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IRISH LANDSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE PAINTING

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## IRISH LANDSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE PAINTING

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## INTRODUCTION

"Landscape painting" is a phrase which, with the passage of time has acquired a status and meaning far in excess of that contained within the words themselves. The phrase has ceased to be a statement of subject matter and is used to define a school of painting. The contemporary painter of landscape must bear the burdens of a massive weight of outmoded tradition combined with the dismissive attitude of many modern painters who deny the validity and importance of a continuing tradition. As a result, landscape painting has, in large measure, fallen into the domain of the amateur painter, painters who have regrettably been persuaded that imitation of the achievements of the past is the simplest road to art. The spectator approaches landscape painting with a preconceived expectation based, not on reality, but on his memory of a particular landscape painting, -his preconceptions are rarely disturbed. The obvious essence of a desire to make paintings is the realisation that nature is alive, and is therefore constantly changing. The landscape of empty wildernesses, yawning chasms, massive cliffs and wild forest- the subject matter of so many bad paintings- is now largely non-existent. In the majority of places where it does exist, it is carefully preserved and fostered as a tourist "scenic attraction" and a useful reminder of the past. The landscape is now firmly attached to man's needs and requirements, the wildernesses are irreversibly over-taken by right-angled fields, hedges cut by machine, broad straight roads and loops of overhead cables connecting one pylon to the next. This is our landscape and

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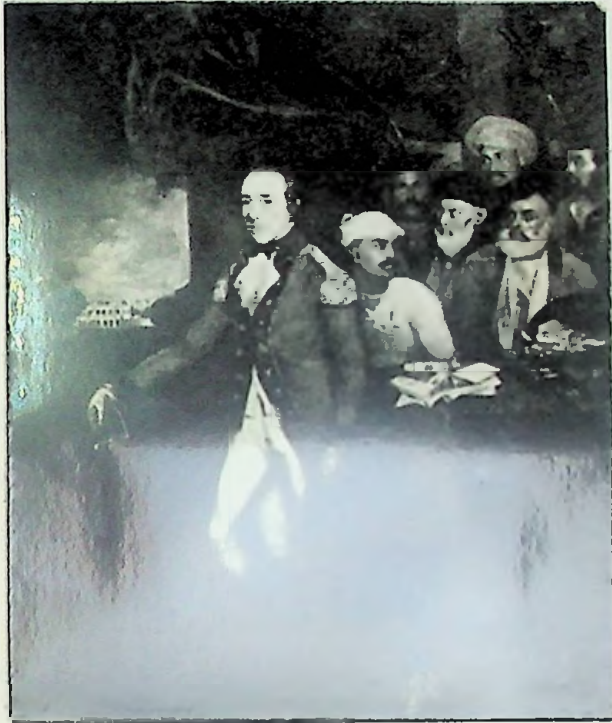
by extension, should be the subject of our landscape painting. Where landscape painting went astray is evident from an analysis of its history.

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LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS AND INTERNATIONAL DIRECTIONS IN ART FROM 1600 TO  
THE PRESENT DAY.

(a) Landscape painting and the landed gentry.

Since oil paint was first used in the fifteenth century and developed into a skill whereby small paintings could be made, sold and transported oil painting has been used as a means of portraying the wealth and property of the patron who commissioned the work. The emphasis on this type of painting led to the subsequent narrowing down of subject matter and the result was a situation in which the major paintings of the day were of ambassadors, landowners etc. The realities of life- poverty, hunger and the life styles of the "lower orders" were, by extension almost completely ignored. Nature, at this time, was not viewed as something which could be possessed and by extension there was no demand from the art patrons for painted landscapes. The first pure landscape, done by Dutch artists, answered no direct social need, were not saleable and the two main landscape artists, Ruysdael and Hobbema, were eventually forced to abandon their work. Despite the fact that nature is a commodity that cannot be quantified, (how can you quantify the sky?) landowners did manage to use the skilled landscape painter to their advantage. Many portraits were painted at this time of landowners deposited in front of their property with a panorama of their land behind them. (See illustration no.I) This type of painting of nature was not prompted by their desire to venerate nature, but by their wish to capture on canvas for evermore a painting of themselves in front of their property.



(Ill. no. I) Lieut. Col. Kirkpatrick  
by HICKEY.

*Late*

While these landscape painters used traditional methods of oil painting, it is interesting to note that at almost every stage at which oil painting was changed or modified, the initiative came from landscape painters. From the seventeenth century onwards, painters such as Ruysdael and Turner, (See illustration no.2) because of the particularness of their method of portraying the subject matter, adapted and changed the accepted techniques, a situation continued by Manet and the Impressionists.

(b) The importance of landscape painting in the beginning of modern art.

It is generally accepted that Manet's showing in the Salon de Refuses in Paris in 1860 of the painting "Dejeuner sur l'Herbe" (See illustration no.3) prompted the revolution in modern art which has continued to the present day. Although the subject matter of "Dejeuner sur l'Herbe" was thoroughly respectable and based on academic precedents such as Giorgione's "Pastoral Concert" and a detail from an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi of "The Judgement of Paris" after Raphael, the critics were appalled that Manet had the arrogance to translate such respectable subject matter into a contemporary scene. Almost overnight the ground rules for the visual arts changed- the Corot-Brabazon school led by Manet, (See illustration no.4) and consisted of artists such as Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Bazille and Sisley, was formed. The revolutionary changes to which these artists aspired were realised through their attempts to recapture the colour, light and reality of nature, which up until then had been subdued by the gloom of studios and academic tonal formulas. Their colour became increasingly more naturalistic and their



(Ill.no.2) "The Burning of the Houses of Parliament" by TURNER.



(Ill. no.3) "Dejeuner sur l'Herbe" by MANET.



work eventually centred around the constantly changing panorama of nature both at different times of the day and year.

The impressionists refused to use the normal channels of the annual shows put on by the various salons to display their work. Consequently, they were much freer to choose their subject matter- what is very interesting is the subject matter that they chose was landscape. Impressionism marked the end of the Renaissance idea of illusionistic realism and the beginning of the twentieth century exploration of expressionism, colour, cubism and abstraction.

Of all the nineteenth century painters who might be considered prophets of twentieth century achievement, Paul Cezanne is probably the most significant. He felt that the Impressionists rejection of all the academic qualities and importance of drawing excluded aspects of Western painting since the Renaissance which were extremely important and vital. A remark that he made that he wanted to "make impressionism something solid like the museums" is frequently misinterpreted. What he wanted was not to revert back and imitate the old masters but he wished to add to Impressionism the substance that he felt it lacked. He felt progress- that the sources for painting should not be classical or biblical studies but about nature, man and the objects around him. In the 1880's , Cezannes ideas of nature, man and painting were clarified in the form of a series of paintings, one of the most famous of which is "The Bay from L'Estaque" (See illustration no. 5). Cezanne certainly affected fundamentally the principles behind twentieth century cubism and abstract painting, but never in his life did he depart from landscape painting as the basis of his work. The methods he used were to discard what he felt were the



(Ill. no.4) "Twilight" by MONET.



(Ill.no5) "The Bay from l'Estaque" by CEZANNE.

irrelevancies of the landscape he wished to portray and then to start to rebuild the painting of the landscape in the form of an independent work, the end result of which was easily recognisable from the original subject matter, but was essentially different - the painting had assumed a parallel and unique reality. In his painting of landscape, Cezanne discovered and exploited all the major concerns which were to dominate the work of painters for the following 60 years.

(c) The move away from landscape.

The Post-Impressionist period saw the decline of subject matter in painting and by extension the decline in landscape painting. There were a few exceptions- Bonnard, (See illustration no. 6) Matisse and Dufy. Impressionism and the principles it embodied was replaced by Symbolism and Expressionism in painting. Symbolism was, in fact, a direct descendant of the romanticism of the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The essence of symbolism was the belief that the work of art is ultimately a consequence of emotions, of the inner spirit of the artist rather than of observed nature. This attitude not only dominated the work of the Symbolist painters, but affected also the twentieth century expressionists, dadaists and surrealists. Whilst symbolism was an important development in the European art scene by far the most major trend in all of Europe was the artists growing interest and awareness in his man-made environment and the changes taking place due to industrialisation. Architecture and the city and mans relation to them were the central concern. This took the form of Constructivism in Russia, (See Illustration no. 7) De Stijl in Holland (See illustration no.8), Futurism in Italy, (See illustration no. 9) Expressionism in Germany (See illustration no.10) and Cubism based mainly in France (See illustration no. 11)



"(Ill. no. 6) "Dining room in the country". by  
PIERRE BONNARD.



(Ill. no. 7) "Model for Monument to the  
Third International by VLADIMIR TATLIN.



(Ill. no. 8) "Composition in Blue B" by  
PIET MONDRIAN.



(Ill. no. 9) "The city rises" by UMBERTO BOCCIONI.



(Ill. no. 10) "Cafe Bar" by GEORGE BRAQUE.



(Ill. no 11) "Indian and Woman" by MAX PECHSTEIN.

Generally speaking, and with the exceptions noted above, the only landscape painting done at this time was in protest against the involvement of the artist in what were generally regarded as unartistic subjects such as industrialism and architectonic based work.

(d) The switch to the U.S.A. and Britain.

In the late 1940's the centre for art changed from Europe to America. Various reasons account for this- America was a new country dissatisfied with the academicism of the European traditions and with a yearning to prove itself and develop its very own means of art expression. Abstract expressionism, as its name implies, used no subject matter of an identifiable form. This school of painting, and its more extreme extensions, attracted adherents throughout the artistic world and succeeded in challenging many basic concepts of the visual arts. However, a counter-reaction against the increasing theoretical instability of abstract expressionism was inevitable and this came in the 1950's in the form of Pop Art and New Realism, which opened up once again the discussion about the importance of subject matter. Its initiators in the U.S.A. were mainly Robert Rauschenberg, (See illustration no. I2) and Jasper Johns, (See illustration no. I3) both of whose work precipitated the beginnings of photo-realism. In Britain, this trend gained adherents in artists such as David Hockney, (See illustration no. I4) Allen Jones, (See illustration no. I5) David Hamilton, and Peter Phillips. In Europe, particularly in Belgium and Holland, with artists such as Lucassen and Freymuth.

As can be seen from an examination of the history of Irish art, Irish painting has invariably followed the example of the schools



(Ill. no.12) "Estate" by ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG.



(Ill. no.13. "Flag" by JASPER JOHNS



(Ill. no13. "Target with Four faces by JASPER JOHNS.





(Ill. no. 14.) "Domestic scene in Los Angeles" by DAVID HOCKNEY.



(Ill. no. 15.) "Green dress" by ALLEN JONES.

and standards of other nations. This is particularly true of the modern era and the current confusion and lack of direction in the visual arts internationally are consequently, an additional complicating/<sup>factor</sup> in an Irish art which is already largely retarded.

## IRISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

(a) Background

In talking about landscape painting, or any type of painting in Ireland during this period, it is necessary to examine the social situation in Ireland. Despite the fact that it is very possible to realise and appreciate the fine visual aspects of Illuminated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells, it becomes obvious on examination of the visual arts in Ireland that any substantial history or heritage is lacking since then. The appreciation of the visual arts in Ireland has historically been almost exclusively the preserve of the upper classes and inevitable the type of work produced for them bore very little resemblance to the lives of the majority of Irishmen and held no message for them. The people who were involved in the appreciation of the arts were mainly the English landed gentry, who, with a few exceptions, did not involve themselves in Irish life, except on a very superficial level. London was the centre of their world and any artist who had ambitions, aspirations or indeed any talent whatsoever, automatically went there. This exodus inevitably crippled an already ailing movement in Ireland, obviously, it was impossible for the arts to develop healthily if every artist of any merit left the country.

(b) Nineteenth century trends

The major changes in the nineteenth century were the transition from eighteenth century classicism to nineteenth romanticism, a sentimental romanticism in the mid nineteenth century and towards the end of the

century, some evidence of the introduction of continental influences. Of the painters involved in the transition from classicism probably the most influential was Francis Danby (1793-1861). Danby, like most of the other ambitious young painters left Dublin for London in 1813 at the age of twenty, with two other artists, James Arthur O'Connor and George Petrie. James Arthur O'Connor returned to Ireland within the year, but both Danby and Petrie remained. Danby went to Bristol and became involved with the Bristol School of Painting. From here little is known about him, until two apocalyptic paintings appeared "The Opening of the Sixth Seal" and "Delivery of Israel out of Egypt", of which, the former, now hanging in the National gallery is the most famous. It has been discovered because of the speed with which the paintings are beginning to deteriorate that many of the techniques used by Danby in his painting were faulty. His unsatisfactory techniques are analogous with the content of his paintings, which were enthusiastically received when they first appeared but have not stood the passage of time. The contradiction between his grandiose aspirations and the realities of landscape make his paintings largely incomprehensible. This can be demonstrated by reference to two illustrations.

The second of these "Sunset through a ruined Abbey" (See illustration no.16) is a much more accessible painting than the ridiculous "Opening of the Sixth Seal" However once the literary elements are stripped away, Danby emerges as a poor painter and his paintings show a complete lack of understanding of the sensitivities of landscape and landscape painting. Danby, however, was not entirely typical of his time, a more representative example of which would be James Arthur O'Connors painting, "The Frightened Wagon" (See illustration no.17) This work contains all



(Ill. no. 16) "Sunset through a ruined abbey" by FRANCIS DANBY.



(Ill. no 17) "The Frightened Wagon" by RODERIC O'CONNOR.

the bad aspects of romantic painting. The major painter of the mid nineteenth century was William Mulready. Mulready's paintings go from the subdued colours of the eighteenth century to the brightness and luminosity of the colours introduced by the Pre-Raphaelites in the nineteenth century. Mulready was a reasonably competent painter but totally unoriginal and uninspired most of his work being mere mimicry of current trends in British painting. In this he was typical of the majority of Irish painters at the time. An example of this is the completely unconnected subject matter and style used by Mulready in the two paintings-"Bathers Surprised" (See illustration no.18) and "Hampstead Heath" (See illustration no. 19) The first painting is of a group of nudes (in Ireland?) scrambling up a badly painted bank in front of a clumsily painted landscape. "Hampstead Heath" while being more attractive has different subject matter painted in a completely different style.

The other influential painter of this time was Daniel Maclise, who painted in the Pre-Raphaelite style works involved with hunting and falconry for example "The Woodranger" (See illustration no.20) These are bland and pretentious paintings which compare badly with Maclise's more intimate portraits of, for example, Charles Dickens and his wife. It is important to note that William Mulready and Daniel Maclise and

were the major Irish artists of the time.

Finally, the end of the Nineteenth century contrasts very sharply with the styles of painting that went before. One of the major reasons for this change was that many of the artists of this time had spent some time on the continent. Two of these, William Osborne and Roderic O Connor, were the leading painters. Also included as a person who made a huge



(ill.no. 18. "Bathers surprised" by WILLIAM  
MULREADY.



(Ill. no. 19) "Hampstead Heath" by WILLIAM  
MULREADY

contribution is Nathaniel Hone, who I would consider as the most accomplished painter of the three, Hone lived in Fountainbleu and Barbizon for a while and then come into contact with French artists such as Millet, Rousseau and Manet. He then returned to Ireland and went to live in Malahide in North County Dublin, where he avoided almost any contact with and was almost completely forgotten about by the members of the contemporary arts scene. He was financially independent and rarely bothered exhibiting or trying to sell his work. His paintings are mainly concerned with pastoral scenes, such as cows in a field and while these are largely painted in the traditional style, paintings such as "The Boundary Fence" (See illustration no. 21) can be picked out as being exceptional in their sensitive subject matter and skilful painting. Neither the work of William Osborne and Roderic O'Connor have that kind of quality. The end of the nineteenth century saw a renaissance in Irish literary work the principal instigators of which were the Yeats, A.E. Russell and Sarah Purser. It has been said that a renaissance in Irish art took place at the same time, but in actual fact this is doubtful. For who are the artists who would constitute this renaissance? An exhibition intended for America, but which was eventually held in the London Guildhall was organised by Hugh Lane in 1904. The catalogue contained such names as J.B. Yeats, father and son, William Orpen, James Lavery, Walter Osborne, and Nathaniel Hone- in fact, precisely the same artists who had dominated the arts scene for the previous century. Of all these people the only person who could be called a new painter of Irish art was young Jack B. Yeats, and it will be seen that he dominated the art scene for many years to come.





(ILL. no 20) "The Woodranger" by Daniel MACLISE



(ILL. no.21) "The Boundary Fence" by NATHANIEL HONE.

(c) Twentieth century landscape painters

Jack B. Yeats while he was the main artist at the turn of the century in Ireland, cannot be strictly termed a landscape painter. He did use landscape in his paintings , but never without the inclusion of a figure. (See illustration no. 22)

Paul Henry, born six years after Jack B. Yeats, was the artist who dominated the landscape scene for many years. Henry, born in 1876 in Belfast, started to paint at an early age, but it was not until after the death of his father, that he set off for Paris, studied in Whistlers studio and started to paint seriously. Through his work in Paris, he became familiar with the work of the Impressionists. Ireland owes quite a debt to Henry in terms of the quite extensive pioneering work he did to introduce paintings of foreign artists, previously unseen, into Ireland. In Dublin, he and his wife, Grace Henry, with eight other artists, people like Laetitia Hamilton, Charles Lamb, Harry Clarke, founded the Dublin Painters. They held frequent exhibitions in the Stephens Green Gallery, then the studio of Walter Osborne, organised an Arts Week and brought to Dublin the work of artists such as Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, Vlaminck, Paul Nash and Modigliani. While recognising the importance of organising such groups as the Dublin Painters Henry, as a landscape painter is highly over-rated. (See illustration no.23) One of the contributing factors to this being, that until the mid twentieth century, the scarcity of Irish painters willing to confine themselves entirely to painting landscape. The influence of the Impressionists is evident in Paul Henrys work, but somehow the ability of the Impressionists to use light, shade and colour is not there. I find the colours that Henry uses, while they are harmonious and 'pleasing' to the eye, insipid. They do not capture for me at all the



(Ill. no. 22) "On Streedagh Strand" by W.B. YEATS.



(Ill. no. 23) "Connemara Cottages" by PAUL HENRY.

vibrancy and strong colours of the West of Ireland landscape, where Henry painted most of his work.--It is possible that Henry was over-influenced by the Impressionists.

Probably the best known Irish painter of the period after Paul Henry is Norah Mc Guinness, born in Derry, in 1903, she is another painter who went to Paris to study. There she studied at the studio of Andre l'Hote, where interestingly enough, Mainie Jellet and Evie Hone also worked. It was these three women, who, on their return to Ireland, started the Irish Exhibition of Living Art. The intention was to create a forum for artists other than the annual Royal Hibernian Academy exhibition which they believed had become stale. Andre l'Hote, Norah Mc. Guinnesses teacher in Paris, taught the principles of Cubist painting, and I feel that this has led to the twee style used by her. The mixture of cubism and representational drawing is unsuccessful. Somehow, the spectator is left between stools, on the one hand on attempt at straight representational painting, and on the other a wish to paint "modern" paintings employing cubist principles. (See illustrations 24 and 25)

The difficulties experienced by artists such as Paul Henry and Norah Mc Guinness in absorbing new European trends are being largely overcome and more successful landscape painting is emerging. Examples of this would be the work of artists such as Brian Bourke, Patrick Hickey and Elizabeth Comerford.

Brian Bourke, born in 1936, and educated in Dublin and London, cannot strictly be termed a landscape painter. He tends to paint nudes and landscapes indiscriminately and his main concern seems to be, not the subject matter, but the method of making marks and using colour. In both of these areas he is very successful and through his highly personalised technique he discovers a very real sympathy for and understanding of, the qualities of Irish landscape. (See illustration no. 26)



(Ills. no. 24 and 25)

Two paintings by NORAH MC GUINNESS



(Ill. no 26.) "Landscape, early Spring '74!"  
by BRIAN BOURKE.

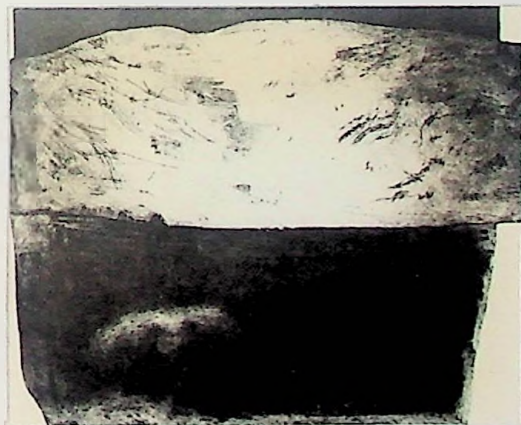
Patrick Hickey, slightly older than Brian Bourke, is essentially a graphic artist, who uses his training as an architect to the best advantage in his etchings. He contrasts the use of fine line with the ruggedness of the heavily bitten plate beautifully and the finished prints using rich blacks and dark browns are really evocative. As with the following artist, Hickey's subject matter is greatly concerned with the new landscape of afforestation and field patterns. (See illustrations 27 and 28)

The youngest of these artists, but certainly not the least accomplished technically is Elizabeth Comerford, born in Dublin in 1953 and a recent graduate of the National College of Art and Design. Her paintings are made up of layers of paint carefully put on which produces a transparent effect so that the eye is constantly moving over the canvas and discovering new textures and colours. One of the things which interests me most of all is the ~~her~~ choice of subject matter, which is highly unusual for Irish landscape painters. She chooses roads, hedges, drains, fences and so on in a deliberate rejection of the remote wildernesses of so much Irish landscape painting.

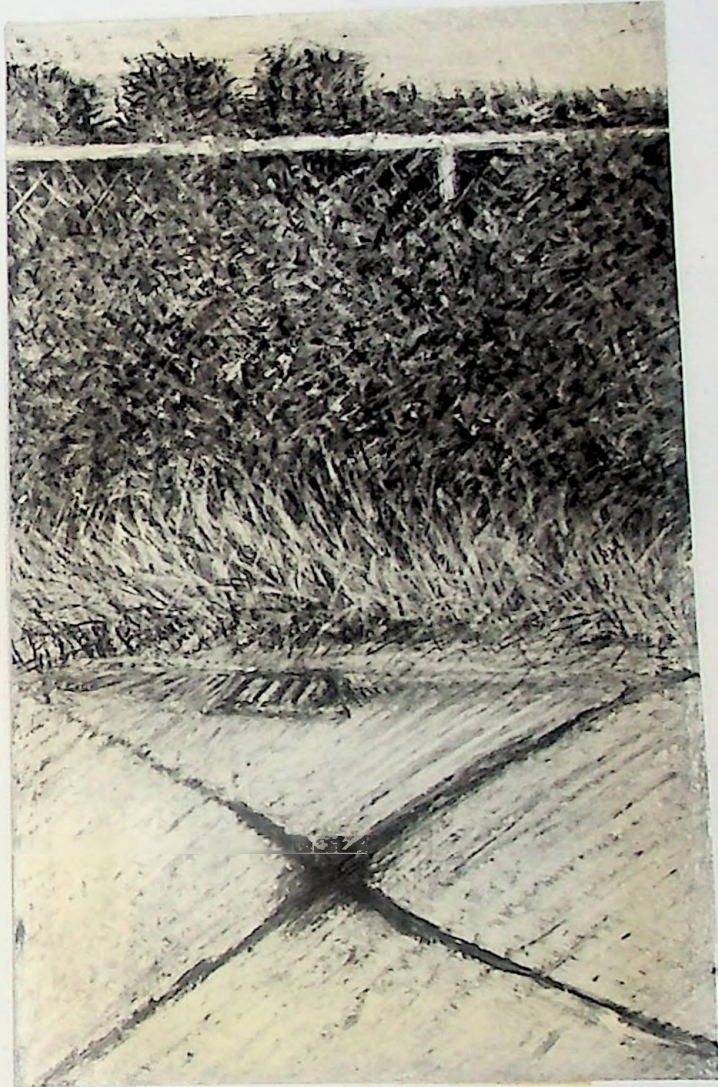
An interesting fact, worthy of special note is that landscape painting in Ulster is far more advanced and successful than the corresponding painting in the South. The majority of landscape painters of this century are actually from Ulster. Examples are Basil Blackshaw, T.P. Flanagan, Norah Mc. Guinness, Colin Middleton (See illustration no. 30) Philip Roycroft (No.31) Arthur Armstrong (Ill. no. 32) George Campbell (Ill. no.33) and so on. Northern artists, unlike their southern counterparts, did not feel it necessary to go to London, were not affected so strongly by the activities in London, and built up a stronger tradition of painting, including landscape painting, based in Ulster itself. The majority of the work does not show the same detrimental marks as the southern landscape



(Ill. no.27) "Waterfall" by Patrick HICKEY.



(Ill. 28.) "Bogland" by PATRICK HICKEY?.

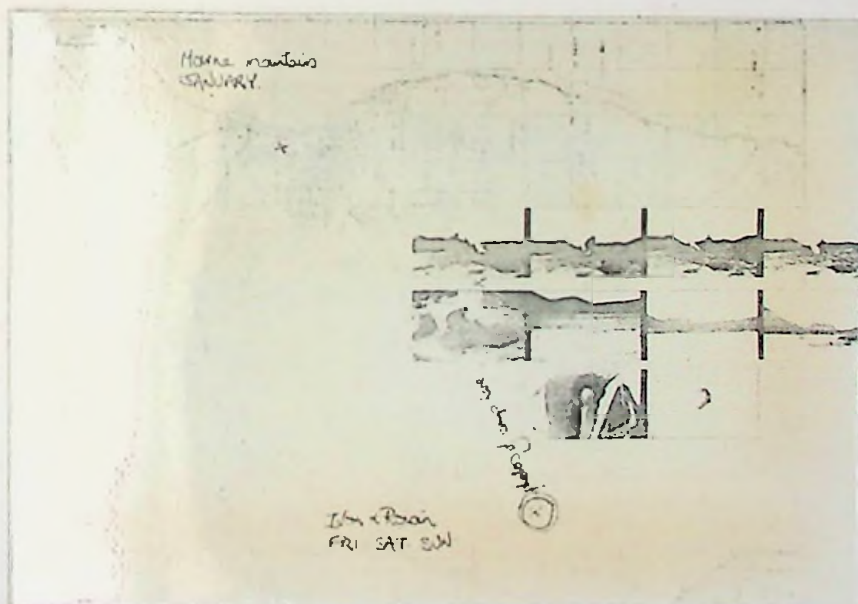


(Ill. no 29) "Hedge by ELIZABETH COMERFORD."





(Ill. no. 30) Silkscreen by COLIN MIDLETON.



(Ill. no. 31) "Page from the log of a journey"  
by Phillip ROYCROFT.



(Ill. no. 32) "Field patterns" by ARTHUR ARMSTRONG.

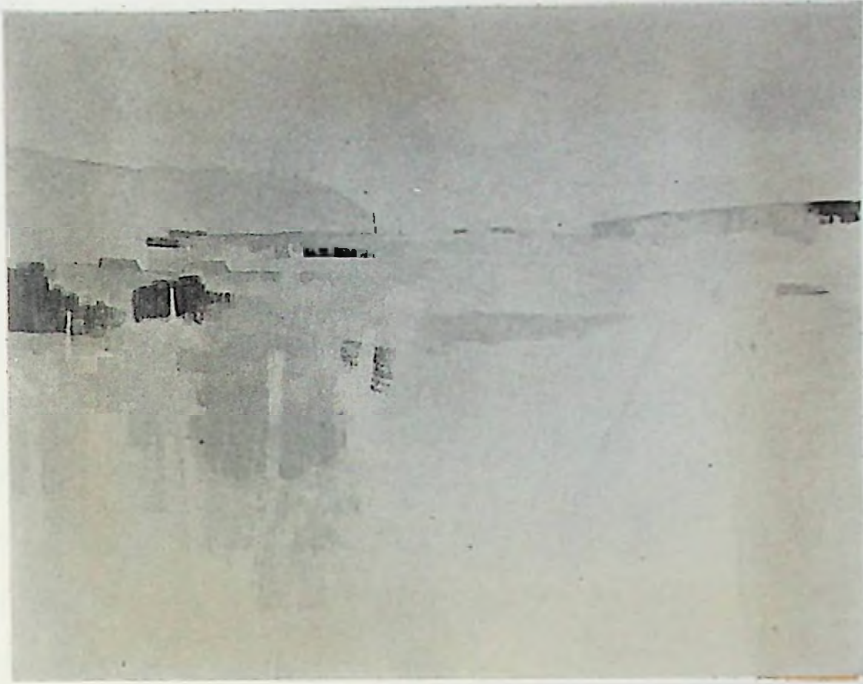


(Ill. no. 33) "Dun Aengus, Inishmore" by GEORGE CAMPBELL.

painting. Perhaps the main artists in this group are T.P.Flanagan and Basil Blackshaw, two artists who have shown together twice. T.P. Flanagan, born in Fermanagh, in 1929, was brought up by two aunts in Lisadell., Co. Sligo near the home of the Gore-Booths, which was to become the subject of many of his paintings later on. It was not until 1962, that he began to paint the type of work with which we are now familiar, the very transparent water colour washes, so ideally suited to his particular choice of subject matter. (See illustration no. 34)

Basil Blackshaw, on the other hand, not only uses water colour, though in a less transparent way, but he also uses thick oil paint. His work is by no means restricted to landscape but his landscape paintings show a real affinity for the land which is reflected in the honesty of his work.

Although it is possible to finish this brief study on an optimistic note, it remains the case that such successful painting as exists is a comparatively recent phenomenon., and is in marked contrast to the majority of Irish landscape painting. Furthermore, the successful work conflicts sharply with the popular understanding of the term 'landscape'



(Ill. no. 34) "Rough Morning" by T.P. FLANAGAN.



(Ill. no. 35) "Field" by Basil Blackshaw.

## IRISH LANDSCAPE - WHAT EXISTS NOW

(a) The conflict between painting and reality.

Why should this be? Public understanding of the word "landscape" has acquired particular artistic connotations. An opinion which has been actively fostered by artists is that a landscape is not a picture of the ordinary sights of everyday life, but a chosen view of wilds and wildernesses. People have been discouraged from believing that all their surroundings are equally important and have been led to believe that the only landscape which is aesthetically pleasing is the "natural" one, free from all the ugly marks of industrialisation. It is an absolutely standard procedure that landscape artists when they want to paint trek out into the wilds to discover the real Ireland. My task is to show and explain that the landscape of Ireland is no longer only rolling hills and dark ominous mountains but it is ~~the~~ landscape of an industrialised agricultural society with all the advantages and disadvantages that go with it.

Up until now, as I have tried to show in my analysis of Irish landscape painting, Irish artists have not come to terms with changes in the landscape. Their work concerns not what is actually in front of them but what they would like to see. Their paintings are not of Ireland, or even of landscape, but of a jumbled up version of what they feel a landscape painting should contain and look like. Landscape painters are in effect painting a lie. However as an artform landscape has not lost any of its validity, all it has lost is its honesty.

While painters have been producing this work, the landscape itself has changed. What is necessary now is not to carry on regardless, we must instead stop and reassess both the painting and the painters and look at what is really there. Is it what painters would like to think - insipid, harmonious colours that are pleasing to the eye and soft graceful clouds over beautiful scenes - or is it the landscape of intensive agriculture, fields tilled and sown throughout the year, forests planted, tractors, hedges cut, roads, railways and cars. The evidence of the change is all around us, it is not necessary to hark back to scenes rooted in the past. It is possible to find a wealth of subject matter in the present and it is essential that we do so. Mans preoccupation with the landscape is not determined by his wish to appreciate it in a state of natural wilderness, but by his yearning to control, mark and sculpt it. Ever since the inhabitants of Ireland had settled sufficiently well to give them the time to engage in laborious and time-consuming work they have endeavoured to change the landscape. The marks of this are still evident. (See illustration no. 36) The hill fort in the centre of the picture was built in Knockaulin in Co. Kildare in the Iron Age while the surrounding fields are present day. This is a landscape entirely constructed by man. Over the last two hundred years, and at an unprecedented speed over the last fifty to sixty years, the land and lifestyle of the Irish people has changed dramatically.

(b) Demesnes and Parks

One of mans absolute necessities is a house to live in. Fortunately

very few people still live in Irish thatched cottages , so I do not accept that the introduction of one into a painting makes it a good painting, what it actually constitutes is a twee copy of a past and highly forgettable "masterpiece".

Perhaps the type of housing ~~which has~~ which has made the most dramatic change to large areas of land in Ireland is the Demesne. This is a big house, surrounded by a large area of walled-in land, handed down from parent to children generation by generation. In the eighteenth century a craze for "landscape gardening" led to the beginning of the ordered planting of demesnes in Ireland. This was responsible for very dramatic changes in the structure of the landscape but, in the long-term , was neither very popular nor successful. This was due to a variety of factors, firstly because the demesnes in Ireland were working demesnes on which cattle grazed throughout the year and secondly, because the hilly nature of much of this land made the planting of long, straight lines of trees well-nigh impossible. Nonetheless this kind of landsaping had a very major effect in many parts of Ireland. (See illustration no. 37)

After the abandonment of "landscape gardening" "green gardening" became fashionable for a time. This consisted of the planting only of trees, shrubs and bushes with no flowers. Many people , however, also had flower and kitchen gardens, but these were kept out of view behind high walls. Blazes of colour were thought of as vulgar and domestic gardening was not to be mentioned.

But many changes were happening, the New World was being explored, and explorers were bringing back exotic foreign plants, many of them very spectacular in their colour and shape. The Botanic Gardens in Dublin were founded the primary concern being show-houses in which to



(Ill. no.36) Hill-fort in Knockaulin, Co. Kildare.



(Ill. no. 37) Dromore Estate.



display the new plants and flowers.

The idea of 'formal gardens' followed the establishment of the Botanical Gardens and in Ireland the Phoenix Park is probably the most famous example of this. In the eighteenth century the then Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Chesterfield, initiated schemes for employment of the poor. One of these schemes was the extensive planting of the Royal Deer Park on the north-west of Dublin, and in 1747 the Phoenix Park (then the largest park in the world) was opened to the public. In the early nineteenth century the situation began to change once more. The combination of the Industrial Revolution, with the consequent growth of the cities and big towns, and the gradual demise of the large demesnes affected huge changes on the landscape.

(c) The effects of industrialisation

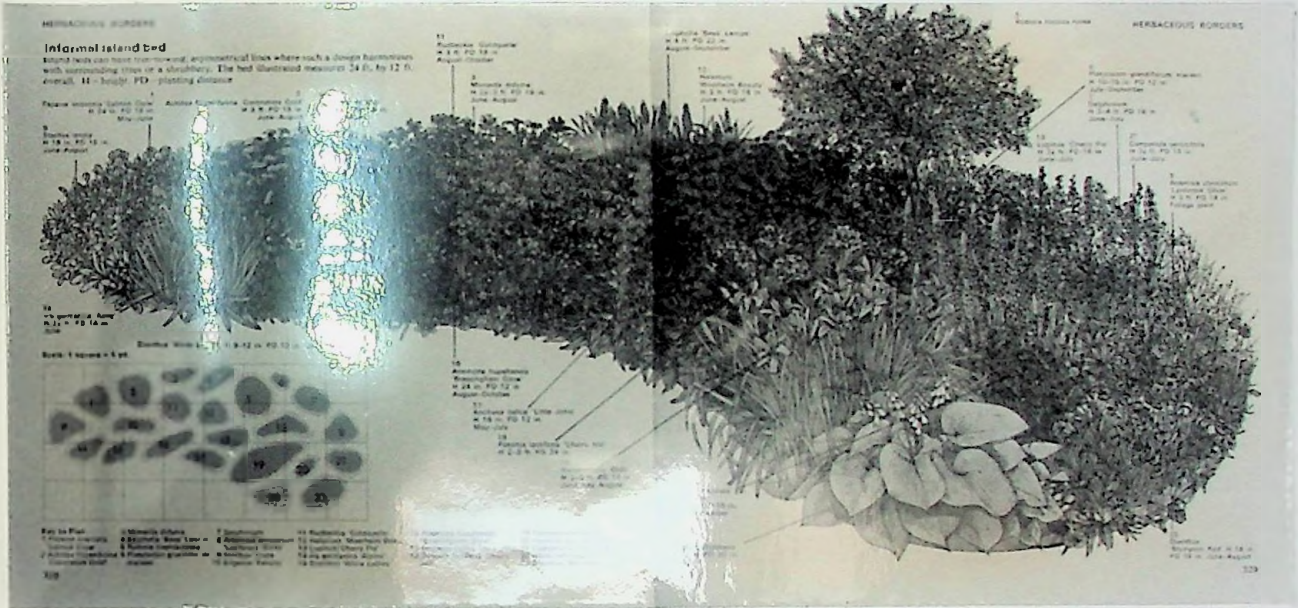
As was one of its main effects throughout Europe the prospect of employment lured many people from the countryside and agriculture into the cities where the subsequent necessity for housing is evident. Left behind, and never to be the same again, was the country of small rural settlement around social centres containing only necessary markets and shops. The evils of the over-crowding in the cities which resulted from the migration to the cities do not need to be detailed here, but the generally held view that the growth of industrialisation implies the death of landscape does need to be challenged.

A major example, which is universally ignored in considering landscape is the start of small gardens on the kind of scale which is now normally

accepted but which is, in fact, a very recent phenomenon. A change in attitudes took place, there was an upsurge in interest in subjects dealing with the environment, and one of the direct offshoots of this was that for the first time ever every householder acquired with his house a small plot of land to cultivate and control as he wished. This was a revolutionary change in attitude, for the first time it was not only the wealthy who had land to cultivate, accepting the huge difference in size, everybody now had that chance. This must be one of the most enthralling areas in the study of landscape. Where else is it possible to see a concentrated view of so many peoples ideas of what they would do if they were given a small piece of land to divide up, plan and plant as they wish? Here you can see how two people with exactly the same resources available to them, use in a totally different way a piece of land with identical size and soil composition. It is possible to see a tidy, carefully divided piece of land with all green gardening and beside it a riot of bushes flowers and colour. (See illustration no. 38) We have come to accept the thousands of different species of flowers available to us as absolutely standard requisites of any garden, but how many of them are native, and if not how long ago were they introduced into the country? It is fascinating to discover that many of our most popular plants are not native to this country. A very short list of examples could include:

- |                 |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Forget-me-not   | from Siberia and the Orient |
| French Marigold | from Mexico                 |
| Garden Marigold | from Southern Europe        |
| Nasturtium      | from South America          |
| Sunflower       | from America                |

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Page (Ill.no. 38) Page from "The Gardening Year" a book which sells different types of flowers.

Sweet Pea	from Southern Italy and Sicily
Sweet William	from Southern Europe
Sage	from Texas

People now take for granted the fact that almost every plant in the world is at their disposal, that elaborate fertilizers, tools, and garden requisites are at their fingertips. A small example of a different kind of change in this area could be represented by the common Rose. From a simple five-petal flower the rose has been made into a plant almost exclusively for formal cultivation in gardens. Various new types of rose have been manufactured - the Hybrid Tea with large flowers, the Floribunda with large numbers of flowers, the Standard with a tall stem which has its branches and flowers confined to the top, and even miniatures, which can be grown indoors - all of these have been largely manufactured by man.

As well as gardens many city people still rent allotments. These plots of ground are the result of the extension into the city of the idea of the agricultural labourers rented land, and a fore-runner of today's gardens. One would be hard put to recall a painting which has allotments as its subject matter.

(d) Cities

The relevance of the growth of cities to landscape painting is usually seen from the negative point of view that cities encroach on the wilderness. It is only due to comparatively recent research that it is becoming evident that in substantial ways nature is adapting itself to its new man-made environment. Chameleon-like changes have taken place, not only in the many plants and flowers which have adapted

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themselves to wasteland existence in the city, but also in the birds and moths who have succeeded in changing their colour to merge into the city landscape. One of the factors which we automatically associate with the growth of cities is the destruction of nature by pollution. That this happens is undeniable. It is not resolved, however, by the artist abandoning the city in search of natural beauty. There are increasingly no places untouched by pollution which is, unfortunately as quick to seek out isolated beauty spots as the artist.

(e) Communications

Industry has not only changed the appearance of Irish landscape, it has also introduced completely new features - roads (see illustration no. 39) and railways (see illustration no 40) and similar features which cannot simply be ignored. Much of today's landscape is framed by the horizontals and verticals made by telegraph poles and the wires which connect them. Yet these features are rarely used by artists in their work, somehow it is thought of as vulgar to include such commonplace objects. Instead their existence is ignored. It is precisely this pretence and side-stepping of problems by artists that I wish to challenge. Cushioned by traditional painting it is the painters fear of leaving this enclosed world which has done so much damage to landscape painting. But if we have criticisms of the way our landscape is being shaped it is not enough to ignore the changes and take up our easels and head for Kerry. It is not only our responsibility it is within our scope to direct and advise as to how the landscape should be sculpted. There is a wealth of subject matter relating to landscape painting which, as of yet, has been untapped.

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(Ill. no. 39) ROADS



(Ill. no. 40) RAILWAYS.

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(f) Farming

Of all the areas of mans involvement in landscape, perhaps the area in which most affects the land is mans necessity to feed himself, in other words farming, both arable and market gardening. As with all other of mans activities, he has become more competent and his systems more complicated. The result of this/adjustment in the pace and efficiency with which the farmers plough, till and sow . For many centuries the systems of farming did not change and the housing patterns used did not alter. Two events dominated the growth of field patterns and farm buildings. In the nineteenth century, repressive legislation against catholic land-owners led to a situation in which it was an offence for a Catholic to buy, inherit or accept land as a gift. It also compelled them to subdivide their estates between male heirs at death. The inevitable result was the perpetual sub-division of land which contributed almost exclusively to the maze-like field patterns in the west of Ireland now. (See illustration no. 41) Changes in the type of farming, eventually took place, because small areas of land were not suitable for stock-grazing because of their size. Fields became bigger and more open. (See illustration 42) Little changed in the life of the small farmer until this century in which irreversible changes took place. (See illustration no. 43) With the huge migration of people from the country to the city, many of the old ways of life were abandoned forever. It is now commonplace and accepted that if a farmer in Ireland has a very small acreage (under 45) he almost without exception has to take a part-time job in industry to maintain himself. It is no longer feasible to try to survive on the income of a small farm and many people welcome the chance to abandon it forever. The introduction of farm machinery has instigated many changes. The size of the

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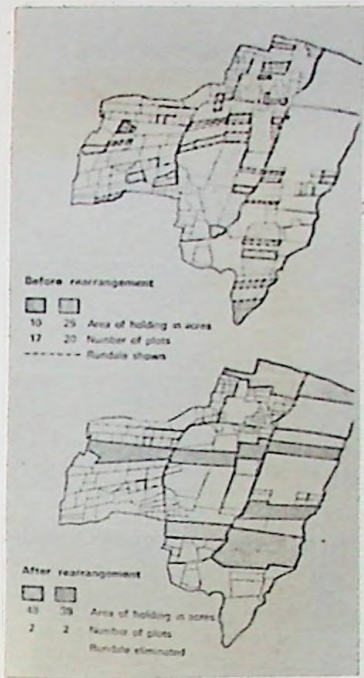
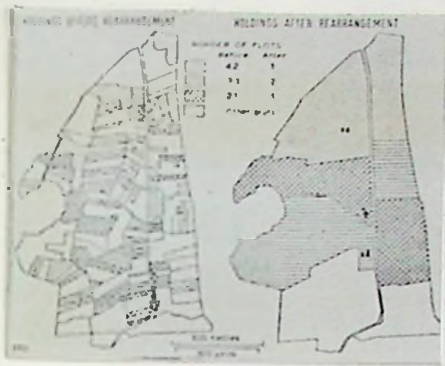


(Ill. no.41) FIELD PATTERNS.



(Ill. no.42) Aerial photograph showing older field patterns coming through.





(Ills. 43a and 43b)  
The re-arrangement of fields and land.



(Ill. no 44.) Kilfinnane forest.

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machinery alone has meant that fields need to be bigger to give the machines adequate turning space. There is a move away from the traditional square field to a long rectangular one, again to reduce the number of turns the machines have to make. A feature which will change the landscape altogether is the introduction of 'combined' farming, i.e. the co-operation and agreement between neighbouring farmers that they will do away with the hedges that divide their land, the result being a flat landscape devoid of the familiar hedges and ditches. This has happened on quite a wide scale already, particularly in areas of intensive arable farming. The reasons behind it yet again being the most efficient method of using the farm machinery. Valuable land was left unused because of the ditches, and despite protestations by people who say that hedges are a necessity, the farmers say that unless the hedges are used to prevent stock from straying, their maintenance is a luxury they cannot afford. As with gardens and the new flowers invented by man, seeds for arable farming are being produced and perfected annually. It is now possible to choose what type of plant the farmer wants to grow, whether he wants a small or tall plant with a large or small head. Despite the fact, mentioned above, that hedges are being removed from between fields, they will definitely remain beside the roads. Elizabeth Comerfords drawing (See illustration no. 29) illustrates perfectly the beauty in the interaction between the hedges and the roads. Hedges are generally cut in Springtime to an uniform height of two feet, which with the cut twigs sticking up gives them an amputated appearance. However, many of the hedges contain foreign flowers and vegetation without which the appearance of the hedges would seem very strange. Examples are flowers such as fuschia, the flowering currant and deadly nightshade.

Market Gardening is a relatively new profession in Ireland, introduced by Dutch emigres in the nineteenth century, it probably produces the most dramatic changes in the landscape of all. It is precisely the expertise of the gardener and the ability with which he rotates the crops available to him, which earns him his living.

A brief explanation of crop-rotation will show how constant rotation of produce affects the landscape. The system employed is the following- Carrots are planted in early January, which are mature in May, followed by tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers or aubergines and finally lettuce, which brings the farmer around to January again. People realise that this happens, but again they do not notice the colour changes at all. When the carrots are harvested in May, they are usually stacked in heaps in the fields, so that the resultant colours are a dark brown field, the green leaves on the tops of the carrots and the startlingly bright orange of the carrots themselves. The subtleties of colour interactions like this are amazing, if we take the time to look carefully enough. Certain fertilizers produce particular colours in the soil and often the clay varies in colour from pale rusty oranges to rich deep black browns. The disciplines of the arable farmer are somewhat different to those of the market gardener, and therefore, affects the landscape in fundamentally different ways. A typical outline of a year's work for the arable farmer producing grain crops and feed for his stock is the following:-

JANUARY- MARCH: Hedgeing, Ditching, Draining, Dressing potatoes.

MARCH- APRIL: Preparation of seed beds, drilling for spring cereals, sowing grass and clover, planting potatoes and sugar beet. Sowing sugar beet at intervals throughout April. Applying fertilizer to grassland.

MAY-JUNE: All root crops sown

JULY: Hay-making, hedge-cutting.

AUGUST- SEPTEMBER: HARVESTING; Winter barley, Spring barley, Winter wheat, Spring oats, Spring wheat.

OCTOBER: Harvesting of potatoes. Ploughing and drilling for autumn, corn and sugar beet lifted.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Stubbles ploughed.

Obviously, the combination of both of these systems produce considerable changes in the colour, shape and form of the land at all times during the year.

(g) Forestry (See illustration no.44)

Apart from Iceland, Ireland has the lowest percentage of its land under forest in Europe. For example, Luxembourg has 31% against Ireland's 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ %. More than half of Ireland's forests are less than twenty years old. In fact, most of the forested areas are not the work of the Land Commission but the remains of the former demesnes around which were landscaped many beautiful forests. (See illustrations 45) It was not until 1904 that the forests started to be rebuilt, with the result that by the end of the century, 10% of Irish land will be under forests. The introduction of forestation is being encouraged by the state-run bodies and grants are available to anybody who is willing to plant trees on his or her land. Forests are a viable economic investment and have in fact, become a crop in their own right (See illustration no. 46) However, the appearance of a young, pale, bright forest on the side of a mountain beside a dark, sombre one is absolutely breath-taking. Many of the forests of the demesnes of yesterday have very sensibly been incorporated into larger areas which contain paths and nature trails for children.

(h) Peat

Peat farming is an activity which is easily recognisable as an activity synonymous with the landscape of Ireland. The development of the Irish bogs has been only recently organised on a large scale by the establishment of Bord na Mona, the Irish Peat development Authority, by an act of the Oireachtas in 1945. Since then, Bord na Mona has acquired 130,000 acres of bogland. The preliminary work in the preparation of a newly acquired bog in itself makes very dramatic changes to the landscape. For example, Derrynagreenagh bog in Co. Offaly. Here about 3,000 miles of drains were

needed and each drain had to be opened and deepened five or six times before the drainage network was completed. Each bog, must have its own railway system. Derrynagreenagh has a bout eighty miles of permanent track and includes in miniature all the features of a normal railway system such as bridges, cuttings, level crossings and sidings. There are many different machines involved in working the bogland, for example, disc ditchers, sod peat strippers (to take off the moss and heather) windrowers, cutting and excavating machines, loaders and harvesters. The process in the photographs is the harvesting of milled peat which is used for the generation of electricity and the making of briquettes. (See illustration 49) This process involves scraping the surface of the bog to about half an inch, and harvesting the loose layer of powdered peat as many as sixteen times during the year., so that at least eight inches or so of the bog is removed each year.

The development of the Irish turf industry has not only led to a much more efficient fuelling system, but some of the land from the left-over harvested bogland has been used for afforestation and in the future much will be used for agriculture. The oldest bog operated by Bord na Mona is at Clonast, and will be available for reclamation about 1980 and others will be available in the year 2000. So the cycle of proper usage of land and the change it affects continues. Where the turf-cutting machines of Bord na Mona are working today, combine harvesters will probably be working in the future.



(Ill. no 45)

The incorporation of the remains of a demesne into newly-forested land.



AS ABOVE.

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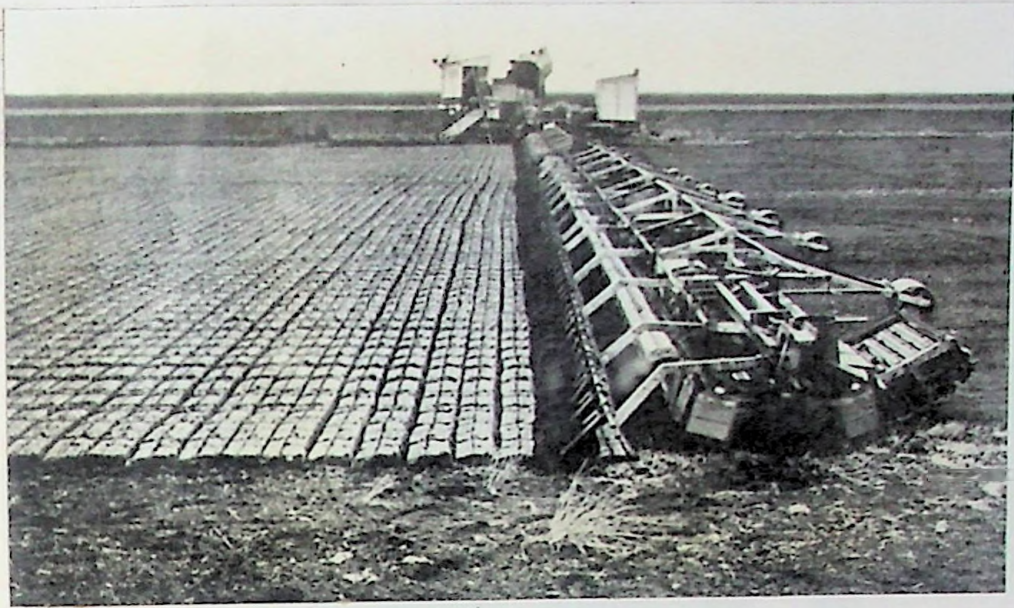
(Ill.no 46. ) CO. WICKLOW. A blanket of  
new forest on the side of a hill



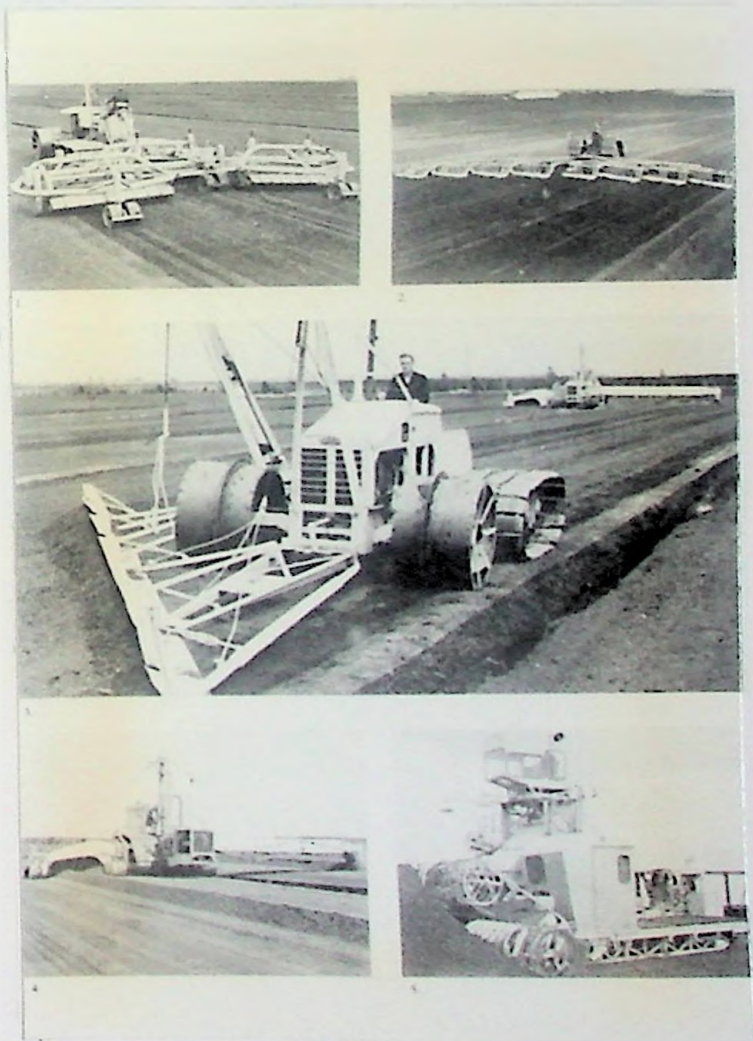
(Ill. no 47) The remains of part of a cut bog.



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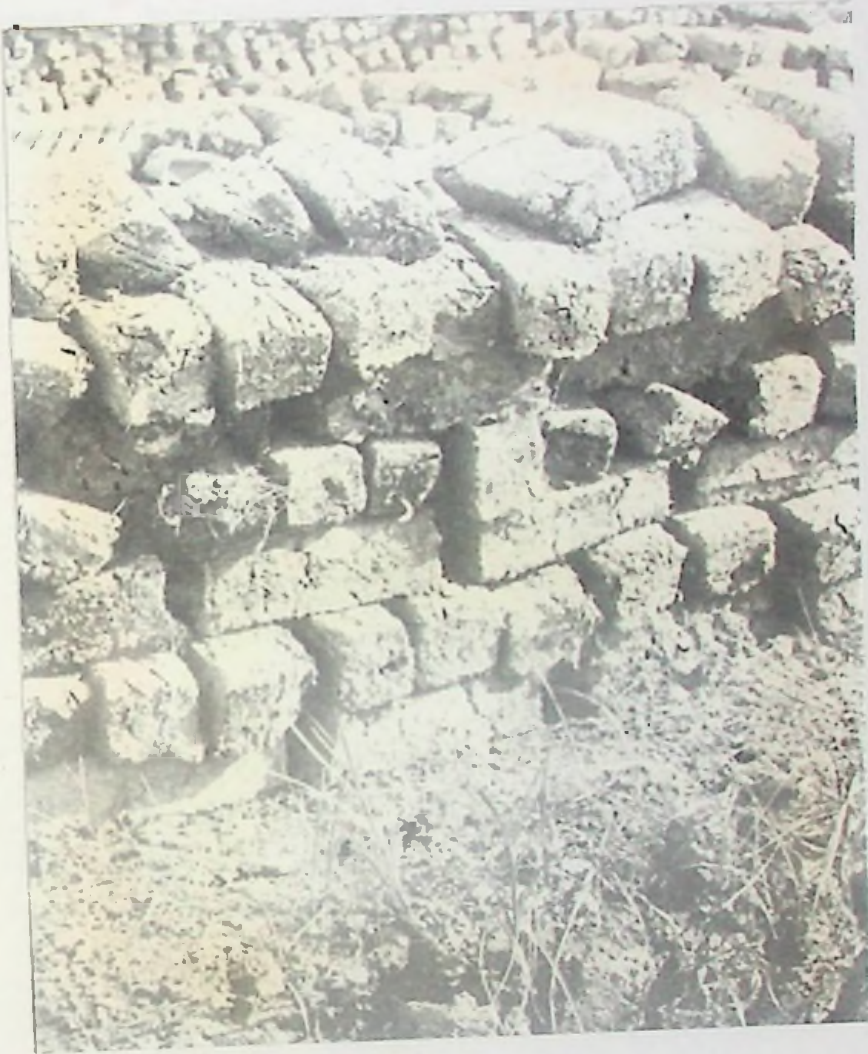


(Ill.no 48) TURF SODS BEING CUT.



(ILL. no 49) THE MACHINERY AND PROCESS USED IN THE HARVESTING OF MILLED PEAT.

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(I11. no.50) A TURF BANK.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary, despite the fact that I have probably said all the things in the previous text, to gather together an overall view of the opinions and points made.

The analysis of Irish and European art was intended to prove that while European art has concerned itself with landscape painting and landscape painting has been at the centre of many changes in painting techniques, Irish art has failed abysmally both in its inability to relate in content to Irish landscape and in technique. The paintings are not paintings of Irish landscape, as it was, they are based on what the artist felt were good landscape paintings, and when I say 'good', I don't mean in the aesthetic sense, but in the sense that they were the standards dictated by the staid academic critics of the time. This tradition has been a dead weight around the necks of contemporary Irish artists which they have been largely unable to throw off. The function of Section 2 of the thesis was to illustrate the ways, generally ignored by Irish artists, in which the environment and surroundings are constantly changing, decaying and renewing. The majority of this is not the consequence of 'Mother Nature', but the consequence of ~~mans~~ necessity to control and shape the land, through his need to live and eat off it. He tills fields, he builds forests, he cuts hedges, he builds mounds and mountains and introduces features into the landscape which would have taken millions of years to develop naturally. So why are painters still using as the subject matter and content of their paintings scenes rooted so firmly in the past. - remote wildernesses that have now been very decisively replaced by the features mentioned above. As I stated in Section I, landscape painting has not lost its validity

only its honesty, but if the present situation continues, it will rapidly become totally irrelevant and lose any potential validity.

I have employed in my own work as the starting points, the subject matter outlined in Section 2, and yet I know that there are enormous areas which have yet to be discovered and used. Because of this, I feel very optimistic about the future of Irish landscape painting. It is the inadequacy of Irish painters which has created the present appalling situation--the landscape is there to be painted.

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