

Drawings are often seen as preparatory work for something else, as stages along the way to an artwork rather than as a final statement. In this regard they are endlessly fascinating but it would be wrong to think that this is the only reason for their existence. Artists draw for all kinds of reasons; to articulate and develop ideas, as preparation for painting and sculpture, as a personal record of significant events and moments, because the urge is so powerful and so natural that it cannot be resisted or, in some notable instances, to be subversive.

This exhibition brings together a number of very recent acquisitions to the IMMA Collection along with some more familiar material. A grid of nine punchy self-portrait drawings by Brian Bourke, entitled *Self-Portrait with Blue, Red and Green* proclaims the use of the self-portrait as a vehicle for the portrayal of a wide range of expression involving the kind of candour that other sitters might find difficult. Bourke's use of colour forms a marked contrast to Brian O'Doherty's *Drawing for Marcel Duchamp*, where the monochrome of the graphite enhances the mechanical process through which this very different 'portrait' was achieved. Brian Maguire's cibachrome photographs of pencil portraits of children in the Favela Vila Prudente installed in their own homes raise issues about appropriate contexts for artwork. Henri Matisse's pencil drawing of his son-in-law, Claude Duthuit prioritises elegance over the subversiveness of Maguire's approach. David Godbold's practice, like that of Brian Maguire, has always had a strong political edge to it. His digital drawings on tracing and computer paper, drawn from both popular imagery and the classical fine art tradition make fun of both with his usual sureness and lightness of touch. Mark Manders' drawings, another recent acquisition to the IMMA Collection, were originally hung, unframed, like sheets on a clothesline, - the artist's way of underscoring the relationship between the domestic environment and the imaginary and creative one of the studio.

Colour is not the primary quality we associate with drawing. In Sean Scully's beautiful pastel drawing, gifted by the artist in memory of the late Dorothy Walker, the layering of colour, the blocks of verticals and horizontals speak of depth, complexity and ambiguity. The colour is sombre but also rich and elegiac. Other abstract drawings in the exhibition include new works by Patrick Michael Fitzgerald while a delicate flower drawing by Willie McKeown, is so subtly drawn that at first glance it appears like a minimal colour field painting.

Drawings are traditionally relatively small in scale. *Oxygen* by Hughie O'Donoghue is extraordinary for its scale as well as for the emotional force of the drawing. The sense of a figure emerging from the charcoal markings, like Michelangelo's *Slaves from stone*, puts the drawing on a level with classical paintings of a similar scale. The canvas ground for this drawing also references painting. Alice Maher regularly plays with perceptions of scale, moving from the tiny to the gigantic, often in surprising scenarios. In *Coma Berenices* the knot of hair reaches mythic proportions. The relativities between painting and drawing are parodied in another large-scale drawing, this time by Bill Woodrow. In *Untitled*, the medium is oil on paper but the process is undeniably drawing.

A series of prints by Terry Winters, recalls Japanese prints from the 19th century, with their wonderful drama and gestural marks. Catherine Lee marked her recent solo show at IMMA by donating a group of etching with an Irish theme, made in the 1970s, on previous visits to Ireland. Their response to place is echoed in *Chandelier* by Stephen Brandes. Drawn on linoleum, the work focuses on personal and ancestral journeys from Eastern Europe to Britain and Ireland. Juan Muñoz deals with space, depth, illusion and perception in his work *Raincoat Drawing* which is a chalk drawing on paper mounted on a waterproof material traditionally used to make raincoats. This drawing is a companion piece to Muñoz's work *Dublin Rain Room* a site specific installation made for IMMA (not included in this show). More familiar work from the IMMA Collection includes drawings of architectural motifs in graphite and tippex by Rachel Whiteread and a similar subject in charcoal by Samuel Walsh. The oak tree from which the leaves in Tom Molloy's *Oak Drawings* derive is unique in the barren landscape of a particular area in the Burren in Co. Clare. The ninety six drawings from which the thirty two shown here are taken, play on issues of individuality and commonality, in a drawing style from which individuality is carefully withheld.

The exhibition offers proof, if proof were needed of the ongoing centrality of drawings to contemporary art practice, whether this takes a traditional form or breaks newer ground with computerized approaches or with new media. It also reveals the ceaseless experimentation in terms of content and practice that artists continue to display.

The exhibition was co-curated by Catherine Marshall and Marguerite O'Molloy.

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