Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane

REVOLUTIONARY STATES
HOME RULE & MODERN IRELAND

A Resource for Teachers and Students

24 May - 21 October 2012
KEY WORDS


Revolutionary States: Home Rule and Modern Ireland: A Resource for Teachers and Students

Revolutionary States: Home Rule and Modern Ireland marks the centenary of the introduction to the House of Commons of the Third Home Rule Bill in 1912. While never implemented, it remains a significant milestone in Irish political history. The Home Rule movement and the opposition to it developed in parallel to other social and political movements such as the suffragette and labour movements and those agitating for land reform. At the same time, the resurgent Irish cultural scene stimulated debates on the emerging modernist movements in Europe and the place of Irish cultural traditions.

Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane is uniquely placed to tell the story of the turbulent and complex social changes in Ireland prior to the First World War. Founded in 1908, its collection includes portraits and busts of many of the key figures who worked both in support of and in opposition to Home Rule and who sat for John Lavery, William Orpen, John B.Yeats, Sarah Purser, Sarah Cecilia Harrison and Auguste Rodin among others. The Hugh Lane was central to discussions on national identity as citizens from different religious and political backgrounds gathered in support of the establishment of the Gallery of Modern Art for Dublin.

Revolutionary States: Home Rule and Modern Ireland: A Resource for Teachers and Students looks at a selection of artworks from this exhibition from a political, social and cultural perspective:

Introduction: The Historical Context

1. The Political Context
2. The Founding of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art
3. The Social Context
4. The Cultural Context
Introduction: The Historical Context

The Third Home Rule Bill 1912

Following the traumatic events of the Great Famine 1845-1849 and the mass emigration of the following decades, Irish political leaders began to question the existing structures of government in Ireland. In particular, the lack of a national parliament became a prominent issue. Elected Irish MPs had to go to Westminster in London where the parliament, the House of Commons, was situated. The widespread belief was that not only could more have been done during the famine, but Ireland could be improved for all through Home Rule.

Various concessions on Land Reform failed to suppress the growing appetite for national self government. The great Land and Home Rule movements would begin in the 1870s and finally resulted in the Third Home Rule Bill in 1912. Charles Stewart Parnell became leader of the Home Rule movement, following its creation by Issac Butt. In 1886 and 1893 attempts were made to pass the Home Rule Bill, both of which were rejected. To further complicate the matter, Parnell’s divorce controversy resulted in his followers dividing into two groups. Parnell’s followers were reunited under the leadership of John Redmond in 1900. In December 1910 British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and John Redmond struck a deal. The deal was that Redmond would back the Liberals in election and in return Asquith would support a Third Home Rule Bill.

In 1911 The Parliament Act was passed in the British Parliament. This meant that if a bill was approved of by the House of Commons, the House of Lords could only delay the passing of the bill for two years, after which the bill could become law without the House of Lord’s consent. In 1912 with the backing of the Irish Parliamentary Party leader John Redmond, Prime Minister Asquith was finally able to propose a new Home Rule Bill. With the passing of the Home Rule Bill becoming very likely, stiff opposition emerged from the Ulster Protestants and Southern Unionists under the leadership of Southern Unionist Edward Carson. Unionists did not want to split from the union with Britain. They did not want to be ruled by a Dublin-based government and believed that their way of life would be threatened. They also believed they would be treated unfairly. Unionists felt that they would be subjected to increasingly nationalist and Gaelic values, and the economic security they benefited from an industrial Ulster, would be poorly managed by the agrarian south. They also believed Catholicism was backward, and feared Catholic rule, viewing ‘Home Rule as Rome Rule’. To Unionists, the Bill seemed like a step towards the full separation of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

A compromise was proposed which allowed for the exclusion of six counties of Ulster from the Home Rule Act. Redmond was prepared to accept the partition to pacify Unionists. However, northern and southern unionists were divided on the matter and Carson stood firm against the slightest change to the existing order. Neither side came to an agreement.
Between 1910 and 1912 Unionists began organising a provisional government in Ulster. Edward Carson set up the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) with the aim of using force if necessary. The UVF imported arms illegally, and its members signed an oath promising to defend Ulster against Home Rule. Irish Nationalists responded by forming the Irish Volunteers and so the path was set towards civil war between nationalists and unionists. Crisis was temporarily averted by the coming of the First World War in 1914.

In September 1914 the Home Rule Bill was passed. Carson and the Unionists agreed to it on the basis that it would not be implemented until the end of the War, and that the ‘Ulster Question’ would then be considered. Home Rule was postponed for the duration of the First World War (1914-1918).

The passing of the Third Home Rule Bill had the potential to change Ireland’s place in the world and in particular its relationship with Britain. However, all would change just two years later when in 1916, the Easter Rising made the Home Rule Bill redundant. Ireland was set on a different path, and we can only speculate as to how Ireland would have fared with Home Rule in the early 20th century.

The artworks in this exhibition provide a visual and historical document of this period when Ireland was at a point of critical intersection, and as W.B. Yeats wrote in his poem Easter 1916 all was changed, ‘changed utterly’.
1. The Political Context

As Ireland became increasingly dissatisfied with being ruled by a British government, the ambition for national self-governance intensified. Political figures including John Redmond worked towards the realisation of this ambition but their efforts were met with considerable resistance by Edward Carson and James Craig. Support for and antipathy against Home Rule dramatically polarised large sections of society. In the aftermath of the passing of the Home Rule Bill, the outcome had made heroes of some men and political failures of others. The following two portraits represent the opposing sides of the Third Home Rule Bill, providing a historical and political basis that filters through the contexts of all the other works in this exhibition.

**Sir Edward Carson, MP (1916) by John Lavery**

![Sir Edward Carson, MP (1916) by John Lavery](image)

Sir Edward Carson (1854-1935), a middle-class Protestant, was born in Dublin and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Carson was Solicitor General for both Ireland and England. Carson was a Southern Unionist, therefore his primary concern was to campaign for the whole of Ireland to stay in the union with Britain. He felt that Home Rule, with the north partitioned would be a betrayal of Southern Unionists. Home Rule was approaching and in response, Carson organised Unionists in Belfast who wanted to remain within British rule to form the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Despite his efforts to keep the whole of Ireland within the United Kingdom, at most, Carson managed to negotiate for the six Ulster counties to be excluded from Home Rule. This partition was to be his most enduring legacy with the six counties still partitioned today. As long as their own interests were protected many of the Ulster Unionists were not too worried about the Southern Unionists remaining in the union.
To the Ulster unionists Carson was a hero. He had managed to keep Ulster in the union and they called him the uncrowned King of Ulster. Murals of Edward Carson can still be seen in Northern Ireland today.

**John Redmond MP (1916) by John Lavery**

John Redmond (1856 -1918) was born in County Wexford. He was a Catholic, Irish Nationalist politician and the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. He successfully had the Third Home Rule Bill passed which O’Connell and Parnell had failed to do. This was the high point of his career. The methods he used to get the Bill passed were admirable, using only constitutional and parliamentary approaches rather than militant violence. He had hoped for a united Ireland but these hopes diminished. After the 1912 Home Rule Bill was passed his political power began to decline. This was because in 1914 he supported the British war effort in the hope that it would help unite Irishmen of both traditions when Home Rule would be implemented after the war. Ultimately, the outcome for his party was politically disastrous. The 1916 Rising and the violence by radical Nationalists undermined his peaceful parliamentary approach and support for the Irish Parliamentary Party declined. With the fall of Redmond Sinn Fein began to rise.

**The Artist: John Lavery**

Sir John Lavery (1856-1941) was a Catholic and Belfast-born portrait, landscape and genre painter. He trained as an artist in Glasgow and Paris and visited the French artists’ colony of Grez-sur-Loing. He favoured painting leisurely scenes of the upper class. Like the
Impressionists Lavery painted ‘en plein air’ but he did not use colour and light in the same way, opting to use a palette of more natural tones. He returned to London and established himself as one of Europe’s leading portrait painters. His sitters included social and political figures, including British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the child actress Shirley Temple. Notably it was the commission to paint The State Visit of Queen Victoria to the Glasgow Exhibition, August 1888 which launched his career. In 1909 he married Hazel Lavery, a beautiful American socialite, who became the muse for many of his works. Hazel shared with John an interest in his native Ireland and in 1913 they began making trips to Ireland. Lavery took a keen interest in Irish politics and began painting Irish political and social life. During WWI Lavery was appointed an official war artist on the Home Front.

**Lavery’s Political Portraits**

During his visits to Ireland Lavery produced paintings which documented key events and people involved in the history of the emerging Irish state. Hazel suggested to Lavery that he should use his art to reconcile the opposing sides in Irish politics. He later wrote that his aim had been "to bind up the contending forces in the bonds of holy paint". Lavery was concerned with representing both sides of the conflict in Ireland. The portraits of Carson and Redmond exemplify this. In 1916 he arranged the sittings of Edward Carson and John Redmond. It was intended that both works would hang side by side in a Dublin gallery. At that moment in time Redmond was at the peak of his political career. When the portraits were completed, Carson thought that Redmond’s portrait was better and knowing that Lavery was a Belfast Catholic, remarked, ‘It’s easy to see which side you’re on’.
Further Discussion and Art Activities

- Do you think Lavery was a good judge of who and what to paint?
- How are likenesses usually recorded today?
- Do you think it is important that Lavery chose to paint both sides of the conflict?
- Can you think of any artist today who plays the role of artist diplomat, or has made political conflict a subject in their work?
- Did you know that Lavery also donated a large collection of paintings to the Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, now the Ulster Museum as well as the Municipal Gallery of Modern art in Dublin. What do you think Lavery’s reasons were for donating many of these historical works to Belfast and Dublin?
- Describe the colour and lighting used in these portraits by Lavery. How are they in keeping with the subject being portrayed?
- How do Lavery’s portraits give us insights into the characters of the people being portrayed?
- Choose two figures from opposing sides of a conflict today. Make a drawing, painting or collage of their likeness and hang these images side by side.
- Both men on the opposing sides of this period of Irish history could not have foreseen how events would play out when their portraits were painted. Create a painting which could be placed between these two portraits that you believe represents what Ireland has become today, politically, socially and culturally.
2. The Founding of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art

Amidst the social, cultural and political unrest Ireland was experiencing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Hugh Lane in 1908 managed to establish the first gallery of modern art in the world. Controversy surrounded Hugh Lane’s wish for a purpose built Gallery of Modern Art and this was further complicated by Lane’s premature death in 1915 with the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Despite this, his many supporters from diverse political and religious backgrounds rallied together to try and have Hugh Lane’s wishes fulfilled.

The Municipal Gallery of Modern Art

Sir Hugh Lane (1875-1915) was born in Cork and raised in England. He began his career as an art restorer and became a successful art dealer in London. He developed an interest in Ireland and the Cultural Revival through his aunt Lady Gregory. At the time, the national style of painting in Ireland consisted of depictions of the landscape, peasants and sculptures and paintings of significant historic and contemporary people.

In 1901 Lane saw an exhibition of paintings by the contemporary Irish artists Nathaniel Hone and John Butler Yeats. This exhibition was organised by the artist Sarah Purser. Hugh Lane was highly impressed and commissioned John Butler Yeats to paint twenty-five portraits of notable Irish people. Soon afterwards Lane began to conceive of a gallery of modern art in Dublin, which would exhibit contemporary Irish art alongside examples of modern English and European painting. Lane showed generosity and great public spirit in his quest for a
modern art gallery in Dublin. Lane began to purchase artworks for the proposed modern art gallery. These included paintings by Monet, Manet and Renoir. At the time the Impressionists were not represented in public galleries in either Britain or Ireland. Lane also wrote to artists to ask them to donate works to the gallery or to offer them at a lower price. In addition Lane galvanized supporters of the proposed gallery of modern art to donate works. In January 1908 the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art opened in Clonmell House, Harcourt Street, Dublin, a Georgian building provided by Dublin Corporation.

Lane viewed Clonmell House as a temporary home for the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. Lane offered to donate what he considered to be the 39 best Continental paintings in his collection to the City of Dublin on condition that a purpose built gallery was provided to house the collection.

This was to cause controversy and much debate surrounded his proposal and motives and many objected to accepting the gift. Some argued that it was inappropriate to display the work of non-Irish artists. Lane had also asked the leading architect Edwin Lutyens to make designs for the proposed gallery. Lutyens designed a bridge gallery across the river Liffey which would replace the Ha’penny Bridge, after a proposal for a gallery in St Stephens Green had been rejected. Lane chose the prominent location over the River Liffey because it would be a good opportunity for the citizens of Dublin to view art as they went about their daily lives.

The Bridge proposal was mired in controversy. Objections included the belief that the erection of a modern gallery would be a monument to Hugh Lane at the city’s expense; a gallery over the Liffey would be damaging to the paintings; Lane’s chosen architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, was not a local man, and his designs were deemed unaesthetic; that the gallery would be for the benefit of a small clique of cultured intellectuals and not in the interests of the ill-housed people of Dublin.

Because of the controversy and delay about finding a suitable building or location of a gallery to house his collection, Lane withdrew his 39 Continental paintings to the National Gallery, London. Following Lane’s premature death at the age of 39 in 1915, there was confusion and controversy surrounding an un-witnessed codicil Lane had made to his will. A codicil is a change or additional to a will.

Although attempts were made at individual and governmental level for the return of the thirty-nine continental paintings, not least by Lady Gregory, Thomas Bodkin and Sarah Cecilia Harrison, it was not until 1959, forty-four years after Lane’s death that the first agreement between British and Irish Governments saw Lane’s 39 Continental paintings exhibited in turn by the National Gallery, London and Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane.

In 1933, thanks to the suggestion of the artist Sarah Purser, the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art moved to Charlemont House in Parnell Square, where it is today.
About William Walcot

William Walcot (1874-1943) was a British-Russian architect and graphic artist. He was one of the leading architectural draughtsmen of the 1920s and 30s, working in a kind of impressionistic style. He admired classical buildings and architecture and his designs were usually produced with gouache or watercolour. He was commissioned by the architect Edwin Lutyens to draw the proposals for a Dublin gallery of modern art.

About the Work

This is a watercolour of the proposed Modern Art Gallery for Dublin. This view is one of three views painted by Walcott of the proposed gallery across the River Liffey. This view shows the bridge connecting the two facades, one on the North side of the Liffey and the other on the South. The view in this watercolour is from Merchant’s Quay on the South of the Liffey. On the right side are a number of horses and carts, a tram and a woman and child walking along the Quay wall. There is a barge moving along the river. The architecture style of the proposed gallery is neoclassical. The bridge section is colonnaded with Ionic columns. At the ends of the flanking sections is a niche framed with Ionic columns and a triangular pediment. The bridge proposal is reminiscent of the Ponte Vecchio in Florence. In response to this proposal the City Architect Horace O’Rourke came up with his own design for a Bridge Gallery.

Horace O’Rourke’s proposal for a Bridge Gallery
Further Discussion and Art Activities

- Do you think Lutyens proposal for a Bridge Gallery was a good design? Would you like it to have been built? Why?

- Find out more about the buildings and war memorial Edwin Lutyens designed in Ireland.

- Compare both proposals for a Bridge Gallery by Lutyens and O’Rourke. What are the merits or drawbacks of both designs?

- Draw up your own proposal for a new gallery of modern art. Design your building and make notes on the location, materials and style of the architecture. What kind of art would you put in it that you feel would benefit or be of interest to the public?
Mr. W. B. Yeats, presenting Mr. George Moore to the Queen of the Fairies (c. 1904) by Max Beerbohm

This caricature is captioned “Mr. W. B. Yeats, presenting Mr. George Moore to the Queen of the Fairies.” This drawing, along with twenty other Max Beerbohm caricatures, was featured in a book called The Poets Corner, published in 1904. Here Beerbohm satirises the writer George Moore’s introduction into the Irish literary movement, which did not last for very long. In the centre foreground stands the poet William Butler Yeats, depicted as a pasty and lanky character with long, thin hands. Yeats is wearing a dark suit and glasses. His right hand is placed on the shoulder of Moore, dressed in a dark jacket and light trousers, holding a cane and a tall hat. His left hand gestures towards a fairy, a reference to Yeats’s fascination with ancient Irish myth and folklore. In the background a map of Ireland hangs on the wall. There is a series of books on the poet’s shelf, which includes the titles: Half Hours with the Symbols, Murray’s Guide to Ireland and Short Cuts to Mysticism.
Hugh Lane Producing Masterpieces for Dublin (1909) by Max Beerbohm

This caricature depicts Hugh Lane producing masterpieces for Dublin from his top hat. The drawing suggests that Lane is like a magician pulling paintings out of a hat, an appropriate comparison to his incredible achievement. Lane is dressed in formal evening suit, and stands on a stage in front of a seated crowd of poorly dressed Dubliners. Lane intended that the Gallery of Modern Art would be for the benefit of all citizens. The portrayal of class difference in this caricature suggests that Lane was perhaps not in touch with what were the more urgent necessities that needed to be provided for the majority of Dubliners living in slums. Behind Lane stands an assistant laden down by the masterpieces Lane has produced and appears to be overwhelmed and weighed down by the sheer number of paintings.

About the Artist: Max Beerbohm

Sir Henry Maximilian “Max” Beerbohm (1872–1956) was born in London and educated at Merton College, Oxford. He was known as a satirical writer and caricaturist. He moved in the same literary circle as Oscar Wilde. In his drawings and parodies he depicted his contemporaries, usually political and literary personalities, highlighting in them the pretentious or absurd. This ridicule was more affectionate than malicious. Although he was talented at figure sketching, Beerbohm was not very skillful at drawing hands or feet. However, he was an expert at drawing heads. He particularly admired, and was inspired by the elegant male dandy fashion of the period, as can be seen in his caricatures. He usually drew with pen or pencil and delicately tinted the drawing with watercolour. He used light and simplistic lines in his drawings.
Caricatures

A caricature is a portrait that exaggerates or distorts distinctive features or peculiarities, to create a comic or grotesque effect. These caricatures are a sort of political cartoon and are a quick way for the artist to say how they feel or what they think about a situation or event.

Further Discussion and Art Activities

- Look at the people in these caricatures; do you think Beerbohm wanted to flatter these people?
- What emotions is he suggesting by Lane’s stance and expression; and by the expression of those in the audience;
- How effective do you think political cartoons are for expressing viewpoints? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- Do you think these are realistic artworks? Are they meant to be?
- Are there any objects in the caricature that gives us clues about the person portrayed- their occupation, interests, status?
- A caricature is a picture sentence conveying a point of view. Choose a work from the exhibition or an historical event and convey it in a cartoon.
3. The Social Context

Before the First World War Ireland’s political landscape was already occupied with the ongoing struggle for and against Home Rule. Amid this struggle Ireland was also in a state of social unrest. Workers had few rights and women did not have the right to vote. As a result there was an emergence of workers’ unions and suffragette movements, who were trying to make their own case alongside the much wider political cause.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Haslam by Sarah Cecilia Harrison

Social activists Anna Maria Haslam (1829-1922) and Thomas Haslam (1825-1917) were a husband and wife who campained for women’s rights. Women could not vote in either parliamentary or local elections in Ireland at this time. The campaign for votes for women became known as the Suffrage movement. In 1876 Anna, a middle-class Protestant, founded the Dublin Women’s Suffrage Association, and later became its president. Her husband Thomas J. Haslam was one of the male members of the Association. Thomas edited a suffrage paper called the “Women’s Advocate”. Both came from Quaker backgrounds, a pacifist religious society that advocated social justice. Therefore the association promoted peaceful methods to obtain suffrage. In 1901 the Dublin Women’s Suffrage became the Irish Women’s Suffrage and Local Government Association (IWSLGA). Like with many of Ireland’s other social and cultural movements, the question of Home Rule had become a source of contension amongst the IWSLGA’s members. The IWSLGA had a common objective to get women’s suffrage but were divided by their political allegiances. In 1908 the more radical members, who were nationalist in politics, formed their own group the Irish Women’s
Revolutionary States: Home Rule & Modern Ireland - A Resource for Teachers and Students

Franchise League (IWFL). They targeted government buildings, smashing windows in protest. As a result the violence damaged support for the suffrage campaign. In order to further the cause some women wanted the issue to be included in the Home Rule Bill, but the Home Rule leader John Redmond feared that the movement would delay or prevent Home Rule. With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the issue of women’s suffrage was postponed. After the war, in 1918 women over thirty won the right to vote. It had taken over forty years for the movement to achieve this victory, which Anna lived see.

The Artist: Sarah Cecilia Harrison

Sarah Cecilia Harrison (1863 – 1941) was born in Co. Down. She trained at Slade Art School in London and spent some time in France painting in the artists colonies in Brittany and elsewhere. There she painted children and landscapes “en plein air”. After moving to Dublin she earned herself a reputation as one of Ireland’s leading portraitists. Her work was meticulous and realistic. The artist Mary Swanzy described her as a “…careful, polished portrait painter”. She was a good friend of Hugh Lane, and worked closely with him in his attempt to establish a gallery of modern art in Dublin. She also compiled notes for the Gallery’s first catalogue in 1908. Harrison was the first woman to be elected a member of Dublin Corporation in 1912, spending much of her time working to improve the conditions of the poor and campaigning for women's rights. After the death of Hugh Lane, she tirelessly supported the campaign for the return of the thirty-nine Lane Bequest pictures.

About the Painting

This is a double portrait of husband and wife, Thomas Haslam and Anna Haslam. The Latin inscription below their names says that Thomas was 82 and Anna was 79, when the painting was made. Thomas has a full beard and looks out towards the viewer. He is wearing a black jacket and waistcoat. His white shirt is barely visible as he is also wearing a black tie. He is holding a sheet of paper in both hands, which are resting on his lap. He is wearing a black cap. Anna is looking to her left. She is wearing a black bonnet, a white lace shawl and a black dress. Her hands are clasped gently together.

Further Discussion

- This elderly couple were active social campaigners. Would you have guessed this from their portrayal in this painting? What can you tell of the sitters’ characters from the way they are portrayed in this painting?

- Look at the double portrait. Do you think the artist knew the sitters? Do you think there might be a specific reason why Harrison chose to paint a portrait of the Haslams?
Sir Horace Plunkett (1854-1932) was a promoter of agricultural co-operation known more commonly as the Co-operative Movement. Plunkett was born in Co. Meath, the son of a landowner. He studied at Eton and Oxford, before moving to North America to work on ranches. He returned to Ireland and in 1889 he began a campaign advising farmers to form themselves into co-operatives. Co-operative means to work together. He proposed that farmers should process and sell their produce together and jointly buy their supplies in bulk. Therefore farmers could cut out the middle man leaving them with a greater profit. However, introducing these changes was not easy and Plunkett was met with a lot of resistance. Farmers were conservative about making changes so the movement initially received little support. As a landlord, Plunkett was distrusted by the people, and as a Protestant he was distrusted by the Catholic Church. However these fears were overcome, and in 1894 the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd., later renamed the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society Limited (ICOS), was formed by Plunkett and his friends. In 1899 he persuaded the government to set up a Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. The co-op movement soon spread throughout Ireland improving and refining Ireland’s agricultural industry.
Also featured in this exhibition is a portrait by Markievicz, Casimir Joseph Dunin de Count of George Russell, a colleague of Plunkett. George Russell (1867-1935) was an Irish nationalist, writer, poet, and painter. Russell was a friend of W. B. Yeats and in 1897 he joined Plunkett’s co-operative movement when Yeats suggested Russell as an able organiser. He was an influential figure in the co-operative movement and worked many years for the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) as its Assistant Secretary and as editor of the Irish Homestead. During the 1913 Lockout he defended the right of workers to join unions and criticised employers’ opposition.

The Artist: John Butler Yeats

John Butler Yeats (1839 – 1922) an Irish portrait painter was born in County Down. He was the father of the poet William Butler Yeats and the painter Jack Butler Yeats. Although called to the Bar in 1866 he never really embraced the Law. Very quickly he turned to his real love art. It is known that while he was in the Four Courts, he often sketched humorous sketches of some of his colleagues.

In 1867 he went to London to study art and took his family with him, deciding to abandon the safe option of law. He was a master portraitist and his admiration for the Pre-Raphaelites is evident in his work. One critic compared him to the Dutch Old Master Rembrandt.

John Butler Yeats exhibited regularly at the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) and he found some success when in 1901 the artist Sarah Purser organised a retrospective exhibition in Dublin of his work and the work of the landscape painter Nathaniel Hone. Purser brought Hugh Lane to see the exhibition. Yeats’s talent impressed Lane and he commissioned him to paint twenty-five portraits of outstanding figures in contemporary Irish literary, cultural and political life. These portraits were to be included in the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art.

However, Yeats worked slowly and was unhappy with the constraints of a commission; he completed just five of the twenty-five paintings before moving to New York in 1907. He was also a poor business man, reluctant to do commercial work and so he was never financially secure. However his contribution was significant to the development of 20th century Irish art.
James (Big Jim) Larkin (1876-1947) was a trade union leader. Born in Liverpool to Irish parents, he was a dock labourer and socialist advocating improved conditions for workers. He was sent to Dublin in 1908 to organise workers into trade unions. In Dublin many unskilled workers depended on finding work on a day to day basis, and were paid poorly for working long hours. In 1909 he founded the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) for unskilled and skilled workers. These workers were living in squalid conditions in tenement buildings in Dublin and so were easy for employers to take advantage of.

In 1912 Larkin helped set up the Irish Labour Party to represent workers in the new government when the forthcoming Home Rule Bill was passed. By 1913 the increasing success of the ITGWU caused apprehension amongst employers. In reaction to the growth of trade unions, employers organised themselves into the Dublin Employers Federation.

Under the leadership of a successful business man William Martin Murphy, the Federation urged workers to leave the unions. Murphy fired workers in his Tramway Company when they joined a union. As a result Larkin organised a strike in the Tramway Company during Horse Show Week, August 1913. Attempts to prevent workers from joining the ITGWU in 1913 led to a lock-out where Murphy instructed employers to lock out workers. About 100,000 workers were thrown out of employment for up to eight months, reducing many to near starvation. Larkin was arrested after making a public speech, which caused street riots and clashes with the police. This violent event became known as Bloody Sunday. Larkin
advised the workers to go back to work and eventually workers were allowed to join the ITGWU. Larkin’s main achievement was the foundation of workers solidarity and action, which others built on. Today at the end of O’Connell Street in Dublin there is a statue of Jim Larkin made by the artist Oisin Kelly. The hands and raised arms are larger than life encouraging the workers to rise up.

The Artist: Mina Carney

Mina Carney (1892-1974) was an American sculptor. She received part of her training in Vienna and Rome and travelled to Mexico to work in sculptors’ studios there. Like Jim Larkin, Carney was a socialist and travelled to parts of the world including Russia to see how socialism was implemented. Art was not Carney’s sole interest; she had many passions but did not have time for them all. After World War Two she decided to give up her art practice and devoted herself to her political commitments. Her husband Jack Carney was a colleague of Jim Larkin. Most probably it is through this connection that the bronze portrait of Larkin came about. Jack Carney worked with Larkin in the Irish Labour and socialist movements before emigrating to America. He edited the Irish Worker and he later founded the Communist Labour party of Minnesota in 1919.

About the Work

Carney modelled a portrait of Larkin and cast it in bronze. The surface of the bronze is pitted and textured, and is placed on a plinth made from a block of marble. This sculpture shows only the head of Jim Larkin. His hair is strongly brushed from right to left. The famous Irish labour leader looks out with serious intent.

Further Discussion

- Larkin was a large man with a strong presence. Do you think Carney’s sculpture of his head captures that aspect of his character?
- Do you think this portrait head was modeled from life?
- How important are portraits of famous people today? Has photography taken over?
- Look at the sculpture bust of Michael Collins by Seamus Murphy in the Entrance Hall of the Gallery and the Portrait of John O’Leary by Oliver Sheppard in the exhibition. Compare the scale, materials and portrayal of this these figures with the bust of Jim Larkin.
4. The Cultural Context

Ireland wanted to show that it was different from Britain, in order to prove that it needed to run its own affairs through a Home Rule government. But first Ireland needed to define its Irishness to give it an identity distinct from Britain. This was achieved predominantly through culture. It was feared that Irish culture was being eradicated by British culture and so the Cultural Revival engaged with the idea of what it was to be Irish, by looking to Ireland’s past. Movements such as the Literary Revival and the Irish language movement, the Gaelic League, took a renewed interest in ancient Irish folklore, myths, history, literature and sport. By using the past as a source of inspiration what emerged was a particularly idealised and romantic representation of Ireland. The movements of the Cultural Revival led the way in re-inventing an Irish national culture, which in turn informed Ireland’s national identity.

Lady Gregory (1910) by Jacob Epstein

Born in Galway Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory (1852-1932) was an Irish playwright and central figure in the Irish Literary Revival. She was introduced to the Irish language as well as the history and legends of her local area by her nanny. Due to a strict evangelical Protestant upbringing, she was forbidden to read novels until she was eighteen. In 1880 she married Sir William Henry Gregory, and their house in Coole Park was visited by many of the famous writers and painters of the day. Lord Gregory was a well educated man with an extensive library that Lady Gregory made good use of. After the death of Lord Gregory in 1892 she immersed herself in the study of Irish literature and folklore. She learned Irish and collected stories from local people. Her literary talent blossomed and she wrote poems, short stories and plays. She was a close friend of the poet W. B. Yeats and was instrumental in the founding of the Irish Literary Theatre which later became the Abbey Theatre. She was the
aunt of Hugh Lane and after his death she was to the forefront of the campaign for the return of Lane’s thirty-nine continental paintings from London to Dublin.

**The Artist: Jacob Epstein**

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) was a sculptor from New York. He studied drawing but developed an interest in casting processes while working at a bronze foundry. In 1902 he went to Paris to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the Academie Julian. He saw primitive and antique sculpture at the Louvre, and is best known for both his expressive and naturalistic styles. In 1905 he moved to London and became a successful portrait sculptor making busts of many leading figures of the day. Much of his carved sculptures and monuments were met with criticism. He modeled portrait busts and heads which are generally characterized by a rough-textured expressionism and he tended to highlight a specific aspect of the sitter’s personality.

**About the Work**

Hugh Lane commissioned Jacob Epstein to make a bust portrait of his aunt Lady Gregory. Here the artist stressed Lady Gregory’s determination and strength of character, not only by the modeling but also by the informality and spontaneity of the pose. At first, Lane and Lady Gregory were unhappy with the pose, regarding the portrayal of her strength of character as quite blunt and too forthright. Lady Gregory believed the pose was captured during a moment when she became briefly distracted. However, Lady Gregory grew to appreciate what she considered to be the work’s energy.

**Further Discussion and Art Activity**

- Imagine the conversation between the artist and the sitter about how the sitter should look.
- Have you ever had your likeness taken? As a photograph, drawing or sculpture? Are you always pleased with the result? Does your opinion ever change over time?
- Model a clay portrait of a close friend or family member. Try and capture a likeness of the person’s appearance and the essence of their personality.
W.B. Yeats (c. 1904) by Sarah Purser

William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939) came from one of the most artistic families in Ireland and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. Born in Dublin, to a middle-class Protestant family, he was the son of the artist John B. Yeats and brother of the painter Jack B. Yeats. As a youngster he spent many summers visiting family in Sligo. The west of Ireland was a major source of inspiration for W.B. Yeats as he often romanticised the west in his literature. He trained in art, but turned to literature and writing. His art training may have encouraged him to think visually and abstractly when writing.

Yeats developed a keen interest in native Irish literature and tradition. Yeats was a nationalist and led the Irish Literary Revival, a movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s which provoked a renewed enthusiasm for new and traditional Irish literature. In 1904 together with Lady Gregory he founded the Abbey Theatre to stage Irish plays. However, towards the end of his life Yeats became disillusioned by the narrow-mindedness of those who wanted to promote Irish cultural identity as Catholic and nationalist. In addition many of these people were adverse to any art which depicted the harsh realities of Irish rural life, rather than romanticising it. Yeats felt it was important for Ireland to open itself up to external European influences and modernism in its search for a new Irish identity.

W. B. Yeats’s legacy extends beyond his literature: he was one of the key players and commentators of events in early twentieth century Ireland. He made an immense contribution to the preservation of Ireland’s heritage and the formation of Irish national
identity and his influence on other writers, plays, films and music can be seen all over the world.

The Artist: Sarah Purser

Sarah Purser (1848 – 1943) studied at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin and went to Paris to study portraiture. Influenced by modern French painting, she adopted the style of the Impressionists and Realists. Following her returned to Ireland, she established a career as a successful portraitist, working in oils and pastels. Purser was a major figure in the development of the arts in Ireland: her exhibition of the work of John Butler Yeats and Nathaniel Hone inspired Hugh Lane to establish a gallery of modern art in Dublin. It also resulted in Lane commissioning John B. Yeats to paint a series of portraits of distinguished Irishmen and women. She was also instrumental in finding a permanent home for the gallery by persuading the then Taoiseach WT. Cosgrave to let Charlemont House become the new home of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, where it opened in 1933. One of her most important achievements was the setting up of the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland (FNCI) in 1924. The FNCI acquired art works for public collections and tried to have Lane’s thirty-nine continental pictures returned to Dublin. Purser also played a pivotal role in re-establishing the art of stained glass in Ireland and in 1903 founded An Túr Gloine (The Tower of Glass) the first Irish stained glass studio.

About the Work

This pastel on brown paper is a portrait of the renowned Irish poet William Butler Yeats. In this work Yeats looks forward, wearing a suit which is not fully sketched. His hair is tousled and parted to the right. A background is suggested by some dashes of yellow. Purser had a brisk technique similar to the Impressionists. In this portrait the force of her drawing technique gives energy to the work.

Further Discussion

- Look at the lines and mark making techniques Purser used to create this portrait. Do you think this portrait took a long time to complete? Why?
- Describe the personality of the sitter as portrayed in this portrait.
- Would you describe this portrayed as formal or informal? Why?
- Do you think this work was a preparatory study for a more finished painting?
- Compare Max Beerbohm’s portrait of W.B. Yeats with Sarah Purser’s portrait of W.B. Yeats. Which representation of W.B. Yeats do you prefer? Why?
- Read the poems W.B. Yeats wrote inspired by the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. Write your own poem inspired by an artwork or theme in the exhibition.
Douglas Hyde (1860-1945), the son of a Church of Ireland rector from Fermoy in Co. Cork, was born in Co. Roscommon and grew up in Co. Sligo.

At the start of the twentieth century the number of people speaking Irish language was dwindling. The language was considered backwards and speaking it was discouraged. As a youngster Douglas Hyde learned to speak Irish from the older people in his locality which instilled in him a love of Irish culture. Although he qualified in law, he loved Irish history, language and folklore. He translated old Irish poems as well as writing his own poems and books. He was so passionate about the Irish language that he founded The Gaelic League in 1893, to save it from extinction. The Gaelic League was a very influential organisation whose aims were to revive the Irish language as well as to develop Irish literature and remove other aspects of English culture in Ireland. It also organised exhibitions of Irish Art.

Douglas Hyde became president of The Gaelic League and was appointed professor of Modern Irish at University College Dublin (UCD). Hyde was also involved in the Literary Revival and wrote a series of plays in Irish. These were performed in the Irish Literary Theatre, which later became the Abbey Theatre. Hyde wanted The Gaelic League to be non-political hoping it would be a link between a religious and politically divided Ireland. However many emerging political Irish leaders, such as Michael Collins became politicised through the movement. He dissapproved of the radical policies promoted by some of the new members and he resigned as president when the league decided to promote independence. In 1938 Douglas Hyde became the first President of Ireland.
About the Work

In this portrait Douglas Hyde is seated in an armchair, his pose is relaxed with his legs crossed and his hands resting upon his lap. He has a thick mustache and is wearing a black suit and waistcoat with a white shirt and a red cravat. Although his body turns to the left of the picture his head is turned out towards the viewer and he looks straight out of the picture.

Further Discussion

- Why would somebody have their portrait painted? Perhaps to celebrate an event, to mark a historical or political occasion, as an intimate view of family life or friendship? What objects might they include to show their status or profession?
- How has the role of portraiture changed over time/during the 20th century?
Revolutionary States: Home Rule and Modern Ireland: A Resource for Teachers and Students
written by Sarah Johnston, Art Education Assistant.

Suggested Further Reading:

In addition to the illustrated catalogue Revolutionary States: Home Rule and Modern Ireland edited by Logan Sisley accompanying this exhibition the following publications are suggested further reading:


View the Hugh Lane’s collection online by going to www.hughlane.ie

Lectures and Film Screenings
A stimulating programme of free lectures, film screenings and public tours accompanying the exhibition Revolutionary States: Home Rule and Modern Ireland is taking place for the duration of the exhibition. For full details of our public lectures and film screenings exploring the exhibition please go to www.hughlane.ie/education

Sunday 27 May 2012/3pm
Public Lecture: Young Ireland 1912: Artists, Writers, Actresses and Activists
Lecturer: Sinead McCoole, Art Historian
Sunday 1 July 2012/3pm
Lecturer: Jessica Cunningham, Art and Design Historian

Sunday 15 July 2012/3pm
Public Lecture: ‘Futurism in Dublin’: Hugh Lane and the Civic Exhibition, Dublin, 1914
Lecturer: Logan Sisley, Exhibitions Curator

Sunday 9 September 2012/3pm
Public Lecture: Marking the Introduction to the British Parliament of the Third Home Rule Bill, April 1912.
Lecturer: Dr P.J. Mathews,

Sunday 16 September 2012/3pm
Public Lecture: 1912 and all that
Lecturer: Prof. Michael Laffan, Historian

Sunday 30 September 2012/3pm
Public Lecture: Sarah Cecilia Harrison (1863 – 1941): Artist and Social Campaigner
Lecturer: Dr Margarita Cappock, Head of Collections

Planning Your Visit: Guided tours of the collection and temporary exhibitions may be booked for schools and visiting groups with a minimum of two weeks’ notice. Tours cost €25 per group up to a maximum of 30 people. For an additional cost, it may also be possible to book a sketching tour, or combined tour and workshop, during your visit. Please contact 01 2225553 to arrange your visit.

For further information on the Hugh Lane’s Education and Research programme, please contact:

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