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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

Faculty of Craft Design

Department of Glass

THE EVOLUTION OF IRISH GLASS: MAUD COTTER &  
JAMES SCANLON, CONTEMPORARY IRISH GLASS ARTISTS

by Noelle E. Higgins

"A thesis submitted to the faculty of History of Art  
and Design and Complementary Studies in Candidacy  
for the degree of Craft Design; March 1992".





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The AIB and The Office of Public Works for allowing me to photograph the work of Maud Cotter.

I would also like to thank Nicola Gordon-Bowe, my tutor, for the thorough guidance throughout the year.

## INTRODUCTION:

My thesis will discuss the work of James Scanlon and Maud Cotter in the context of the evolution of glass art in Ireland. They will be discussed and compared to glass which has been produced in Ireland since the Arts and Crafts movement. I will discuss Harry Clarke and "An Tur Gloine" artists who were the revivalists of the medieval principles of stained glass design in Ireland, and the influence of post-war stained glass in Germany and France.

I will discuss how internationally the influence of the "Studio Glass" movement which began in the 60's in America has changed peoples attitude to glass as a creative sculptural medium.

The question of whether it is a viable art-form rather than a decorative craft throw-back or a functional part of church fabric is being answered by the introduction of the autonomous panel, the one-off sculptural piece and the use of glass as an environmental medium. Yet the Fine-arts versus Crafts argument persists. Glass in this century has echoed the painting and sculpture of contemporaries, yet it is a medium in itself. The glass produced now in Ireland is still specifically Irish; the contemporary glass of Cotter and Scanlon is definitely art but it is specifically based in a craft tradition.

CHAPTER 1





By the end of the 1900's in Britain, a generation of designers had found refuge and inspiration in Medievalism and the decorative arts of the Middle and Far East. The great instigator of the Arts and Crafts movement and part of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was William Morris along with John Ruskin, he had very precise theories about glass, identifying the two chief characteristics of Glass as

"Its Ductility when heated and its transparency when cold, both nearly perfect...All work in glass is bad which does not, with loud voices proclaim one or other of these great qualities." John Ruskin (5, p217)

The Arts and Crafts Movement believed in honesty of design and manufacture and a move towards hand-worked craftsmanship. Where glass was concerned it meant the skill of the blower could be seen in the final piece or in stained glass that care and consideration was taken in choosing and utilizing each section of glass to create the desired results.(FIG. 1 and 2)

There was an Irish Arts and Crafts Movement. The stained glass produced in the first 60 years of the twentieth century had a quality i.e. "small scale, jewel like colour, traditional technique" (38) which was characteristic of the ideology of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Edward Martyn was a revivalist and patron of Irish stained glass. His employment of Christopher Whall, (1849-1924) "a distinguished follower of William Morris" (10, p5), on a commission for the first 3 windows for the new Cathedral at Loughrea with the conditions that it should be executed in Ireland in such a way that Irish assistants could learn his craft was the first practical part in the revival of stained glass technique





FIG. 1 Jesse window in St Stephen's, St Peter Port, Guernsey. William Morris and Philip Web, 1864.



FIG. 2 Venetian Style manufactured in the late nineteenth century by Whitefriars. Glass Works, a London factory. The ductile quality of these pieces satisfied John Ruskin and William Morris.



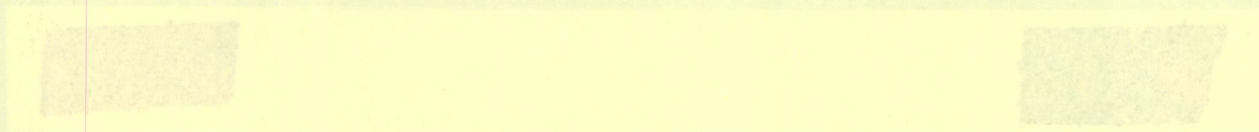
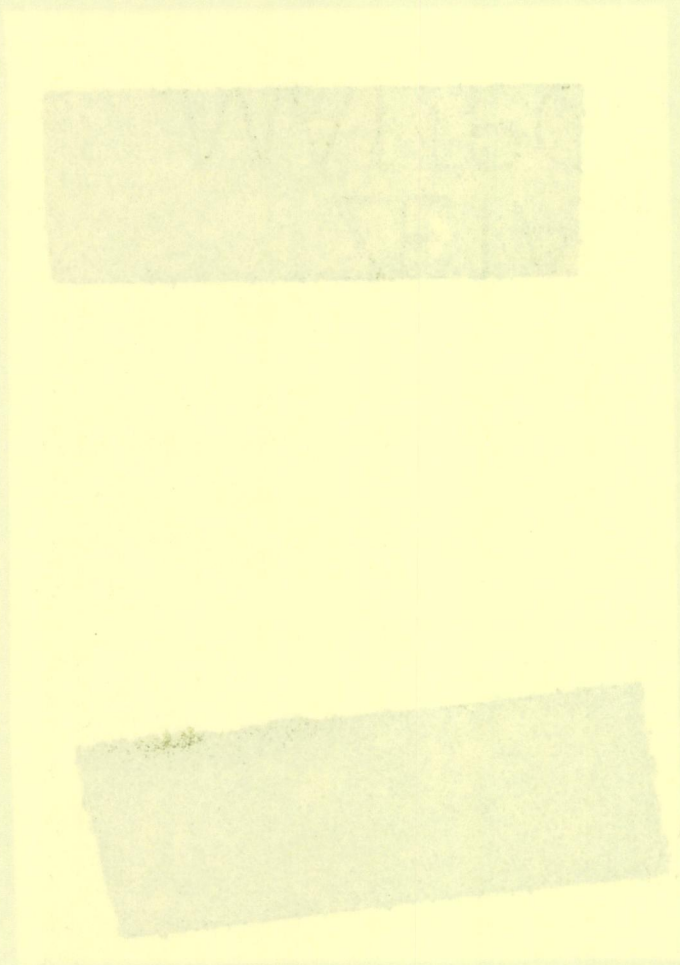






FIG. 3 A.E. Child by Kathleen Fox, a pencil sketch,  
drawn in stained glass studios at Dublin  
School of Art, 1906.





in Ireland and led to the foundation of stained-glass classes in the School of Art (1900) run by Alfred Child. Child arrived from Christopher Whall's "acclaimed Art and Crafts stained glass workshop in London". (10, p5) (FIG. 3)

Edward Martyn also advised Sarah Purser to set up an independent studio because of her great business capacity. This studio "An Tur Gloine" (The Tower of Glass) was set up as a co-operative where equipment and studios were provided for artists.

The Irish stained glass movement began to develop as the first generation of Irish artists trained at the School began to understand their medium and shed the influences of their teachers. These artists developed in individual environments, on independent projects and produced work which had unique characteristics.

The An Tur Gloine artists as well as Harry Clarke (1889-1931), were the main revivalists of the medieval principles of stained glass design in Ireland. They also left a foundation of the indigenous qualities to inspire the Irish artists who have followed them to continue working in glass including the contemporary James Scanlon and Maud Cotter.

The three most notable artists of the celtic revival period were Wilhelmina Geddes (1887-1955), Harry Clarke (1889-1931) and Evie Hone (1849-1955). All three realised the technical capabilities of glass, took account of the relationship of the glass to the architectural setting, and relearnt the value of lead as an independent pattern within stained glass design.

Wilhelmina Geddes' designs were based on the stylisation of figures, an interest in graphic work and the use of



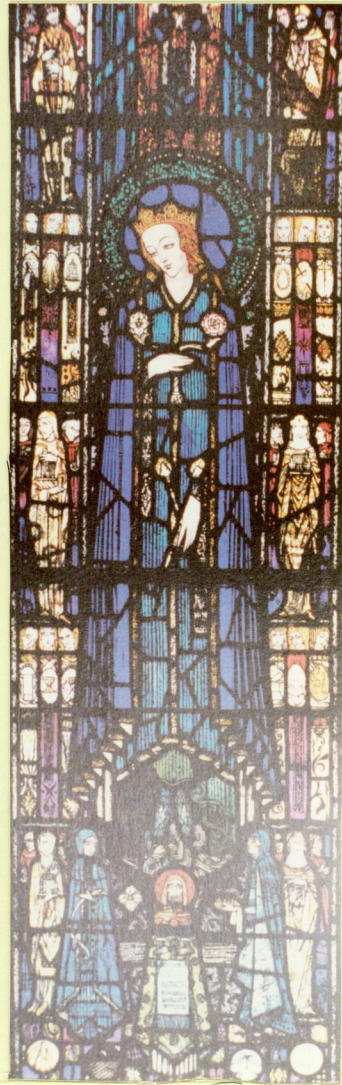


FIG. 4 The Virgin Mary, Mother of Sorrows, Honan Chapel, Cork, 1917. Harry Clarke.



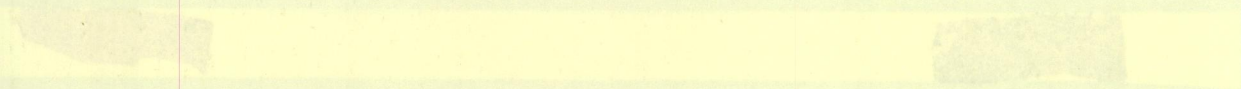






FIG. 5 The fate of the Children of Lir, Ulster  
Museum, Belfast, 1930. 33cm X 22.9cm.  
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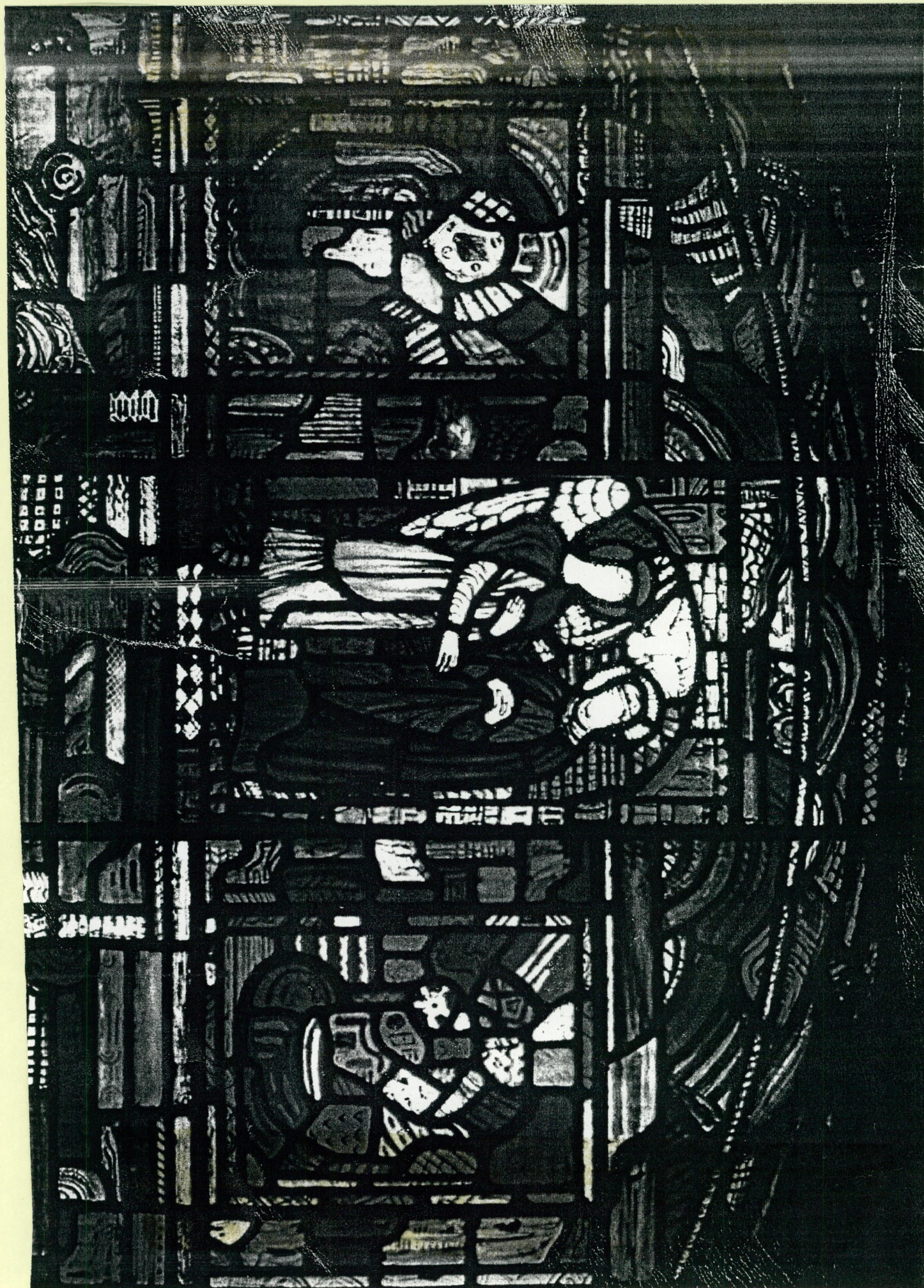


FIG. 6 The Annunciation and two abstract panels,  
Dundrum, Co Dublin, 1933/34. Evie Hone.



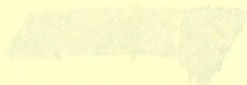
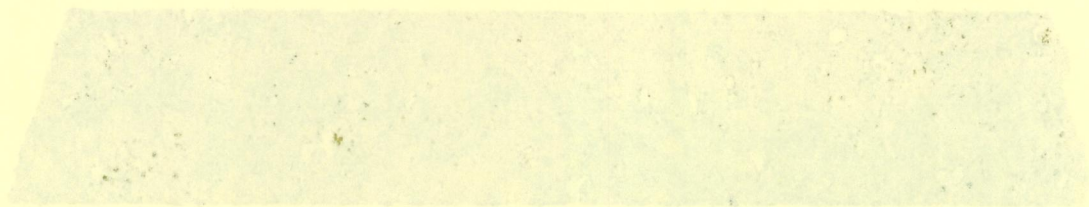






FIG. 7 The Souls did from their bodys fly,  
illustration of Coleridges the Rime of the  
Ancient Mariner, Pen and Ink, 1913. Harry  
Clarke.



F/G  
Harry Clarke

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strong black line. (FIG. 5) Her work became increasingly expressive as it matured and lead lines and brushwork became simpler and looser, comparable to her contemporaries like the Cubist painters.

Unlike Geddes or Hone, Clarke had a fundamental understanding of his material before his full-time art school training. (FIG. 4) He began working in his father's stained glass and ecclesiastical decorating business when he was fourteen. He won a scholarship to study full time at the Dublin School of Art between 1911-1913, and in France in 1914. He won the National Competition Gold Medal three years running with panels made during this time. Clarke was an outstanding illustrator as well as a successful stained-glass artist. His use of rich colour is distinctive, often mixing blues, purples, pinks and bright greens. He developed acid etching and treated glass as a conductor of coloured light. He was somewhat of a perfectionist, sometimes firing a single piece of glass several times over until he was satisfied. There is a certain lyrical quality about his work, and his use of colour and line show an influence of Beardsley's illustration and an interest in the bizarre and the exquisite. (FIG. 7) Clarke was interested in secular glass based on Irish literary themes as well as church art.

Evie Hone had been deeply involved in abstract art in Paris before she turned to stained glass in the 1930's, when she rejected abstract art and developed "methods of figurative composition". (10, p36) Hone was not particularly interested in acid-etching glass; she was more concerned with applying pigment and rubbing it off rhythmically with her fingers to control the light and depth of colour. (FIG. 6) Her colours were used appropriately to the mood of the piece. The overall effect was a simple and unsentimental representation.



She was influenced by medieval Irish carving and Byzantine Mosaics as well as Modern European stained glass and an expressionist treatment of glass.

During this period in Ireland a distinctively Irish style developed. There was a fusion of nationalistic ideals and artistic expression, founded on an interest in the vernacular and native traditions and materials as a basis for style. Because of Ireland's geographical position on the edge of Europe and as an island, our painting and sculpture developed parallel to European painting but with idiosyncrasies influenced by our unspoilt rural landscape, rich folklore and visual, oral and musical traditions. The quality of light in cloudy Irish skies was caught by the rich reds and blues used within the stained glass of the time. There was a strong constructive relationship between stained glass and painting and the work of Clarke, Geddes and Hone was exhibited along with the paintings, prints and sculpture of their contemporaries. This fact gave Irish glass a legitimacy within the fine arts even at this early stage and a public awareness and acceptance of glass within the fine arts in Ireland. This legacy has been left by Hone, Clarke and Geddes for artists like Cotter and Scanlon who have chosen to work within the medium. By 1955 and the death of many of the predominant stained glass artists of this generation, stained glass in Ireland had reached its peak, it was 30 years till the next generation had emerged.

By the 1960's in France and Germany a revival of stained glass had been established. After the second World War German architects rebuilt the churches that had been destroyed. The new architecture incorporated walls of stained glass and their designs dominated the buildings.





FIG. 9 Commission for William Skinner House, New York, 1905. Louis Comfort Tiffany.



Fig 9

Many were influenced by Anton Welding who was one of a number of pre-war 1960's German artists. In 1941 he engaged a young artist called Ludwig Scraffrach who was one of the greatest post-war stained glass artists in Europe.

The French artists Matisse, Braque and Leger created church windows at the same time. Theirs was not traditional ecclesiastical designs. The "Abstract and semi-abstract designed with a smattering of symbolism replaced the figurative approach" and the windows became recognised as art in their own right. (8, p158)

Alfred Manesser, who was called the greatest religious painter within abstractionism, designed stained glass for many modern concepts of stained glass in architecture, rather than as isolated windows.

The new methods of construction since the war and new materials available (eg. cement, glass and steel) meant the architecture of the 1950's onwards had a distinctively "modern" feel to it. Churches were no longer built to a traditional format and a slab-glass and concrete technique called dalle-de-verre was experimented with in France, England and Germany as well as America.

In America there had been little exciting development in stained glass since Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933) and John La Farge (1835-1910). (FIG. 9) Both Tiffany and La Farge were working with the medium of stained glass and experimenting with making opalescent glass. Tiffany is usually given credit for developing a glass formula which produced iridescent glass. Together with master craftsman Arthur Nash, Tiffany produced highly decorative, richly coloured, functional glass. Although the use of opalescent glass was as much a negation of



stained glass as enamel painting, it laid a foundation for a wider interest in stained glass on which to build in the twentieth century. Tiffany owned his own factory which specialised in high quality, expensive, functional and sculptural objects of glass. These traits were not unique to America; at the time other notable artists were producing designs to be made at their factories in different areas of glass. German glass of this period is best known for its imaginative use of enamelled decoration; Daum of France, refined the process of pate-de-verre. Rene Lalique (1860-1940) was a highly versatile artist who designed everything from jewellery to sculptural and functional glassware, and Emile Galle produced his famous cameo glass and rich multiple-layered glass which was carved and engraved.

The combination of new techniques and a new decorative language brought about fresh attitudes towards glass. These artists had expressed the natural beauty of glass not only in a decorative and sculptural sense but also in a decorative and sculptural manner. Their work had been important in the foundations of the new aesthetics by which glass had been judged.

But by the 1960's in America the need and fashion for highly decorative factory produced work had waned and the interest in glass as a medium to be used on a studio basis for a single artist had been explored.

The most important event which marked the advent of the International studio movement was the 1962 Toledo Workshops in Wisconsin.

The first workshop's objective was to gain additional experience in glassforming.

In 1966 the Toledo Museum had their "1st National

Invitational Glass Exhibition". The work included mosaic and flat glass and essentially blown work by the pioneers of the movement: Harvey Littleton (b.1922), Marvin Liposky (b.1938) and Dominick Labino (1910-1987).

Two years later in Europe an exhibition Four British School of Designs in Glass was organised by the Corning Museum in New York state. Participating colleges were the Royal College of Art in London, and the Art and Design Colleges of Birmingham, Stourbridge and Edinburgh.

This development of group exhibitions helped to inform and educate the public of the new developments in glass. It also contributed to a rift between crafted work and art which had not previously been encountered by artists who worked in glass. Artists like Harry Clark, Evie Hone and Wilhelmina Geddes had been exhibiting glass early in the century along with paintings and prints and their work had been accepted within these boundaries. Possibly, the statement that the Studio Movement made, of being a new form of art, made critics and public wary and prejudiced towards the new aesthetic they were asked to accept, and this made glass artists paranoid and defensive about their craft background. These facts contributed to a wearisome debate about whether or not glass can be art.

After this initial period of elation in the early 1960's followed a period of more reasoned artistry and technology in the 1970's and 1980's. The technological and artistic discoveries made meant new possibilities were opened in all types of glass with preference for warm and cold techniques. This rich technical vocabulary was used to make more artistic and personal statements and the art of contemporary glass became established. This was confirmed through glass education and gallery



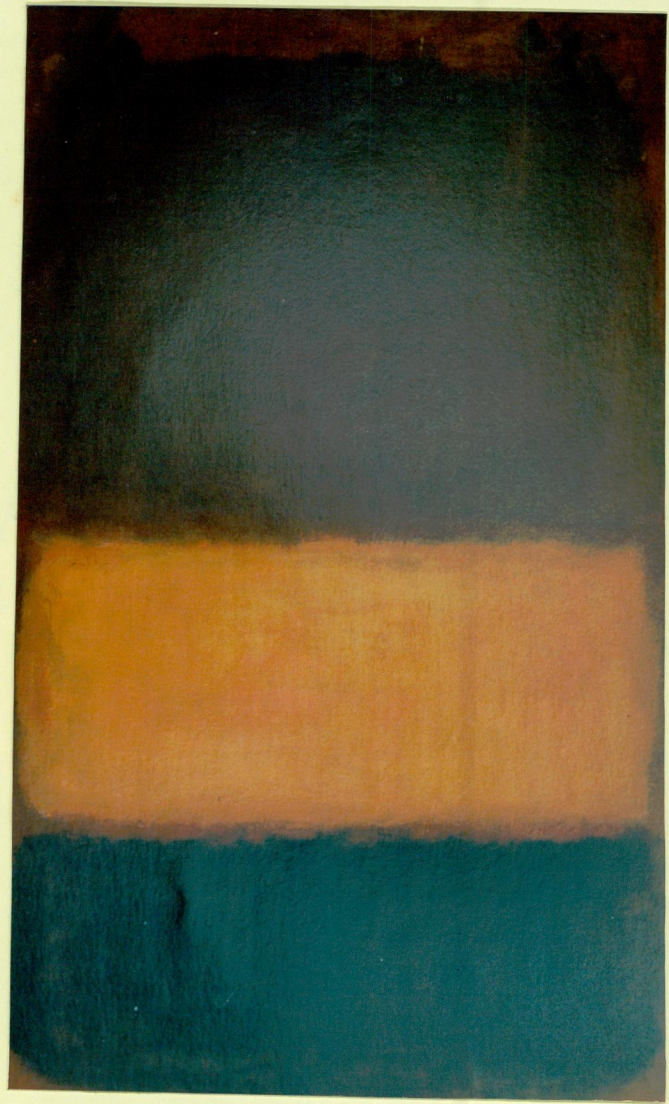


FIG. 10 Light Red over Black, 1957. Rothko.

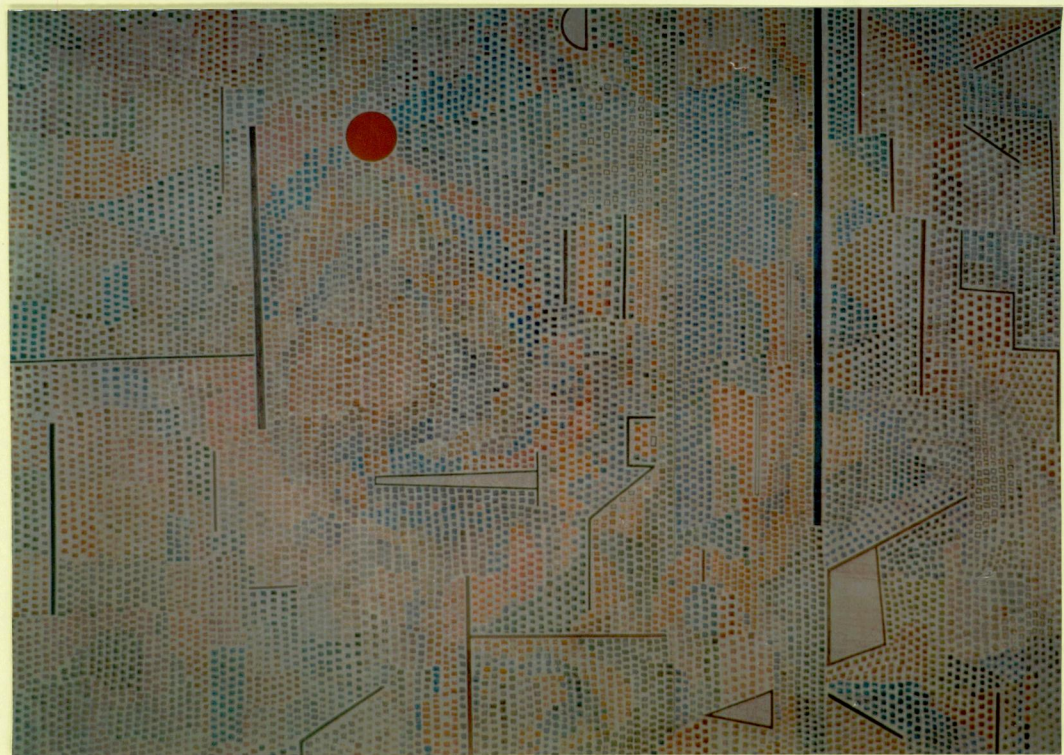


FIG. 11 The light and so much else. Watercolour and oil lacquer on canvas. Paul Klee.



Robbie Red on  
light black

LK 10

Paul  
Kle  
B7



interest.

This thesis so far has traced the emergence of glass art concepts this century. The relationship between Irish glass and European has converged and diverged throughout the twentieth century.

The development of Irish glass has been independent and in some ways different from American and European Glass.

The Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland had exhibitions between 1895 and 1925 which featured the work of artists/craftsmen and women who represented Irish expressionism. The legacy left by these early Irish artists was followed through by Patrick Pye (b.1929), Patrick Pollen (b.1928) and Helen Moloney (b.1926). Barry Moloney, the past principle of the Cork School of Art, supported Cotter and Scanlon allowing them to use a kiln for glass while still in college.

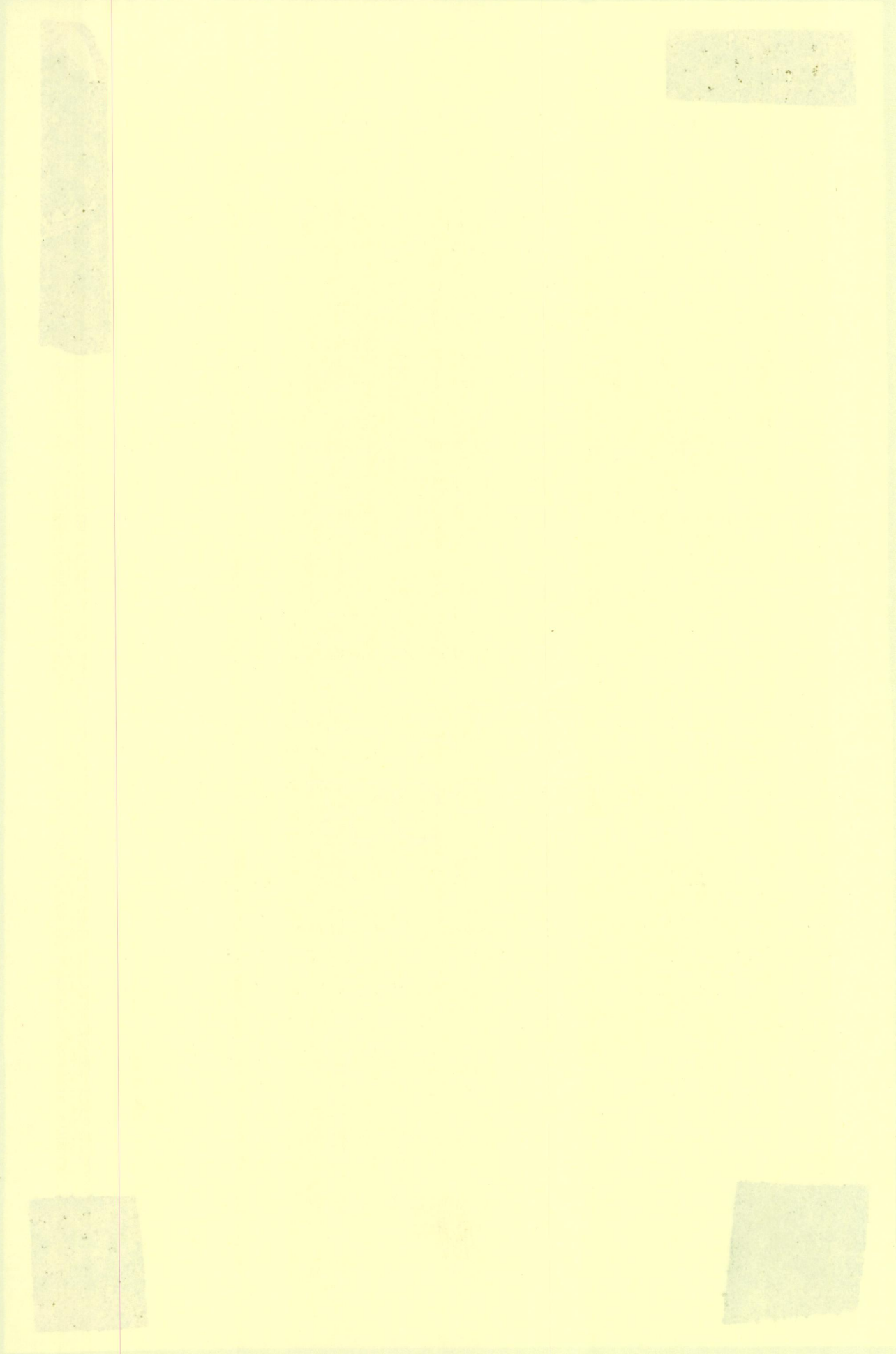
Both of these artists have developed their work from traditional stained glass into "imaginative works that are undeniably contemporary and forceful". (21, p44) They are conscious of the influence of Harry Clarke and Evie Hone within their work but also acknowledge Kandinsky, Klee, Rothko and Miro. (FIG. 10 and 11) They worked together at a preliminary stage. Then, having both gone through training in silver-smithing, glazing and a 4 year apprenticeship in the principles of glass technique, they no longer work together and have each developed their own methods of technically working with the material as well as the way which they have used glass environmentally. Scanlon has received a number of large and small commissions in Ireland and has received a great deal of support from the Arts Council. Cotter has been working towards three dimensional glass as well as working on architectural commissions and has received





FIG. 12    Tensile Miriads, 1982. Stained glass. Maud Cotter.





patronage from the Arts Council, the AIB and Local Authorities.

The first three-dimensional piece of Maud Cotter's that the AIB brought was Tensile Miriads (1982) which is now displayed in AIB's Bankcentre in Ballsbridge. (FIG. 12) Frances Ruane purchased it on the company's behalf because the piece was in a stand which allowed it to be viewed from both sides and it did not need a specific light source. The only reluctance that the Bank had in buying a piece of glass was that it needed a specific environment to be viewed in and it was for this reason that James Scanlon's work was not considered as appropriate.

Continued patronage within Ireland has allowed these artists' work to continue to mature and develop.

I will now discuss the work of Maud Cotter and then James Scanlon within their individual ways of working and compare and contrast their work with what is taking place in Europe and America.

The first fifty years of the twentieth century were years in which great changes occurred in glass and were formative years in the development of an Irish style. This was expressed not only in attitudes towards the material but also in the actual work executed. These years were to lay a solid foundation for a new form which has developed in contemporary Irish work.

## CHAPTER 2



James Scanlon sees what he does as "Painting with light" (40) and in the technical sense he is correct. Without refracted light passing through the glass, the colours of glass are deadened and when darkness falls stained glass windows die, unless they are artificially lit and viewed from the opposite side.

Because of this relationship with light the glass is affected and changes subtly or dramatically according to the time of day, seasons and weather, making this medium an ancient form of kinetic art. It also makes the medium itself difficult to work with and probably for this reason few artists have sought expression in glass, less still making their glass for an integrated architectural setting.

Scanlon has been quoted in the past as saying "the only valid criterion of success in relationship to his work is emotional". (30, p.14) The most recent work he has made has been site specific and in this way contextual.

His passionate interest in architecture and his awareness of the spiritual and seansual qualities of this atmospheric art have led him to try to create magical, self-contained worlds with glass through a series of commissions and a unique vision and approach to each specific site in which he will work.

Scanlon has been involved with glass as a medium since 1978. He trained in sculpture and film in the Cork School of Art after studying ballet and mime. After finishing college he set himself an apprenticeship to learn traditional glass technique and silversmithing for three years and then set up his own studio, in Cork.

The work that he produced for the Cork Glass Art exhibition (1986) with Maud Cotter was a series of





FIG. 13 Study No.2 for Miro, 52X27cm, Contemporary Arts Society; Cork Glass Art Exhibition, 1986. James Scanlon.

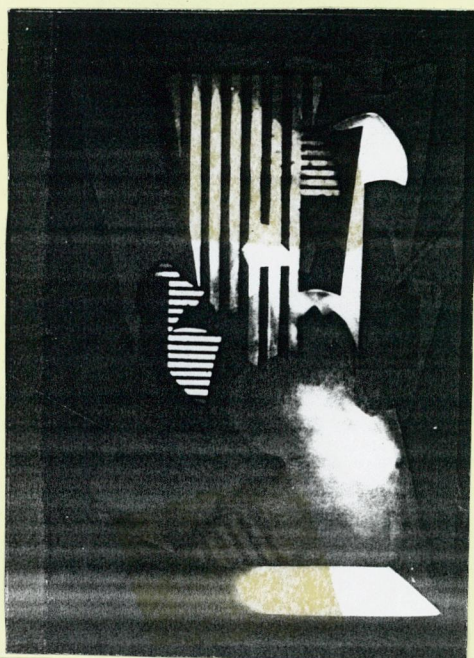


FIG. 14 Growth Cycle, 42cmX30cm, Collection of the Arts Council; Cork Glass Art Exhibition, 1986. James Scanlon.



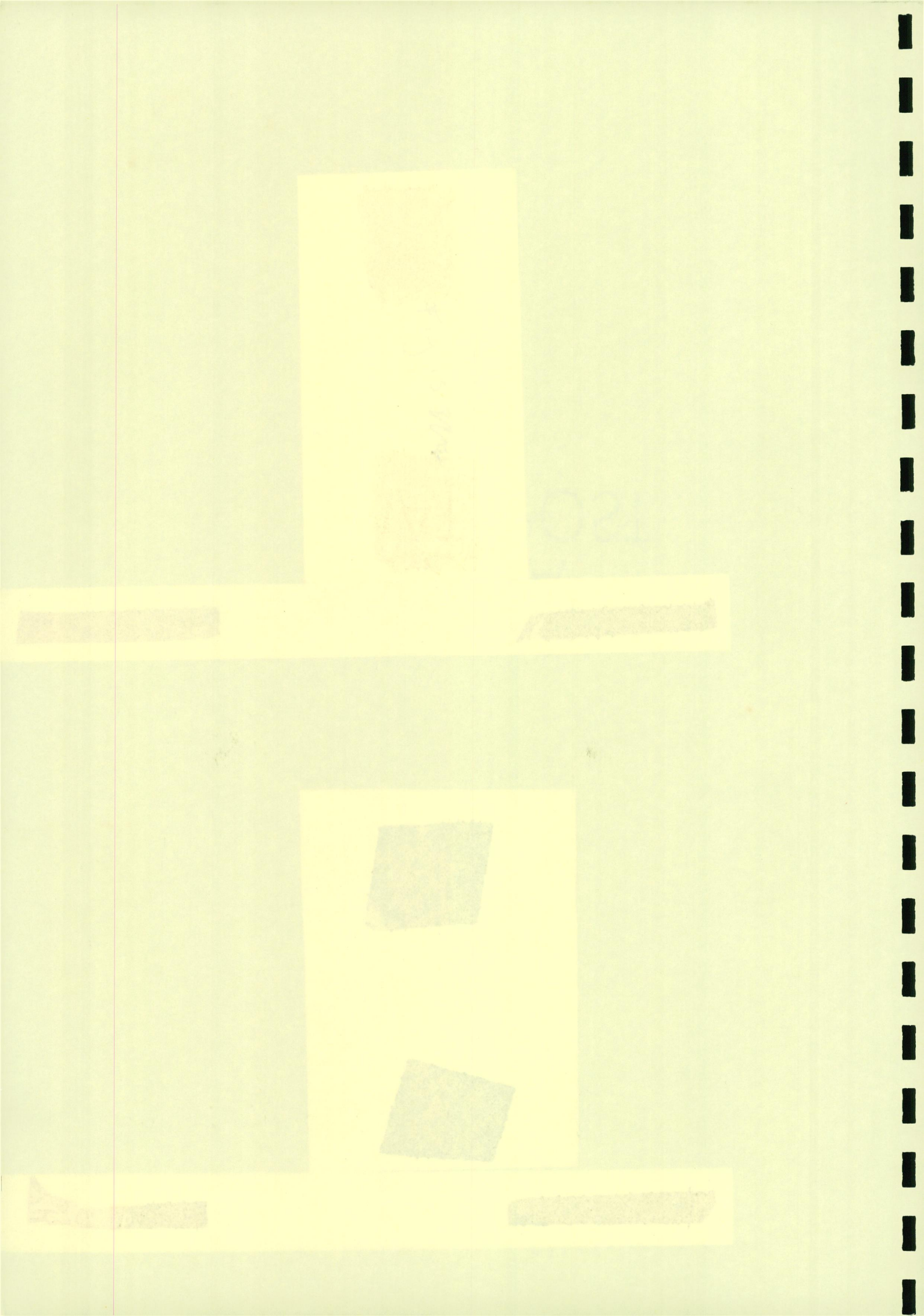




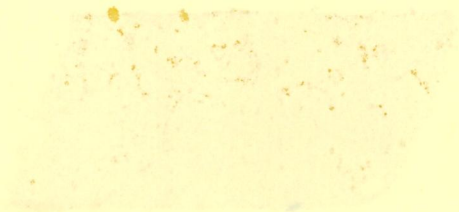


FIG. 15 Installation of the side chapel, 1990. Consisting of a 40ft high mobile of 10 blown glass and neon pendants 6-10' high, suspended above 25 blown glass and iron sculptures 6-15' high; Glass does not grow in the forest exhibition, 1990. Steve Tobin.



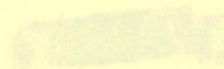
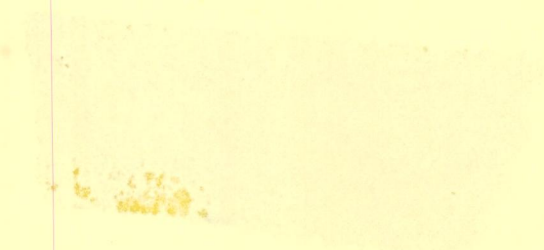
FIG. 16 Hommage a Picasso, group of 10, blown painted, enamelled, approximately 20" high; Glass does not grow in the forest exhibition, 1990. Eirwin Eisch.



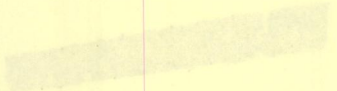


Steven Tobin

Tig 13



Erwin





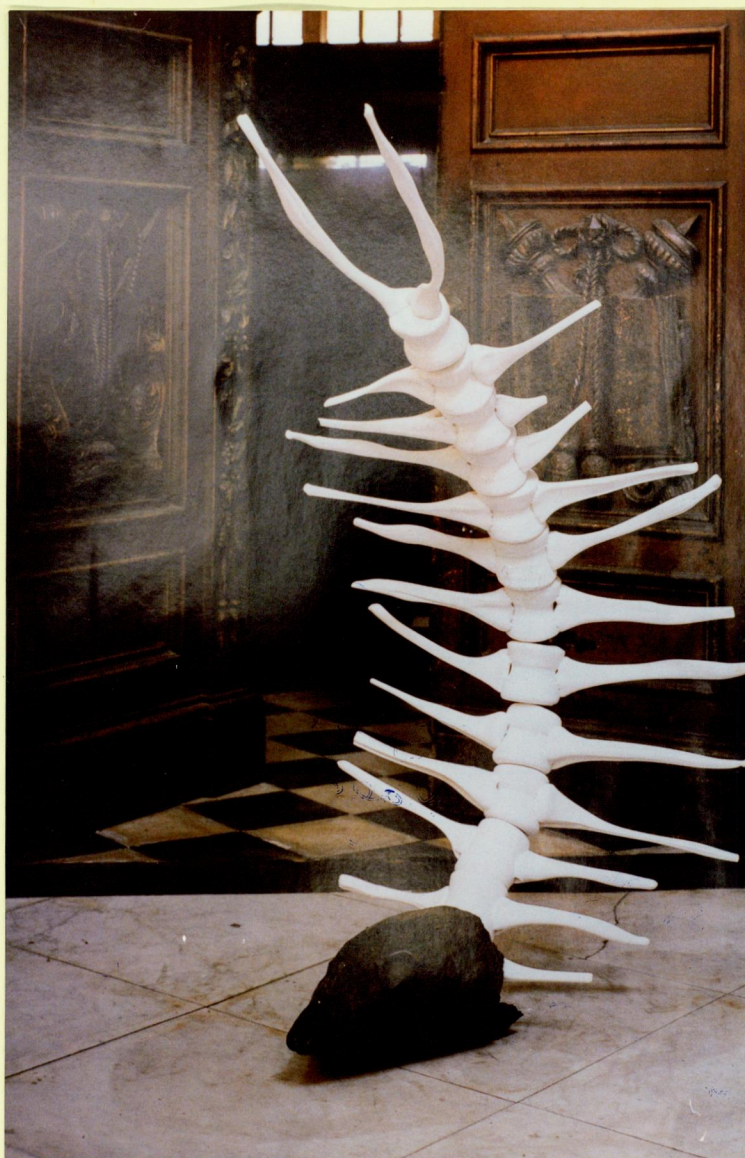


FIG. 17 Bone, 1990. Blown glass and iron, 5' high;  
Glass does not grow in the forest exhibition,  
1990. Densaburo Oku.



Fig 17  
Cones

Dendroica  
Chloris

"prayer book size" (22, p.28), intricately worked panels. (FIG. 13 and 14). "They have densely concentrated areas of ruby, blue and yellow that, although heavily worked are unpainted, unstained and unleaded". (31, p.14) His earlier use of mime to affect peoples moods was transferred to glass because of the unique qualities and intimate relationship with light that glass offered him. These panels verge on abstraction with suggestions of figuration and symbols of musical and organic activity. The colours, dominated by blues and reds, are cloudy and soft but held within a tight formal geometric framework. The forms and images although difficult to define have a very strong presence and are highly charged and emotional. They are best equated to music or dance and it is easy to relate them to his earlier work with mime.

In 1986 he expressed an interest in making kinetic pieces "that transmit sounds as you approached them" (30, p.17) but, as yet, he hasn't developed this idea. He has not been alone in the idea of using glass in a kinetic way; glass in the 1990's has been developed in installations, performances and as an environmental medium. In the summer of 1990 in the Church of St Augustine in Antwerp in Belgium, the international exhibition Glass does not grow in the Forest was held (FIG. 15, 16, 17)

The focus of the exhibition was glass, but it was unusual in location and format. Located in a deconsecrated Baroque church on a quiet side-street of Antwerp, the work of eleven artists from Belgium, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, the United States and Japan was presented in a striking "site responsive" collaborative installation." (19, p.32)

There was a high degree of abstraction in the exhibition



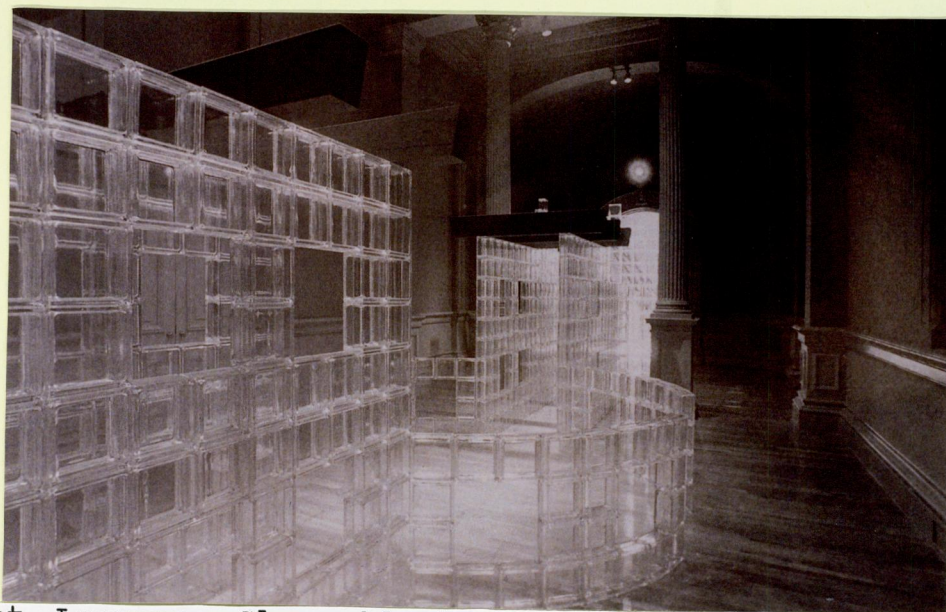


FIG. 18 Flight Lessons, Glass blocks, blown glass, wood; Glass Installations at the Renwick Gallery, 1991. Mark McDonnell.

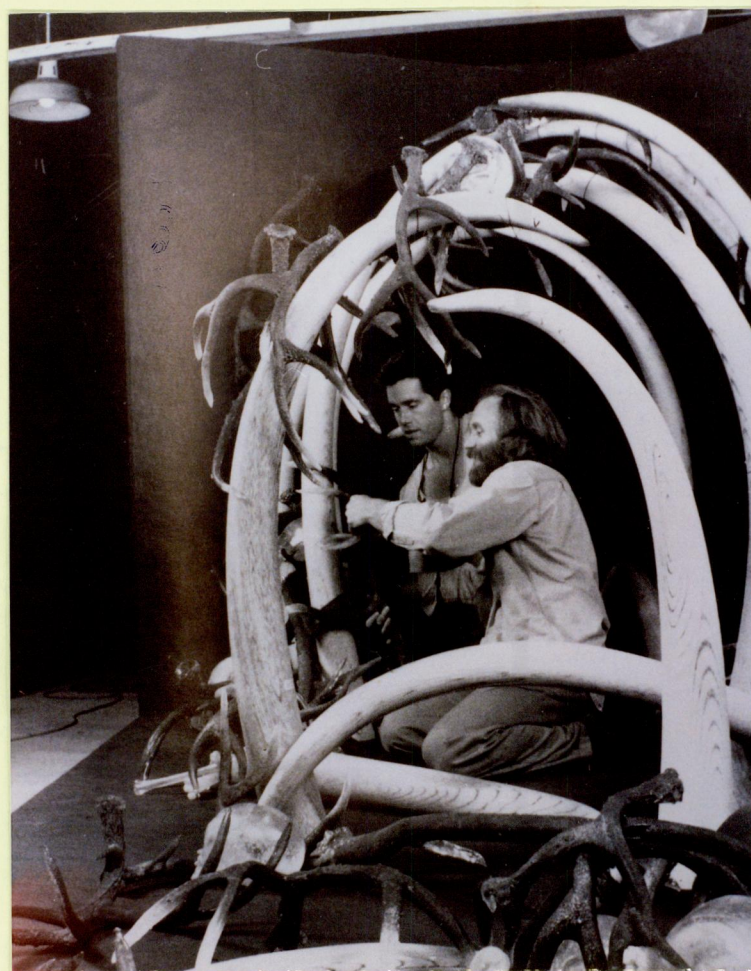


FIG. 19 Garnering, 1990. Glass, bone, gut; Glass Installations at the Renwick Gallery, 1991. William Morris.



Flight lessons

Harold Mc Donnell

Feb 18

Feb 19

Garnering 1793



and the relationship between vessels, bodies and houses as containers reflected the symbolic use of the figure and its associations, among the European artists. The pieces on exhibit were diverse, ranging from sandblasted panels dealing with sociopolitical subjects to blown vessels-based sculpture. This exhibition was of significance to the work of Scanlon because it questioned the current relationship that artists have with glass and highlighted the use of this unique material in a symbolic way by these European artists.

The Americans are also experimenting with glass installation exhibitions. At the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute, seven artists exhibited work from November 9th to April 14th 1991. (FIG. 18, 19, 20) The artists in this project felt they had made a fundamental departure from the studio glass movement and reject the conventional craft orientation of concern with the material properties of glass itself and are more concerned with the ideas expressed by their works.

To a large extent the attitude to glass expressed in these peoples work is more about creating sculpture in a medium which they have been trained to understand rather than allowing themselves to be reduced to just exploring the beauty of their medium. The aim of the glass within the work is to serve the artist as a material within the sculpture they create. (11)

The work of both Maud Cotter and James Scanlon has been accepted within Irish fine-art circles and their use of craft/technique based materials had not affected their status or limited the commissions or praise they have received. Within an international context perception of glass as a medium "graduating" from craft to fine art has been raised by critics and artists alike. The first Toledo Workshops (1962), showed a split in viewpoints





FIG. 20 Standing Figure 1984. Cast glass, metal base, height 61cm, based 61X51cm. Clifford Rainey.



Fig 20

Clifford Rainey  
Standing figure

between the artists and craftsmen. Artists "in search of form... content to push glass in new directions rather than master technique, and that of the craftsman, who strove to create a perfectly executed functional object from the least glass possible". (6, p.11)

The introduction of other materials used with glass since the 1970's by artists like Clifford Rainey has meant that work is veering towards a formalised use of glass as sculpture. (FIG. 20)

Rainey has been making and teaching glass in Britain since the 1970's. He has combined cast glass, with painted sheet glass and metal to create strong images that deal with tensions and evoke a reaction that is not always pleasant. His use of glass as a means to an end to create a reaction relates well to Cotter's use of glass which she has found "directly attacks your nervous system" (36) and "the only criterion of success James Scanlon thinks valid in relation to his work is emotional. (21, p.14) Rainey's work has used glass in a very sculptural way and his career success has helped a "formalisation of glass as a fine art medium". (4, p.156)

In 1977 a group of British artists set up an association. British Artist in Glass (BAG) which served as a common institution to which all artists interested in glass could participate and exchange techniques.

The formalisation of glass has also been helped by public awareness through exhibitions and expansion of Associations, Organisations (British Artists in Glass - BAG) and Publications (Neus Glass).

The first opportunity for artists, educators, curators, collectors, art dealers and the general public to see



the most up-to-date assortment of glass was in 1979, when the Corning Museum of Glass presented New Glass a Worldwide Survey. This was an open competition to any glass-worker or company making any kind of glass anywhere to exhibit in an exhibition which travelled in the USA, Europe and Japan for three years.

This exhibition showed some interesting changes from previous surveys. There was a departure from factories to established designers working independently and a growing number of artists attracted to glass as a studio medium.

This exhibition was important in the break from traditional industrially based glass, and it gave rise to other international exhibitions with more specific briefs. Sculptural Glass was held in 1983 in Tucson Museum of Art. This exhibition showed a jump from small tablesize objects to environmental sculptures. Other exhibitions centred in themes such as the figure, functional design and architectural collaborations.

The role of glass in the context of decorative objects was overshadowed by its exciting role as a major ingredient within the International Modernist Style. Modernism crystallised in the 1920's, inspiring a new spirit in architecture and design appropriate to the machine age. Glass and steel were the key ingredients in design which ranked function without abandoning stylishness and rejecting decoration. Glass for the first time was used dramatically in architecture, in interior design and design of furniture and light-fittings. Modernism was first established in Germany and France, in the Bauhaus and in a loosely-knit group which included Le Corbusier and which in the 1930's was to form the Union des Artistes Modernes. To the Modernists glass meant light, space and optimism. The style found





FIG. 21 Icon chapel, Glenstal Abbey, Limerick, 1987.  
James Scanlon.

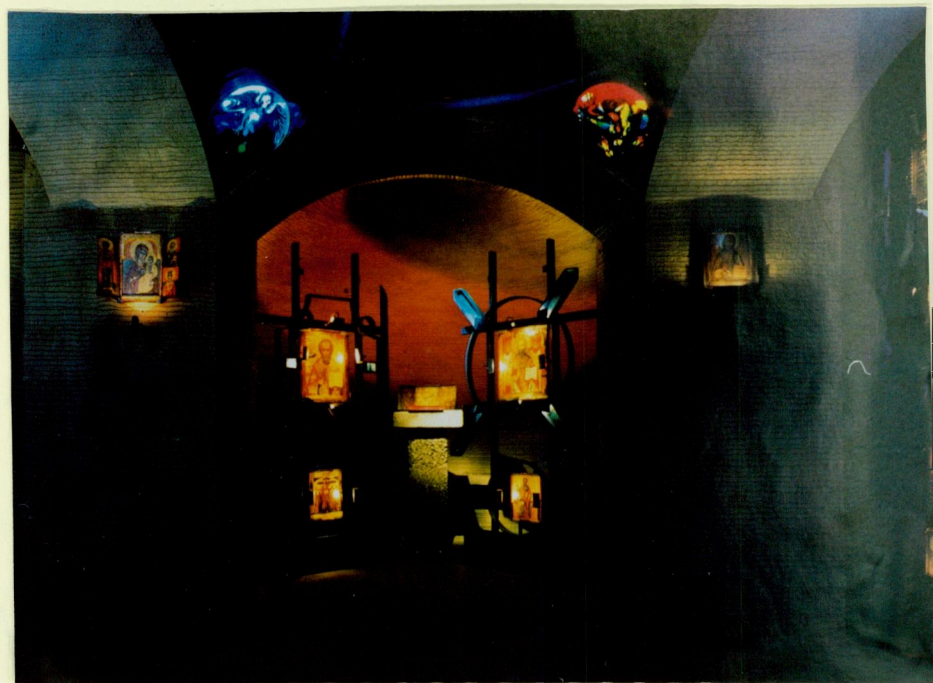


FIG. 22 Icon chapel, Glenstal Abbey, Limerick, 1987.  
James Scanlon.



FIG 21

Handwritten label

James Barber

FIG 22

Handwritten label

James

Barber



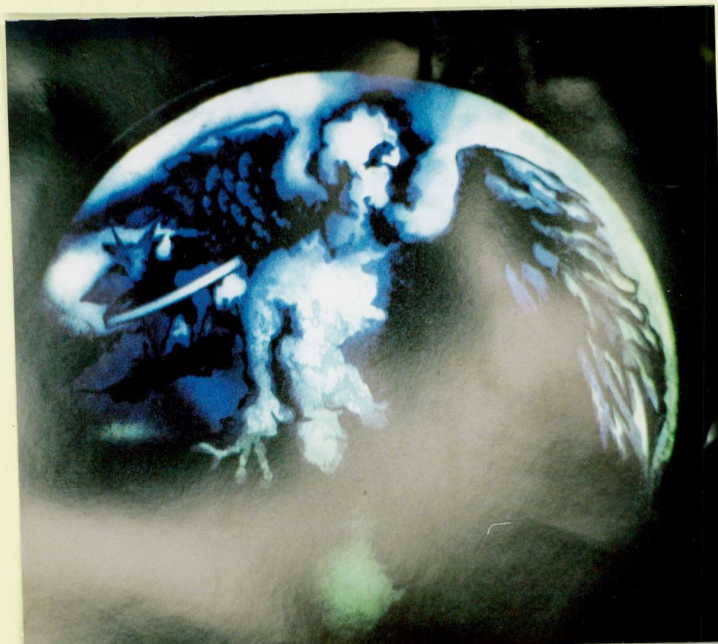


FIG. 23 Icon chapel, Glenstal Abbey, Limerick, 1987.  
Detail of the evangelist tondos. James Scanlon.



FIG. 24 Icon chapel, Glenstal Abbey, Limerick, 1987.  
Detail of the evangelist tondos. James Scanlon.



Fig 24

Fig 23



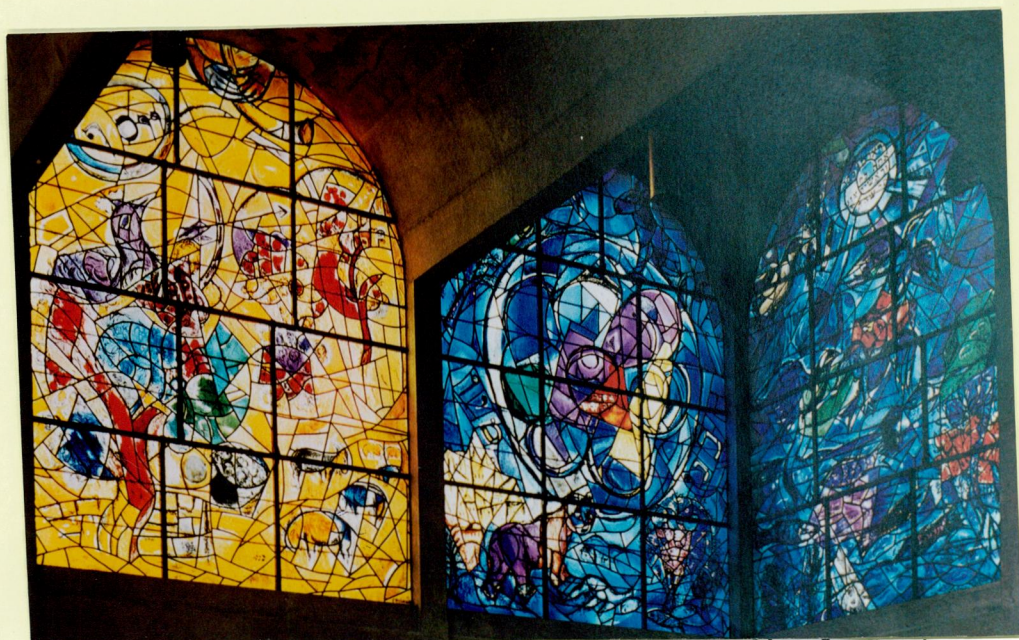


FIG. 25 Hadassah - Hebrew University Medical Centre, Israel, 1962. (Twelve windows representing the tribes of Israel). Tribe of Joseph (left), Tribe of Benjamin (centre), Tribe of Reuben (right). Marc Chagall.



FIG. 26 Sobre Papel, 1972. Joan Miro.



Have Chogull

FG 23

Hadamah

File 26

John West  
Soc. Sec. Dept.

international popularity, especially, in the USA where steel reinforced buildings were tentatively being pushed skywards.

The enormous destruction wrought in Germany by the war meant a massive rebuilding programme whose scale and speed encouraged experiments in architecture and decoration.

Scanlon has been developing an interest in essentially the atmospheric qualities of the art. These priorities are ones which Scanlon has worked when he designed the small icon chapel at Glenstal Abbey, Limerick (1987) with the architect Jeremy Williams. (FIG. 21 to 24) Along with the small stained glass panels representing the four Gospel writers, he designed the floor, the lighting and the mood of the chapel to reflect the theme of the Passion.

Scanlon admires the way Chagall worked with the Jerusalem windows. (FIG. 25) In 1962, Chagall produced 12 windows for the Hadassah Medical Centre in Jerusalem. He avoided portraying the human figure because it is forbidden in Judaic art. He used symbols and animals with human characteristics. Scanlon admires this rich symbolism and the fact that he has retained the natural luminosity and brilliance of handmade glass. "When one takes a sheet of handmade glass off the racks, it has innate qualities. Then you go through the processes of putting a message on the piece of glass, it is extremely uppermost not to sacrifice the glass to the idea. This is when Chagall comes out on top." (42, p.1)

Scanlon says he has been influenced by Miro's "honesty" in his symbolic painting. (FIG. 26) The "ease and simplicity" through which Poliakoffs "compositions" seem to slip into place. The "musicality" of Kandinsky's



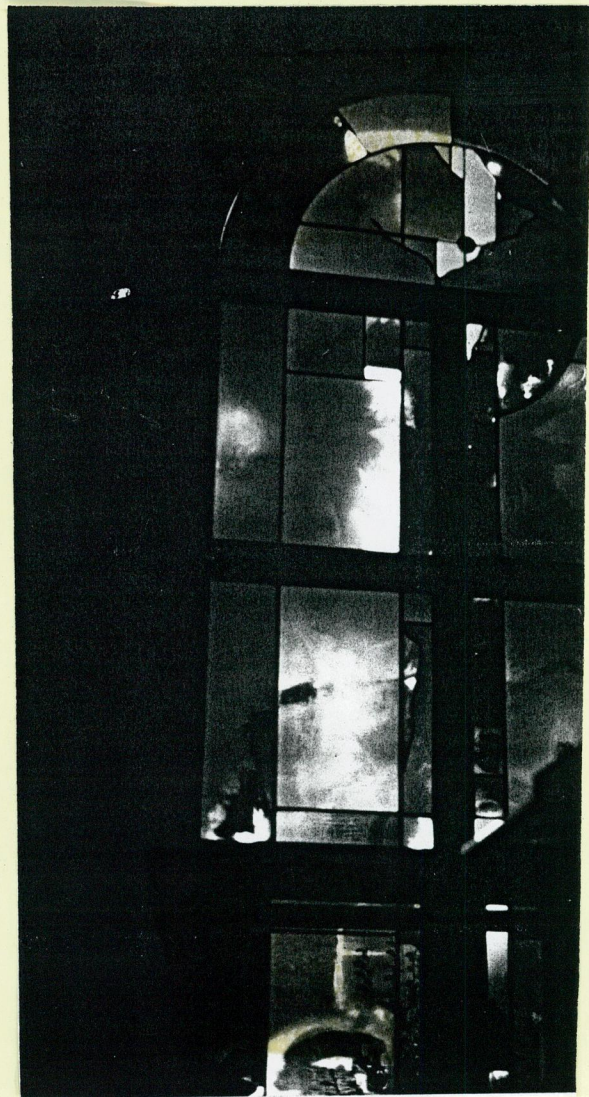


FIG. 27 Share Buildings, Grattan Street, Cork, 1988.  
Detail of Stairways. James Scanlon.



FIG. 28 Share Buildings, Grattan Street, Cork, 1988.  
Upper Room. James Scanlon.





Shore Buildings  
James Scallan.  
Feb 22



later painting, which give him encouragement to carry on with his own symbolic language in glass and Rothko whom he believed has "redefined a century of painting: if Monet began painting as we know it today; he feels Rothko brought that area of painting to an end.

In 1989 Scanlon was given a £10,000 commission for the windows in the Share Complex in Grattan Street, Cork. In 1989 it was awarded the Plan Building of the year Award. The architect Neil Hegarty allocated a specific amount of money to be integrated for art within the building, in the initial plans of the building. The buildings are flats and homes for homeless old people and local authority houses, separated and laid out around two courtyards. The windows are placed on two walls of a corner that is to become a major roadway and will be a main focus as you pass through the city. (FIG. 28 to 30)

Scanlon made five windows for this project, three stretch two stories in height, measuring 18ft X 4ft. One window in a room directly above the glass door to the street is 8ft square and a fifth window on the opposite wall of this room is 8ft X 4ft. The windows are 3 basic colours, green, blue and red.

The succession of colours from green, back to green creates a unity among the five windows, and it is possible to view at least part of them from the small meeting room. They must be viewed from inside by daylight and from outside by night (because the ESB lights them free of charge to the City).

The project gave Scanlon the chance to use the glass itself to define a space; from the upper room you are surrounded by nothing but the glass as a light source. This place that he has created is a very quiet,

contemplative controlled environment.

The first panel is the stairs. This panel is continued from the ground floor up two flights of stairs. Because there is very little working of the glass with paint and quite a lot of etching, it allows a lot of light in and the stairs are not darkened. The predominantly green, heavily etched flashed-glass makes use of vivid, energetic brush-strokes but the corner is held in strong, formal, geometric frames and the greenness is framed by blue, interspersed with yellow and red. The yellow is used sparingly as it allows light in and focuses attention on itself. The leading takes a secondary role in the sense that it has a purely functional form rather than an aesthetic one, contributing to the all over affect.

The next panel is basically ultramarine blue. The purpose of this panel is as a shrine. The design follows an axial format consisting of basic geometric shapes. The simple linear structure is contradicted by the intense painting, intelligent use of colour and the apparently erratic interspersions of red. This window pulsates with life and energy. It is supposed to signify the religious Christian theme behind the share projects to people who pass by the buildings without using the representation of the cross as a symbol.

The large window above the door has different dimensions than the aforementioned windows. Scanlon has used lead within the window in the decorative style of Johannes Schreier as well as purely structurally. The inside section is the same dimensions as the other windows, mainly blue it is heavily etched and there are small inclusions of pink and yellow pieces of glass. The majority of the window and the other perimeter is a white semi-transparent wispy glass, which permits a



great deal of light.

Scanlon thinks that Schriether brought a simplicity back to the work of stained glass. He put stained glass into a modern architectural setting and he also rescued the lead line from centuries of disguise and insignificance making it an equal partner in the art of stained glass source, thus illuminating the interior wall faces with their reflective colour. These last two windows, influenced and made after Scanlon had seen the famous Chartes Cathedral, were the last two made.

The sublime impact of the windows of Chartes Cathedral is due to the extensive stained glass within the same tonal range and is undisturbed by any nearly white light source. Some of the most striking figure windows are the mid-twelfth-century masterpieces in the Cathedrals such as Notre Dame de le Belle Vevriere. This window was installed in the choir when the cathedral was rebuilt, and is now surrounded by thirteenth-century angels. This cathedral is a perfect architectural environment for stained glass - a giant black box with virtually all its apertures filled with coloured glass. (7, p.64)

Scanlon tried to reflect Chartes by using small fragmented glass pieces that create a controlled, light environment. One of the windows represents landscape imagery because many of the people now occupying these buildings would have originated from the country and might never again see the real countryside. "...chunks of fields and hedges and bushes and sky landscape". (40) The small grey meeting room is the centre of the glass area.

The other window (which is predominantly red), Scanlon claims is an attempt to recreate a presentation window in a butchers shop. "The pieces are hacked up like meat"

(40) and displayed: "You get an animal hack him up skin him cut him up and the butcher lays him out in the window". (40) The effect of this red window also visually pushes the two surrounding green windows apart.

A private commission that he undertook during this time was a relatively small commission for a memorial window in Frankfield Church of Ireland, Cork.

He was commissioned to make a memorial window approximately fourteen foot long by three foot wide. As it is the only stained glass window in the church he opted to divide three windows in the church and replace the middle third of each with his panel. His panels are fourteen foot long by one foot wide.

One is predominantly blue, one red and one green. They blend well into the atmosphere of the church, this is helped by the fact that, at each side of his work are the original trellised sections.

The cross-bar structure of clear transparent glass allows a great deal of harsh light and the images of the transient outside world of trees and cars filter through. Scanlon's contributions do not impose themselves.

The designs are increasingly abstract and emotionally responsive. He explained the images of blue are "like water", red a "warm colour" and green like "fields". In each window there is a predominant colour with a complementary colour and a hint of a third colour. The seemingly random inclusion of yellow glass in each window allows a break up of the coloured light emanating from each large panel.

The liquid, fiery, and luxuriant atmosphere are focused



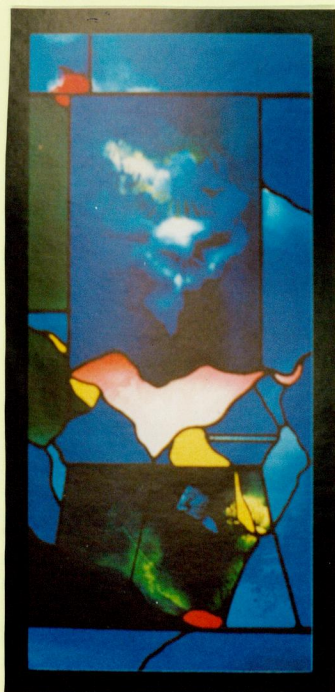


FIG. 29 Gleann Na Luachra, Triskel Arts Centre, 1985.  
James Scanlon.



Fig. 29





FIG. 30 Sneem, Co Kerry, environmental sculpture, 1988. James Scanlon.

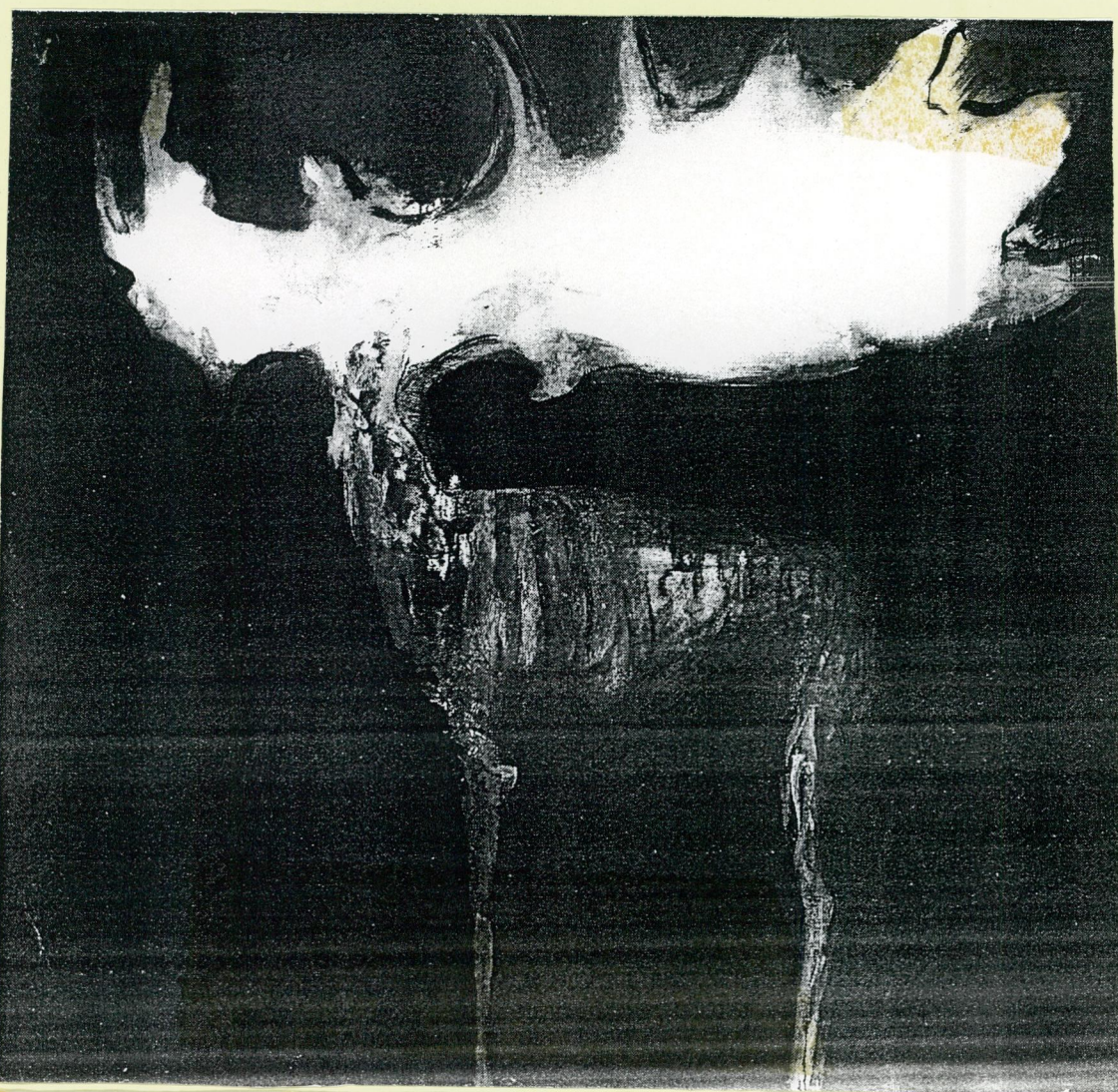


FIG. 31 Magacarus Hibernius, 1983. Barrie Cooke.



Fig 30



because these small holes in the canvas of glass allows controlled light to pour through.

From meeting him I got a very strong, positive impression of a far from typical Irish man. He has been successful in presenting himself and the objects he makes in a semi-romantic Irish way. His interest in indigenous culture has been an important long standing theme in all his work. From the title of his Triskel piece Gleann na Luachra (Glen of Rushes) (1985) (sponsored by New Ireland Assurance Company) in his native tongue, to the references to Irish architecture in the land structures in (Co. Kerry, 1989, sponsored by the Arts Council) his work is rooted within a particularly Irish culture. (FIG. 39)

Many Irish artists have investigated and assessed the definitions of their cultural identity.

Scanlon's obvious impulses to create something Irish are returned by an impulse in the opposite direction to create something which is not kitsch. He has no desire to create monuments to "the holy grail of Real Ireland". (22, p. 51) His direct response is to ordinary people, the community and his "attempt to rework old myths and materials from the vantage point of the contemporary work". (22, p.50) He does not claim to have a unique view of Ireland or a unique insight into our culture. (FIG. 30)

Over the past few years, at the close of the 80's in Ireland there were a number of exhibitions which tried to assess and evaluate Irish art, within the 80's. A New Tradition, Irish Art of the Eighties, The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Sept 1990-March 1991. Strong Holds, New Art from Ireland, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 1991. In a State - an exhibition in Kilmainham Gaol on National Identity





FIG. 32 Sweeney meets Allan, 1983. Brian Bourke.



FIG. 33 Dogon Series 3. Mick Mulcahy.





March-April 1991. These exhibitions could not have been said to represent all the work that has been produced by Irish artists in the 1980's, nor could it be said to represent all the artists who have produced work in Ireland in the 1980's. Nonetheless most had a specific theme and angle to view Irish art from and tried to represent art from this angle.

Irish people seem to incessantly try to assess the definitions of their cultural identity. The Celtic revival of the 1900's devotes a key period in Ireland's cultural history and its participants sought a distinctive visual manifestation of national aspiration in the turbulent years before the establishment of a Freestate in 1922. (35, p.21)

This period of our history is also a turbulent, unsettling time. The part Ireland plays in the European Community and in the single European Market this year calls for a transition, even though we are still struggling with our north and south - divided country and nationalism. "The question of nationality is still raw, still in some respects untouchable". (35, p.11) The "Irish experience" (29, p.55) is not only tied to the dominant political and social unrest but also to indigenous mythologies tied to our Celtic cultural identities. At the turn of the century W.B. Yeats turned to Irish mythology in a search for Irishness.

The old celtic themes and stories within Barrie Cooke's (Magcicarous Hibernius, 1983) and Brian Bourke's (Sweeney meets Alan, 1983) paintings can seem thoroughly divorced from everyday existence unless they are treated with irony. (FIG. 31 and 32) The works of Michael Mulcahy on the other hand are flamboyant examples of new "Irish Art" (32, p.81) that lack any sense of irony. (FIG. 35) Mulcahy now works with paint and canvas and



regards himself as a visionary and seer (32, p.81) drawing inspiration from his travels in Africa and Australia. Mulcahy sees himself as an intermediary between our everyday existence and this primitive existence which is closer to his spirituality. James Scanlon's image is comparable to Michael Mulcahy's image of Celtic Shamen.

Scanlon has been a performance artist working with both mime and film. He has tried to identify with the "past" and by using conscious references to symbols and myths given comparatively little intellectual analysis and adopted an emotional approach to societies problems. He has dealt with his cultural identity by using it with the contemporary images of expressionist painting, questioning the need for figuration and moving towards abstraction. He has returned to Ireland's ancient roots and delved into his own psyche.

I would be cynical just as Robert Ballagh is of artists "constantly.... presenting.... re-interpretation of our history with the primary purpose of reinforcing our present". (35, p.21) If I did not feel that there is a current need for escapism from the repressive social, political and religious time in which we exist and this makes an alternative national identity valid as long as it is not "transformed into a popular icon" (35, p.21) for our present day.

Scanlon is aware that traditionally there is not an Irish Fine Arts tradition and feels that Ireland's art tradition is based in music and writing to produce the strength of feelings they portray.

He feels Ireland has a "freshness" that is no longer present in Europe, but his introspective response to the work around him is not, he claims, a reaction to Europe.

He claims to be quite unaware of what's happening in the European Studio Glass movement and this distance has I feel allowed to him a freedom to develop in his own way.

Scanlon's interest in the use of glass environmentally but realistically in architecture was stimulated by attending the "Glass in the Environment Conference" in 1986 in London. The conference addressed the issues of the use of glass in the environment through the discussion of problems of decoration and integration of craftsmanship and design and of what the artist conceives aesthetically as well as the practical problems of "space-making" and building for architects. (34, p.7)

The conference generated discussions on the role of decoration, the problems of technology and the different scales on which artists' work, patronage and the fact that to be given the opportunity to design you must find a good patron. The attitudes of the artist and the architect were obviously different but the conference gave both an opportunity to listen to each other and possibly to understand a little more about each other. The crisis of incorporating art into buildings was addressed and the conference hoped to lead to integration and collaboration of the artist with the architect.

The conference was three days long and architects, artists, art-critics and businessmen discussed the problems and their opinions of the medium. The Conference was organised by the Royal College of Art, by the Crafts Council in Britain to stimulate the use of glass within the environment.

Scanlon was influenced by the conference. He began to understand the use of glass environmentally and its



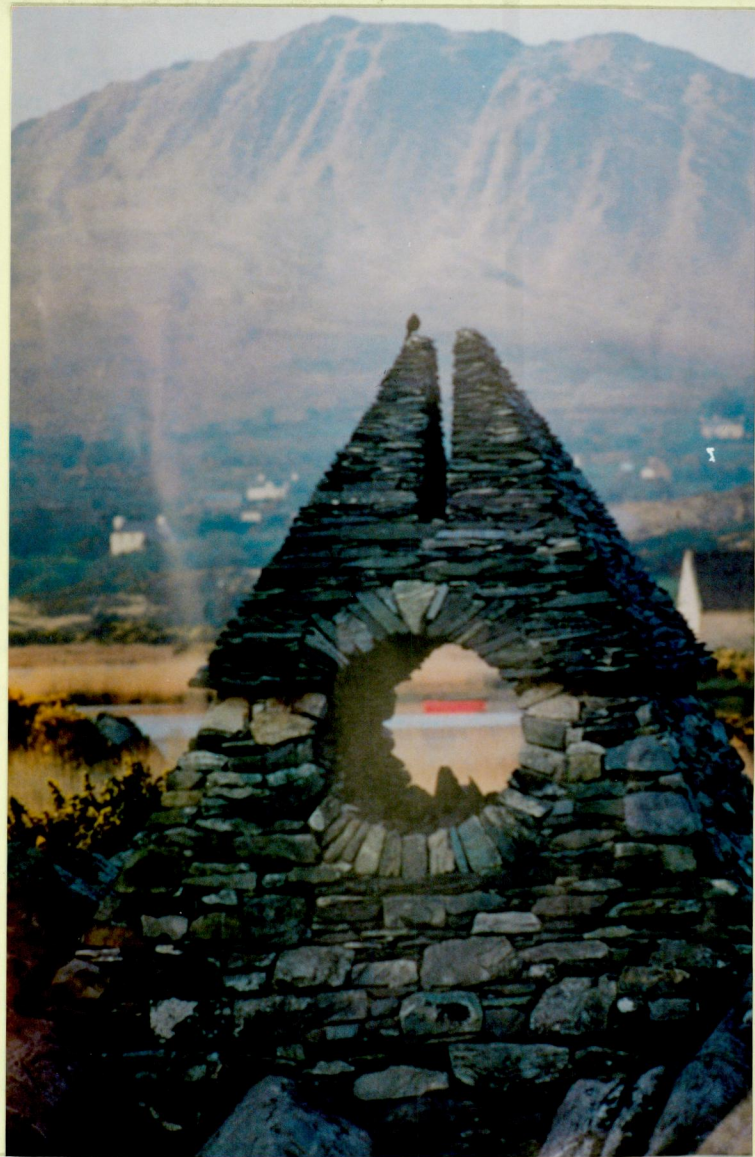
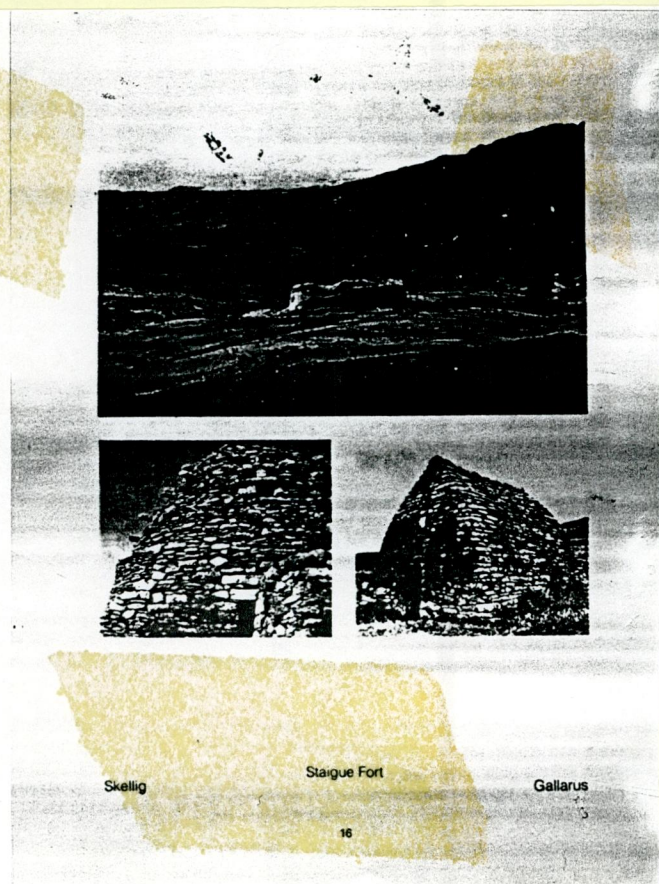


FIG. 34 Sneem, Co Kerry, environmental sculpture, 1988. James Scanlon.

FIG. 35 Stellig, Staigue Fort, Gallarus.





Handwritten text on a small piece of paper at the top left.

Fig 34

1931-32-33

NEW  
EZ

Handwritten text on a piece of paper in the middle left.

Small piece of paper with handwritten text.

Small piece of paper with handwritten text.

Small piece of paper with handwritten text.

Small piece of paper with handwritten text.

Small piece of paper with handwritten text.



employment within an architectural environment. He has employed his skills within a number of architectural environments since, also in a sculptural landscape setting in Sneem, Co Kerry, (1990) sponsored by the Arts Council with a budget of £5,000.

The focus of this project was also the "creation of a place rather than an artwork" (22, p.24) and it has been widely supported and acclaimed not only internationally but also among the local people of Sneem. It draws inspiration from Staigue Fort, Gallerous Oratory, a series of small meditation cells and the local peoples understanding of stonework, drainage and ditches. (FIG. 35) The final installation is made up of four separate stone structures, two pools and three mounds of earth, "set among the rock strata with the fissures levelled off in vertically laid slate". (25) (FIG. 34) It has also been a success not only because of his public acclaim but also because of the amount of involvement with the local community.

It has allowed him to develop the personal aesthetic which he has carried into his glass work. For Scanlon the process is the same, whatever the material. He is unquestionably aware of the environment his work occupies. The criterion of success is no longer just emotional.

His work has reached a maturity which understands the potential of glass to create a place rather than just be an elitist art object. His aesthetic has achieved the use of glass as painting with light and using this light to create an environment to which we respond. He has also achieved acceptance within fine-art circles of Ireland even though he uses craft based materials.



CHAPTER 3





The present generation of glass artists' work falls within two traditions; the decorative arts tradition which explores the visual delights that the material can offer and the fine art tradition that explores the powers of expression in more adventurous artistic terms.

The glass artist must produce work which explores the powers of expression of the medium in order to compete and flourish with a contemporary art form.

The work of these artists falls into three broad categories; architectural glass, sculptural/non-functional glass and functionally designed glass. The latter category generally falls within a design tradition and works within a small scale production basis or within industry, usually on a large scale production. The two previous categories generally fall within a fine art tradition and are usually produced on a once-off basis.

In this chapter I am going to discuss the work of the Irish artist Maud Cotter who produces work within both architectural and three-dimensional categories.

Her interest in exploiting the material in a sculptural way is not surprising as she studied sculpture initially in the Crawford School of Art. Her interest in architectural work has been a slow development using stained glass and creating environments in which to view this work. She says that she "could never not do sculpture" (36). It is part of her personality. Her use of glass has become increasingly sculptural. Her interest in scale, the occupation of space and the installation of her work have led her to produce structures in which the glass can be viewed.

Cotter's increasing passion for and interest in glass



have led her to use it to work through her ideas and problems. The idea of working with three-dimensional pieces that incorporate both glass and other material such as steel has been one which has occupied her for a number of years. To a great extent the problems that presented themselves have not been solved. Her solution to make structures in steel and glaze them with two-dimensional images in glass has not found the answers that she required.

Structures such as Tempered (1991) is basically a constructivist sculpture of steel with a piece of unworked glass almost as a token gesture. (FIG. 36) The glass doesn't seem to be integrated well into the concept and sits uneasily within the finished piece.

Having said this, Cotter has pioneered the use of steel and glass in sculpture in Ireland. Her work is exhibited and accepted within fine-art circles in Ireland even though they are of craft-based materials.

Her more recent sculptural work is much "freer" (36). The glass is integrated with the concept to a much greater extent in pieces like I do not think they will sing to me, (1990/91) where the slab glass is completely unworked. (FIG. 37) Djinn (1990/91), a small piece in her My Tender Shell exhibition, has diminished any unnecessary frills and hangs together better, in my opinion, than any other which Cotter had made. (FIG. 38 and 39) Based on "ritualistic customs" (26, p24) the caricature of red hot horns and feet not only helps fuse the materials and colours of the piece but also gives the piece a sense of character which is not normally present in Cotter's work.

The first motivation in making a free standing piece was in the AIB Bankcentre in Ballsbridge - Tensile Miriads

(1982). (FIG. 12) Her love of the integrity of objects in space and the sculptural impulse of making something into an object is very strong in her mind so it was a natural progression to work towards sculptural concepts into glass.

Cotter sees lead lines as a drawing medium and part of the concept of the whole piece. She uses the lead lines to create tensions and interactions visually within the pieces, as well as applying sculptural principles to lead, interpreting the angles and gravitational pull of the lines to determine the speed of the lines.

The next step in the development of her work towards sculptural pieces as changing the traditional enclosed frames of architectural setting to allow the piece to have an environment of its own and break out of the picture plane and confinements of a pre-determined site. Tensile Miriads (1982) had a kick proof base and metal stand so that it could be viewed from all sides.

After experimenting with watercolours and wax to try and achieve the sumptuous qualities of the liquid pigment she discovered that glass has the quality of reacting to its environment which was what she sought.

She feels that glass "is not contained within its material surface". (36) It transmits itself to its audience and "really good work even if it is introspective, radiates an internal strength of power and does have an outgoing feel to it." (36)

To an extent her work is introspective; she feels that she couldn't make a piece based on a site. Her concept will always come first, and she will usually make a piece based on what she needs to explore in her own work at that time.



In spite of this, she has a long list of commissions. Her most recent commissions have begun to be more compatible to the environment of their buildings, with references to the architecture and the light sources.

A good example of a recent successful window is the Dublin Castle Window - That Sound makes Sense (1989). (FIG. 44) The narrative connects with the function of the building as a Conference Centre; she says that this was one of the most stimulating aspects of the project. The image in the window is that of a "language tree" (36) the main trunk of which is formed by Ogham Script. This opens at a Y section on a group of Ogham vowels at the top of the window; these are surrounded by archaic Greek. Alongside the main trunk of Ogham script are other texts which had "been chosen for their direct mark-making qualities." (18) They are laid out like an early Christian manuscript. The main bulk of the window is a strong blue framed by red and broken by strips of yellow frames and alternating areas of translucent white. She has used the techniques of painting, staining and acid etching to control and vary the colour within this window.

To a large extent Cotter is not interested in people who make glass and is more interested in painters and sculptors. She feels she just happens to be an artist who works in glass and feels a lot of studio glass is more about the quality of the glass and not about the quality of the idea. Although she finds studio glass engaging that is the extent of her interest in this work generally and it "leaves her cold". (36)

She is interested in the American Studio Movement but feels some of the work, especially some of the blown work, is a bit "blob". (36) She is unimpressed with a lot of it because it doesn't show coherent sculpting,



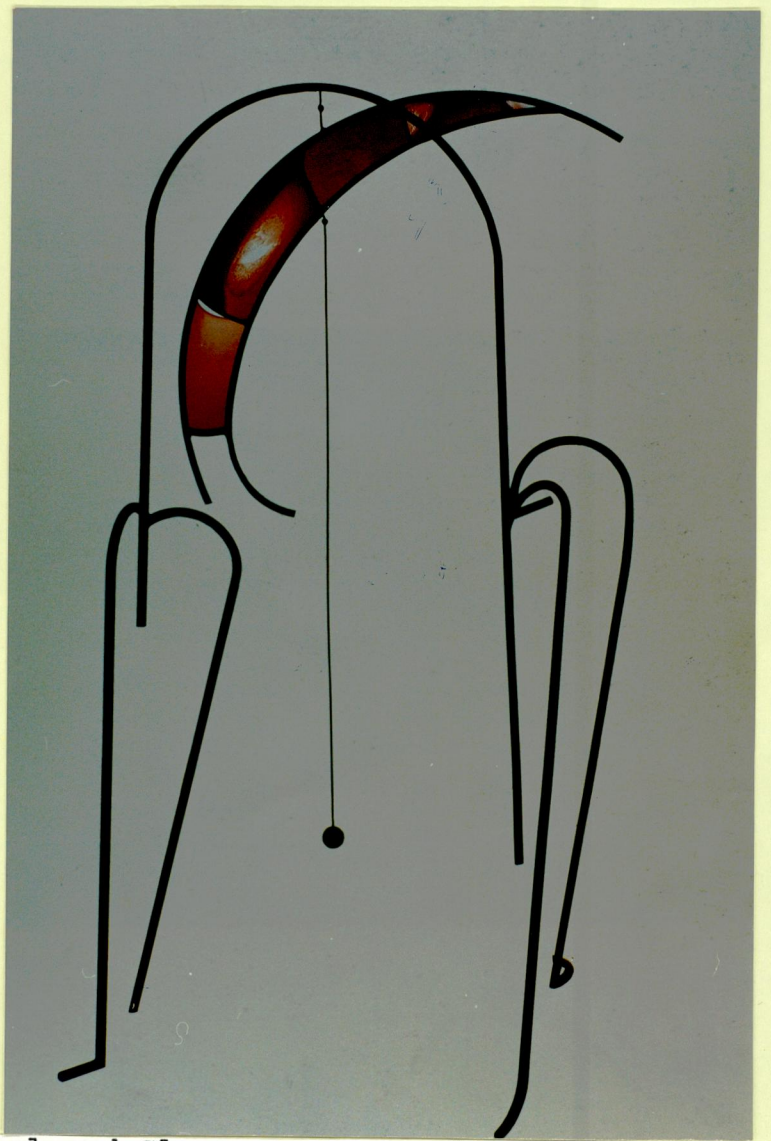


FIG. 36 Tempered. Steel and Glass, 1991. Maud Cotter.



FIG. 37 I do not think they will sing to me. Bronze, glass copper, 1990/91. Maud Cotter.



FIG 36

Imperial  
Hatch Cutter

Fig 37





FIG. 38 Djinn. Steel and glass, 1990/91. Maud Cotter.





Fig 38

*Dyina* [illegible]

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[illegible]

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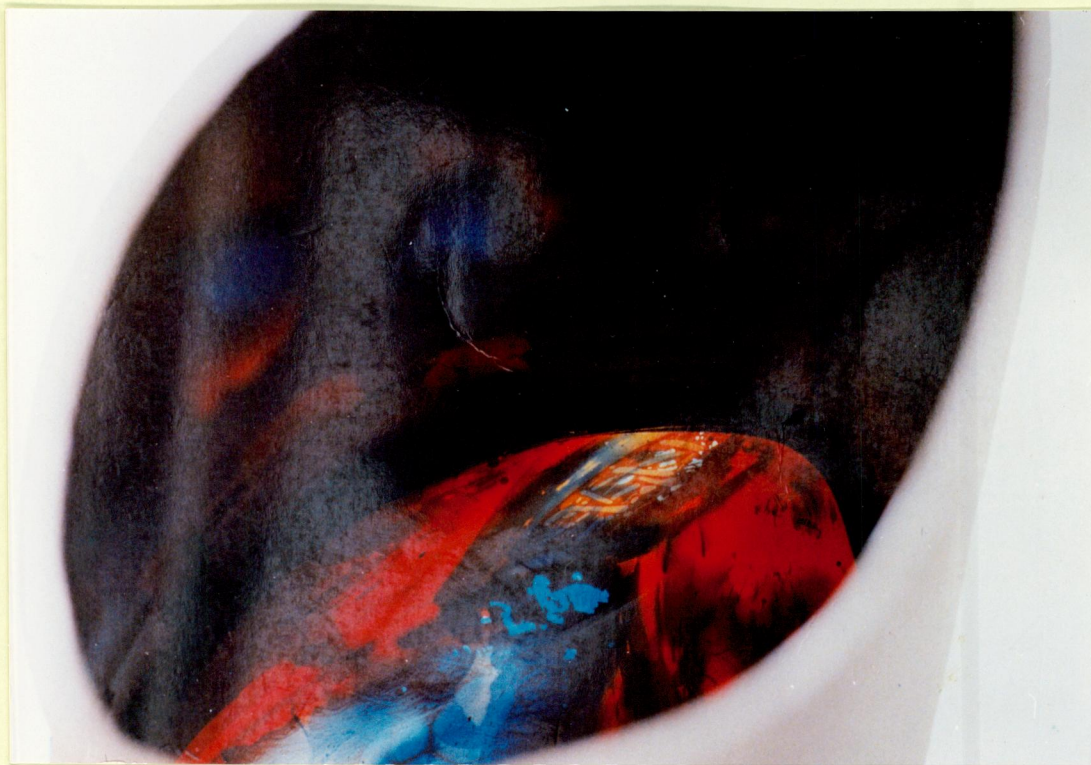


FIG. 39 My Tender Shell. Steel and glass, 1990/91.  
Maud Cotter.



49 39.  
my father's photo  
Wood Coler



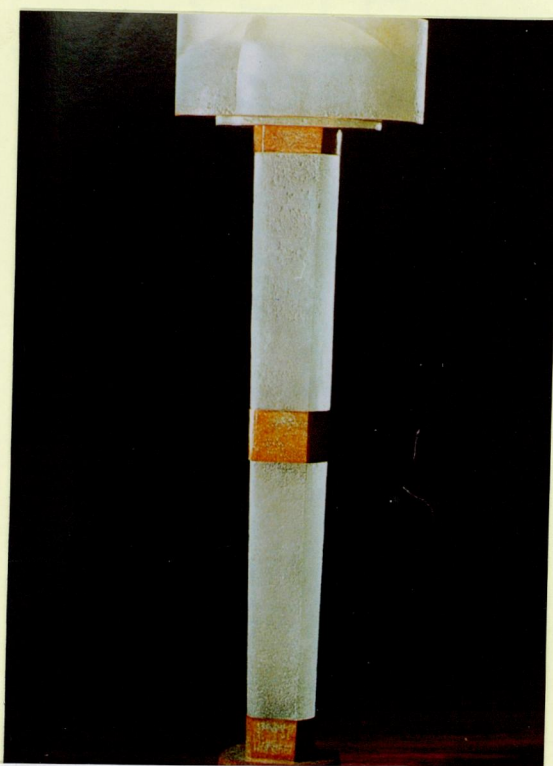


FIG. 40 Coloum 39. Cast glass and copper, 1987. Howard Ben Tre.



FIG. 42 Family Portrait. Layers of sheet glass with transparent paint and etched motifs, in metal frame, 1987. Dana Zamicnikova.



SOH 11-11-11  
11-11-11

FIG 10  
1/10  
1/10

FIG 10  
Family protocol  
Dina Zencarilova

11-11-11



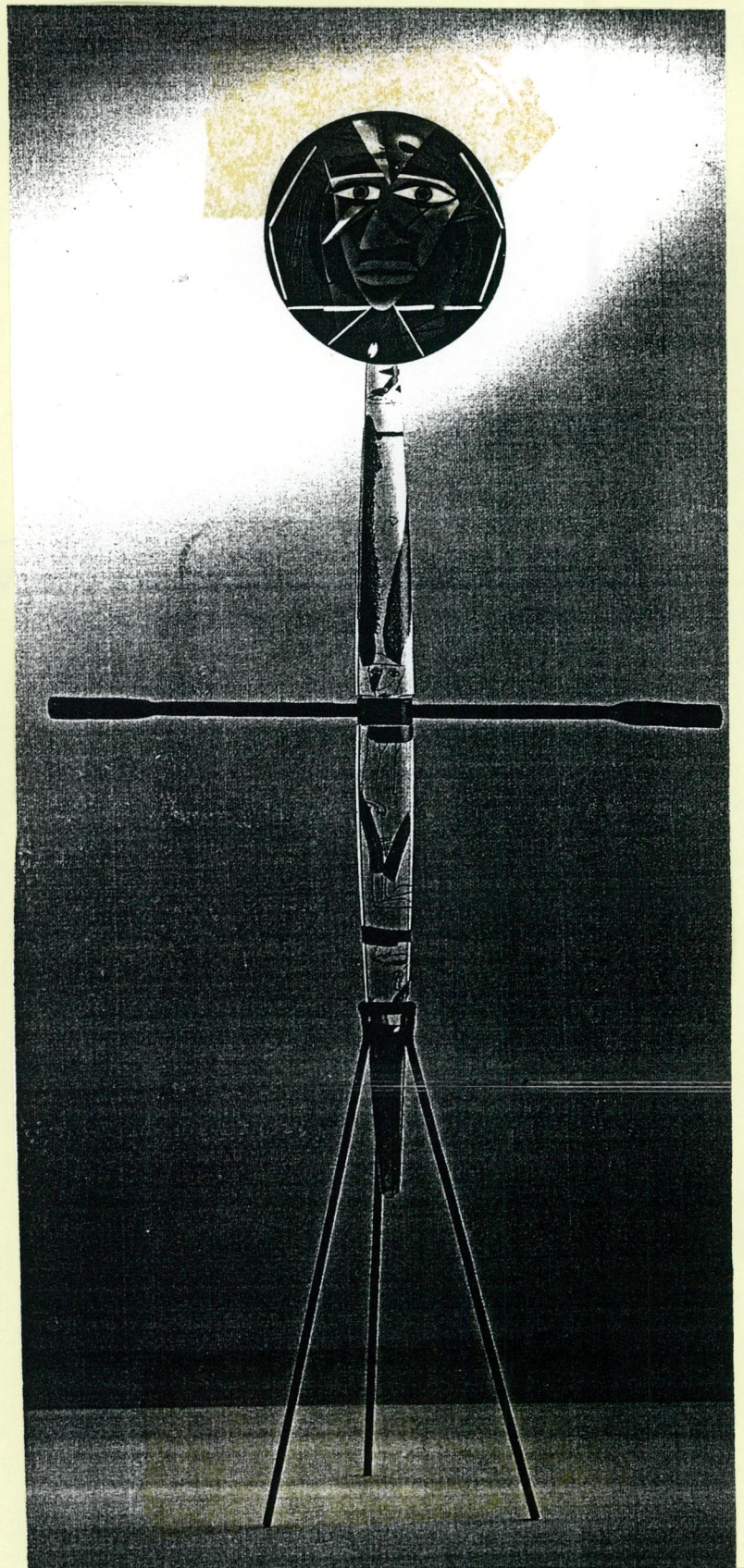
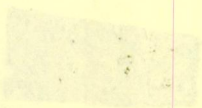
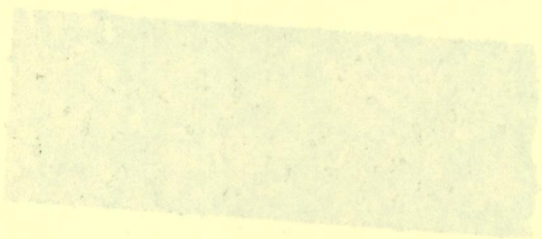


FIG. 41 Nut's Daughter. Glass and metal, glass acid-etched; sandblasted, painted with black enamel. Ann Wolff.





lacking a sense of idea and not seeming to have the same critical faculty as fine art work.

There are of course exceptions. She expresses interest and admiration for Ann Wolff, Howard Ben Tre and Dana Zamecnikova.

Ann Wolff a West German who has worked in Sweden since 1960, created outstanding work with very personal imagery and symbolism, dealing with the domestic tasks of marriage, divorce, childhood, motherhood, joy and sorrow, oppression and love of life. (FIG. 41) Her most recent works have a much more structural context and incorporate steel and stone and combine material to express new images of women as a fertility goddess within the banality of life.

Howard Ben Tre creates powerful totemic images on a monumental scale. (FIG. 40) Cotter admires his fluency and control over the technological problems of casting glass and the fact he has not allowed these problems to reduce the range of the ideas he deals with or lost his integrity and personality to the technical aspects of the medium.

As painting on Glass is a Czech speciality with historical roots, it is not surprising that Dana Zamecnikova's work incorporates painting images. She is internationally know for her "boxes" that consist of layers of clear plate glass onto each of which a fragment of an image is painted, sandblasted, acid-etched or drawn with coloured pencil. (FIG. 42) The illusion of space stretching to infinity is achieved by stacking the images together to form a single image. The images appear to Cotter as she feels they show an aspect of how Zamecnikova's mind works.





FIG. 43 I spy with my little eye. Steel and glass,  
1990/91. Maud Cotter.



~~Fig 33~~

~~I do not think  
they will sing to  
me~~

~~Hand letter~~

Fig 43

with my  
little eye Hand letter



To an extent Cotter finds a lot of work decorative and dependant on the material with little to say except decorative gymnastics but she seems to be beginning to understand the potential of glass, other than stained glass. I spy with my little eye (1990) shows an experimentation with a piece of slumped, fused float glass. (FIG. 43)

Cotter worked through a self-directed apprenticeship for 4 years after a formal training in painting and sculpture at the Crawford School of Art, Cork graduating in 1977. She experimented with etching, painting, staining, firing, enamelling, leading, copper foiling and installation work on a commercial basis as well as silversmithing and casting.

The interest in expressing herself through the technically difficult medium of glass has meant she has found an untraditional process of working. When making a panel Cotter never makes a fully rendered coloured cartoon. She feels that would "cause it to die". (36) She experiments with ideas in graphite first. She would always work directly with glass so it becomes like painting to her. Cotters understanding of glass not as a diligent, boring manifestation of what she has designed, makes her commitment to stained glass as a medium for art directly resemble the legacy of Geddes and Hone whose common purpose was the creative revival of stained glass during the 1900's in Ireland.

Generally the role of stained glass in Ireland has to a great extent degenerated into mass-production of Art. Nouveau designs in pubs and much of the headway made by Geddes, Hone and their contemporaries has been lost. Irish people seem to have a special love of stained-glass. But Cotter has had to face the initial requests for commissions to make specific representations to suit

her clients aesthetic understanding. Cotter made no concessions to commissions but presented them with a fully rendered colours drawing and allowed them to decide if they wanted her work.

She feels that Irish people have a naive visual sense and part of her job as an artist is to inform and show people that non-figurative work has the quality and content of figurative representational work but just occupies a different sphere.

Her uncompromising attitude has led her to believe that if you accept the boundaries other people set you, you begin to operate in those boundaries and the range of problems you present yourself will diminish. "The arena you give yourself is very much to do with the range of problems you present yourself with and that is the arena you will find yourself in". (36)

This interest in informing people and setting yourself problems could be one reason why she established and lectured in a Glass department in the Crawford School of Art and Design, in Cork in 1981, as an optional study along with photography and printmaking in connection with the Craft/Ceramic department. Because of the intimate size of the college there was also a healthy degree of interaction with the fine art department and foundation course and people were encouraged to investigate glass as a material. Unfortunately these classes have been abandoned due to severe cutbacks in 1989. The only college now teaching glass as a creative medium in Ireland is our own college, the National College of Art and Design (NCAD).

NCAD's course is set up in the same way as many courses all over America, England, Germany and Czechoslovakia. The first glass programmes in America were set up by



Harvey Littleton in the University of Wisconsin, Madison, during the early 1960's. The fact that they were attached to a University gave them an intellectual credibility that they had not had previously. In 1962 at the Toledo Workshop a group of American academics, artists and technicians investigated whether glass could be worked as a studio medium on a small scale. This heralded a time of random experimentation, mainly in hot glass.

The main priority of Littleton and his students was to actually master basic glass manipulation, uninhibited exploration of a new material and investigate techniques for the artists working alone. The latter included investigation of kiln-working techniques, pate-de-verre and casting techniques. These latter techniques became increasingly popular in the 1970's as they could be worked upon with a variety of cold working processes.

More recently, in the 1980's and 1990's, the priorities of colleges have, generally, been to produce students whose work is technically sound and individually inventive. The need for the new generation of artists to move into the fine arts field has been expressed (with some degree of paranoia) in order to once again achieve some intellectual credibility. The development of a large technical vocabulary has resulted in varying approaches to techniques and an emergence of two distinct schools of glass artist: those who choose to create sculptural and those who choose to make or design functional glass. One is occupied with making statements about the intrinsic beauty of glass: artists such as Harvey Littleton. The other takes a less reverent view and allows a broader scope and approach to glass. Maud Cotter is one such artist.

Four years ago Eilis O'Connell (b.1953), Maud Cotter and

Vivienne Roche (b.1953), all of whom are sculptors, decided they wanted to create a communal large-scale industrial space for sculpture in Cork.

It responded to a need they saw for shared resources and community among a group of artists working in diverse ways and the creation of a new arts industry to be built on the growth of public commissions.

This venture has been supported by Cork Corporation and the Arts Council, in its location and funding. Creatively it has encouraged development and brought Sculptors of different nationalities, media and ideologies into a focused artistic community and established lines of communication with community groups, business and local national government.

The availability and use of these resources for Maud Cotter are evident in her most recent work. Since the Sculptor Factory opened she has used the facilities available to her within the pieces for her My Tender Shell exhibition. Cotter has used bronze casting and copper forming, slab glass, stained and kiln-formed glass and welded and forged steel elements in eleven of these pieces. The new techniques have given this work a different feeling although they are on the same theme.

The Irish landscape has always been important to her "aesthetic concerns" (14) and the relationship between its "elemental forces" (14) and human energies. She has made panels which are based on the balance, gravity and tensions of the nature of landscape and fundamental life forces.

In 1989 Cotter travelled to Iceland as part of a European group exhibition; one year later she returned for 10 days and this second expedition was the



inspiration for the main bulk of her work in her My Tender Shell exhibition which opened in the Triskel Arts Centre, Cork, Ireland in October 1991 and is to tour further venues in 1992, including France, Germany and Wales.

Ireland's prolific natural growth, subtle changes in light and the evidence of the impact on landscape provide a focus through which she "... can explore her personal visions". (36)

I do not think that they will sing to me (1990) is a small but considerable example of how Cotter has tried to present an example of the energies she identified by concentrating them. (FIG. 37) The focused isolation of Iceland and the raw, primal elements of its landscape are focused on her mainly cast piece of small scale sculpture. The relatively intimate proportions of this piece do not in any way lessen its impact. It is made up of three different, layered elements. The element which first catches your eye, even though it is transparent and completely unworked, is a sheet of heavy gauge float glass. On top of this lie three small organic hollow musical instrument forms laid parallel to each other but diagonally angled to the edges of the glass, not quite touching the edges. One is an uneven flute-like tube, one is bowed and flattened like a rib bone but opens into a wide smiling mouth and the final piece is a conical form ending in a point and with a rough small hole at the other end.

Below both the glass and the three slender organs lies the bulky folded cast patinated base which makes up the main weight and impact of the piece. The thick glass separates both the conflicting elements of above and below by drawing a strong blue/green graphic line (caused by the refraction of light) along the

rectangular glass edges. The lack of colour and feeling of space contributes also to a feeling of calm above the surface and confusion below and the possibility of two conflicting forces at work. The haphazard, disordered fold of the lower surface seem likely to break the confines of their rectangular area and to rise through the surface of the glass to upset the calm and order above.

Cotter's use of glass in this piece and since her trip to Iceland, shows her interest in the transparent qualities of unworked or kiln-worked glass. The heavy gauge of this float glass gives an element of subtle colour and tone which I feel must have a direct relationship of the bleakness and cold of both the landscape and strength of light in Iceland. There is a certain cold, untouchable quality in the glass which seems much more solid than fluid, more like ice than water. This is a quality that is echoed in the graphic and wash drawings of the same exhibition.

The piece itself, whose text is taken from writings by T.S. Eliot, was a direct response to her experience of Iceland. One evening sitting at the edge of a black river in the interior of Iceland;

"... cold sky but a lovely glow, the river went into an ultramarine blue with white edges on it and the mud is a kind of bournville brown - spongy mud - you know it will spring back..."

There are long terracotta stones with holes in them, they looked like musical instruments to me - I imagined that they were playing a tune very quietly." (36)

This piece's unusually small dimensions and use of materials reflect a stark Icelandic environment. The three intriguing pieces on the glass do not create any



desire in me to be touched or held, echoing forms of human or animal bone. The patination on their surface blends tonally with the potential of glass as a medium. This use of glass could possibly be influenced by her involvement in the 36 Women from 12 Countries exhibition which travelled around Germany and Iceland from May 1988 to January 1989, here the diverse and individual use of glass by women could have had an influence on the horizons she saw for glass as a material.

Cotter identifies with fine art principles but it is undeniable she is using a craft based material, to express her ideas. She has not until recently associated herself particularly with women's art, when she participated in 36 Frauen Ans 12 Landem (36 Women from 12 Countries).

Yet the fact that she is a woman and Irish would be significant in the way she perceives her work and therefore have undeniably affected her work, at least unconsciously over the year.

"Crafts" and "craft materials" have always been associated with women and the domestic sphere of community responsibilities and female values. Fine arts have been frequently associated as particularly male, created by individual genius to be consumed and revered in a male dominated society.

Despite such conditioning women have produced art, alongside men. Their differing psyche has meant that it has been produced with different emphasis and in differing materials.

In Ireland there has been a glass-craft tradition among women. Wilhelmina Geddes studied in the Schools of Art in Belfast and Dublin and set up her own studio in

London in 1925. "Evie Hone who at first had been interested in abstract art and who had studied with Albert Gleizes in Paris, later turned to stained glass, motivated by her deep religious belief and experience of French Cathedrals". (33, p.1) She produced work in stained glass at the very successful community-studio An Tur Gloine in Dublin with the assistance of Michael Healy which was run by portraitist Sarah Purser.

In relation to Maud Cotters new work which she exhibited in the 36 Women from 12 Countries Show - her work is very much in an Irish tradition. She follows the multi-treatment of glass going back to Harry Clarke and An Tur Gloine; Evie Hone and Wilhelmina Geddes. Their work was a conglomeration of etching, painting, plating and using both surfaces as well as maximizing the transparency of the material, as is Maud Cotters. In the 36 Women show she had some glass pyramidal structures in the surface area and mass and confusion of changing shapes, forms and colours - obvious and elusive. The work of Sylvie Goudin, the French Artist was the closest to Cotter's but much more monotone - where Cotter's was a canopy of colour.

She said her Icelandic trip contributed "to more depth and layering in my work" (41, p.3) but she was already pursuing those shifting light/dark multi-coloured terrains previously to this. Perhaps she wants to go deeper and deeper and use the simile of landscape to enable her to do this. She is in a way wrapped up in a technicolour dream-coat which is not echoed in the work of other women in the show. Other women's work was painterly and textural but never so fragmented or concerned with minutiae and depth. Her window in Dublin castle Where Sound Meets Sense contains all these elements of cacophony, something which initially was seen in the Ireland House exhibition, in London (1986).





FIG. 45 The Removed Sound of a great fish, drawing, 1990/91. Maud Cotter.



Flor 44  
Where. Sand  
meets. 1/2  
Hand letter



(41, p.2) Both Maud Cotter's and James Scanlon's work in that show was highly expressive in the abstract expressionist tradition but Maud's was also very much concerned with the mark, calligraphy and the human part. James Scanlon's pieces were like gazing into rock pools - reflections of the sky - Maud Cotters were wild, vibrant vulgar and alive - not captured moments. (41, p.3)

Ellen Mandelbaum's (USA) work is similar in its use of light, colour and brushstrokes in a highly active - but doesn't introduce the chaos of Cotter's work. Maud Cotter's work appears to be much more elemental; in this respect it echoes Sigridir Asgeirsdottir of Iceland's work, which also deals with the elemental but in a different way. Originally attracted to film and sculpture, she discovered a medium which had the transparency and light transmitting qualities of film plus the power to sculpt and magnetise inner space while on a visit to the Sainte Chapelle in Paris.

Sigridir Asgeirsdottir's draws from a limited palette one or two deep primaries plus black and white pulled together with sweeping strokes. Her stained glass windows are untamed and unintimidated, "Her inner space and well of her imagination has always been the chilling and penetrating pool of emotions which suffuses the landscape of Iceland". (18, p.6) The panels exhibited in the 36 Women from 12 Countries exhibition were "... composed of freestanding sections of float glass, savagely appliqued with pieces of antique glass that had been heavily painted and over fired, until the surface distorted. Only the reticle of cracks between the pieces transmitting light, for the rest reflected light and stopped your eye on the surface which has the texture of the moon." (18, p.6)





FIG. 44 Where Sound meets Sense, 1990/91. Maud Cotter.



\$16.50  
The Remored  
of great  
land

1132

Maud Cotter's work is full of life where Sigridir Asgeirsdottir's has a similar power but is ominous and contains reflective elements in its force. Overawed in the spiritual sense by the landscape - raw, wild, vibrant and explosive so there are links internationally, Cotter's glass techniques are strongly within the Irish tradition which has been "small scale, jewel like colour, traditional technique". (38) Cotter has said "I sometimes think that the pool of my imagination is deeply coloured glass and that my three-dimensional pieces using glass and steel are amphibian creatures manifest on its shores still carrying traces of their vivid origins." (40, p.2)

A year after the 36 Women from 12 Countries exhibition, (July 88 - January 91), she returned to Iceland on her own for a drawing expedition in the central desert region of Versalir. She produced black and white drawings of the landscape itself, ignoring the immediately attractive aspects and searching for the fundamental "primordial... bubbling chaos" (31, p.4) of the land. Her isolation resulted in drawings that are about her survival in this desolation. Drawing landscape is a way of investigating natural energy for Maud Cotter. (FIG. 45)



### CONCLUSION:

Maud Cotter produces glass within both architectural and three dimensional settings. She has developed a multi-coloured treatment of glass. Her work is fragmented and concerned with minutiae and depth. She has pioneered the combined use of steel and glass, in sculpture in Ireland.

Her work is accepted and highly regarded within fine-art circles in Ireland even though she uses craft based materials. Her interest in Irish landscape has led her to explore the contrasting landscape of Iceland and it is from this source that she has produced her new work.

James Scanlon produces work that investigates and assesses his cultural identity in a semi-romantic way. His glass has densely concentrated areas of colour, although they are heavily worked they are rarely heavily painted or stained. They are also becoming increasingly abstract. He is specifically interested in creating and controlling the environment with his glass within mainly architectural settings. He also produces sculpture which incorporates glass.

From the 1950's until today has been a time of transition, change and development internationally. Attitudes to glass have changed, it is now considered an appropriate medium for sculpture as well as an important medium in the modern methods of building. Previously it had been a medium for decorative objects and in church architecture.

By 1955 most of the previous generation of stained glass artists in Ireland had died and there has been few artists seeking expression in this medium until

Cotter and Scanlon began producing work in the 1980's.

Ireland is a backwater as far as contemporary glass art is concerned but this distance from the international work has allowed it to develop independently and has allowed Cotter and Scanlon to understand the medium's richness without limiting their use of glass to the ghetto of technical achievement. The period of self-examination and re-evaluation that International glass art is now going through does not apply to the work of Maud Cotter and James Scanlon at present.

The future of Irish glass is unknown but I believe that Architects are the people who have the leverage to integrate glass into our architectural environment and re-establish glass as a great medium. Glass artists should also look at other arts for inspiration and challenge as Cotter and Scanlon have done. This will guarantee a continuing tradition of remarkable work in a very special medium.



## GLOSSARY:

### acid etching

Process of removing coloured flashing. The area of flashing to be removed is first outlined. The rest is masked with bituminous paint, while hydrofluoric acid eats through the exposed portion of the paler-coloured layer below.

### blowing

The process of shaping a molten mass of glass by blowing air into it.

### cameo glass

Cased glass in two or more layers, the outer layer carved on a wheel to create a design in relief of one colour or another. The technique similar to the cameo cutting of stones and shells, was known to the ancient Romans, and revived in the nineteenth century.

### cire perdue (lost wax)

A casting process adapted from metallurgy, in which a model object to be cast is carved in wax and encased in a mould. The wax is then melted and poured out of the mould which is refilled with molten glass.

### dalle-de-verre

Pieces of glass usually about one inch thick and often chipped or faceted on the surface, which are set into concrete or epoxy resin.

### etching (acid etching)

A technique in which controlled exposure of the surface of glass to hydrofluoric acid results in shiny, mat or frosted decoration of the exposed area.

### iridescence

A rainbow-like effect on a glass surface caused by weathering.

### pate-de-verre

Literally "glass paste". A mixture of crushed glass, flux and colour fused together in a mould.

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