

FOREIGN ARTISTS IN IRELAND

Foreign painters and tapestry  
weavers in Ireland since 1945

JACQUELINE CORBIERE

FOREIGN ARTISTS IN IRELAND

A SURVEY OF FOREIGN PAINTERS AND TAPESTRY WEAVERS  
IN IRELAND SINCE 1945

JACQUELINE CORBIERE

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## INTRODUCTION

To be a foreigner in a country leads to a choice: you may wish to remain a foreigner - because you enjoy your foreignness or because you look down at the indigenous community or for any other reason - and you refuse or simply do not think of becoming part of the country where you live. Or you would like to become Irish in Ireland, Greek in Greece, French in France or as near to it as you can. Or else - and it might not be a choice, only an inevitability - you do not think in terms of "foreigner", you are no longer a representative of the country where you came from, not really a representative of the country where you live, you are only a person living among other people.

When you indulge in an activity which, in the eyes of most people, sets you apart from the "plain people", that is to say, if you are or attempt to be an artist, you may find that you are a "foreigner" anyway.

What is it to be a foreign artist in Ireland? Is it important to be a foreigner or to be Irish? Does it matter? Or do you sit between two stools for the rest of your life? Wouldn't you do so anyway because of your choice of being an artist?

As a foreigner from a country which no longer exists, living in a country which is not yet mine, I attempt to

find out about those people who at one time were in the same position, about their experience and their identity and maybe, through theirs, about my identity. I try to find some answers to the questions previously raised by examining the situation of some of the contemporary foreign artists in Ireland. Only painters and textile artists are the subject of this study and they will be usually referred to as "artists" throughout the thesis. The survey covers the period 1945-1978.

We must first look at the Irish community of artists from 1945, with a closer examination of the scene in 1945 and 1969, to define what a foreigner would find on his arrival in this country.

When discussing artists, one cannot avoid mentioning the tax-exemption law included in the 1969 Finance Act. We examine the text of the law and what it meant in 1969 to artists and to the general public.

The survey then deals with facts - number of painters in Ireland, their nationalities, why they came to Ireland, how long they have been in this country, the way they work, where they sell their work and whether they are affected by the tax-exemption.

We study the world of tapestry in Ireland in the last thirty years, looking at what was produced in 1945 and what is created now by foreign weavers.

From talks with art-amateurs and painters, we gather impressions on foreign artists as regards influences, from them or on them, on their feelings about Ireland and the art world here.

The conclusion is a personal assessment of these meetings with artists, trying to find whether the questions originally asked were satisfactorily answered.

This research being carried by a person whose first concern is visual expression, the thesis is largely visual and, whenever possible, there are examples of work by the artists mentioned.

## THE IRISH COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS FROM 1945 ONWARDS

What was happening on the art scene in 1945?

At 74, Jack Yeats was turned into a living monument. A major retrospective exhibition of his work was staged in Dublin that year. That same year Paul Henry, at 68, had lost his sight. His wife, Grace Henry, also stopped exhibiting at the same time. Leech was 64; although exhibiting in Dublin from 1943, he was not living in Ireland. Mary Swanzy had had her first exhibition in twenty years in 1943. She was then 61. Other painters were still happily painting, elected or about to be elected Members of the Royal Hibernian Academy: William Connor who was then 61, Letitia Hamilton, 66, Sean Keating, 56, Maurice McGonigal, 45.

A visitor arriving in Dublin in 1945 would have observed the usual pattern of the younger generation of artists rebelling against the older established set: in 1943 Mainie Jellett had founded the Irish Exhibition of Living Art with a group of artists. It is interesting to note the age of some of the painters who were out of sympathy with the establishment: Evie Hone was 51, Norah McGuinness was 42. Louis Le Brocquy was younger, 29, and went on exhibiting with the R.H.A. as well as the I.E.L.A. Our visitor would have caught only a glimpse of him, as he was to leave Ireland in 1946.

Although in 1949, in his "Report on the Arts in Ireland",

Professor Bodkin talked about "the present apathy amounting almost to an antagonism towards Art in Ireland", in 1955 James White, describing the active art scene in Ireland, could write: "Twenty-five years ago, a handful of painters and sculptors lived a somewhat remote life from the people of the country and were understood by a minority. To-day hardly a week passes without a couple of exhibitions by individual artists. Three major group shows are held in Dublin and as many as ten group shows are held in cities and towns outside the capital. The work of our principal contemporary artists has been shown in North and South America, in Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Belgium and Holland and will be shown in other countries in the future. Artists like Scott, Dillon, Hanlon, O'Neill, Middleton ... are known and regarded with interest in countries where art is a tradition as old as memory. The main reason is that they use an international idiom or style deriving from the Paris school. This style is applied to the interpretation of Irish subject matter."

There was therefore an active community of Irish artists in the late 1940's. A large number of them, belonging mostly to the older generation, were painting the Irish landscape, the West of Ireland, scenes of the Irish way of life or Dublin scenes. Painters were not "isolated" in Ireland. Most of the artists from the older and the younger generations had studied or travelled outside Ireland,

I in "The Visual Arts in Ireland", STUDIES, Spring 1955.

exhibited abroad and occasionally represented Ireland at international exhibitions.

1969 is the second key-date in the survey of Irish art, since that year was marked by an important event for artists: they were exempted from paying taxes on their work.

Although there was a good lot of activity among painters that year, Brian Fallon could write, in a critique full of praise for Gerard Dillon, who had come back to live in Ireland in October 1968: "In recent months the outstanding work by Irish artists has almost all come from painters who are middle-aged or elderly - Reid, Middleton and now Dillon. Much the same generation, in fact, who were dominant fifteen years ago or more. The younger ones who have emerged since have yet to show the same staying power. It is certainly an oddity of the Irish art scene that the most youthful painting should come from painters who are no longer young, scarcely a healthy business either. Is there no new generation which will really capture - and keep - the imagination of the picture-going and picture-buying public? The younger talents seem to come and go with queer rapidity." I About the Independent Artists Exhibition also he was less than enthusiastic, although finding the quality of the show "decidedly good": "The Independent no longer is quite the Nouvelle-Vague it

I The Irish Times, May 2, 1969.

once seemed. ...It has ousted nothing or replaced nothing and some of its members have scarcely developed as far as they promised half-a-dozen years ago." <sup>1</sup> Of the Oireachtas he would say: "Not an exciting affair." <sup>2</sup> In spite of his strong reservations about the state of painting at that time, Brian Fallon was full of praise for a few painters, some of whom were young, like Sean McSweeney, Tim Goulding and Brian Bourke.

1969 saw a large exhibition of work by Picasso held in Trinity College, Dublin, and an exhibition by a Japanese artist, Miss K. Kusuda, at the Municipal Gallery. On the home front there was an exhibition of Young Irish Artists - with work by Frank Lee-Cooper, Charles Harper, Tim Booth, Brian Ferran, Colin Harrison, Brian Henderson, Paul Mosse, Anthony O'Brien - and the main group exhibitions: the RHA, the IELA, the Oireachtas and the Independent. A number of artists exhibited in two, three or all of these shows. Among the painters, not previously mentioned, who were working in 1969, one should list the main ones: Ch. Brady, M. Byrne, P. Pye, J. O'Connor, M. Lydon, M. Bennett, D. Vanston, F. McKelvey, T.P. Flanagan, G. Campbell, A. Campbell, A. Armstrong, T. Ryan, G. Collie, H. Kernoff, A. Power, E. Costelloe, A. Shelbourne, P. Collins, J. Kelly, M. Farrell, B. Cooke and many more.

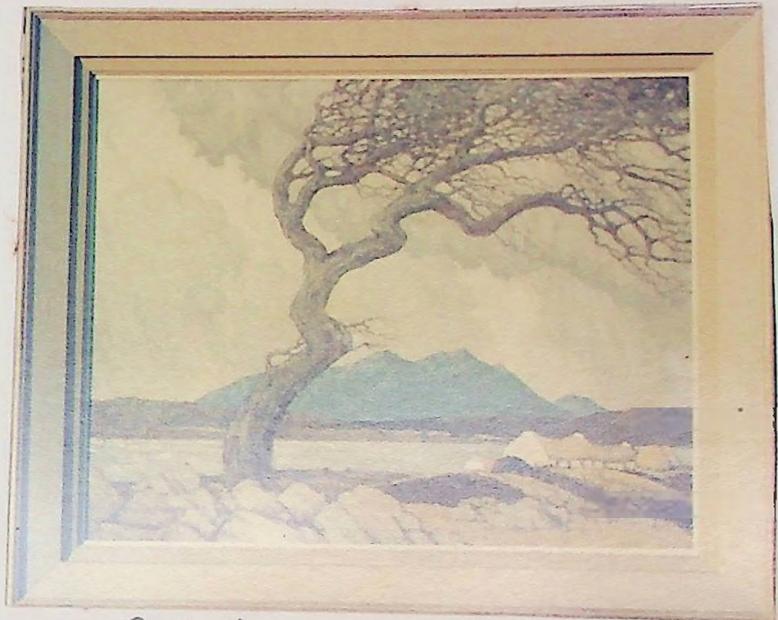
1969 was thus quite active, rather dull if one is to trust

<sup>1</sup> The Irish Times, May 7, 1969.  
<sup>2</sup> id. July 4, 1969.

the critiques which were voiced at the time. Painting in Ireland seems to have been in need of new blood. Charles Haughey - the least expected person to do so - was about to try to bring that new blood to Ireland.



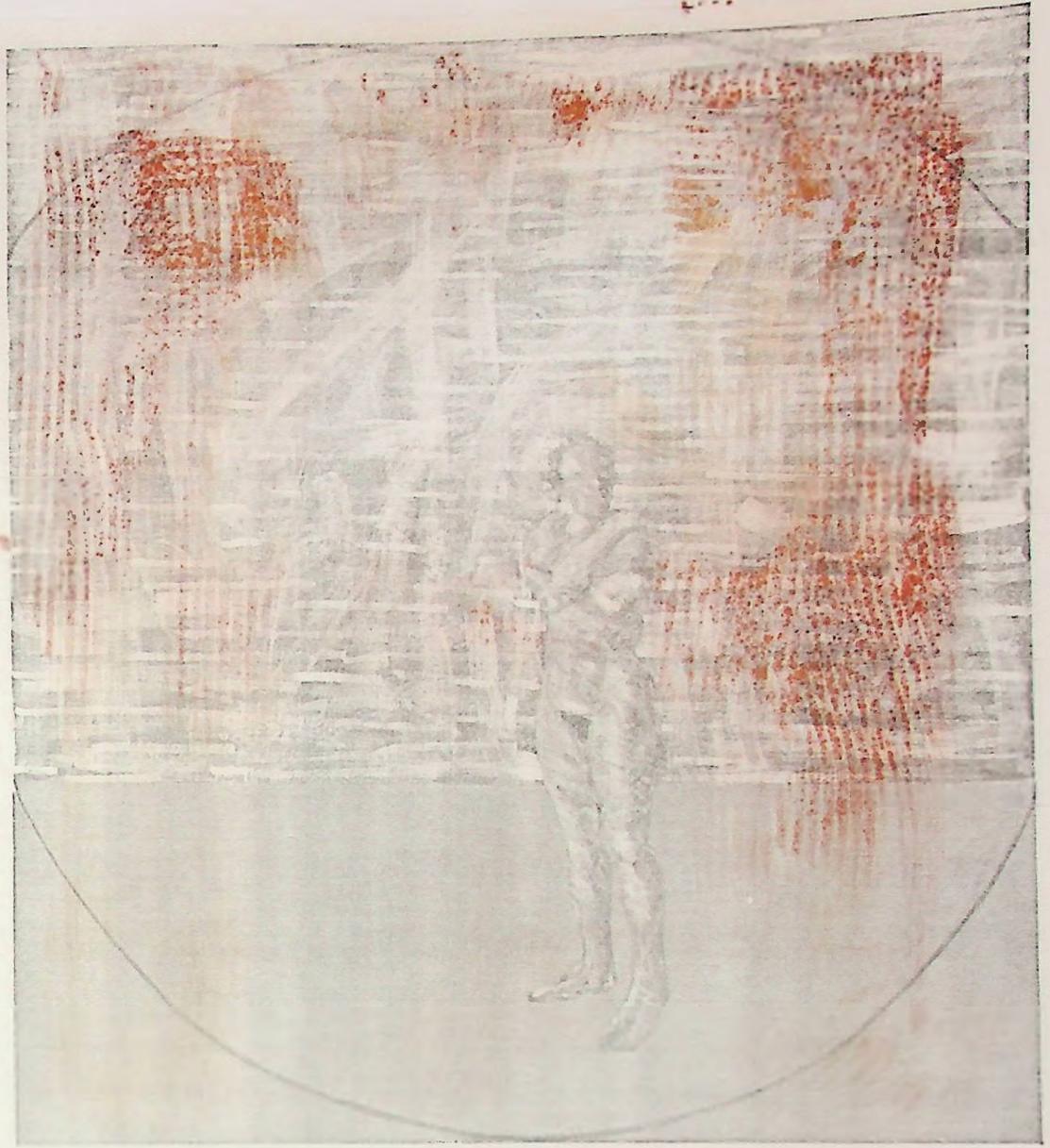
Daniel O'NEIL



Paul Henry

Maurice De Gonigal

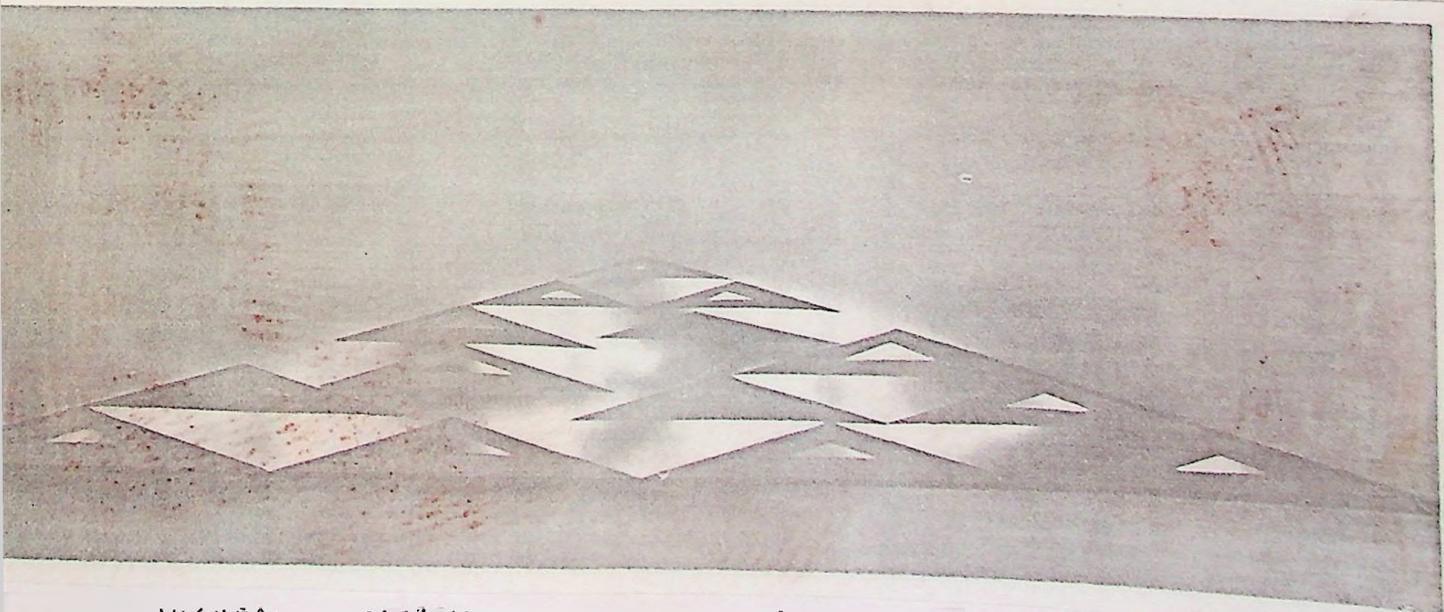




BRIAN BOUCKE

STANDING FIGURE

1967



MICHEAL FARRELL

SANDY COVE SERIES

1969



RAY'S GARDEN 1969 COLIN HARRISON

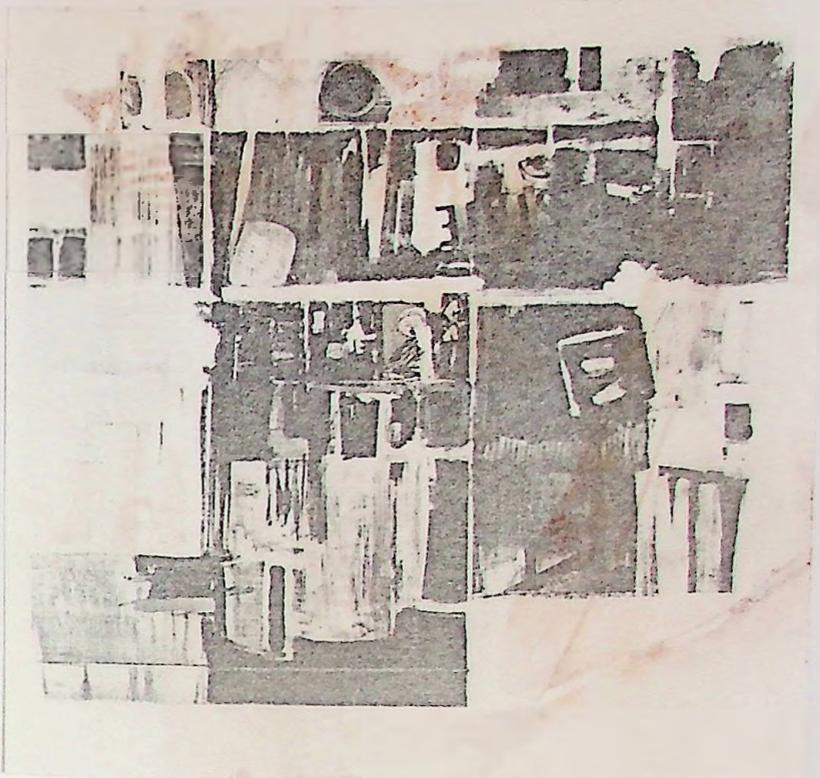


RESTING PLACE 1967

GERARD DILLON

SUMMER SONG

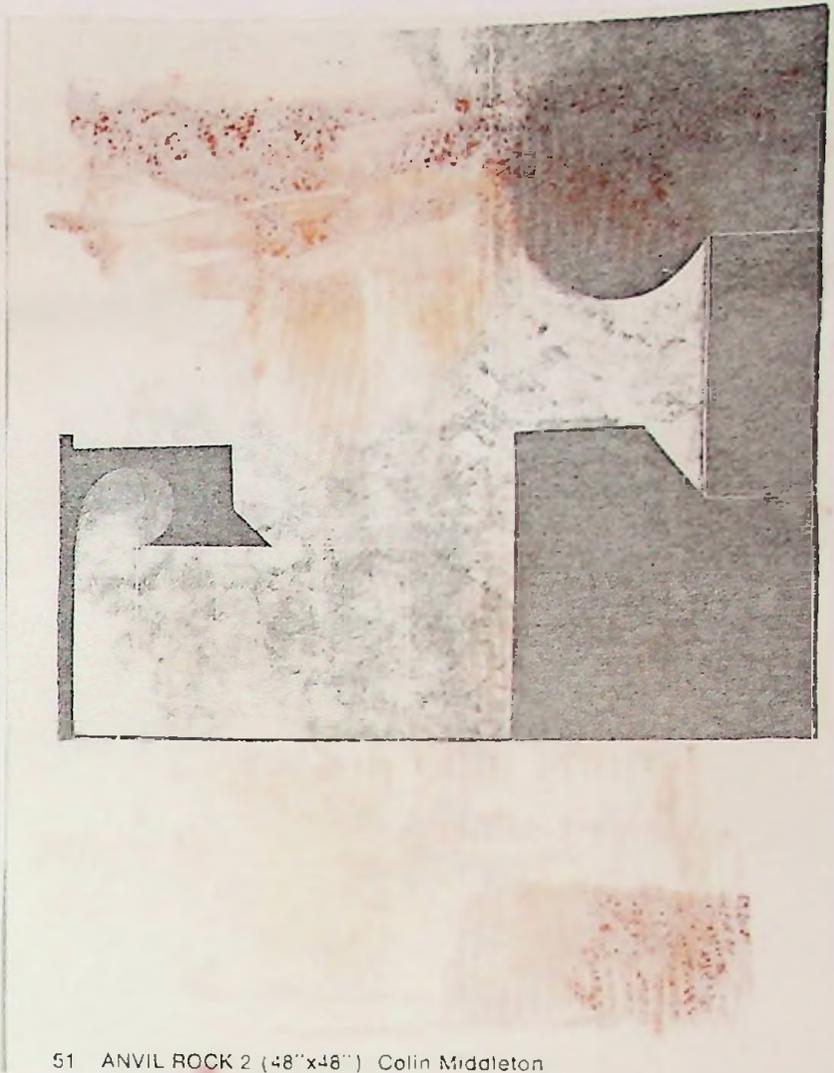
BRIAN PERRAN



1969

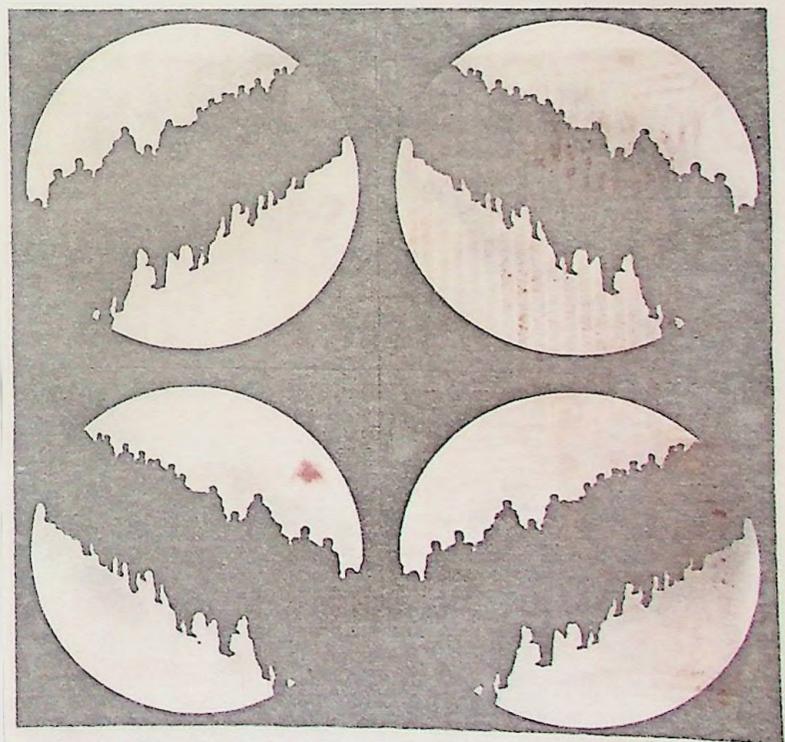


94 SPLASHDOWN (62" x 62") Tom Roche



51 ANVIL ROCK 2 (48"x48") Colin Middleton

1969



Series 4 No 3 (66 1/2"x66 1/2")  
Robert BALLAGH

## THE TAX-EXEMPTION IN THE 1969 FINANCE ACT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

A number of articles in national and international press have been written about the exceptional status of the artists living in Ireland as regards taxes. When reading those articles, one is aware of the number of renowned writers who have made Ireland their home, openly or not for tax-reasons. A number of people were asked the question: "What do you feel about foreign painters in Ireland?". Practically all of them, even those who were deeply interested in art and aware of the art situation here, expressed the view that painters had come to Ireland first to avail of the tax-exemption. Before finding out from the painters and tapestry-weavers whether this is true of them, we should look at the law.

In July 1969 the then Minister for Finance, Mr Charles Haughey, proposed "the exemption from income tax of earnings of writers, composers, sculptors and painters. The purpose of this relief is ... to help create a sympathetic environment here in which the arts can flourish by encouraging artists and writers to live and work in this country... The relief will apply to earnings from a book or other writing, a play, a musical composition, a painting or sculpture which is original and creative and which is regarded as having cultural or artistic merit... Once the Revenue Commissioners have determined that a particular work has artistic or cultural merit, the writer or artist will be entitled to exemption in respect of earnings from

that work and all his other work in the same category...  
Once an individual establishes that he is a creative writer,  
composer, sculptor or painter, his income from all his  
work in that capacity is free of tax". 1

The text of the bill, as it was passed, specifies that the  
tax-exemption "applies to an individual who is resident  
in the State and is not resident elsewhere". 2

The bill was passed with very little debate within the  
Dail - among the few people who had anything to say about  
the amendment of the bill was Mr Richie Ryan, who under-  
stood that "once a person has arrived and his status is  
recognised, he will get unlimited tax reduction, no matter  
what rubbish he produces". Mr Bolton asked: "If a person  
wrote a good book and started writing pornography and  
making money at it, would it be tax-free?" 3

There was a little more discussion outside the Dail.  
Anthony Butler reports: "That it (the bill) might not be  
an unmixed blessing was clearly indicated when, in May,  
Mr Maurice McGonigal, President of the Royal Hibernian  
Academy of Arts, wrote to the newspapers and suggested  
that he foresaw the concession being abused by "the Art  
Nits of Dublin" filling the city with the "art parasites  
of Europe". This caused some irritation in the ranks of

1 Ch. Haughey, Official Report, Dail Eireann, Vol. 24I, p. 510

2 Finance Act, 1969, No. 2I, Part I, Section 2(2).

3 Official Report, Dail Eireann, Vol. 24I, pp. 539 & 1027

the Academicians and the resignations of Louis Le Brocquy and Brigid Ganly followed within a short time." 1

There was remarkably little reaction to the proposed amendment. Only a few letters were sent to the Editor of the Irish Times on the subject, mostly concerned with "what is and what is not art? Who is to decide whether a work has cultural merit?" One artist only, Michael Biggs, a sculptor, wrote to express his opposition to the bill. 2 Patrick Pye had one restriction: that the tax-exemption should be extended to artists' wives as they support their artists-husbands. 3

However the bill was generally well received. Sir Alfred Beit praised Mr Haughey: "This generous concession should lead to a real Renaissance". though worrying "whether an artist is wholly engaged in his art and whether he sells his work in Ireland or Britain". 4 The leader of the Irish Times (May 9, 1969) gives a good idea of the spirit in which the bill was welcome: "Mr Haughey's proposal... is the most substantial recognition the arts have ever received in this country and our local Cinderella has by the magic ministerial touch been transformed into a princess for the world to copy if it can.... Irish artists and writers earn so little as it is, the Exchequer will lose little; but the country will gain by the influx of

1 in "Eire - Ireland", Winter 1969, from "The Irish Scene" p 134

2 The Irish Times, May 26, 1969

3 id. May 22, 1969

4 At the opening of the 28th annual Art Exhibition, Waterford

working artists whom it is reasonable to expect will wish to take advantage of the scheme. Their coming would stimulate competition and improve the critical climate and cultural standards in general.

Remember that what the Huguenots did for Ireland with the linen trade, and the Quakers with their crafts, might in other spheres be repeated now... Mr Haughey has ... dug in Ireland the foundations for another Athens."

The following letter to the Irish Times, by a Mr Synnott, is worth quoting in parts, as it expresses the hopes placed in the bill and the visions that it conjured up:

" The grant of tax-freedom to artists is not chiefly for the benefit of the artists, but of the whole country. If the move is successful, a considerable number of well-known artists with very great earning capacity should move here in the next few years. They should find little difficulty in selling their works on the international market and repatriating their earnings to Ireland. This could amount in a few years to a substantial new export trade... Ireland ... could in this way become the centre of the contemporary art market. If foreign artists come to Ireland, the country will also benefit from the all-year-round tourist attraction, drawing not only collectors, pupils, connoisseurs and critics to the masters themselves but also many others to the country. Furthermore any artists who value their income enough to come here can be expected in gratitude to enrich our national collections

with presentations." I

In 1978 what would Mr Synnott have to say? Is Ireland nearer to being "the centre of the contemporary art market"? Did "the considerable number of well-known artists" move here? Who are the Foreign painters and where are they? Are there any more foreign artists than there were in 1945?

I in the Irish Times, May 14, 1969

## FOREIGN ARTISTS: FACTS AND FIGURES

During the final years of the second world war a number of artists, most of them British, arrived in Ireland to seek shelter. Together with some Irish people, not all of them artists, they founded the White Stag Group. In it the Irish painters were Pat Scott, Norah McGuinness, Ralph Cusack, Doreen Vanston, Thurloe Conolly, Bryan Boydell and Bobby Dawson. Basil Rákóczi was Hungarian. Kenneth Hall, Stephen Gilbert, Nick Nicholls and Phyllis Hayward were British. Georgette Rondel was French. They had exhibitions here and in London. They remained in Ireland during the war years and left around 1946.

In the 1960's the American painter Morris Graves lived in Ireland for about ten years, first in Skibbereen, co. Cork, then near Dublin. He left at about the time the tax-exemption was introduced and went back to California.

A number of other painters arrived in the last twenty-five years, who are still here. A survey was carried out to draw up a map of foreign painters and one of foreign tapestry-weavers. This survey could be incomplete, as there is no official record of artists, even less so of non-Irish artists. However there could not be many painters or tapestry-weavers who would have been left out in the investigation; these would be either very secretive about their work or have no contact with other artists, galleries or art shops through the country. Therefore the following

data can give a definite idea of the foreign population in Ireland.

A number of these artists have taken up Irish citizenship by now. However all those who were born outside Ireland and settled here as adults were considered as "foreign" for the purpose of the survey. One obviously could not include here Camille Souter, born British, who arrived in Ireland at the age of one, or Patrick Pye, who was three years old when he immigrated. Ms Souter explains that she was at school in Ireland and this was the factor which makes her Irish. As far as it was possible, every person mentioned as being British was checked to eliminate similar cases. The few mistakes, if there are any, will compensate the forgotten names.

There are at present about 66 foreign painters settled in Ireland. There is a majority of British artists, at least 38. The next largest group consists of Americans, 12. There are also six Germans, one Swede, one Italian, five Dutch, one French, one Austrian and one Pole.

There are two main centres of attraction, Dublin, with 32 people, including most of the Americans, and County Cork which mostly drew British painters, 15 at least. The rest is scattered through various counties: three in Galway, one in Clare, two in Limerick, one in Kerry, two in Kilkenny, three in Wicklow, one in Donegal, one in Kildare, one in Meath and one in Louth.

# FOREIGN PAINTERS IN IRELAND



- BRITISH
- AMERICAN
- DUTCH
- GERMAN
- FRENCH
- AUSTRIAN
- SWEDISH
- ITALIAN
- POLISH

There is a majority of 40 men over 26 women.

No precise data on ages were available but there is a wide diversity of ages ranging from the middle-twenties upwards, corresponding closely to the age distribution of the population.

Thirty-two people were asked whether they were full-time painters or employed in another work. Only five people considered themselves as part-time painters; two women mentioned looking after a family, one woman is a university lecturer, two men work in advertising agencies. All of them however emphatically stated that they could not live on their painting alone. A great number of them teach art, privately, in colleges or in schools. They seem to regard their teaching as an inherent part of their painting profession.

The majority of artists said that they knew most of the other painters or knew of them, but did not have particular contacts with them. However they were surprised at the number of foreign painters living here and, when given the names of those living in their area, they often said they did not know them all.

In the cases investigated there was none of a painter working here and exhibiting exclusively abroad. All of them had exhibitions in Ireland, some abroad also. At least one did not use galleries.

A random selection of painters will show some more details.

KATHLEEN BOUCHER-BEUG is American. She has been in Ireland for over six years. She had visited the country before settling in Kinsale, co. Cork, as she was always interested in Ireland. She came with her husband who had got a teaching post. She was trained in the States. She exhibits locally in galleries in Cork and Kinsale. She also teaches on a part-time basis, formerly at the School of Art, now privately. She is totally unaffected by the tax-exemption bill.

JOHN RICHARDSON is British. He has been living in Ireland for eight years. He lives in Howth. He started painting as an amateur, then as a semi-professional and he is now giving up his work to paint full-time. He is a landscape painter. He does not exhibit in galleries or abroad. He shows his work in hotels locally and sells his paintings mostly to Irish people. He has no contact with other artists. He is not affected by the tax-exemption law.

DOREEN DUNNE is British. She has been in Ireland for twenty-one years. She came here because her husband is Irish. She was trained in Great-Britain. She is a landscape painter. She exhibits in Ireland, at the RHA, and in London.

ALAN ROBB is from Scotland. He has been in Cork for two-and-a-half years. He came here to teach and would not

have come to Ireland otherwise. He has exhibited locally in Cork and in Edinburgh.

GEOFF STEINER-SCOTT is American. He has been in Ireland for four years. He came with his wife who was working on a research in this country. He is now living in Cork. He has exhibited in one-man shows in Dublin and in Belfast. He teaches.

BARRIE COOKE is British. He settled in Ireland in 1954, when he was twenty-three. He was trained in the USA. He now lives in co. Kilkenny. He is a full-time painter. He exhibits in Ireland and abroad, where he has represented Ireland in a number of exhibitions.

CHARLES BRADY is American. He has been living in Ireland for twenty-two years. He was trained in the United States. He started painting seriously in Ireland in 1962. He exhibits regularly in Ireland and, up to last year, in New-York. He is not greatly affected by the tax-exemption.

KOERT DELMONTE is Dutch. He came to Ireland by chance twenty-five years ago. He studied art in Holland and Belgium. He worked on commissions here for two years, left and came back to settle permanently. He is a full-time painter/teacher. He exhibits in Ireland and abroad, mainly Britain and Holland. He has no particular contacts with other artists.

Whatever the reasons were for coming and settling here, tax-exemption played no part in the decision. This was a very definite fact from the conversations with all artists, full-time or not. They often came here by chance. They sometimes stay here by chance too, out of apathy. A number of them came with a husband or a wife who is Irish or had work here.

In every case they feel that, although tax-exemption made things easier, it does not really affect the large majority of painters. Their earnings from painting are not high enough to justify moving to Ireland solely to avoid paying taxes.

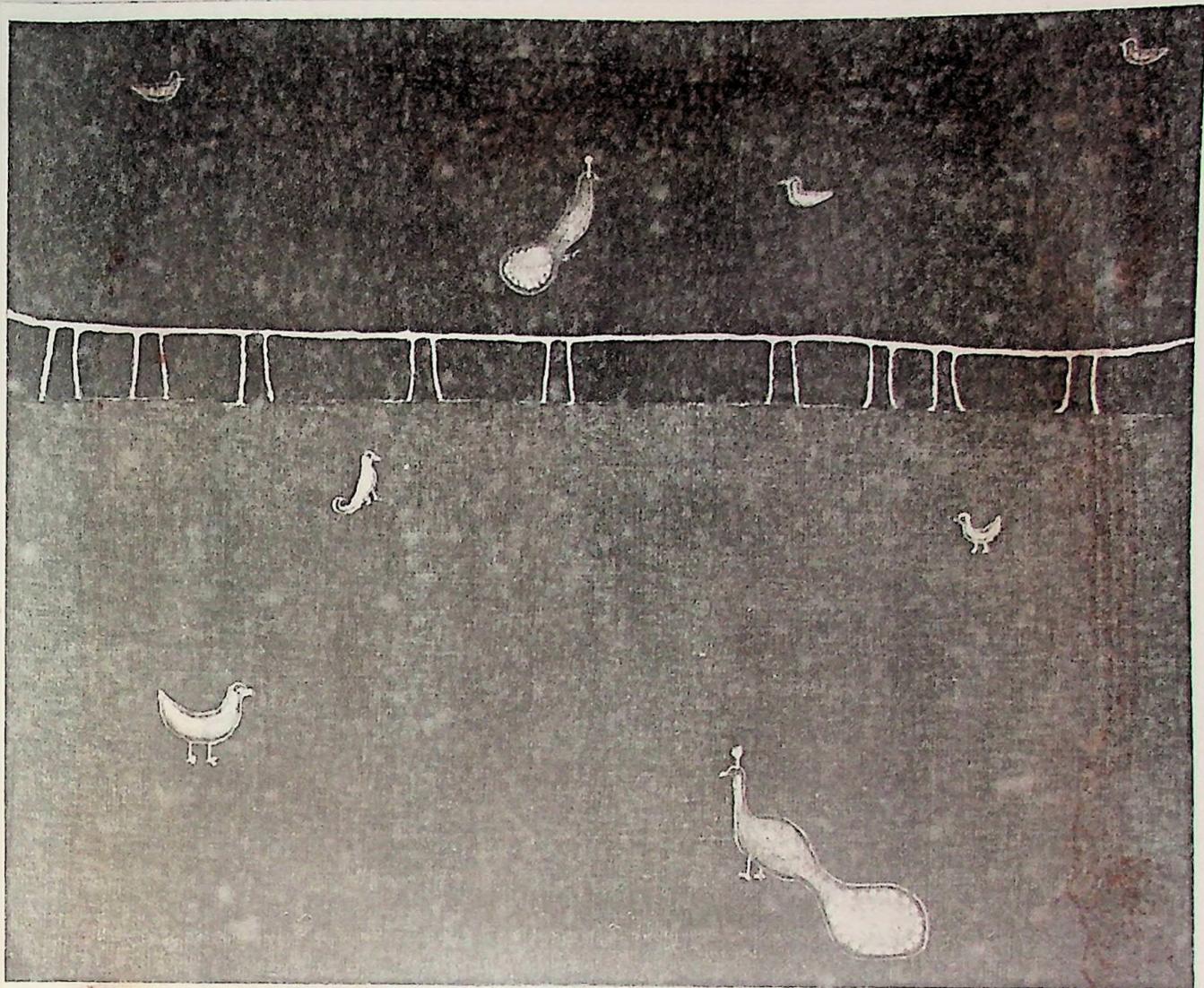
However nearly all the painters who were asked about tax-exemption thought that it was a good thing for art, even if of limited application. A few felt that it could be greatly improved. One painter only - she is Irish - does not approve of tax-exemption, feeling that she is treated as a second-class citizen by not being allowed to pay taxes.

The foreign painters who are now successful and might be more favourably affected by Mr Haughey's scheme than the average painter, were in Ireland before 1969 and quite settled here.

That particular issue was the only point which had a

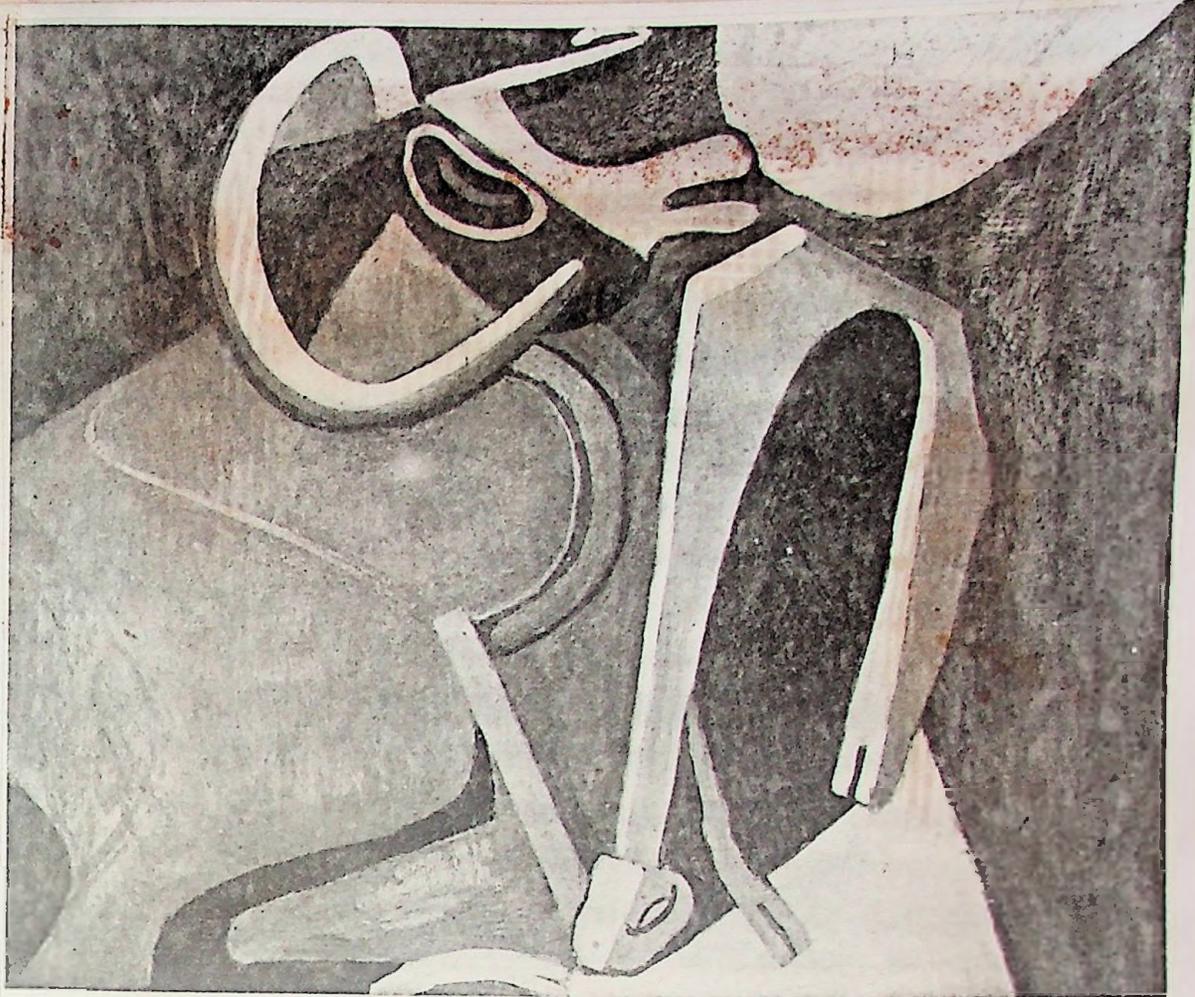
general common answer. The first and outstanding impression from those conversations was the diversity of views on every other subject on discussion, particularly when it came to talk about impressions, feelings and non-factual topics, as will be seen later.

THE WHITE STAG GROUP

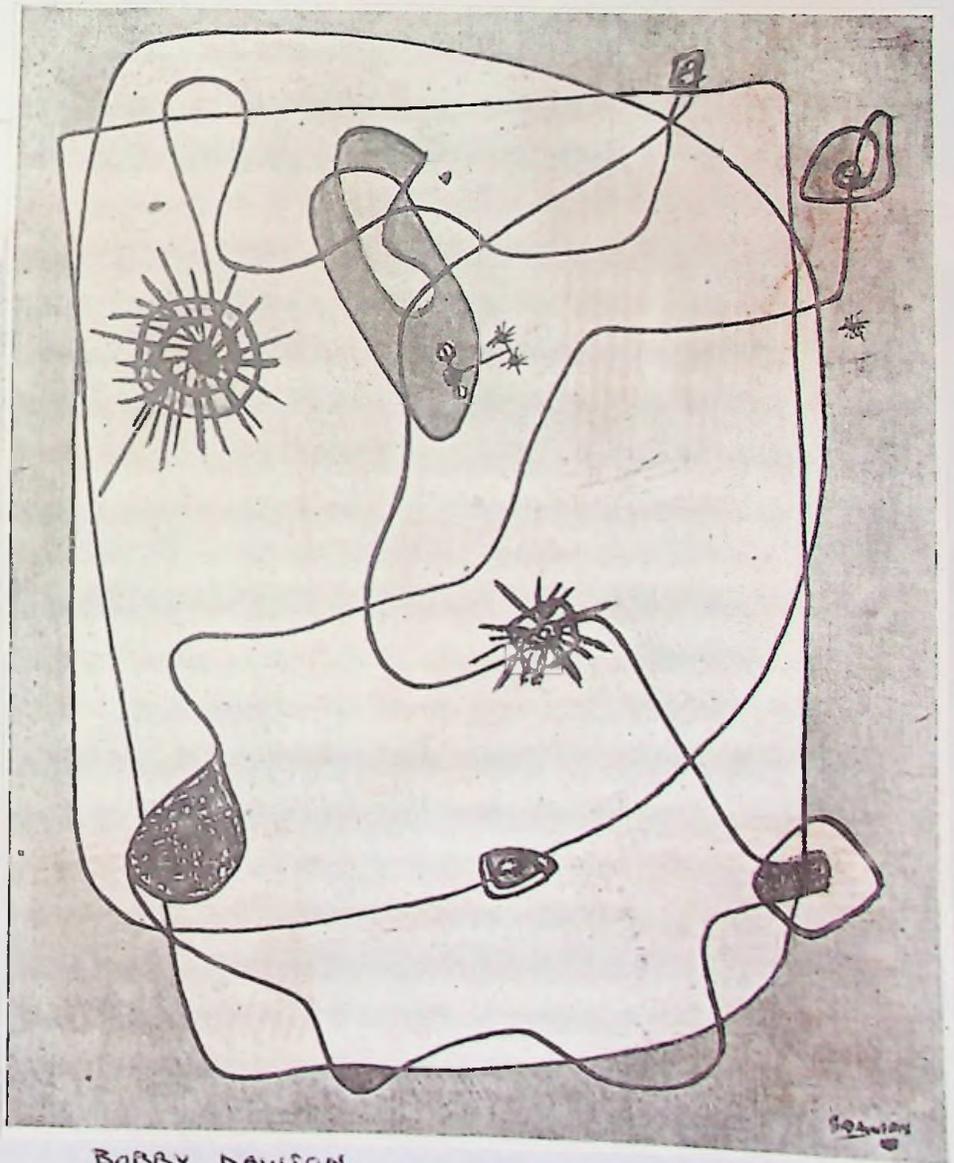


PAT SCOTT

16 Birds in the Trees



DOREEN VANSTON



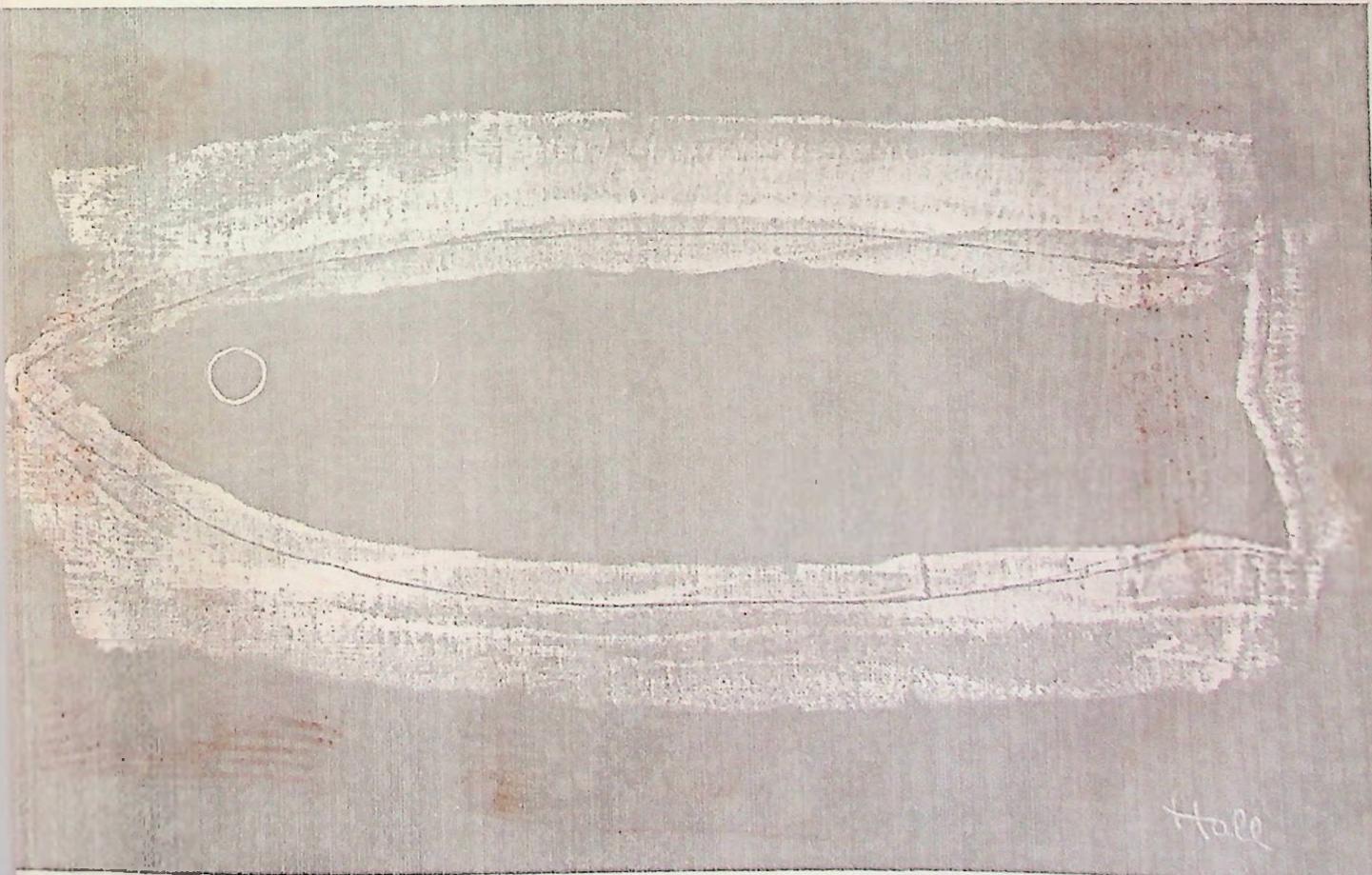
BOBBY DAWSON



BRIAN BOYDELL

KENNETH HALL

BRITISH



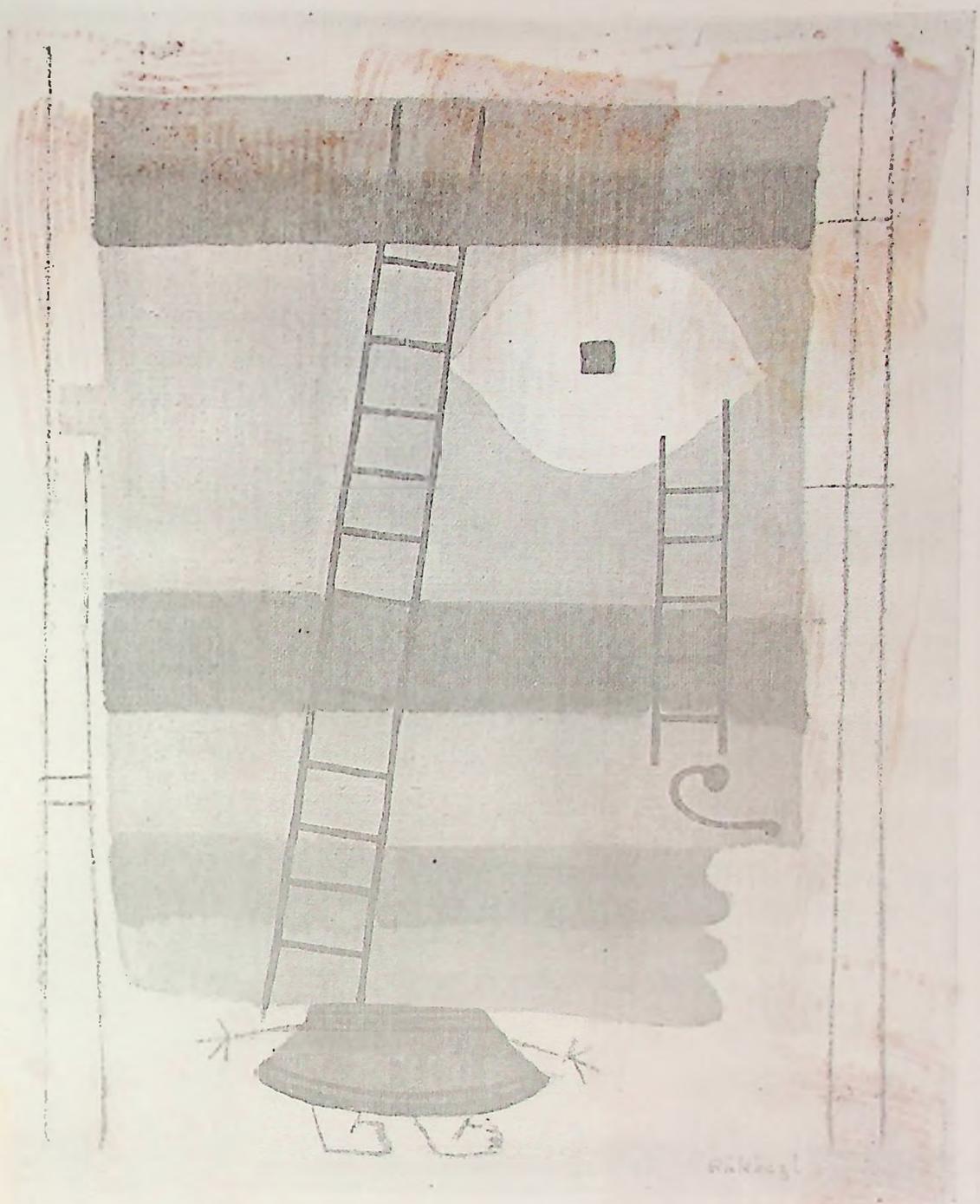
Hall



4 Feeding a Bird

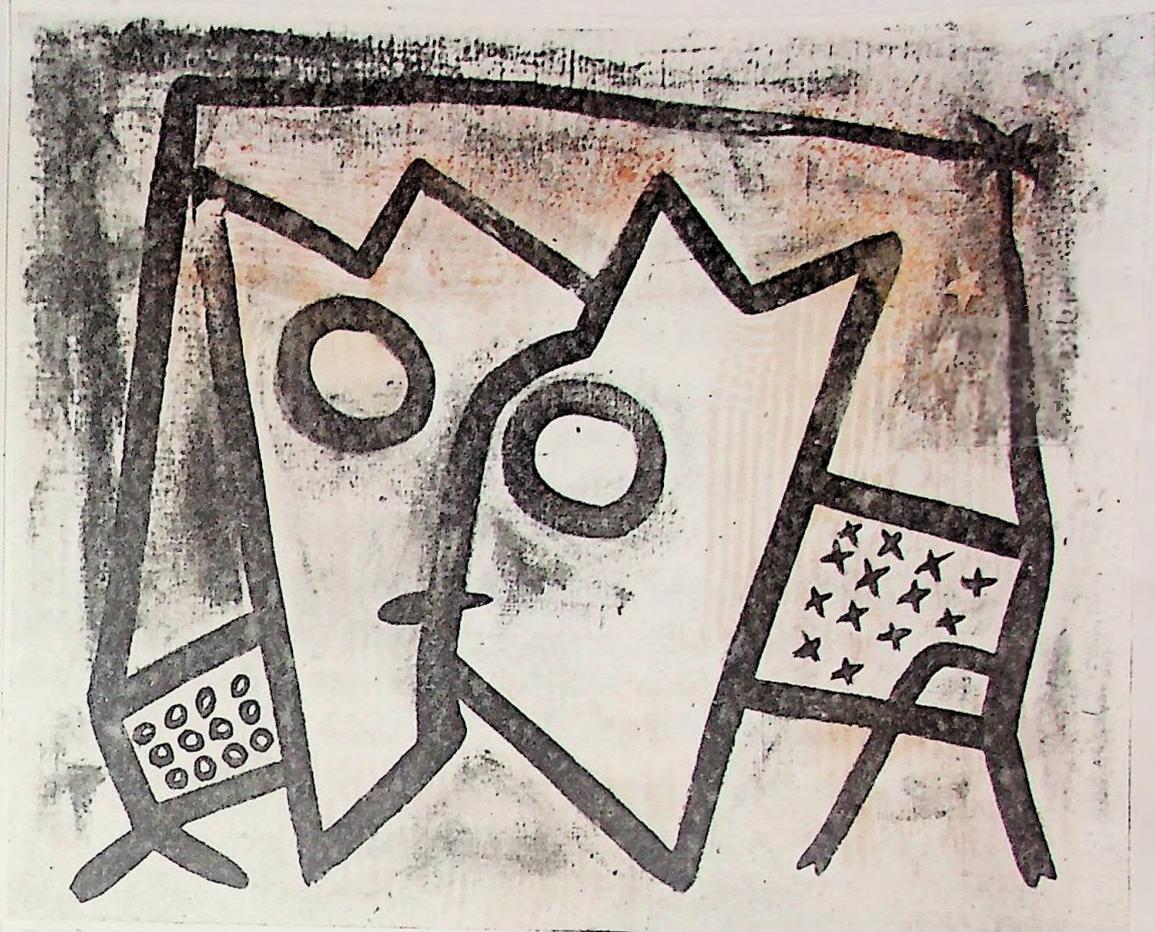
BÁBIL RÁKÓCZI

HUNGARIAN



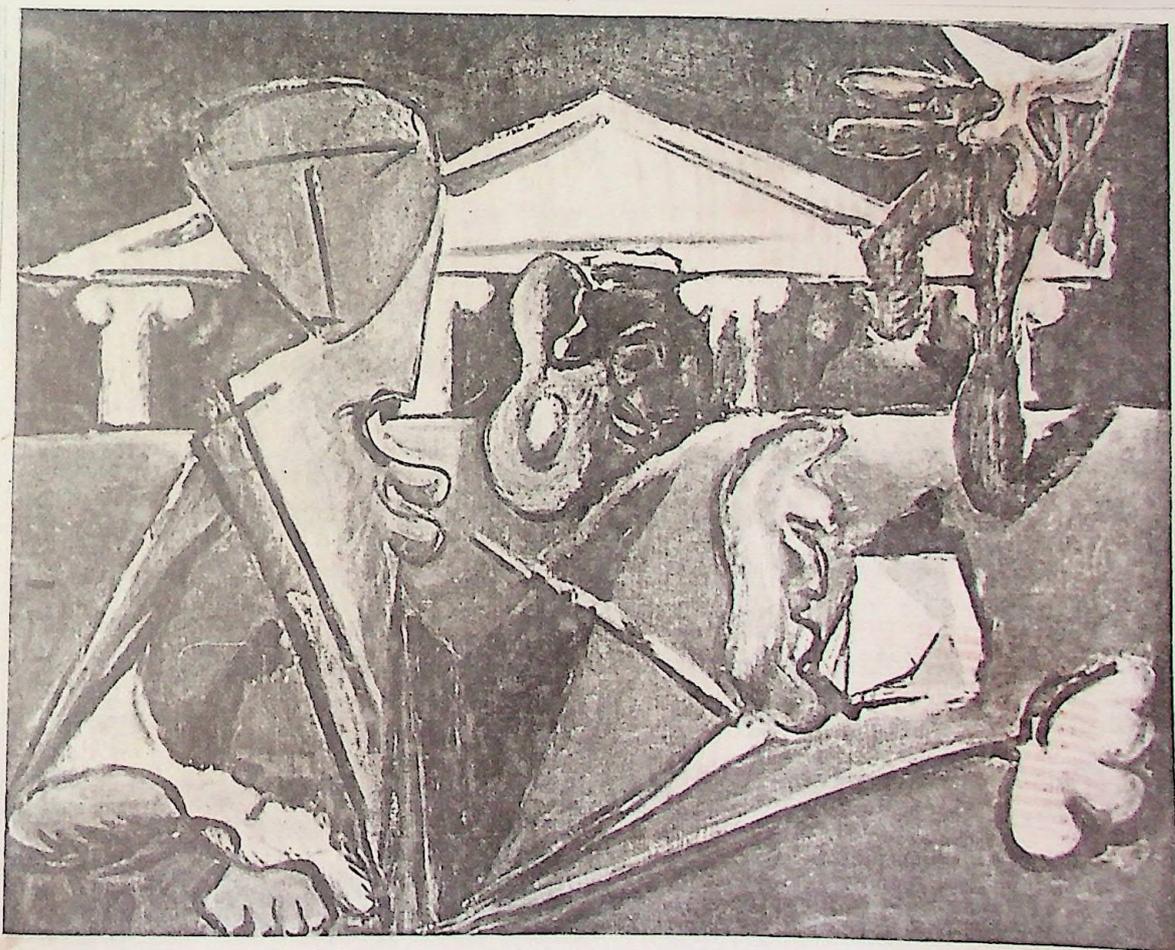
BASIL RÁKÓCZI HUNGARIAN

2 Construction of an Idol



NICK NICHOLLS

BRITISH



STEPHEN GILBERT

BRITISH

## TAPESTRY WEAVERS

The situation of tapestry in Ireland can be quickly reviewed. In the late 1940's only one Irish artist was involved in that medium. Louis Le Brocquy was designing some Lurcat-inspired cartoons. These were woven by craftsmen at Aubusson, in France. By 1978 a number of people are working in that area. Pat Scott does tapestry designs. A few Irish weavers - Sally O'Sullivan, Evelyn Lindsey, Leonora Fowler, Muriel Beckett, Alice Roden are the best-known - make wall-hangings and tapestries, but this is not their main activity. They are usually more involved in weaving.

The same applies to the foreign weavers who are established here. In the 1960's a Swedish weaver, Lily Bohlin, was here for about ten years. She trained Leonora Fowler and certainly had an influence on her style.

In 1978 there are 12 foreign weavers who may do a certain amount of tapestry, which would be a very small part of their activity. In practically all cases their work is closer to weaving than to tapestry. Only one foreign artist had an exhibition of tapestries, a young Norwegian artist who has recently come to Ireland with her husband.

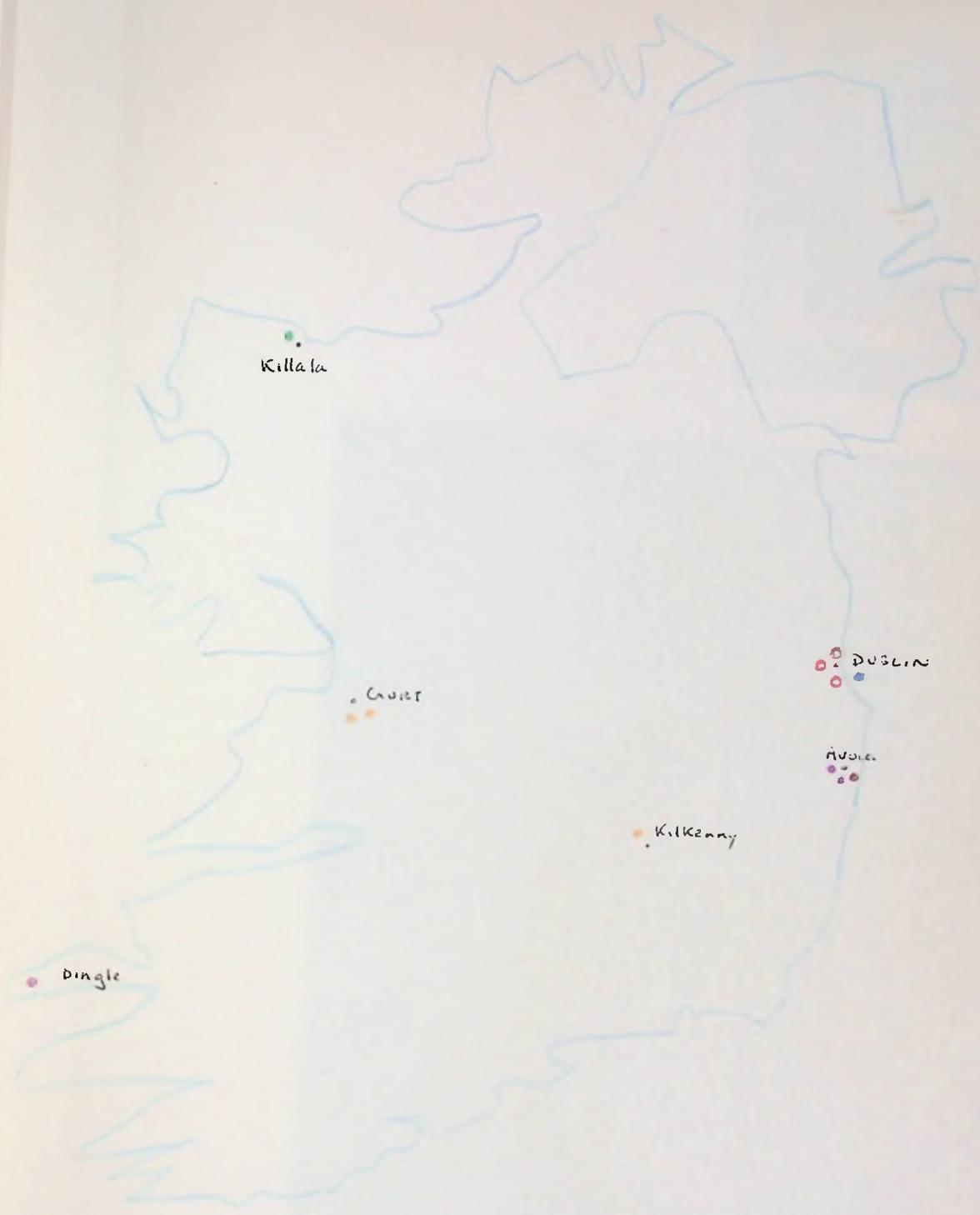
HELENA RUUTH is Swedish. She has been in Ireland for over twelve years. She now lives in Avoca, co. Wicklow.

Helena was trained in Stockolm and exhibited there. She does mostly curtains and bedcovers for commercial purposes and also weaves wall-hangings on the loom. She feels that, when working in Kilkenny, she certainly influenced people there, but mainly in weaving. She does not think that working in Ireland had any effect on her style.

A. L. is American. She has been here for a year. She does mainly weaving and some wall-hangings on the loom. She has had exhibitions of her woven pieces and wall-hangings and found that it was very difficult to sell the latter. She now thinks of going back to the United States for practical reasons, as material and equipment are not readily available in Ireland.

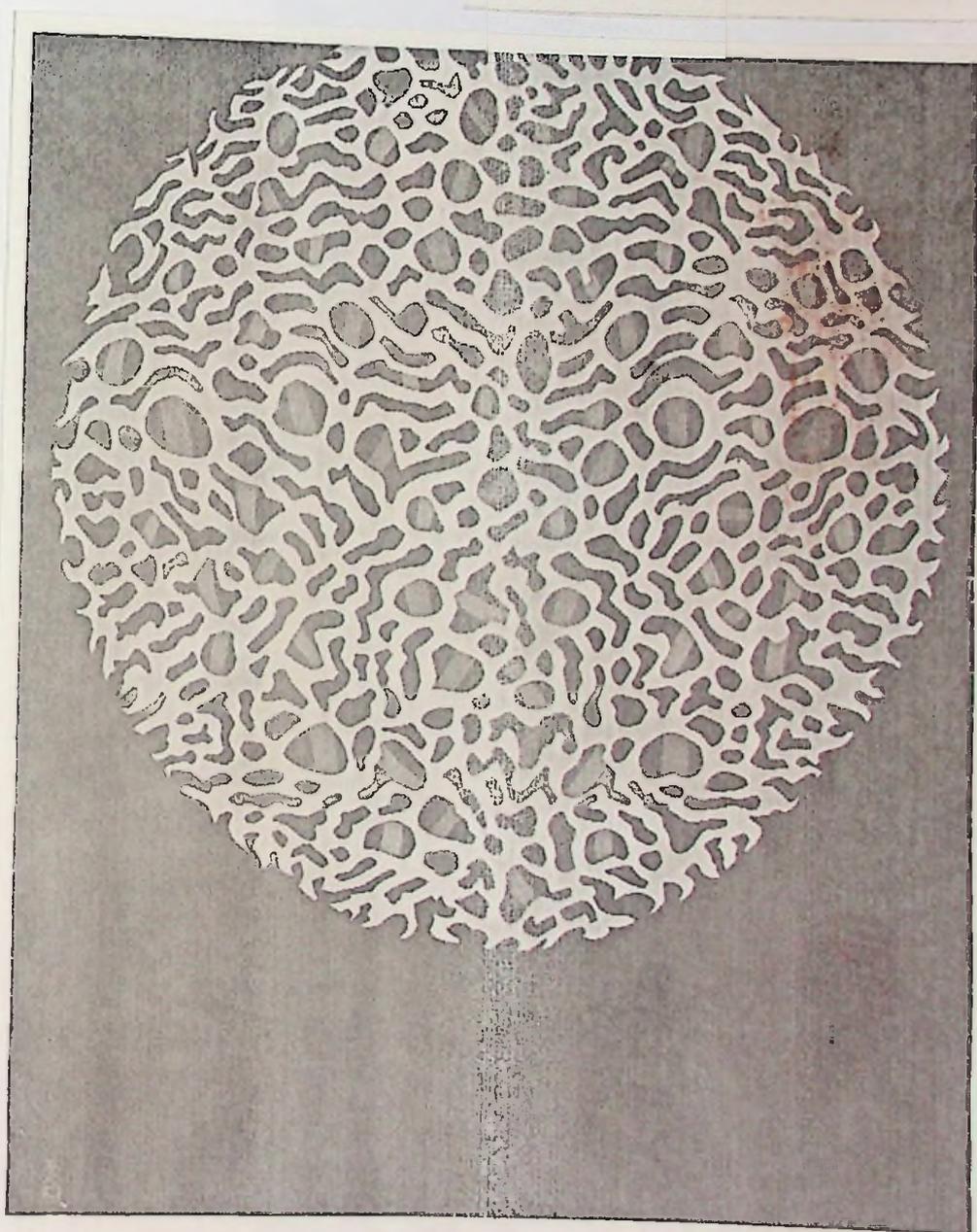
These two weavers are typical of the situation of foreign weavers now in Ireland.

FOREIGN TAPESTRY-WEAVERS IN IRELAND



- AMERICAN
- SWEDISH
- FRENCH
- JAPANESE
- DUTCH
- NORWEGIAN
- GERMAN

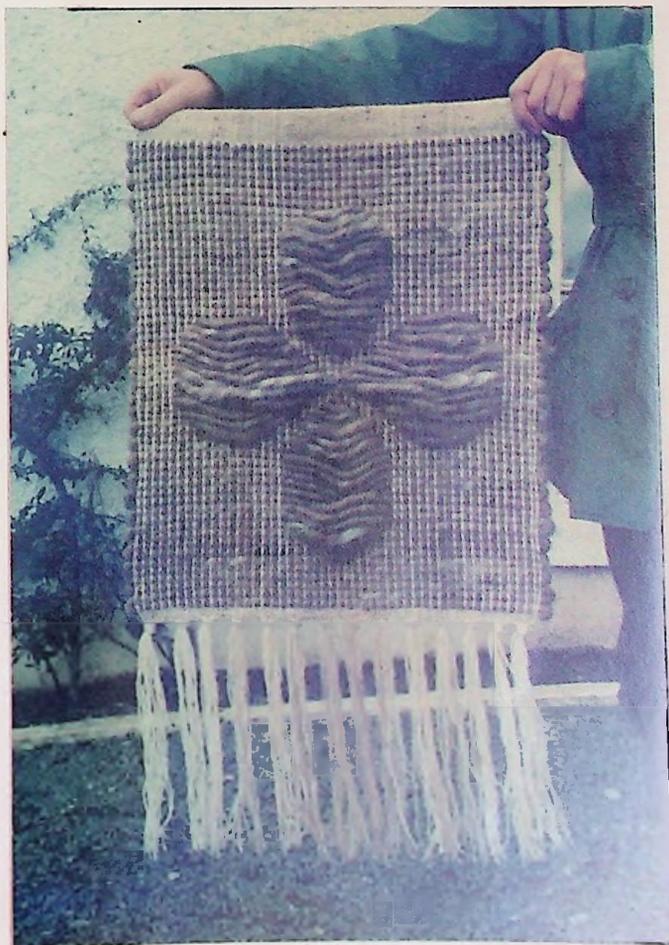
Louis le Brocquoy  
garlanded goat



Patrick Scott  
Device 1972 1/8

HELENA ROUTH

SWEDISH



## FOREIGN PAINTERS AND IRELAND: IMPRESSIONS

The original object of this research was to find out about the place that foreign artists occupy in the art scene, the role they play, the influence they may exert or may receive, their impact. It is difficult, sometimes impossible, to really assess these elements. Even when judging now the foreign artists who worked here in 1945, opinions tend to vary, as they varied at the time.

In 1945 Maurice Collis, in a review of an exhibition held by three painters from the White Stag Group, wrote: "These painters... are interpreters of the subjective mind and are a cosmopolitan corner in Dublin life, not without influence, probably, for its future." <sup>1</sup> This view was not shared by everybody: "It is a dangerous thing to say that a man has no merit, yet I think it ought to be said. Messrs Rakoczi, Hall and Patrick Scott are late in the field. The doodling of the intellectually unemployed will not pass for art." <sup>2</sup>

In 1978 a gallery owner described the White Stag Group as a noisy gang of drunks, who had nothing to do with art. Pat Scott, as a member of the group, and Professor Kelly feel that they made a strong impression by bringing new trends to Ireland. The foreign painters in the Group had a certain influence on the Irish artists who were

<sup>1</sup> in The Observer, December 16, 1945

<sup>2</sup> in The Standard, January 4, 1946, signed P. K.

working with them. Michael Scott, judging in retrospect, categorically says that, although those painters were of a very high standard, they had no effect on the public or, with the exception of Patrick Scott, on any Irish artist. There were no communications, Ireland was not ready for modern art and individual artists could not have any impact then.

Nor did Morris Graves have any influence here either. He spent ten years working here, yet very few people even knew of his presence. For Michael Scott the first and strongest foreign influence to change the art scene in Ireland was Rosc, held for the first time in 1967. A completely new world was then open to young Irish artists and to the public.

In 1967 also, there was an exhibition of "Dutch Contemporary Art in Ireland", held at the Municipal Gallery. The introduction to the catalogue states that " the exhibitors are all well integrated into Irish life and, although native Dutch trends are likely to persist in artistic styles, the majority of the exhibitors do feel that they have absorbed definite influences from Irish life in general. Both atmosphere and environment have made their mark and it can be discerned in the work on exhibition." ... " The artists are living and working in this country and find its inspiration necessary to the development of their art."

One can easily accept the veracity of such statements when reading them in catalogues and articles. But it is not always easy to find evidence of such "native trends" when looking at the works. It is even more difficult, when talking to artists, to assess influences and the necessity of an Irish "inspiration" in "the development of their art".

From talking to painters, foreign and Irish, art collectors and gallery owners, one can gather impressions, one cannot draw specific conclusions. Painters are individuals, art is subjective, one cannot put either into a file. So here are the impressions as they were collected.

When asked about influences - working in either direction -, people often answer: " Which artists? There are so few, only a handful." There are in fact sixty-six painters, who were not educated in Ireland and brought a different vision with them. Their art education and art traditions were very different, their palette, their style and their approach could be expected to be different. Yet people are not usually aware of their presence here.

Present trends in art are one factor.

Present trends are very international. They are not rooted in traditions from any one country - this was regretted by many artists approached , Irish and foreign, of various

ages. For Michael Scott all good artists have now an international style. The works of painters working in Ireland, Irish or not, like Barrie Cooke, Theo McNab, Cecil King and many more could be seen anywhere in the world. One would not know which country they come from. Nationalities do not matter any more and foreign influences could not be detected now in painting. One cannot generalise; a few years ago Michael Farrell gave his Irish vision of hard-edge. One painter spoke of the very Irish quality of Patrick Collins.

The foreign painters established here whose style does not correspond to present trends do not have a wide commercial success and therefore have a more discreet audience. Even if they sell their work regularly, they are not household names. Their influence, if any, is limited to very few people, often students of theirs. X... is in this category. He has been in Ireland for twenty-five years. He is reasonably successful in selling his work here and abroad at prices in excess of £400. Yet he is known to a very small circle. He feels that he would not have had any influence and that any similarity in his style and somebody else's style would be only coincidental.

That was the opinion of many foreign painters and the word "coincidental" was often used. A few felt an affinity with a particular Irish painter; Their work was along the same lines or of the same inspiration,

but that was accidental. There was no influence from either side.

Of course one may have an idea of oneself which may not be shared by others. One artist feels that his vision is very continental, his palette different from an Irish painter's, as for him Irish art is not generally keen on colour. The painter with whom I associated him is Irish. His style and palette reminded me immediately of Mary Swanzy.

As to Ireland's influence on the foreign painters here, the views are varied. Landscape painters obviously feel greatly affected by the country. Koert Delmonte feels that he is affected by the untouched quality of the landscape. Kathleen Boucher-Beug, though not a realistic landscape painter, says that Ireland's light and colour had a great effect on her work.

For some artists the environment is of no primary importance. This is Charles Brady's view also. But when he arrived in Ireland, he was in the west first after living in an urban society. He painted the Irish landscape, but seen through his previous experience.

A number of painters are not affected at all by their environment. They could do anywhere the type of work they do. Ireland is accidental.

Some, like Geoff Steiner-Scott, are affected by Ireland in a positive way. "Geoff says he does his best work when he is happy. He feels living here has had a definite influence on his work for the good." I

Others laughed at the idea that they could be influenced. Their work is an international language which would not be influenced by the physical or geographical environment. If they are affected, it is in a negative way, by the retarded growth of art in Ireland. "Art is stunted", one said. Their reaction to Ireland is one of frustration, even anger. These artists are young. They have been in this country for less than five years. They do not want an Irish vision of art, a celtic image. "Nationalism is antiproductive", one of them said. He is here to train people in visual art; he wants an international language so he can relate to German, American or any international art. To try to do so in Ireland is a hard, frustrating task.

If the situation in 1978 is so frustrating to them, one wonders whether they could have attempted to live here thirty years ago. All painters who have been in Ireland for over fifteen years talk of the enormous changes which have occurred in the art world. These have taken place at two levels, that of the artists and that of the public, spectators and buyers. There is obviously no need to elaborate on these assertions.

I in Evening Herald, May 23, 1975

Language of course is a factor of absorption into the Irish scene. Many gallery owners do not think of the British painters on their lists as foreigners. In Barrie Cooke's case the language factor is combined with a long adaptation to the country and a style and talent which have been accepted internationally. Many are not aware that he is not Irish and that he only came to Ireland as an adult.

Success and recognition might be linked with the adaptation to the Irish environment. Erik van der Grijn is Dutch. He had been here for a relatively short time before he was known to the public - the public interested in art. He and Barrie Cooke have taken part in exhibitions of Irish art abroad, they have represented Ireland at international exhibitions.

Two of the last questions which were asked were consciously naive, impossible to answer: "What are you doing for Ireland? What does Ireland do for you?" Indeed one artist, who was angry at the art situation here, answered by laughing. Ireland provided at least one artist, Geoff Steiner-Scott, with the right environment for him. Two foreign artists brought international recognition to Ireland as they represented this country abroad.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this study I explained the reasons for it and what I was hoping to achieve. At a very early stage of the research I discovered that I would not really find what I had set out to do. Many of the questions asked seemed pointless and often irrelevant. Ms Souter pointed out to me that my own circumstances as a foreigner would provide the answers to the questions I was posing to foreign artists. I decided to persevere, hoping to learn something, which I did.

Beside the arid facts I met people. All artists who were approached were very cooperative, ready to answer all questions, personal or not, relevant or silly. They gave time and thought. If nothing else, I gained, at a personal level, by being forced by the research to go towards strangers and finding them open.

Much more important is the fact that the artists who were asked opened their studios, showed their work and talked about the way they paint, progress and change. One painter in particular spent an afternoon showing me paintings spanning thirty years and explaining how some work had evolved.

The field of tapestry was even more limited than I feared, as regards tapestry proper. In searching for tapestry-

artists who did not exist, I met active weavers who, though not expecting my visit, gave all the help they could.

My contacts with the foreign painters and weavers in Ireland gave me new insights and emphasised the frequently intangible but very important factor of human communications in these and other art disciplines.

SOME FOREIGN ARTISTS



The Holly hedge

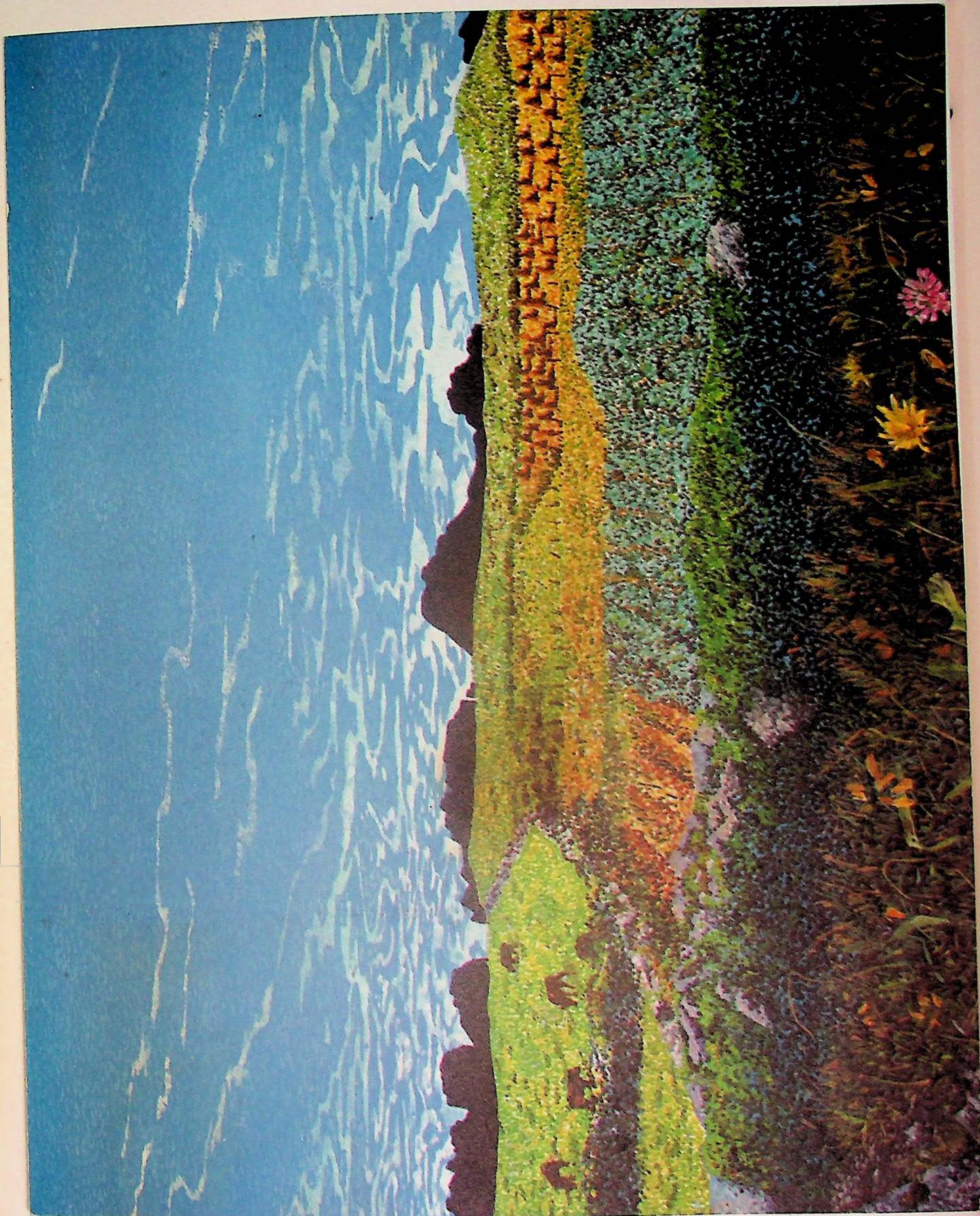
Jenny Richardson

BRITISH



157 DEREK HILL Tory Island from Tor More

BRITISH



TIM GOULDANCE

AUTUMN FIELD

IRISH

(compare with painting by J. Richardson)



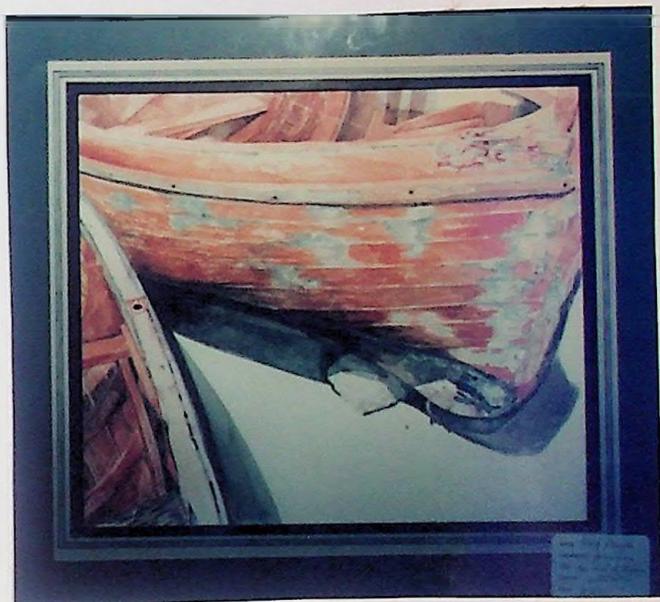
No. 55 Jenny, Simon and Daisy Jennifer Richardson

BRITISH



Boyd  
PLACZEK

American





BARRIE COCKE BRITISH JOINT REGIONAL ANATOMY  
INTERIOR DIPTYCH





DANNY OSBORNE

BRITISH



UNTITLED (VERTICAL FLANKING DIPTYCH)

JO BAER AMERICAN

one reaction to Jo Baer's art

Sir,—  
—Yours, etc.,  
MARGARET SEGRAVE  
(another articulate MS).  
24 Willbrook Road,  
Rathfarnham,  
Dublin 14.



rian Ballard, the Belfast painter, viewing some of the paintings by Jo Baer at the opening of the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Trinity College, Dublin, last night.—(Photograph: Peter Thursfield).



TWO SPOOLS Charles BRADY American



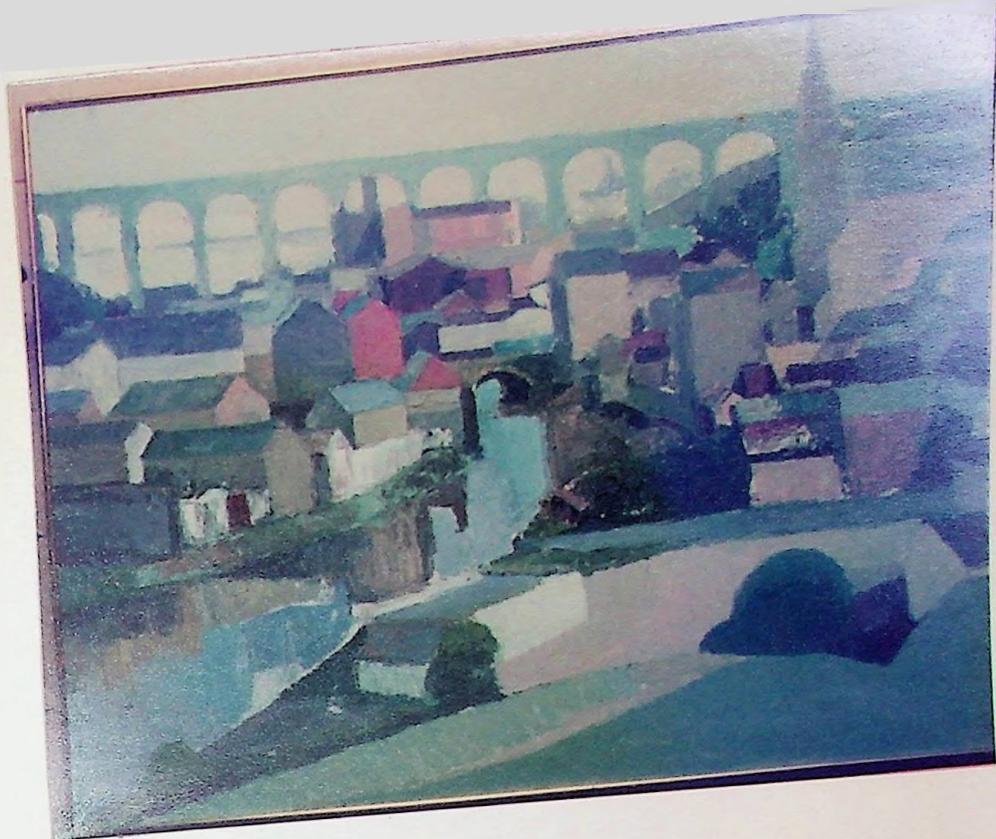
Nos 52 and 53

Lucia and Hilda  
Lady Boxes Series I & II

George Potter  
American

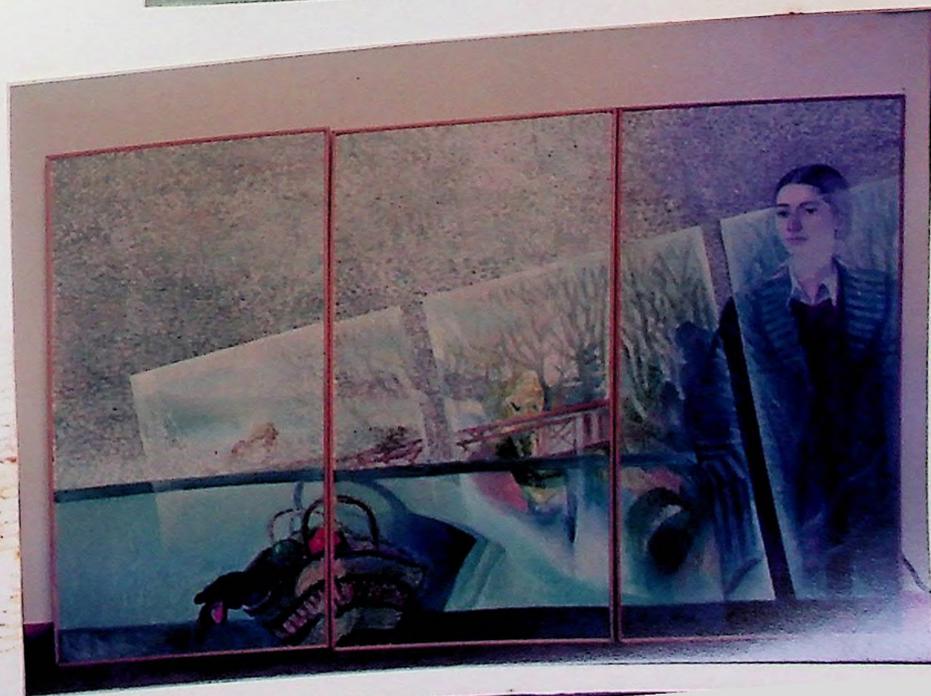


No. 53 Seated Woman George Potter AMERICAN



KOERT  
DELMONTE

DUTCH





MARIANNE HEEMSKERK  
DUTCH

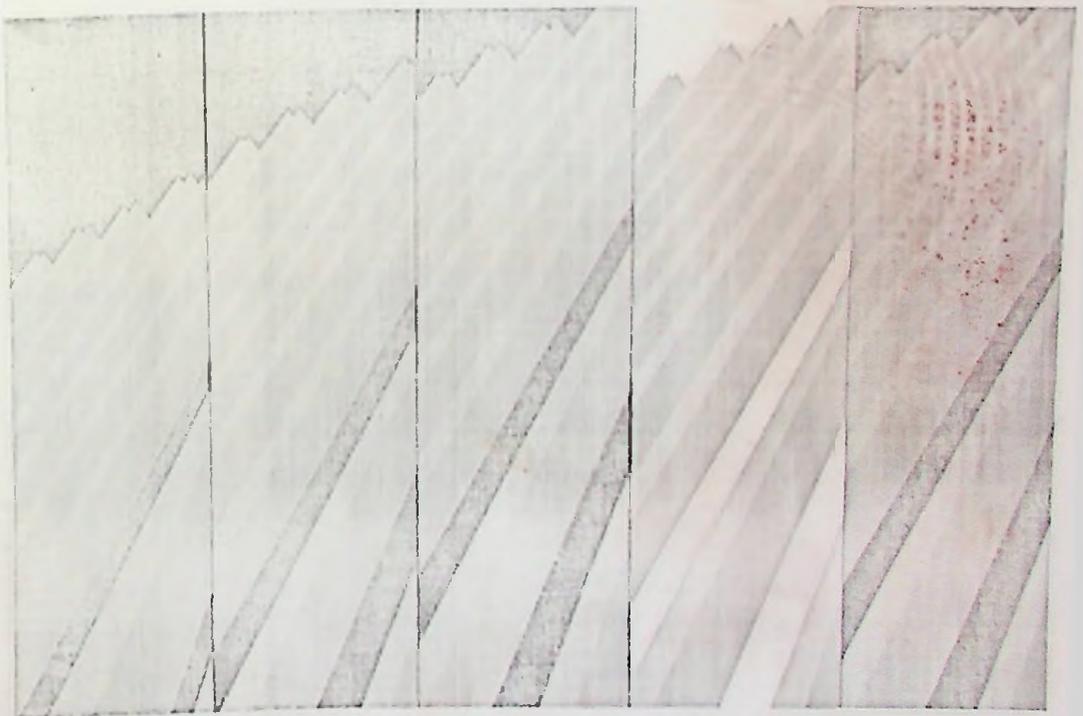


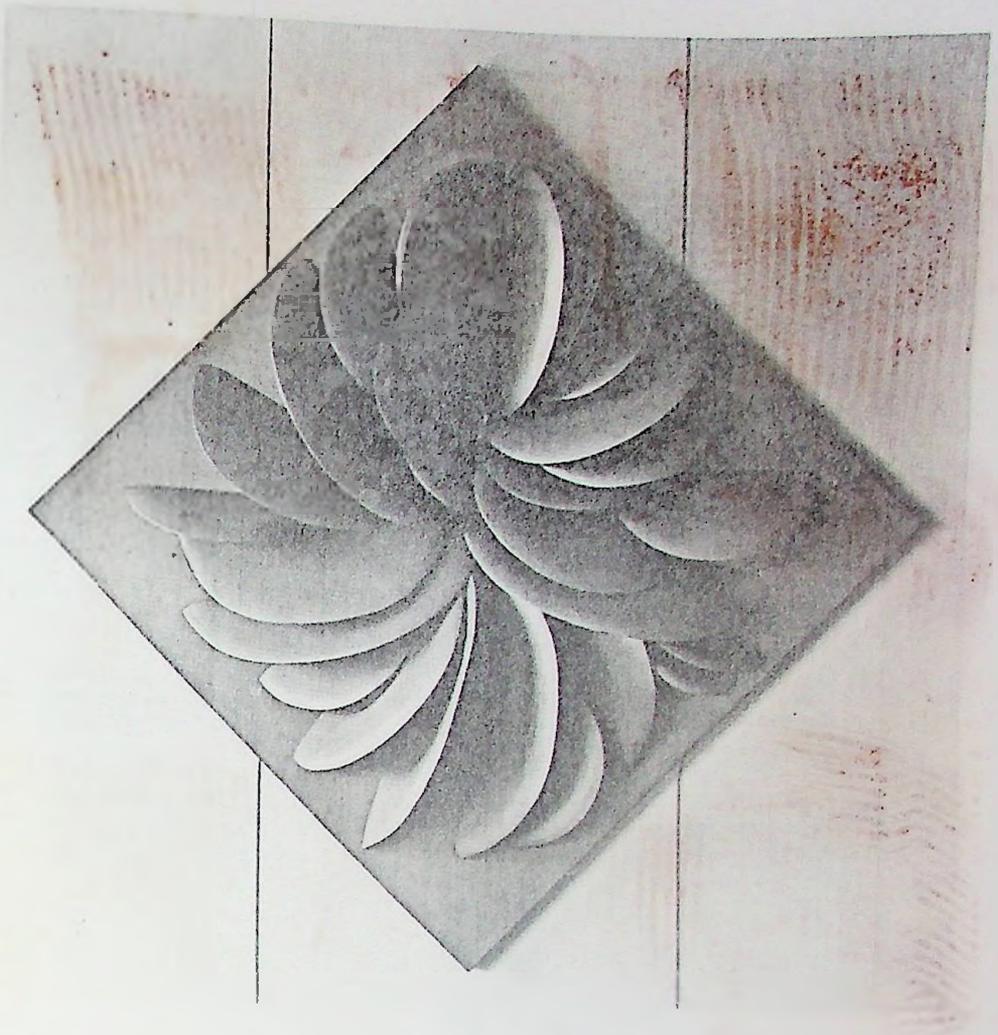
PETER SLUIS  
DUTCH



CEIK ADRIAAN van der GRIJN  
DUTCH

YELLOW PRESERVE





ALEXANDRA  
POLISH

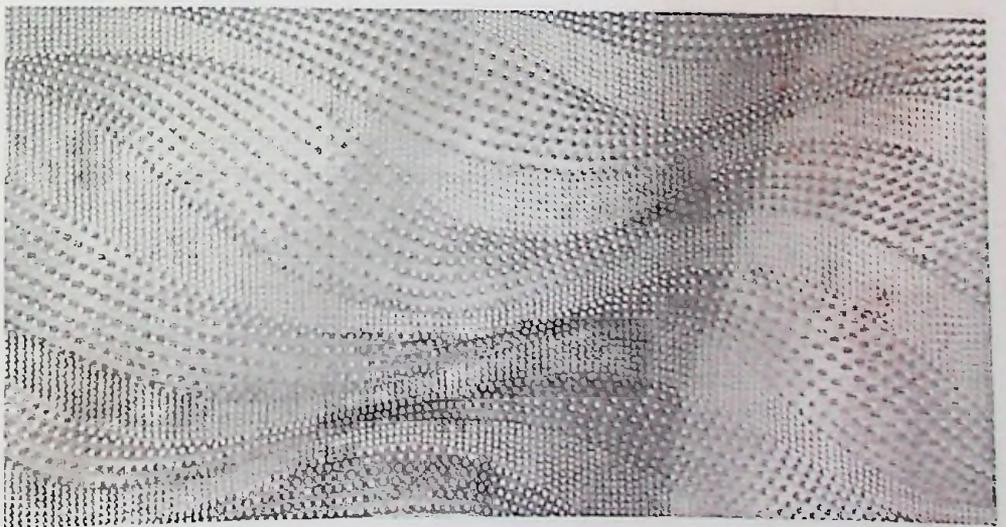
WESCHERT

GOLD RELIEF

ALEXANDRA

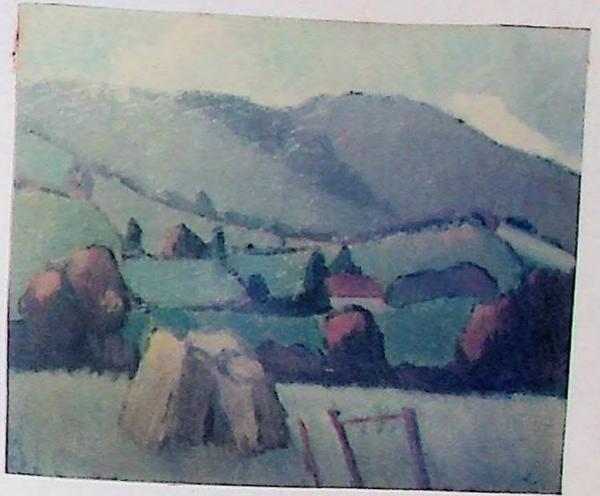
WESCHERT

FLOWING RELIEF





PETER COLLIS  
BRITISH



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