the pig all the time. You could also be the intimidator. Presently you're in one situation, but another may arise if the scenario changes.... Its definitely an Irish sort of an image, but it's not specifically about here. It's universal. It's essentially about the ability of the human condition to wage war or make peace.

A.P. 'On our Shores'...

D.D. 'On our Shores', I and II. No I shows a bull calf which is between two horses. Both the calf and the horses look disturbed. There is chaos on either side. 'On our Shores No.2' is a pig that's been shot. I feel this could be a reference to Nicaragua, (or any of these places). Not only could it be Nicaragua, it could be Cuba, it could be Ireland. We've had children up here of fifteen with their heads blown off... As Bob Geldof said "Four year old children with bloated bellies aren't Marxists". It's a universal reference about people being prejudiced because of their political beliefs. I like to think my work has a strong humanist element.



"ON OUR SHORES I" (ed. 20) 59.5 × 47 cm 1985

R



"ON OUR SHORES II" (ed. 20) 47 × 35 cm 1985



"DOWN ON DUNSEVERICK STRAND" (ed. 7) 54 × 49.5 cm 1981

I

Conclusion:

While Diarmuid Delargy's subject matter is essentially rural, the bleak barren landscape, (in occasional ferrays), is indeed pushed into a level of abstraction. A dream like quality is one of it's strengths. It leaves that something to the imagination, and appeals to rather than insults the intelligence of the viewer. A contortion of animal figures rather than human figures, a play on the four legged race to convey human emotion. In my opinion 'Down on Dunseverick Strand' contains in its brooding sinister scene, a particularly concise example of the above mentioned strengths in Delargy's work.

His images I believe strive to be viewed in the global sense, they are an attempt to find a universal image of man. Unquestionably, they have been influenced by his immediate environment in Northern Ireland but attempt to relate I think, to the wider situation. The wider theme of the human condition. Delargy as I've mentioned previously has received an Arts Council bursary to print at the 'Artists Union' workshop in Berlin, West Germany. One would hope like Belfast's current artists in residence Alfonso Monreal, that Delargy will be forced to analyse himself and his natural environment at arm's length. To clarify for example the undertones of political ideology presently in his work. As Monreal said "After all this moving around and playing around. I suddenly re-discovered my home" (d). This is the typical artist.in exile syndrome.

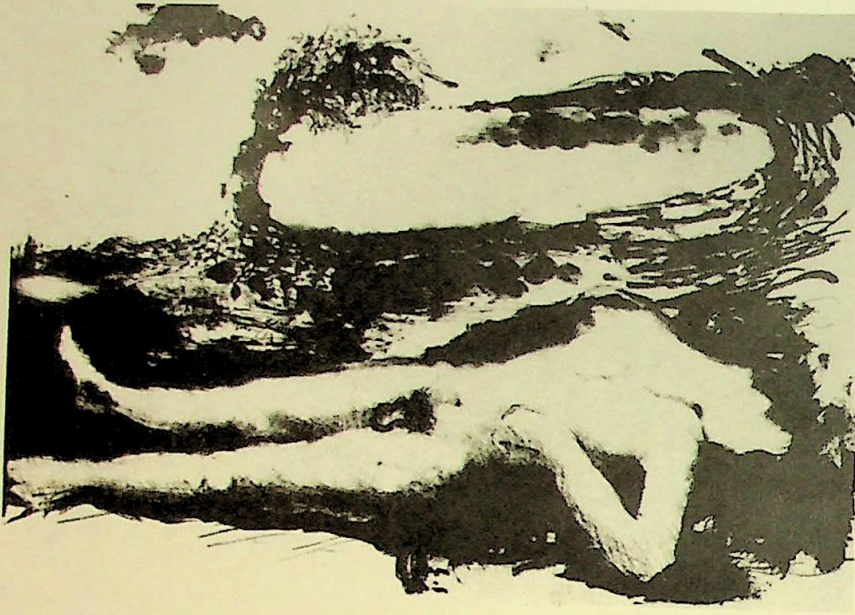
In Delargy's own words; "This is as good a place to start as anywhere, as long as we allow ourselves to be influenced abroas" (e). This I believe is imperative if his images are to transcend their present boundaries of development.

The transgression and attainment of a clearer vision of his own place, a sphere of spontaneity less cluttered by political connotations. Bluntly Delargy must acquire a broader, clearer vision of his subject matter, Northern

Ireland. To finally relinquish that last deadly hold on his subconscious, and to allow it the freedom it so richly deserves. His technical knowledge is unquestionable, but only the subtle manipulation of his subconscious is capable of making him one of the outstanding printers of the 20th century. Thus I believe the root of his imagery must lie in its spontaneity and the play between this looseness and an element of control. How much more powerful the result if this battle of odds is allowed the freedom to develop.

At the age of only twenty-eight, Delargy's curriculum vitae reads quite impressively. Since leaving the Slade School of Fine Art in 1983 he has exhibited extensively throughout Ireland, Great Britain, West Germany, and Mexico. The awarding in 1987 of both a study bursary and residency fellowship, would seem indeed to be the icing on the cake. For Alfonso Monreal it was important "that someone from Zacatecas could have a place in the wider world" (f).

Art students of Ireland take note, Delargy like Monreal above, has shown that one of Belfast's own can have a place in the wider world, the wider world of print-making. Obviously for those who are talented and determined, the opportunities are indeed there for the taking.



The Beach Post, Lithograph (ed. 10) 1986 44 x 32 cms.

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FOOTNOTES

- (a) Anthony Davies (quote).
"Some problems with printmaking".
Nunn, Jill.
Circa No. 28. Belfast. May/June 86.
- (b) Diarmuid Delargy (quote).
Interview, Belfast, 12/4/86.
- (c) Fergus, Delargy.
Belfast Painter, brother of Diarmuid Delargy.
- (d) Alfonso Monreal (quote).
Alfonso Lopez Monreal.
Introd: Paul Muldoon.
Conversation: Jamshid Mirfenderesky.
Pub : Fenderesky Gallery. No.2. 1985.
- (e) Diarmuid Delargy (quote).
Interview, Belfast, 12/4/86.
- (f) Alfonso Lopez Monreal.
Introd: Paul Muldoon.
Conversation: Jamshid Mirfenderesky.
Pub : Fenderesky Gallery. No. 2. 1985.
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GENERAL CONCLUSION

In conclusion I feel I have, within the limited space available, accurately examined the theme 'Print and Print-makers in Belfast today'. The theme has been examined under the specific heading: Print and The Arts Council of N. Ireland (Chapter 1), Alfonso Lopez Monreal (Chapter 11), Anthony Davies (Chapter 111) and Diarmuid Delargy (Chapter 1V).

In centring my analysis around the fore-listed print-makers, I realise that these artists, (their work and their opinions), represent only a narrow cross section of those available on the subject of this thriving (and generally positive) print community. Naturally time permitting, I could also have discussed the issue in relation to the work of Kent Jones, Mary Farl Powers or Steven Barraclough. These artists are all previous resident Printmakers, and advertently or inadvertently, each has to some extent, helped to shape the face of print-making in N. Ireland. Indeed at some stage in the future, I'm quite sure it would also be extremely beneficial, to discuss and analyse their experiences. Objectively though, in the face of fore-mentioned restrictions, I have chosen to characterise the print scene in Belfast through Monreal, Davies and Delargy.

Briefly to recapitulate, Chapter 1 centres on the role of the Arts Council in the area of Print-making, the different facilities and schemes they provide were discussed. In retrospect, the only major criticism I can establish in regard to the print workshop was the actual size of the studio space. I felt it was totally unsuitable for the number of artists availing of the facilities housed there. The space is better suited to the needs of a small number of foundation year students than a possible twenty "professional"

artists. Granted I'm sure that is highly unlikely all these people will congregate here at any given time, but for example on the day I visited the studio only three artists were using the Etching area, and my impression was one of an extremely cluttered, claustrophobic situation. In fact the size and layout of Anthony Davies private studio in my opinion was far, far superior. Let us hope in the near future that planning permission is granted in order for the facility to be extended, and thus attain its full potential.

Chapter 11 deals with the work of Alfonso Monreal, current holder of the Arts Council residency fellowship. A Mexican, he epitomises for me, the growing trend of foreign print-makers who are congregating on Belfast, underterred by the political situation existing in N. Ireland. Since coming to Belfast in 1983 Monreal's work seems to have become progressively more Mexican, but to some extent this is the inevitable redefinition imposed by exile. While not ruling out totally the infiltration of N. Ireland's angst ridden imagery into his work, he is determined it must be a totally natural progression, "if it comes, it comes".

In Chapter 111, I have analysed, Print in Belfast, from the view point of Anthony Davies, the general renegade of the print scene to an extent. Davies set up his own private print workshop, in the face of for him, unexceptable facilities at Stranmillis Road. While I do admire Davies, for his stance on this issue; indeed as I've mentioned the workshop he created is far superior in my opinion to that controlled by the Arts Council, in retrospect, in a place like Belfast, one can't over estimate the importance of security. This must be

taken into consideration by everybody when critising the availability of the studio time at Stranmillis Road. One is essentially existing in a war torn zone. But unquestionably what Davies has achieved is exceptionable in times of such severe economic recession, and should prove as a fine example of what can be achieved, to any future print-makers.

Alternately focussing on Davies work, my impressions and thoughts were not of such a positive nature. Granted his technical knowledge is of an unchallengable proficiency;- I've no doubt in his competency in this area, but for me, there seems to be little attempt made in many of his prints, to entice the various mediums used, into anything other than a reproductive technique with certain attractive properties. Lucie-Smith called him the voice of the 80's. The voice he may be, the artist I have my doubts. My impression of Davies is that he is a very vocal person, one who perhaps has over estimated his own creative proficiency, and would now need to critically analyse what he is doing. Concepts and superficiality have taken over.

Diarmuid Delargy is one of the more talented of the home grown crop of artists operating in Belfast today. While his subject matter is essentially rural, similarly central to his work is the need to find a universal image of man. Having just received a bursary to print at the "Artists Union" for a period of months, one would hope this separation from N. Ireland will prove beneficial in the development of Delargy's imagery, which at present, in my opinion, is cluttered by political considerations.

Finally in a general context, I would like to state that although the terms of reference used by each

artist are different, their common bond lies in each one's belief in Belfast as a potentially thriving printmaking centre. The undoubted support of the Arts Council in this venture is epitomised by the facilities and schemes they provide for print-makers, indeed last year, their financial commitment alone was valued at £32,709.00.

Thus it is my wish that this study will not only be of general use, but helpful to students embarking on a similar lifestyle. Granted these are financially repressive times but then the world of the artist has always traditionally hung on the cliff edge. In this dissertation I have endeavoured to depict the survival patterns of three specific artists. Theirs is indeed a world of balancing grants and part-time incomes infringed with the ever prevailing threat of increasing material, rent and electricity costs.

I would also hope, in discussing the imagery, technique, and work practices, of the print-makers in question, that I have provided the observer with an alternative perception and insight; a glimpse into another artist's workshop so to speak. These printers, whether they be of twin or opposite cultural extraction, have undoubtedly been influenced by their traditional backgrounds, and to varying degrees by their immediate environments.

Thus I would like to finally extract from the text, the pinnacle for me of all the alternative philosophies and ideas put forward by the artists examined. Firstly, like Monreal, (as a final year student embarking on the post college scene), I would do well to learn from his experience and remember that "the more I travel, the more I realise how unimportant where you are is really, as long as you have the possibility of working". Perhaps

even more important for me though, is a point established in relation to Delargy's work, - that in Art, particular experiences are only valid if they acquire universal forms.

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