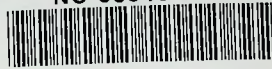


NC 0034893 7

T636



MOOS5769NC

THE HISTORY OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

BY

JOHN HAYNES SPENCER

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE HISTORY OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

BY

JOHN HAYNES SPENCER

BY

JOHN HAYNES SPENCER

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

SEAN MCSWEENEY

A STUDY OF HIS PAINTINGS IN RELATION
TO USE OF COLOUR AND TEXTURE

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART & DESIGN AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

FACULTY OF DESIGN

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

BY

ISEULT AIKEN

MARCH 1990

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

SEAN MCSWEENEY 1

- AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS EARLY WORK

IRISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING 9

- MCSWEENEY'S INFLUENCES

THEMES IN MCSWEENEY'S WORK 13

MCSWEENEY IN RELATION TO - TURNER 21

- KOKOSCHKA

- YEATS

CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

<u>LANDSCAPE WITH CROWS</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>PAT IN THE LANDSCAPE</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>WICKLOW LANDSCAPE</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>THE ROAD</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>PJ's SCARECROW</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>WICKLOW</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>SUMMER FIELD</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>WICKLOW BOGLAND</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>MAYDAY</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>TREES ON THE HILL</u>	Sean McSweeney

CHAPTER II

<u>HY BRAZIL</u>	Patrick Collins
<u>EVENING POOL LISSADELL</u>	Sean McSweeney

CHAPTER III

<u>THE LONG SQUARES</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>TREES IN THE WIND</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>THE ROCKS</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>SUMMER SHORELINE</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>KELLY'S BOG</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>THE LOWER BOG</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>SHORELINE BALLYCONNELL</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>WINTER BOGLAND</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>LISSADELL TREES</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>THE GREY TREE</u>	Piet Mondrian

CHAPTER IV

<u>ULYSSES DERIDING POLYPHEMUS</u>	J. W. M. Turner
<u>EVENING LANDSCAPE</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>SEBASTIAN ISEPP</u>	Oskar Kokoschka
<u>MEN OF DESTINY</u>	Jack B. Yeats
<u>OLD BUILDING LOUGHALIN</u>	Sean McSweeney
<u>MANY FERRIES</u>	Jack B. Yeats
<u>DESERTED HOLDING</u>	Sean McSweeney

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Sean and Sheila McSweeney for their wonderful help in giving and obtaining information for this project.

I would also like to thank James White (ex-Director of The National Gallery of Ireland).

INTRODUCTION

Sean McSweeney is perhaps one of the finest landscape painters currently working in Ireland. Having not followed the trends over the years, he worked instead in his own distinctive style, drawing from his personal reactions to the landscape.

His vivid use of colour gives him an individuality and distinction from other Irish artists. I intend to discuss his work, specifically referring to his use of colour and texture.

As little has been written on McSweeney, an introduction to his early work is necessary showing the development to his present style.

An introduction to Irish landscape painting is important to place McSweeney in context.

I intend to introduce the Irish artists who influenced him at an early period, among whom McSweeney subsequently earned a placement. I will compare each of these artists to McSweeney and, in so doing, further explain his work.

McSweeney's individual use of colour and texture will be discussed through themes in his paintings. This will also explain the basis of landscape through which he expresses himself.

The final discussion relates McSweeney's work to that of Turner, Kokoschka and Yeats. I shall compare each of these artists to McSweeney and, in so doing, further explain his work.

Sean McSweeney was born in Dublin in 1915. His family home was 7 Synnott Place, just off Dorset Street. His father, who was a trade unionist, was also a very good amateur painter and showed some of his work in the Synnott Gallery which was in St Stephen's Green. Sean himself had father painting while holding one of the children in his arms. Unfortunately portraits of the children were regarded as 'you could give a washer and a candle of his paintings would fall out of, as many washers were not washing pictures about works of art. He had also in 1918 the house. He could take over a year and find a picture painted in the bottom of it, in order to take to the gallery'.

CHAPTER I

SEAN MCSWEENEY

AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS EARLY WORK

As a young boy Sean McSweeney was the first to see the Municipal Gallery of Art in 1918 as a privileged visitor. Artists such as Maillol, Pascin, Chirico, Sargent, Augustus John, Matisse, Van Man, Robert Rauschenberg, Paul Gauguin, Jack B. Yeats and many others had works there.

McSweeney's mother was from Malinbeg, Co. Tyrone, where he now lives and works. As a child, many of his summer holidays were spent in Malin, Co. Tyrone, and Malinbeg, Co. Tyrone. McSweeney developed a strong awareness of the countryside.

McSweeney, Sean

Sean McSweeney, 1915-1918, Dublin, Ireland

Sean McSweeney, 1918-1921, Dublin, Ireland

Sean McSweeney was born in Dublin in 1935. His family home was 7 Synnott Place, just off Dorset Street. His father, who was a tradesman painter, was also a very keen amateur painter and showed some of his work in the Painters' Gallery which was on St Stephen's Green. Sean remembers his father painting while holding one of the children in his arms. Unfortunately portraits of the children were destroyed as "you could open a wardrobe and a bundle of his drawings would fall out so, as young children there was nothing precious about works of art. We had them all around the house. You could turn over a chair and find a painting nailed to the bottom of it, in order to keep in the springs".¹

In 1941 when McSweeney was five his father was electrocuted. Many of his paints along with some unfinished pictures were left around the house. His mother, having a large family to cope with, did not disturb Sean as he messed around with his father's oil paints.

As McSweeney was only a short distance from the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Art he was an observant visitor. Artists such as Utrillo, Ronault, Constable, Sargent, Augustus John, Mancini, Evie Hone, Patrick Hennessy, Paul Henry, Jack Yeats and Nano Reid all had works there. ¹

McSweeney's mother was from Ballyconnell, Co.Sligo, where he now lives and works. As a child, many of his Summer holidays were spent in Sligo, Meath and Wicklow, so that McSweeney developed a strong awareness of the countryside.

¹ McGuinness, Carmel
Sean McSweeney, His work to Date and Critical Acclaim
 Fine Art Thesis, 1989. Questionnaire, Page 59.



Fig. 1 Sean McSweeney
LANDSCAPE WITH CROWS 1958
Oil on Board
8" x 11"
Artists Collection

McSweeney has no formal art education and rejected the academic teaching of the Royal Academy. He did attend evening and Saturday afternoon classes (1958-60) in life drawing and compositional studies in the National College of Art and Design, where he studied painting under Terence Gayer.

Fig.1 McSweeney was working as a shipping clerk when he first exhibited, in September 1958. This exhibition was in the Cavendish Gallery near the Gate Theatre, now closed down. In this he exhibited "Landscape with Crows" a small naive landscape painting. The brushstrokes were very haphazard, dabbed and dragged, the palette consists of basic blue and white. In the early 60s, McSweeney's work was rejected by the Oireachtas, but accepted by the Living Art Exhibition. Shortly afterwards the Oireachtas also accepted his work. The Living Art Exhibition of August 1962 was McSweeney's first major exhibition, described as 'the new boy',^I his work was shown alongside such people as George Campbell, Norah McGuinness and Camille Souter.

In 1963 McSweeney left his permanent and pensionable job as a shipping clerk to devote himself to full time painting. His first one-man show opened in the Dawson Gallery in October 1965. His work was described as "mainly abstract landscapes, not too abstract and are recognisable as landscapes".^{II} This description has been used to describe McSweeney's painting right up to the present day.

I Butler, Antony
 'Exhibition Success'
 Evening Press, August 15, 1962

II Fallon, Brian
 'First Show by Young Painter'
 Evening Herald, October 7, 1965



Fig. 2

Sean McSweeney
FIGURE IN THE LANDSCAPE 1975
Oil on Canvas
40" x 44"
Private Collection



Fig. 3 Sean McSweeney
 WICKLOW LANDSCAPE 1969
 Oil on Canvas
 30" x 24"
 Private Collection

His second one-man show in 1967 resulted in the purchase of a painting by The Hugh Lane Gallery, the first painting to be bought by the Gallery in 50 years. "Summer 66" is a large predominantly yellow canvas, with a composition that suggests a landscape with no reference to any particular place. The palette is warm and bright reflecting a hot Summer's day. One would go so far as to say that his feeling for the pigment reflects those of a Turner painting. The moist luscious colours are applied with immediate excitement in response to the reaction McSweeney must have felt on that Summer's day. 'Summer 66' is characteristic of McSweeney's energetic Abstract Expressionist style of the 60s although he also painted in a tighter stricter style.

Fig.2 Not all McSweeney's paintings, in the late 60s, were as free, warm and bright as 'Summer 66'. By contrast Figure in The the Landscape' (1968) has heavy brooding lines, strong flat greens and blues. The brush strokes are short and definite in heavy dark lines, the view is reminiscent of the Wicklow landscape with its hilly forests.

Fig.3 Following this style is 'Wicklow Landscape' (1969), a Romantic interpretation of the Wickow mountains. The colours, thickly applied, are subdued, although a further look reveals the the use of yellows, oranges, reds, purples, browns/greens, blues and white. The Paul Henry influence on structure and flatness is evident. Such influence is not surprising as McSweeney had seen Paul Henry's work in the Hugh Lane Gallery. Although the structure seems to lack feeling, the road draws your eye into the picture, and poses a question which leaves you wondering. "McSweeney, so far, has not given proof that he can compose as well as he can evoke. There are times when one realises how boneless and soft a large part of his work is, how lacking in structure and real thinking power."¹

1

Fallon, Brian
'Works that place the Painter to the Front'
The Irish Times, July 4, 1969.



Fig. 4 Sean McSweeney
THE ROAD 1970
Oil on Canvas
28" x 36"
Artists Collection



Fig. 5 Sean McSweeney
PJ's SCARECROW 1977
Oil on Canvas
40" x 44"
Private Collection



Fig. 6 Sean McSweeney
WICKLOW 1975
Oil on Canvas
24" x 30"
Private Collection

Fig.4 'The Road' painted in 1970 shows the freer side of McSweeney a strong expressionist piece of work with swift definite brushstrokes. The painting was inspired by a travellers' encampment while the artist was driving past Tallaght. Structure and thought is more apparent in this painting. The brushstrokes are precise and much of the stained canvas has been left untouched. McSweeney has also used the end of his brush to score parts, exaggerating the travellers' dwelling. The choice of subject for this painting was quite unusual for McSweeney - an artist known for his soft Romantic interpretation of the landscape. To

Fig.5 refer to another example from this period, 'PJ's Scarecrow' (1977) is indicative of heavy expressionist lines and colours. The palette is unusual; a turbulent red and white sky covering nearly half the canvas - the lower half with hills in the background and, in the foreground, a scarecrow in a ploughed field. The scarecrow is picked out by white brush strokes on his clothes. The composition is somewhat naive, as is the choice of palette, however there is an adventurous aspect to the painting.

During the mid-1970s McSweeney found himself in what he describes "as a black hole". During that time he could not paint, although he felt it was very important for him to visit his studio each day. After struggling for two years he finally 'climbed out' and was able to resume painting.

Fig.6 'Wicklow' (1975) is a lush, Romantic interpretation of the Wicklow landscape, yet the handling of the paint is in an expressionist manner. The palette is black, brown, green, yellow and white. Yet it is by no means dull. McSweeney's natural flair for mixing his colours gives an even balance through out the painting. The paint has been applied with a brusque and areas of it have been scraped, leaving the stained undermarks. This technique has been applied to the hills in the distance while, in the middleground, McSweeney used a palette knife to obtain a more layered effect.



Fig. 7 Sean McSweeney
SUMMER FIELD 1975
Oil on Canvas
24" x 28"
Private Collection

He also used the end of a brush to make slight markings. Pure yellow paint applied with a palette knife and by the fingers depicts the foliage growing at the base of the painting. The only detail recognisable in the painting is the whiteness of a gable end of the house. There is no graduation in distance since the far-away hills are as abstract as the foliage in the foreground.

The paint, which McSweeney has been described as using in a rather Jack Yeats's style, remains clean and luminous, without being gaudy. His colour remains pure, and the colours he chooses are alive, chosen probably from his feelings rather than observation.

Fig.7 'Summer Field' (1975) is a depiction of a Wicklow wheatfield in the height of summer. The yellow is painted as a flat plane and haystacks in the distance are difficult to distinguish. A Wicklow forest makes a sharp contrast - the trees are scored to show their outline. The colours used are more reminiscent of continental rather than Irish landscape. McSweeney's use of flat planes of colour is in total contrast to the typical imprecise nature of his shapes, usually emerging from the physical mass of paint and the vivid strident colours. The impasto use of paint in exaggerated colours is reminiscent of the work of Vincent Van Gogh.

At this stage one wonders if McSweeney became uncertain of his style and looked more closely at Irish painters of the period, eg, in his show of 1969 there were a number of pictures that for the first time in his career seem directly related to the work of other major Irish artists, eg, Colin Middleton, Arthur Armstrong and Nano Reid.

Fig.7 In 'Summer Field' his freedom seems to have been severely reined in or dried up. The planes of colour are held tightly together and it is only when one looks closely at the scoring on the trees and the wheat that these details are visible.



Fig. 8 Sean McSweeney
WICKLOW BOGLAND
Oil on Canvas
30" x 24"
Private Collection



Fig. 9 Sean McSweeney
MAYDAY 1980
Oil on Canvas
28" x 40"
Private Collection

Despite the uncertainty McSweeney was beginning to develop towards his present approach and style. He began to look at the landscape more closely, not focusing so much on an area but more on a focal point. This allowed him to be much freer in his approach, representing the landscape in a manner which was expressionist.

Fig.8 In 'Wicklow Bogland' (1978) the bog texture is brought out by the use of a paint brush. Thinly laid on oil pigments are merged with each other representing the layers of the bog. He has not allowed pure colour to come through at all. The sky is dark and moody, suggesting an overcast dull day. The weakness in this painting lies in its structure which in turn exaggerates its vagueness.

Fig.9 'Mayday' (1980) seems to be under more control, the subject being dealt with in a freer style; the haphazard strokes were placed on the canvas with a dash and freedom. McSweeney has used his finger a lot, rubbing the brown pigments into each other, obtaining a smooth yet not untextured effect of the bog.

His pigments are rich, vibrant and have a sharp clearness about them, even though he has allowed them to merge with each other. (it is quite hard to identify a sharp opaque black in McSweeney's work as he tends to use dark blues and browns, preferring to mix his own pigments on the canvas as he works.

In July 1980 McSweeney was the first artist to be awarded the George Campbell Memorial Travel Grant. This award had been recently set up by the Arts Council, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Spanish cultural Institute. This annual award, valued at £1000, is to be made alternatively to an artist from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The award enabled McSweeney to work for five months in Spain, to make contacts with artists and cultural organisations there.

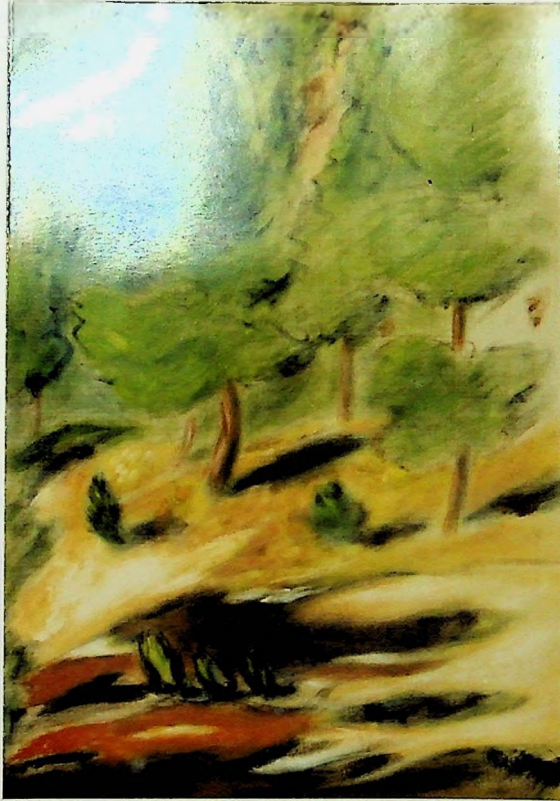


Fig. 10

Sean McSweeney
TREES ON A HILL 1981
Venta de Contrearras
Oil on Canvas
30" x 24"
Private Collection

Fig.10 'Trees on the Hill' (1981) at first glance may seem like a watercolour, but McSweeney has abandoned the thick heavy use of oils for a smoother softer approach. The sharp light that shines on the Spanish landscape gives much softer colours than those of the Irish landscape. The colours of burnt yellow, muted browns and olive greens echo the warm earthiness of the Spanish landscape and McSweeney's reaction to it. During his visit to Spain, for the first time, McSweeney painted many watercolours - a medium which was not previously associated with him. These were described as having "the lose solidity of Cezanne, muted in colour and quite naturalistic".^I His drawings have a lovely suggestive quality and clarity about them, and he paints on the watercolour transparently, leaving the pencil marks visible.

In 1984 McSweeney and his family moved to Ballyconnell, Co. Sligo, after 17 years of living and working in Wicklow. He felt it would be like a homecoming for him but, as it turned out, he was the last and the slowest member of his family to adjust to their new environment. The western boglands were alien at first after mountainous, forested Wicklow. "The hills stand up in Wicklow. Here, in Sligo, you would need the wings of a seagull to fly over the landscape and view it properly. But I've come to terms with it. I haven't had the courage to tackle Ben Bulbin yet; its a difficult shape."^{II}

I Dunne, Aidan
 'Sean McSweeney at the Taylor Galleries'
 In Dublin June 24 1982

II Fallon, Brian
 'Landscape in Sligo Schoolhouse'
 The Irish Times September 13, 1989

The Sligo countryside, the contrast between East and West, was a whole new environment for McSweeney. The large, flooded marshy bogs are full of wild bog cotton and various other kinds of foliage. The Atlantic sea, beaches and large overpowering rocks are illuminated by quite a different light to that of hilly Wicklow. It took McSweeney quite a while to soak in and digest this landscape, although it was by no means unknown to him. The difference in the landscape did not force him to find a new formula for his painting. The new textures and colours of Sligo made him look and observe the unfamiliar surroundings, and feel his way into the new environment. These works will be discussed later.

The first half of the century in the Republic of Ireland was marked by a period of intense political and social change. The influence of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution was felt in Ireland, leading to a period of reform and a new sense of national identity. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility.

CHAPTER II

IRISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING

McSWEENEY'S INFLUENCES

The influence of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment was felt in Ireland, leading to a period of reform and a new sense of national identity. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility.

1. The influence of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment was felt in Ireland, leading to a period of reform and a new sense of national identity. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility. The political and social changes of the time led to a new sense of national identity and a new sense of political and social responsibility.

The Irish artists who emerged in the immediate post war years were essentially conservative, eg, Paul Henry, Sean Keating, Maurice McGonigal, Sean O'Sullivan and Jack B Yeats. There has been a "consistent poetic response to landscape or poetic genre"^I in the work of many Irish artists, relating to the fact that many of them did not follow the mainstream international movements. This was not a "rejection of the international avant-garde, but a tacit recognition that these styles may not be wholly appropriate in an Irish context".^{II} The distinctive quality of these Irish artists was their fondness for a romantic Irish landscape, Irish peasants, fishermen, and a romantic presentation of Irish history. Paul Henry and Jack B Yeats were the prime examples. Although undoubtedly Yeats was the bridge which changed the thoughts of the younger generation of painters with "his own painting embodying the change from an anecdotal to an increasingly abstract style".^{III}

This response to the landscape is apparent in different ways in the work of Patrick Collins, Tony O'Malley, Colin Middleton, T P Flanagan and in the newer generation of Barrie Cooke, Sean McSweeney and Cecily Brennan, to mention but a few. These are the artists "searching for contemporary aesthetic alternatives that reflect their own sensibilities. The art tends to be figurative rather than non-objective, intuitive rather than intellectual or academic."^{IV} The art is evolved in a kind of organic abstraction exploiting texture, subdued, atmospheric colours, evocative of the soft light and misty climate. Certain themes and motifs recur in the work of these painters. What seems to attract them is what is embedded in, or associated with, the landscape.

- I Ruane, Frances The Delighted Eye. Page 1
- II IBID
- III Ruane, Frances Six Artists from Ireland.
An Aspect of Irish Painting Page 10
- IV Ruane Frances The Delighted Eye. Page 1



Fig. 11 Patrick Collins
HY BRAZIL 1963
Oil on Board
29" x 35"
Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery

The artists veer towards essentially rural themes, and are more attracted to the soft organic shapes of the countryside than to cold hard machinery, which seems to be dominant on the continent. Patrick Collins has said about Ireland "I've noticed this, the hedges are still woolly; nobody keeps things neat and quiet; that is what's lovely about it. You know ash trees grow up in the hedges and so on; they're never culled, as in France".^I

A sense of place is an element extremely important to Irish artists. Patrick Collins, who was originally from Sligo, will not return as he feels he has all the images in his head; to return would only spoil them. His works express a romantic view of Ireland and its landscape. One of the successors to Yeats, he strives to capture this sense of place, the people and its spiritual content. McSweeney has followed Collins with his abstract poetic interpretations of the landscape. Both artists veer from the picturesque, thereby creating paintings of strong personal emotions relating to their reactions from the Sligo landscape. The depiction of the land does not come from a particular area but a more generalised concept.

Collins's colours are generally subdued, radiating diffused sunlight which is enveloped in misty atmosphere. McSweeney's palette is virtually the opposite with vivid, rich clashes of the primary colours. Collins's palette has tended to rely on an atmospheric blue, a colour McSweeney has also involved with strong emphasis.^{II}

Fig.11 'Hy Brazil' has the image centrally placed, fighting with the edge of the canvas resulting in an unusual imbalance. The image which is painted nearly in relief, relies on the impasto use of paint.

I Ruane, Frances
Patrick Collins Romantic Phase 1965-70. Page 47

II Ruane, Frances
The Delighted Eye. Page 7



Fig. 12

Sean McSweeney
EVENING POOL LISSADELL 1987
Oil on Board
24" x 32"
Private Collection

Fig.12

Emerging from the background it contrasts with the flat use of paint surrounding and framing it. Areas of paint seem to be nearly translucent as if one is trying to visualise behind and beyond the image. McSweeney's 'Evening Pool Lissadell' is shrouded in a strong atmospheric blue. The image is almost centrally placed. McSweeney relies on similar atmospheric effects as does Collins. The central image is evoked by the play of light on the bog pool, radiating a haunting atmosphere. His impasto use of paint is a little less obvious at first. The last grasp of light fights to remain, emerging at the top of the picture in a swift white stroke. The light almost bounces off the land, and is echoed in a white area which has been blended into the canvas. Visible in the diminishing light, sparse foliage occupies the foreground.

This painting has many elements of Collins's influence on McSweeney. First of all, this painting radiates an atmosphere of utter isolation which McSweeney has begun to develop only recently, maybe in an attempt to push and explore the image harder and to find an element and atmosphere which he has not explored before. At times McSweeney does not push his images to their potential; he does not explore enough, leaving the image in a molten state.

Another contemporary of Collins who influenced McSweeney was Nano Reid. She "belonged to the generation of Irish artists which had digested Yeats".₁

1

Fallon, Brian
Irish Women Artists
 From the 18th Century to the Present Day. Page 47

Sean O'Faolain has described the work of Nano Reid: ".... a poetic visionary, writing in code about things behind the seen surface, an imagination nurtured in the Boyne Valley whose rich uplands and ancient stones silently murmur ancestral memories. She never describes, she indicates, hints, suggests, but once we get the hang of her private code she is just as lucid as painters who speak openly through things made recognisable at a glance".^I

Yeats, Collins and McSweeney all indicate, hint and suggest in their paintings. Having developed as Romantics (as did Reid) their work became freer, more abstractly expressionist in style. Reid's paintings are made up of haphazard brushstrokes, shapes and colours, painted in a bold spontaneous manner. They are full of patterns which suggest and hint at her subject, seeming at first in complete disarray but, at a second glance, the forms and shapes become more apparent. The canvas is often filled with painted drawings which are informal and free. Reid's influence on McSweeney is evident often in his haphazard brushstrokes. He draws with the brush creating a patterned effect which at first may not be fully recognisable. McSweeney has always had great admiration for the work of Nano Reid, describing "Cats in the Kitchen" (from the Hugh Lane Collection) as "a fine painting and a joy to see".^{II}

In discussing McSweeney, it would be impossible not to include the comparisons between the artist and Jack B. Yeats. This will be discussed in Chapter IV.

- I Ni Chuilleanain, Eilean
Irish Women: Image and Achievement Pages 102-103
- II Aiken, Iseult
In Conversation with the Artist. Nov 22-22, 1989

McSweeney's basic instinct is to express himself through landscape painting. All his inspiration comes from the landscape as which he is surrounded. He takes off an excellent artist's eye to observe the appearance of the place. He does not "revel" the landscape in a natural sense, rather captures it as an abstractly poetic interpretation. He has no interest in representational art, and is more concerned with a sense of place, the mood, the light and what the elements were done by the landscape. His knowledge of the landscape is not transmitted through the perfect representation of objects. It is achieved through the manipulation of forms, the spontaneity which he expresses that through various strokes that pull a whole composition together. He works fast and spontaneously in a passionate attempt to capture the spirit of the wild. His technique is "informal and free" with an absence of any regularity, capturing the mood of his environment. He is extremely concerned with the mood and atmosphere of painting.

CHAPTER III

THEMES IN MCSWEENEY'S WORK

The application of paint overcame him, but one "can sense a total bodily movement". At times he flutters his brushes and uses his fingers to paint. His impulsive and bold movements result in long sweeping strokes across the canvas.

1. ...
 2. ...
 3. ...
 4. ...
 5. ...

Sean McSweeney's basic instinct is to express himself through landscape painting. All his inspiration comes from the landscape by which he is surrounded. It triggers off an excitement within him to recreate the experience of the place. He does not 'record' the landscape in a literal sense, rather captures it in an abstractly poetic interpretation. He has no interest in representational work, and is more concerned with a sense of place, the mood, the light and what the elements have done to the landscape. "His knowledge of the countryside is not transmitted through the perfect representation of images. It is achieved through the manipulation of paint, the scumpling colour/the expertise that throws the spontaneous stroke, that pulls a whole composition together".^I He works fast and spontaneously in a passionate attempt to capture the spirit of the wild landscape before him. His technique is "informal and free"^{II} with an essence of much impetuosity, capturing the moods of his environment. He is extremely concerned with the drama and adventure of painting.

The application of paint consumes him, and one "can sense a total bodily movement".^{III} At times he discards his brushes and uses his fingers to paint. His impetuous arm and body movements result in long sweeping strokes across the canvas.

- I Robinson, Kate
 'Art'
 The Sunday Independent Sept. 1986
- II Hutchinson, John
 'Bogged Down in the Flat'
 The Sunday Press July 31, 1988
- III Walker, Dorothy
 'Art to Art'
 The Irish Independent May 31, 1986

McSweeney is in constant contact with the landscape. The bog stretches out directly in front of his home, the Atlantic sea and rocks are not far away. He walks through the landscape making notes of colour and reference sketches to record the light hitting his surroundings and the changing moods it creates. From his notes he might find something that will help him into a piece of work. He does not work directly from these notes but finds perhaps a suggestion or an idea. Like many artists he does not work 'in situ' but removes himself from the landscape, finding that it is important to retain freshness by not allowing anything to come between the sensation and the realisation.

To his notes, as he returns to the studio, he might apply colour notations; something suggested in a drawing is taken onto his canvas. He works in a conventional manner on stretched primed canvas. He prefers the finer texture of linen cloth to that of sailing cloth; the canvas gives a spring when working on it as opposed to the hardness of board. Working from a white canvas he likes to totally kill the white before he starts into the painting. The canvas is used as his palette. In recent years, he has begun to use carefully sanded board with which he can easily eliminate the surface texture and concentrate on the application of thick paint.

His dramatically sure colour sense is achieved mainly from the basic primary colours. The essential colours in his palette are red, yellow, blue, cobalt, cadmium, lemon, yellow ochre, phthalo, black and white. All his greys and browns are mixed from the primaries. These are mixed on the support, sometimes leaving the primaries to show in areas. Throughout his career, his talent for pure strong colours has been noted.

The intensity of his palette and his ability and courage to depict the landscape with vibrant colours has never failed him. There are times when the vibrant, luscious impasto becomes too sweet and one wonders why the influence for such pigment comes from a land where "the colours are generally subdued and atmospheric".^I

Through his feeling and handling of the paint, he achieves the textures of the landscape. What has been described as his Jack Yeats's impasto use of pigment is scraped, scored, stroked, skimmed and dragged with brush, rag, palette knife and fingers. The sheer amount of paint used may be described as self-indulgent. Although "McSweeney has an easy manner with the stuff, but doesn't show off"^{II}, few artists have the courage to handle paint and pigment in his particular style.

McSweeney's subjects have remained familiar - bog pools, moorland vegetation, the characteristic western fields, isolated trees and the wild Atlantic sea - all strong elements of the Sligo environment to which he is attracted.

FIELDS: McSweeney's luscious vibrant greens (made from the mixing of blue and yellow) have a wide range and variety. Making fields come alive with colours one would not ever associate with the Sligo landscape. They are often hilly, running on a slope, and divided evenly making pleasant patterns. Some are intermingled with the bogs and maybe only divided by the high ditch and fence in between.

I Ruane, Frances
 The Delighted Eye Page 1

II Dunne, Aidan
 Sean McSweeney Catalogue
 Taylor Galleries 13-16 July 1984



Fig. 13

Sean McSweeney
THE LONG SQUARES 1988
Oil on Board
18" x 24"
Private Collection

Fields are generally accepted as a quite mediocre part of our landscape, but McSweeney depicts an exciting and dramatic interpretation of them. They go beyond just fields, becoming something poetical, filled with the atmosphere and echoing the softness of the Irish landscape.

McSweeney's sense of colour and texture confronts the viewer with many new ideas to change the way we see our landscape, so that the next time we see the countryside we see something different. The grass is painted with a huge variety of greens and yellows, creating a texture of its own. The brushwork has an urgency about it so as not to lose spontaneity. Further texture is achieved by the scoring and scraping with the palette knife and the use of his fingers.

Fig.13 'The Long Squares' (1988) are a series of long rectangular (squares) fields in Ballyconnell. The fields run from a height down to lower ground and are a dramatic feature in the area. McSweeney's interpretation of them is in a semi-realist manner.

These textures are a strong feature achieved through his pigment, brushwork and scoring of the canvas. The variant greens are merged together and then scored to create uneven line textures. A tree bent over by the wind shows its movement through the brushstrokes echoing its shape. In the foreground the grasses are indicated by scoring and finger-smearing of paint.

Fig.7 'Summer Field' from McSweeney's Wicklow period is a pleasant contrast to 'The Long Squares'. The most obvious contrast is the change in season, but also the change in landscape. Wicklow fields are longer, less divided than those in Sligo. At the edge of a Wicklow field, as in 'Summer Field', the forest, dark and dense, begins to spread across the landscape.



Fig. 14 Sean McSweeney
TREES IN THE WIND 1989
Oil on Board
18" x 24"
Private Collection



Fig. 15 Sean McSweeney
CLOCH CEIM 1986
(Part of a Triptych)
Oil on Board
14" x 30"
Private Collection

TREES: McSweeney has always had a special affinity with trees, usually bogland trees which stand in isolation in the midst of a flat, surrounding landscape. Trees are used as a medium for describing the movement of the wind, and also the hilly Wicklow landscape. 'Figure in the Landscape' describes the descending road with the trees lining each side of it, while 'Trees in the Wind' 1989 is a fine example of haunting lonely trees in the Sligo landscape. Bent over from the force of the wind, the execution of the trees is surprisingly simple. McSweeney captures the movement and the atmosphere of the windy terrain. Here, the greens have not the vibrancy of those in 'The Long Squares'.

A palette knife has been used to incite the movement of the trees intermingling with the clouds in the sky. No attempt has been made to make a feature of the foreground other than an abstract mass of greens and yellows. The clouds moving in the sky are bright and pure, showing no sign of mood or change in the weather. Dabs of pure yellow are dispensed in the trees signifying the change to Autumn. Again the spreading of the paint with excited brushwork, palette knife and fingers describes the textures of the subject.

SEA: The sea is within easy walking distance of McSweeney's house and, on a stormy day, the crashing of the waves is clearly heard. The energy and force of the water on the rocks is so mesmerising that one could stand and watch the sea for hours. It is not surprising that the artist wanted to capture its energy on canvas.

'Cloch Ceim' 1986 (part of a triptych) is a powerful, moody, energetic painting. The heavy dark bluey greyness of the rocks signify their sheer weight and mass. The frothy whiteness of the sea crashing down on the rocks is amplified by the impasto use of pigment. The painting is full of energy, the sweeping use of fingers and palette knife work in unison to create a feeling of rapid motion.



Fig. 16 Sean McSweeney
SUMMER SHORELINE 1989
Oil on Board
6" x 10"
Private Collection

There is no attempt at detail other than what the feeling of the thick paint implies. One can see how the artist has left some of the red pigment to show through in places; he is not afraid of colour. McSweeney is trying to achieve the feelings which Turner evoked in his Romantic interpretation of nature - this will be discussed later.

Fig.16 'Summer Shoreline' 1989 is in total contrast to the previous painting; the striking use of orange and white, representing land, sea and sky, is completely abstract. There is no division between sea and sky; they merge into one. The horizontal dragging of the brush across the support is in contrast to the haphazard strokes of the land. Yellow, orange and broken white pigments make up the land and the use of colour is free from all cliché. The treatment of the subject may only be described as abstract expressionist.

BOGLAND: The bog is perhaps the most characteristic Irish symbol of the past and is the subject of many contemporary Irish artists. The Boglands of Wicklow and Sligo, which have been a source of inspiration, are probably McSweeney's closest themes. Some of the Wicklow bogland may still be in use, as 'Wicklow Bogland' seems to show an undried-out stretch of bog, much of the Sligo bogland is worked-out turf-cuttings which have filled with water. They are filled with various vegetation: rushes, grasses, bog cottons, irises and many varieties of wild flowers. The ground is filled with water and full of unsuspected marshland. The barrenness and isolation of the bog evokes moods and qualities very different from those of the surrounding landscape. Here, there is very little protection from the wind since the countryside, towards the sea, is virtually treeless.

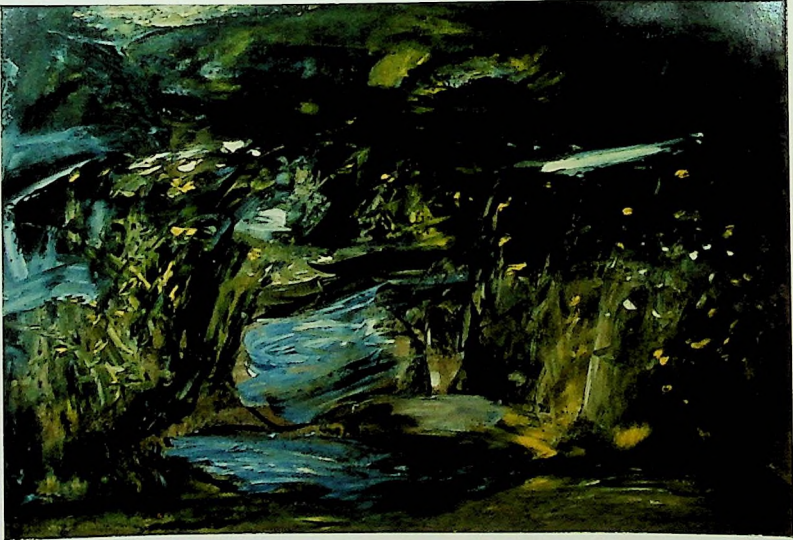


Fig. 17 Sean McSweeney
KELLY'S BOG 1987
Oil on Canvas
25" x 36"
Private Collection



Fig. 18

Sean McSweeney
THE LOWER BOG 1988
Oil on Paper
22" x 30"
Private Collection



Fig. 19

Sean McSweeney
SHORELINE BALLYCONNELL 1988
Pastel
20" x 25"
Private Collection

McSweeney has an urge to explore this area of bogs, bog pools and marshland. The isolation is an intriguing quality. Many of these moods and qualities he has captured while studying the bogs all year round. His paintings have explored the bogs and marshes as if one was looking down from an aerial view at the evening bogland and pools. The bog is reaching as far as the shore and sea.

Fig.17 'Kelly's Bog' (1988) evokes a kind of magical feeling about the bog and its vegetation. The palette is subdued, lending to the atmospheric feeling. The artist has killed the white of the canvas with an undercoat, which has been left to show underneath the paint. The paint is dabbed and dashed to represent the bog rushes, cottons and yellow irises. The watery blue bog pools are simply indicated by the sweep of a paintbrush. The artist feels no pressure to indicate any form of foliage or bog pool in the background. He tends to capture his particular subject and makes no attempt to represent any kind of imagery on the remainder of the canvas.

Fig.18 In comparison to this painting, in 'The Lower Bog' (1988) the treatment of the subject is in a similar vein. The palette is much warmer, radiating pink squares invading the upper half of the canvas. A shaft of light beams down on the bogland. The bog pool is the focal point of the painting. The opposing pink and yellow ochre pigments are an unusual combination - a characteristic common in his paintings.

DRAWINGS: Pastel is a medium McSweeney began to use on his move to Sligo. He uses pastels in a very free and flowing manner. The swift sketchy approach reminds one of how McSweeney tends to draw with his paints, quickly capturing the essence of the subject. 'Shoreline Ballyconnell' 1988

Fig.19 a pastel study of the shore and sea, is a very abstract suggestive depiction. In the foreground the sand is a mixture of orange and browns rubbed gently into the paper while the stones are represented by squiggles of black pastel. The sea is of many various blues and textures, achieved by rubbing, spreading and drawing with the pastels. McSweeney attempts to capture the texture of the sea in motion.



Fig. 20

Sean McSweeney
WINTER BOGLAND 1988
Charcoal on Board
24" x 32"
Riverrun Gallery Restuarant



Fig. 21

Sean McSweeney
LISSADELL TREES 1988
Charcoal on Paper
16.25" x 11.75"
Artist's Collection



Fig. 22 Piet Mondrian
THE GREY TREE 1912
Oil on Canvas
31" x 42.25"
Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

- Fig.20 'Winter Bogland' 1988 is a disciplined drawing making no attempt to capture any of the surroundings other than the hills in the distance and some sparse bog cotton. McSweeney has gently smudged the charcoal which has the effect of making he drawing seem not as flat as it might have been unsmudged. Both drawings have a lovely suggestive quality and clarity of the landscape.
- Fig.21 'Lissadell Trees' 1988 are drawings of some very old trees in Lissadell, Sligo, which McSweeney hopes some day to tackle. The drawings are very free and suggestive without being fussy. They are also, in execution, close to Mondrian's study of 'The Grey Tree' 1912. Mondrian's style is in a grid like formula and space, as in McSweeney's drawings, is an essential element. there is in both drawings the feel of repeated patterns.
- Fig.22

These drawings are an insight to the fact that McSweeney can draw, and they show much improvement from his work of the early 70s, which was strongly criticised for weak drawing, lack of draughtsmanship and structure.

The difficulty of printing has been evident throughout the year. ... (The rest of the text is extremely faint and illegible.)

CHAPTER IV

McSWEENEY IN RELATION TO - TURNER

KOKOSCHKA

YEATS

(The text in this section is very faint and mostly illegible, appearing to be a list or index of names and dates.)

(The text at the bottom of the page is faint and illegible.)

The adventure of painting has been evident throughout the ages. Artists have strived towards expressing themselves through their painting. Sean McSweeney's paintings are not just about landscape but also the adventure of painting. Elements of comparison can be found in McSweeney's work which relate to such artists as Turner, Kokoschka and Yeats. One of the features which connects these artists is their dramatic use of paint, stemming from the intense emotional feelings they have for their subjects. Therefore the artists may be termed 'Expressionists'. The expressive power of colours and shapes, brush strokes and texture, of size and scale, has proven to be efficient enough for these artists, although Expressionism, to put it in another manner, means the use of art to express personal experience, emotions and reactions.

TURNER: Joseph Mallord William Turner was preoccupied with capturing the moods of nature, both dramatically and objectively - one of the first true Romantics - if indeed he is termed Romantic. Often maybe his images of nature verge on expressionism. "His art of landscape was not restricted to faithful representation. it could also be a challenging experience in self-expression as well."¹ Much of his drama lay with the sheer brilliance of his colours and his ability to create atmospheric light effects. Turner's palette consisted of a limited number of pigments: white, yellow ochre, raw and burnt sienna, venetian red, umber, prussian blue, blue, black and ultra-marine. He only used linseed oil to mix his pigments. McSweeney also restricts his palette, preferring to mix his pigments to suit his needs, a technique which both talented colourists have evolved. Their vivid colour sense stems from their fascination with light and atmosphere.

1

Hirsh, Diana
The World of Turner 1775 - 1851 Page 37
 Time Inc. New York 1973

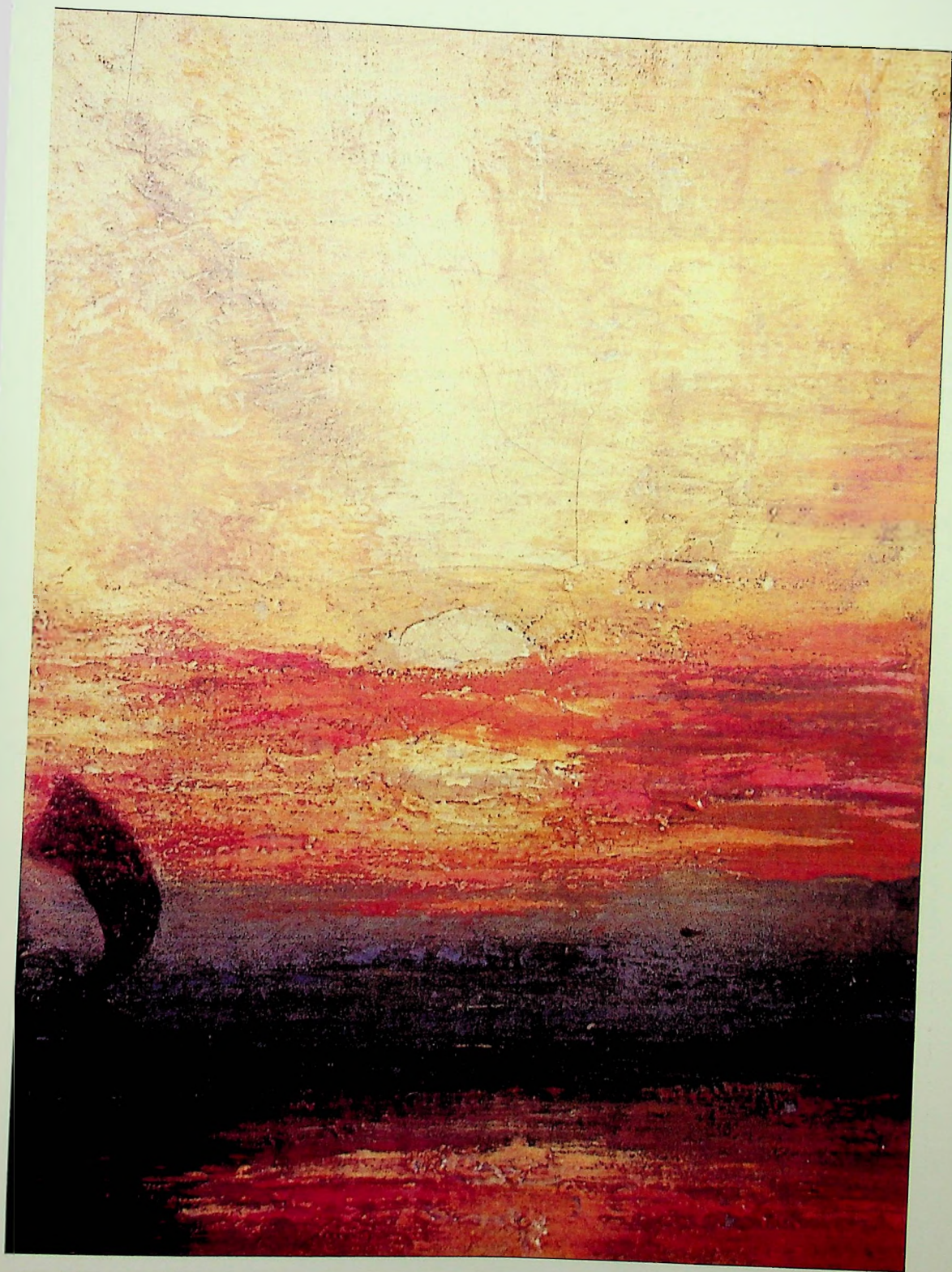


Fig. 23

J.W.M. Turner
ULYSSES DERIDING POLYPHEMUS 1829
Oil on Canvas
52.25" x 80"
The National Gallery, London

Turner's preference was to depict the melodramatic and catastrophic with such subjects as whirlwinds, avalanches and storms at sea. Even his large dark dramas radiate powerful images of nature. His compositions are a mass of whirling energy and movement. The luminosity of his paintings was partly achieved by his fearless attitude towards his palette. "From the start he adopted broad under-painting but, instead of the traditional monochrome brown or ochre, he used pale washes of colour, such as pinks, blues and yellows"¹

Fig.18 McSweeney also has an unabashed sense of colour, a quality which has always made him free from cliché. 'The Lower Bog' (1988) is essentially exploring colour and light. A shaft of light beams across the left-hand side corner and three pink boxes (maybe the clouds) hover above the bog pool. To

Fig.23 compare this to (a section of) Turner's 'Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus' (1829): both artists are clearly interested in the vivid hues of the sunlight. In Turner's painting the sun on the horizon radiates an amazing amount of light. The brightest, purest colours in the picture are also the areas of the thickest paint. One can see how he has built up the layers of colour, some laid on thickly while others are comparatively thin. The white pigment has been applied thickly and then partly scraped away to produce the reflected highlights of the sunrise.

McSweeney has used this same method to create his beam of sunlight, the pigment has been scraped off the support revealing the stains of the pigments which had been initially applied.

I

Hardy, William
The History and Techniques of the Great Masters,
Turner Page 13
 Tiger Books International Ltd, London 1988

Although the artists use basically the same methods of applying, layering and scraping their pigments to create effects, Turner has built up his use of oils from his experiments in watercolours, therefore being able to layer his pigments in a most delicate style. McSweeney only began to use watercolours in the last ten years, which is relatively late in his career. McSweeney, like Turner, has a great fondness for the effects of radiant colours. McSweeney initially rids his support of its whiteness - often with a blue or yellow ochre. Turner veered away from the traditional monochrome brown or ochre, preferring to use pale washes, such as pinks, blues and yellows. This stemming from the building up process of watercolours.

As both artists apply their pigments to the canvas, they tend to use pure colours. Turner did not (as with McSweeney) mix his pigments on a palette. Instead he laid one pigment over another on the canvas. This method is the essence of their pure and vivid colours.

KOKOSCHKA: Oskar "Kokoschka has impressed himself on the world as the Expressionist par excellence". His striking use of a huge range of colours in one painting, and his impasto use of paint, make his work quite memorable. McSweeney's use of paint as texture has touched closely on the style of Kokoschka. Also, the approach both artists have towards the struggle to produce a painting, seems quite similar.

Kokoschka, in conversation with Ludwig Goldscheider, has described his approach to painting - an approach McSweeney also follows - "With me a painting has to grow on a canvas. Sometimes I do a pencil sketch, but only to record an idea. I never make a proper outline on the canvas. It wouldn't serve any purpose. I know what I'm after - the whole painting is finished in my head. I look at my canvas and try to project it. I see the entire thing before me, and I must never lose too much of it. I must get it on the canvas as I have it in my head. I paint layer upon layer, and if I don't capture it at once as I see it before me, I paint it over - that's why my paint is sometimes so thick. That doesn't matter. The only important thing is that the pigments don't get dirty, for spatial depth can only be reproduced through the luminosity of the colours".^I

In their work, both Kokoschka and McSweeney treat drawing as a way of applying paint. "Completing the graphic layout of a composition with colour is normal procedure, but it is unusual for a method of laying on paint to represent drawing at the same time, or be capable of turning into drawing at any moment".^{II}

This is a factor which Kokoschka and McSweeney rely on. All their drawing is done by means of the paint being drawn onto the canvas, whether by brush, palette knife, rubbing, scoring or scrapping. Another aspect of this drawing procedure is the textures which are achieved through these methods.

I Goldscheider, Ludwig
 Oskar Kokoschka
 Page 23

II Sehmalenbach, Fritz
 Oskar Kokoschka
 Page 27



Fig. 24

Sean McSweeney
EVENING LANDSCAPE 1987
Oil on Board
14" x 18"



Fig. 25 Oskar Kokoschka
SEBASTIAN ISEPP 1951
Oil on Canvas
35.75" x 22.33"
Private Collection, Dublin

Colour is regarded by both artists as a form of expression. The splendour of colour, placed thickly or thinly on the support being built up layer by layer, creates an excitement - evident in their rapid brushstrokes. The pigments mix, forming new and exciting colours as they are placed on the canvas from the tube to create a more vivid effect. The beauty of colour is very important. The colours may be taken from nature, but also partly from experimentation; this does not mean that these pigments may not be used to represent nature, as more often than not they do. This factor one knows of in McSweeney's work and his unashamed use of unusual expressive colours.

Fig.24 Evening Landscape (1987) is an extremely expressionist piece of work. The landscape is fired with colours not generally associated with the countryside. Swift movements are implied by the use of the paint brush, and scoring and blending of the pigments are achieved with a sharp stroke of the finger. A wide range of colours have been applied with no restraint on the pigments to depict the evening landscape.

Fig.25 Sebastian Isepp (1951) is a fine example of the palette that Kokoschka employed. The paint is applied rapidly dabbing, dashing, mingling the colours to create new ones. There is very little distinction between the man's flesh and other parts of the canvas. As with McSweeney, the pushing of the pigments around the canvas has created the textures helped by the impasto use of the paint. McSweeney has scored the canvas to outline his images. Kokoschka's images remain more recognisable as the structure of the painting is explained quite clearly. McSweeney does not explain as clearly, and his images tend to merge more deeply into the paintwork.

YEATS: Jack B Yeats has undoubtedly been the most prominent Irish influence on contemporary Irish artists. "He belonged to tradition and yet stood outside it, beyond it. His originality of mind and of technique place him among the most daring of the moderns, whom he did not resemble in other ways. He thus acts as a bridge to the younger generation of painters who did not want so much to break with the tradition as to reach beyond it".^I

Yeats was a 'Romantic' although his later work has strong tendencies towards Abstract Expressionism. He was an intensely patriotic, idealistic person, also believing that no man has a right to place himself above another.

Yeats's paintings strived for "a concept of the past that would give inspiration for the future".^{II} A Race in Hy Brazil was an echo of Watteau's 'Embarkation for Cythera' "where love and the absence of death are man's destiny";^{III} a Romantic notion for the destiny of the Irish.

Fig.26 Men of Destiny (1946) is a depiction of the Sligo fishermen as they disembark at Rosses Point. Two figures emerge from the mass of paint, highlighted by the setting sun in the distance. The whole painting is a mass of live colours: royal blue, indigo, greens with an impasto use of vermillions, yellow and white. The sky is full of turmoil, made up of blues, greens and white dabbed with a brush. His paint is applied - perhaps straight from the paint tube - and then pushed around the canvas with a palette knife. This creates rich textures on his canvas, with many layering effects leaving some areas to be almost in relief.

- I Barrett, Cyril
Irish Art 1943 - 73 ROSC Chorcai Page 8
- II Aiken, Iseult
 In conversation with James White. Jan 24, 1990
- III White, James
Jack B. Yeats A Centenary Exhibition Catalogue
 published by the Arts Council



Fig. 27 Sean McSweeney
OLD BUILDINGS LOUGHAUN 1987
Oil on board
24" x 32"
Private Collection

McSweeney is probably the most prominent Irish artist to be described as a possible successor to Yeats. Comparisons may be made through their impasto use of paint and their unashamed use of colour, although undeniably both seek the adventure of painting, the energy and excitement which can be created in a work.

Fig.27 'Old Buildings Loughaun' (1987) shows McSweeney at his finest in the tradition of Jack Yeats. The painting radiates an atmosphere of the past in the symbolic depiction of the three old ruined and uninhabited cottages. He has highlighted parts of the painting by the subtle use of lighter tones, applied in thick broken strokes. Like

Fig.26 'Men of Destiny', the horizontal plays an important part in the composition - the divider between land and sea, past and present. There is strong emotional feeling in both paintings. McSweeney's basic blue, yellow and white palette does not create a cold atmosphere. The textures of the paintwork are extremely rich. The paint has been applied in areas and then scraped off, leaving the staining underneath - this effect has been used for the sea. The two cottages in the middleground have been built up layer by layer, the juicy thickness of the paint visible. The foreground is a mass of abstract layered paint, echoing the line of the horizon. This painting could represent the existence of McSweeney's work. The subject matter is Romantic while the treatment of the paint and choice of pigment can only be Expressionist.

Yeats, who has always been credited as being a fine draughtsman, spent his early career years as a cartoon artist in London. McSweeney 'was both heralded as a possible successor to Yeats and criticised for weak drawing'.¹ One can see from 'Winter Bogland' and 'Lissadell Trees' that

Fig.20
Fig 21 McSweeney has, over the years, increased his observation and worked towards good draughtsmanship.

I
Dunne, Aidan
'Sean McSweeney at the Taylor'
Magill July 1984

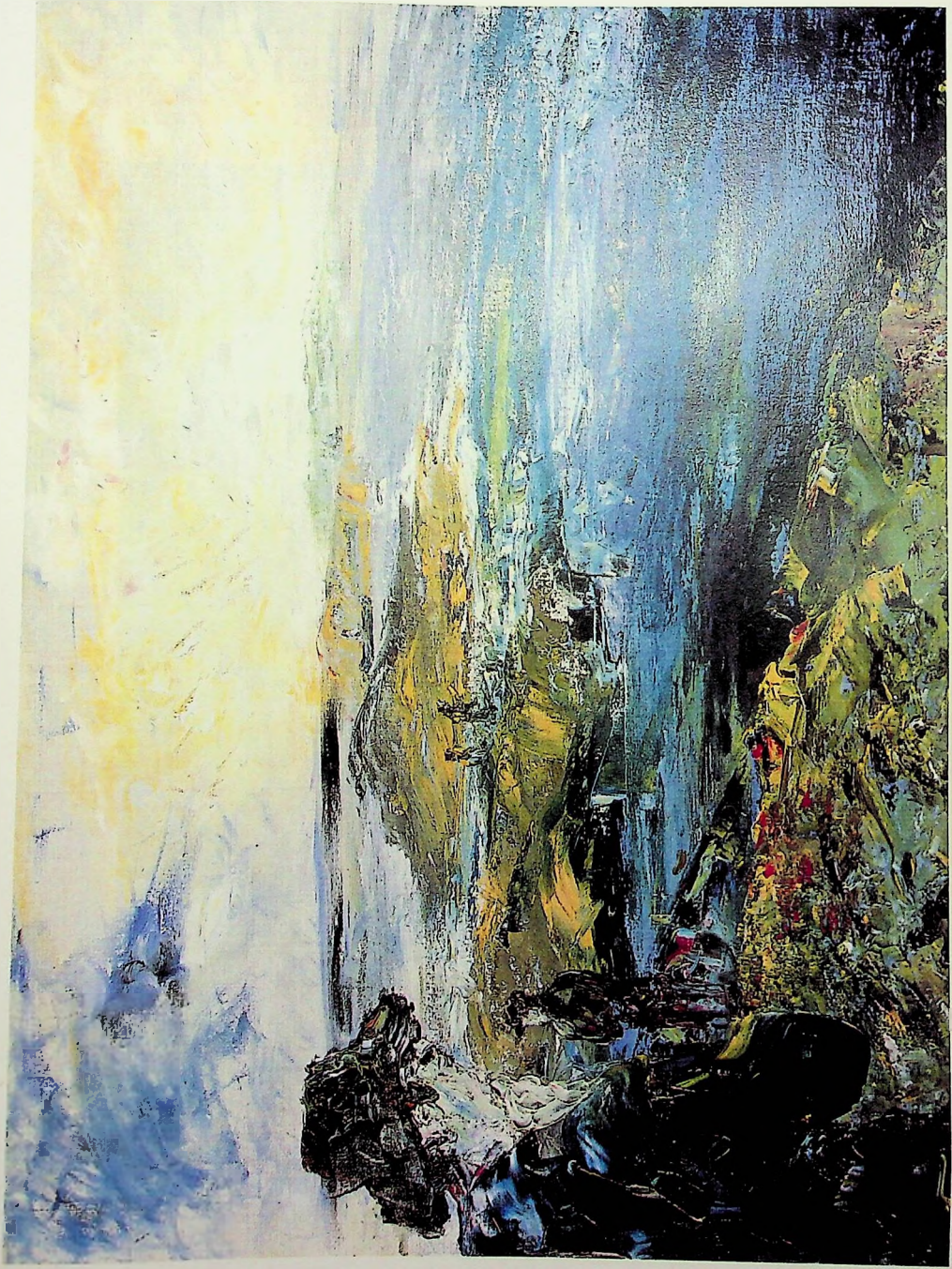


Fig. 28

Jack B Yeats
MANY FERRIES 1948

Oil on Canvas
18" x 26"

National Gallery of Ireland

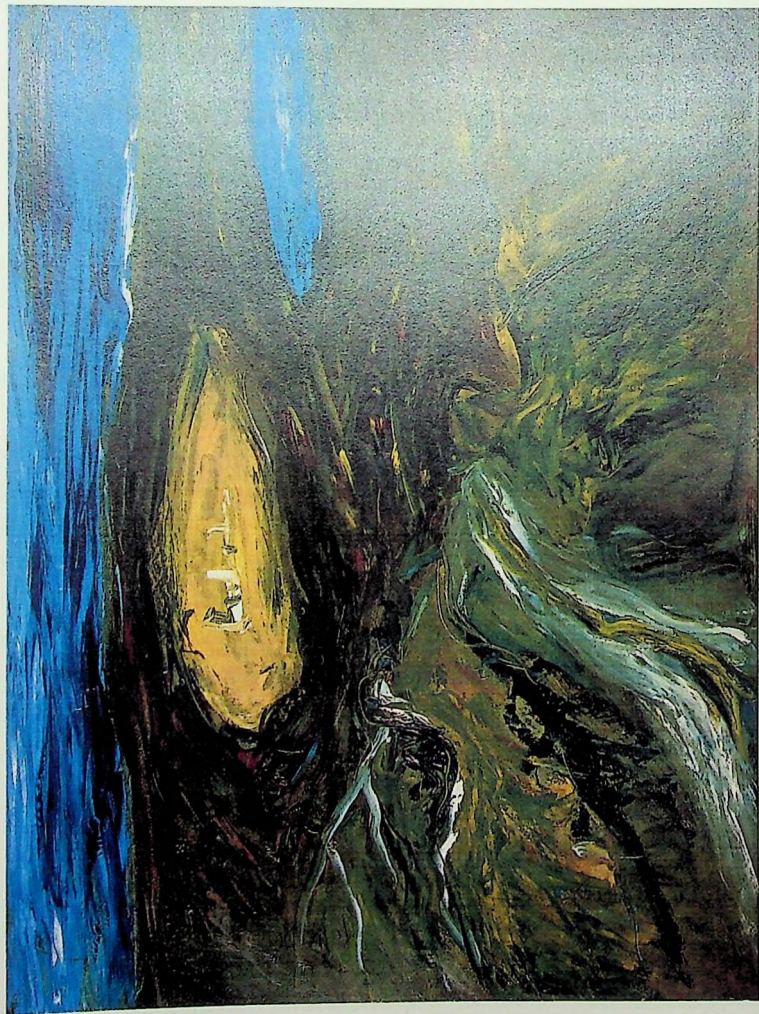


Fig. 29

Sean McSweeney
DESERTED HOLDING 1988

Oil on Board

24" x 32"

Cover of The Modern Art Collection
Trinity College, Dublin.

But one must not forget that essentially McSweeney is a landscape painter while Yeats is not. Yeats was very aware of the connections between man and nature. This is evident in 'Men of Destiny' as the figures merge with the background. 'He had always a strong sense of man in relation to the impersonality of the Irish scene; isolated figures never dominate the landscape ...'.^I

Fig.28 To compare Yeats's 'Many Ferries' 1948 to McSweeney's
 Fig.29 'Deserted Holding' 1988: McSweeney never allows any human interference in his paintings since 'for him the figure just isn't there',^{II} while Yeats relies on the whole narrative aspect of his paintings. The Ferryman, in the left-hand corner, looks down at the islands out in the distance, and it is this element that holds the painting together. Without the figures of the Ferryman and the Fisherman in the distance would the painting have the same appeal?

Fig.29 In McSweeney's 'Deserted Holding' the ruined cottage is painted in vivid yellow and stands out from the canvas, almost hovering in the air. The blue sea creates a horizon and colour is reflected in the blueness of the bog pool. The application of paint is similar in both paintings with the use of a palette knife to spread the initial layers. McSweeney has used his fingers to bind the pigments. His textures are not as rough as those in 'Many Ferries'; Yeats mingled his paints swiftly, creating much thicker and uneven textures.

I
 White, James
Jack B. Yeats A Centenary Exhibition Catalogue
 Published by the Arts Council

II
 Dunne, Aidan
'Sean McSweeney at the Taylor'
 Magill July 1984

- Fig.28 Yeats was always aware of the atmosphere he was creating and one feels that McSweeney is also aware of this. 'Many Ferries' is relating back to a memory of years ago, where Yeats and his good friend, J M Synge, travelled around Connaught.
- Fig.29 McSweeney has also created an atmosphere of reflecting the past in 'Deserted Holding'; one wonders about the occupation of the cottage and the dwellers who once lived there.

McSweeney and Yeats both have a lot in common, from having roots in Sligo to their similar uses of colour and texture, although McSweeney is primarily a landscape painter and makes no attempt to prove otherwise. Yeats includes landscape within the narrative aspect to his painting; therefore, he is not first and foremost a landscape painter.

To tie the Kokoschka, Yeats, McSweeney relationship together, one only has to be aware of their individual, yet common, sense of colour and application of paint. Yet, McSweeney lags behind with his softer temperament. He does not place himself on edge as did Kokoschka and Yeats, and therefore does not create the utmost excitement possible in his painting. Kokoschka has been described as "the only European Artist similar in style and temperament who can be called, if the phrase has any meaning at all, greater than Yeats".₁

Rather than being considered a successor to Jack Yeats, one would hope that McSweeney would be placed in a calibre of his own.

CONCLUSION

Sean McSweeney is, I feel one of the most important Irish landscape painters of this era. His landscapes, in abstract and semi-abstract styles, with vivid colours, give him an individuality from other Irish artists, who tend to use more subdued tones. I feel that his most distinctive features are his lyrical feeling for landscape, a glowing colour-sense and his natural handling of paint. This thesis has dealt with these features, examining their effectiveness and giving an insight to McSweeney's work. A factor which is extremely important in discussing the work of an artist.

The discussion of themes has given us an understanding of his attraction to the landscape. Through the landscape, McSweeney's feelings and reactions produce paintings which capture the essence of place and the atmosphere it creates. This, one can see through his paintings and is, I feel, the backbone of his work. It has, therefore, been essential that McSweeney's work be thoroughly discussed, so that this is understood.

In placing McSweeney with Turner, Kokoschka and Yeats, it is important to not only show how significant the work of these artists has been. But also to make the understanding of McSweeney's work easier. I feel that, in doing this, McSweeney's work reaches an understanding that previously it had not obtained.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barrett, Cyril
Irish Art 1943-73
ROSC, Chorcaí, 1980
Arts Council 1980
- Butler, Antony
'Exhibition Success'
Evening Press
August 15, 1962
- Clark, Kenneth
Landscape into Art
John Murray, London, 1976
- Dunne, Aidan
'Sean McSweeney at Taylor Galleries'
In Dublin
June 24, 1982
- Dunne, Aidan
'Sean McSweeney at the Taylor'
Macgill
July 1984
- Dunne, Aidan
Sean McSweeney Catalogue
Taylor Galleries
July 13 - 28, 1984
- Fallon, Brian
'First Show by Young Painter'
Evening Herald
October 7, 1965
- Fallon, Brian
'Works That Place the painter to the Front'
Irish Times
July 4, 1969
- Fallon, Brian
'Sean McSweeney Exhibition'
Irish Times
July 10, 1975
- Fallon, Brian
'Landscape in Sligo Schoolhouse'
Irish Times
September 13, 1989
- Gallagher, Raymond
'Landscape Painter Not at His Best'
Irish Press
July 5, 1969
- Goldschneider, Ludwig
Oskar Kokoschka
Phaidon Press Ltd London 1965

Hardy, William

The History and Techniques of
The Great Masters Turner
Tiger Books International Ltd London 1988

Hughes, Robert

The Shock of the New
Art and the Century of Change
BEC London 1980

Hirsch, Diana

The World of Turner 1775 - 1851
Time Inc., New York 1973

Hutchinson, John

'Bogged Down in the Flat'
Sunday Press
July 31, 1988

Irish Women Artists

: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day
The Arts Council 1987

McGuinness, Carmel

Sean McSweeney, His Work to Date
and Critical Acclaim
Fine Art Thesis, 1989

Ni Chuilleanain, Eilean

Irish Women : Image and Achievement
Arlen House 1985

Pyle, Hilary

Jack B Yeats in the National Gallery of Ireland
The National Gallery of Ireland 1986

Robinson, Kate

'Art'
Sunday Independent ^
September 1986

Rosenthal, TG

The Masters 40 Yeats
Knowledge Publications London 1966

Ruane, Frances

The Delighted Eye
The Arts Council, 1980

Ruane, Frances

Six Artists From Ireland
An Aspect of Irish Painting
The Department of Foreign Affairs 1983

Ruane, Frances
Patrick Collins
The Arts Council 1980

Schmalenbach, Fritz
Oskar Kokoschka
Karl Langewiesche, Taurus 1967

Walker, Dorothy
'Art to Art'
Irish Independent
May 31, 1986

Walker, John
Turner
Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York 1976

White, James
Jack B Yeats 1871 - 1957
A Centenary Exhibition Catalogue
The Arts Council 1971

Turner
The Great Masters 4
Marshall Cavendish Ltd London 1985