

Pádraic Reaney

1973



1993

R E T R O S P E C T I V E

Pádraic Reaney

1973

Galway Arts Centre
March 1993

Model Arts Centre, Sligo
April 1993

Linenhall Arts Centre, Castlebar
May 1993

Pantheon Gallery, Dublin
June 1993

Wexford Arts Centre
July 1993


Laois County Hall
August 1993

1993

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Front cover
Display, 1980
Oil on board, 122 x 81

Back cover
Figure in a Room, 1979
Mixed media on paper, 74 x 54

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FOREWORD

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Galway Arts Centre, I am very pleased to introduce "Padraic Reaney 1973-1993" to the Irish Public.

Much has been said about the Galway Arts Scene in latter years, but perhaps insufficient attention has been paid to practitioners, such as Padraic, who have been working quietly at their craft over this period. This exhibition is designed to sum up Padraic's varied work of the last twenty years. It captures his career up to now and gives an indication of where he is going in the future. The show draws on older works from public and private collections, as well as a selection of his most recent work. We are very grateful to the lenders for agreeing to allow their artwork to be included in this exhibition.

We are also extremely grateful to Udaras na Gaeltachta for sponsoring the exhibition and we trust it will be a worthwhile demonstration of how a Gaeltacht artist can develop a national reputation while continuing to live and work in Conamara.

We hope that this exhibition will be a worthy testimony to Padraic's work and that the accompanying catalogue will provide a suitable documentary record of the exhibition after the national tour.

John Yates
Chairman, *Galway Arts Centre*

PADRAIC REANEY

Over the years one of the pleasures of visiting group exhibitions in and around Galway has been coming face-to-face with the painting of Padraic Reaney. Amidst the facile Western views and tentative attempts at up-to-date Expressionism, his work has always stood apart, for not only was it untouched by these facilities, but it proclaimed a self-contained, complete integrity. And, intriguingly, the paintings made their own pictorial statement without reference to the landscape and light outside the gallery doors.



Hanging Man,
1976 Woodcut,
24.5 x 16.5

When I met the artist and visited his studio, which is actually set in the magical Galway landscape, I mentioned the absence of any feeling of this in his work and asked why he never seemed to use his wonderful surroundings. He replied that he would never think of painting it and in particular could never imagine himself ever setting out to paint a particular view or even effect of light...

It is here that his birthright is evidenced for he was born in Carraroe in the heart of the Western Gaeltacht and in spirit and in fact has never left this. So the landscape that has prompted and nurtured so much art is to him, not exotic, romantic, quaint or even more 'Irish' or any of the qualities that, over the years, attracted so many Irish artists to the West. It is Reaney's natural environment into which he was born and in which he has always lived: nothing very remarkable. And it is suddenly borne in on one that the art brought out of the West has all been produced by those who have come there in search of these particular qualities; one hesitates to call them tourists, since many have settled and lived there for long periods; but their work has a whiff of souvenir; certainly it is not indigenous. In fact Padraic may well be thought of as the first Connemara painter, rather than as a painter of that area. However when landscape features do invade his painting, which as a figurative painter they must, and since these are his daily surroundings, it just becomes part of his iconography so that tree, rock and sky are unlocalised; just another recognisable shape; a reference.

But, it may be asked, surely it is not possible in such isolation, remoteness even, for a painter to construct a comprehensive oeuvre and particular one that pays so little attention to the local scene? Well the exhibition here belies that and very powerfully. Admittedly hitherto this could hardly have happened but now with the freedom and variety and indeed pervasiveness of visual information, the necessity that was so vital in previous ages to travel to gain any knowledge of the heritage of art has been adequately replaced. Even training itself has become free of the metropolis and the total effects of this transformation are already very obvious here in Ireland and will become more so. Certainly without these modern factors it would be difficult to see work of the range and scope of Reaney's being achieved. Actually he has, by preference, travelled very little, indeed very infrequently and reluctantly and when he does, it is usually to the same place, London, because it has a lot of galleries and above all is easy of access. Thus his work can draw upon the masters of the past as of the present; some of the preferred are obvious: Francis Bacon, Munch, Griinewald, for instance; others are less obvious but all are absorbed into his own personal idioms.



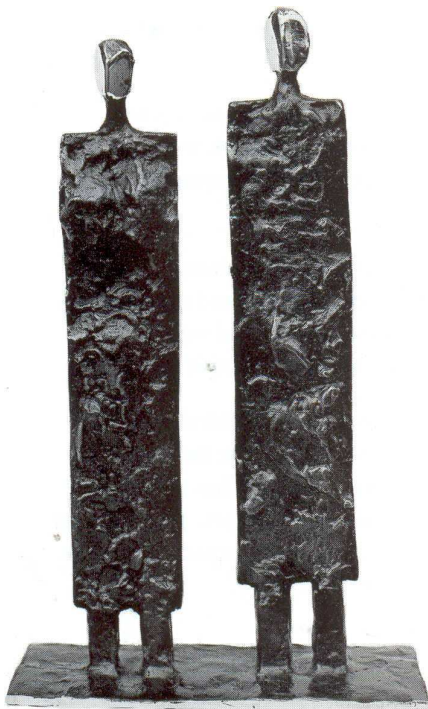
Death of Cuchulainn,
1992 Monoprint, 36 x 39

These are deployed over a range of images in a variety of media and to a number of purposes. He has, for instance, a lively interest in graphics, particularly noticeable recently in a series of quite complex monoprints. He delights in using and extending the craft but this delight is kept in its place and never allowed to become an end in itself, so that his prints are never just a display of craft but rather show how this has been exploited to contribute to the image and thereby become integrated into his expression and his total oeuvre, not just another description of this.

In fact it can even provide a means of access to his creative world demonstrating how this is in a continual state of becoming; reacting and extending itself as it feeds on each new challenge of subject or medium. His imagination runs free but it always resolves itself into a solid image. He is very clear in the realisation of his imaginative world: everything, however fantastical, even evanescent, becomes specific, exact. This inner world is rooted in his interests of which a fascination with birds is uppermost (when I visited there was, probably still is, a wounded merlin contentedly tethered in his livingroom) and also his reading. This can result in a series like the recent set of monoprints based on the T<iin in which he has succeeded in evolving a fresh set of images for this much illustrated, even hackneyed, text. In these the shapes of the original plate and its textures have contributed to a realisation of the narrative, giving the incidents the emblematic quality of stone-carving. Another recent extension of his work has been the tapestries woven by V'Soske-Joyce which again show how successfully his imagery and its medium can fuse.

This variety of output shows very forcibly how sure he is in the realisation of his vision. Here his drawing: sensitive, but exact, contributes very considerably and in fact these, with their immediacy and display of skill have considerable charm, although, as I found, they are rather undervalued by their maker! Drawings, it seems, are the basis of his image-making; the solid foundation which clarifies and subtly expresses his creative intelligence. This is a very individual merging of the sensual, fantastical and, finally, the formal. His iconic forms are reverberant, enigmatic, replete with echoes, suggestions, reminiscences: now bird-related, then animal-skeletal; all making and existing in their own world and all expressive of a personal, steadily developing statement of considerable scope of which, I would suggest, the present exhibition is but one of the early chapters, for he is now working with complete authority and individual purpose.

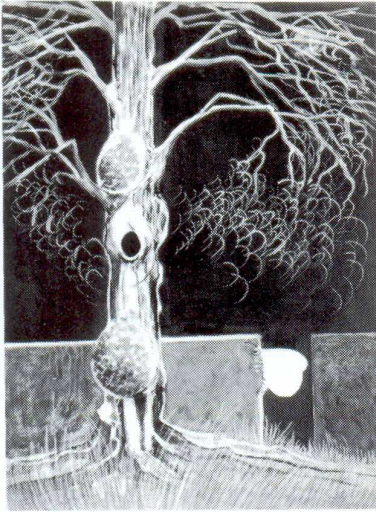
Desmond Mac Avock



Maeve and Ailill, 1991
Bronze, 27.5

PADRAIC REANEY: - A WORLD OF HIS OWN

I met Padraic Reaney in the 1970s in Galway. We had two things in common in those days. We both were students- he at the Regional College and I at University College Galway- and we both were fascinated by art. I don't think we talked a lot about either of these things then, and certainly not since, but our feeling for what was right and proper for art, writing and what an artist or writer should do, was an unmistakable presence in the atmosphere of that time.



Metamorphosis: Night,
1985 Mixed media on
paper, 74 x 54

During the 1970s Galway was beginning to become self-aware of the artistic community which had always been drawn to the city and Connemara. Within a decade or so that self-consciousness had been turned, for good or ill, into a shopwindow and throughout the 1980s it sometimes seemed as if Galway was running the risk of losing a sense of proportion.

It is hardly surprising that throughout those years Padraic Reaney was busy with his own work as an artist, going about his creative business with the steady, level-eyed belief in what he was doing. His commitment has always been to his art. All those who have known Padraic's work from its earliest public beginnings in exhibitions such as those in Spiddal Stone Galley, under the care of the late Jesus Modia, have seen a consistent marvellous transformation take place. For Padraic Reaney has become total master of his own imaginative space and has created, out of all sorts of mythic and visual sources, a world of his own.

Over the years Padraic and I have collaborated on some projects. I have given him poems of mine to illustrate and often after several months he has returned with an image that bears an uncanny resemblance to where the poem started in my own mind. Those images, of Padraic's strike me now, looking over them, as pictures from the first Garden, brilliant snapshots of Innocence, shadowed by another troubled world of memory.

More than any other artist whose work I am familiar with, Padraic has retained a powerful sense of lyricism in his paintings. This is not in any shape, way or form an easy or sentimental lyricism but something that is vital, mysterious and betimes, scary.

Padraic Reaney is of course a painter and sculptor of exceptional personal modesty. In the current climate of hype and buzz, full of shoneens, chancers and ego-maniacs, the cool graphic care and sensitivity of Padraic's art had to stand and wait for the discernment of time. The twenty years represented in this Retrospective says it all.

There is something deeply satisfying for those who have admired Padraic Reaney, that, with this exhibition, a much wider audience can now appreciate the unique vision of an Irish artist. Padraic Reaney, an artist from Connemara, has never relied upon the mixed blessings of one place or another to underpin his work. His paintings and sculptures inhabit their own universe but what else should we expect of an artist of the first order?

The only real appreciation I can make on the occasion of Padraic Reaney's Retrospective, besides this note, is by way of a poem, dedicated to Padraic, with admiration and respect.

From THE NICK OF TIME for
Padraic Reaney

4 Out of the Question

The second 0 in Portarlinton
has gone and under the shed's
Bangor Blues a yellow
breakdown truck. Into the sky's
concealed entrance head a line
of sheep, but what, pray, are
we waiting for?

7 About the House

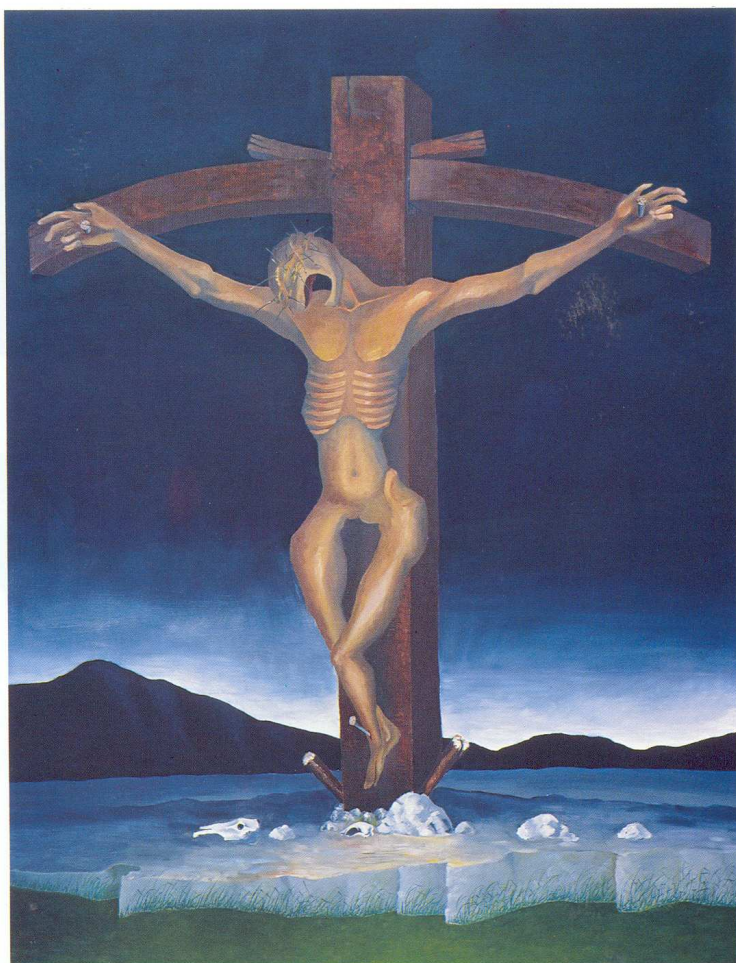
Two horses in the field
opposite shake their
heads and move off; rain
hangs in the treetops and
simply refuses to shift.
I've been doing what I
can about the house,
putting things away,
balancing toys of every
description precariously
against my chest. The
'phone goes and as
quickly stops; a scrap-
dealer's lorry thunders
past. Nothing is ever put
away.



***Maeve's Daughter Finnbair,
1991 Bronze, 21***



Metamorphosis No. 2, 1985
Oil on board, 85 x 65



Agony, 1975
Oil on board, 122 x 94



Ros an Mhíl xviii, 1983
Etching, 27 x 36



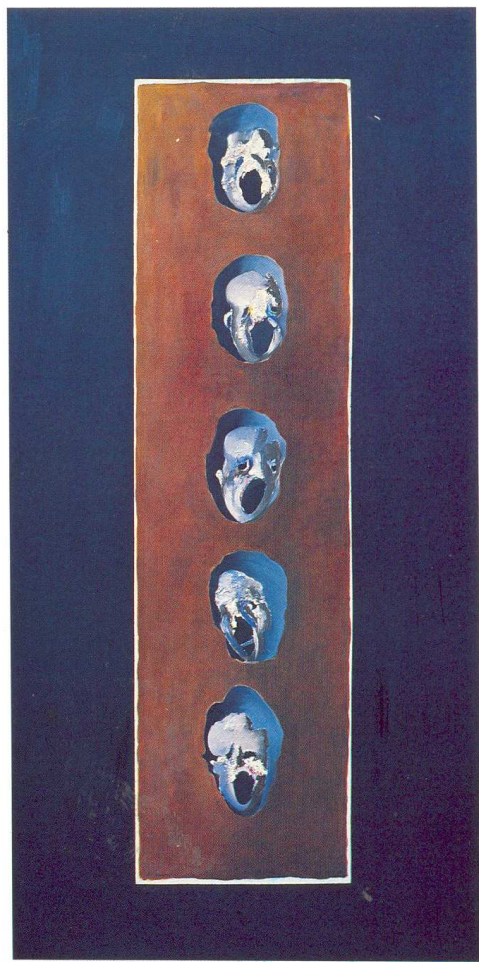
Ros an Mhíl xv, 1983
Etching, 27 x 36



Maeve Waiting for Her Warriors, 1992
Monoprint, 36 x 39



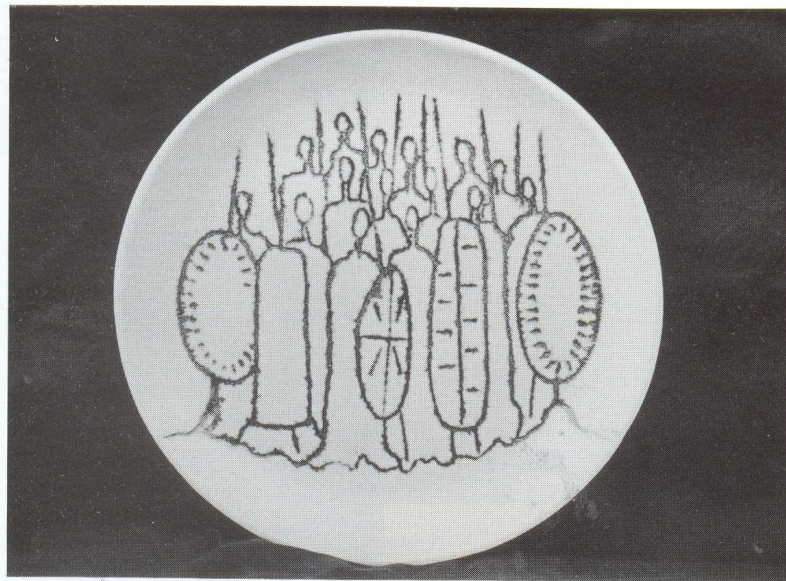
Two Tree-Pierced Figures, 1978
Oil on canvas, 127 x 84



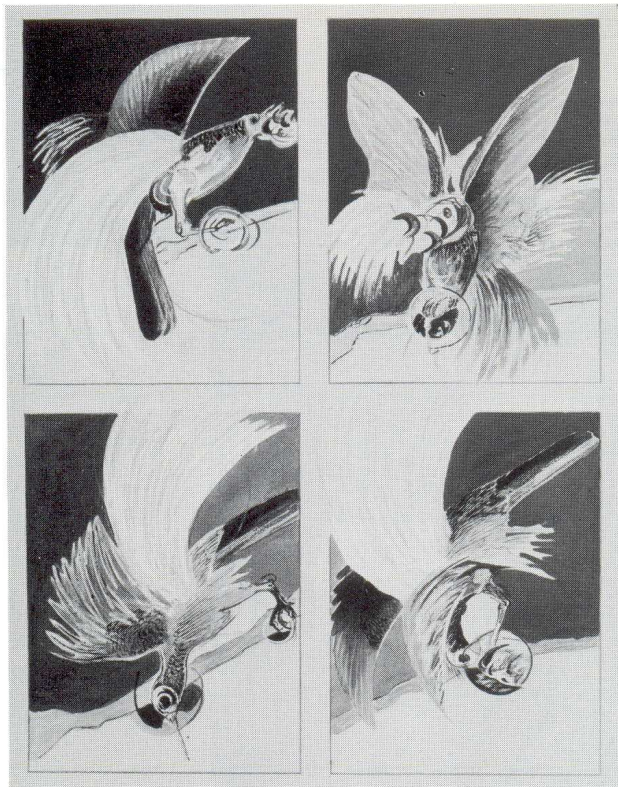
Trophies, 1990
Oil on board, 126 x 65



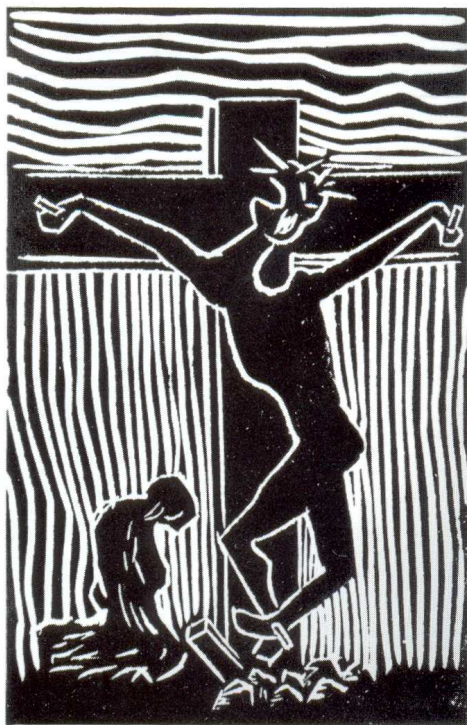
Cuchulainn, 1990
Bronze, 27



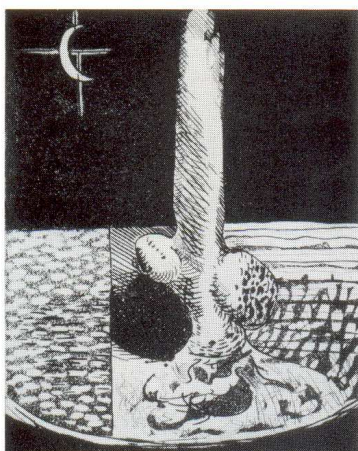
Cormac's Troop, 1987
Ceramic, 24



Birds, 1980
Mixed media on paper, 73 x 52



Céasadh, 1977
Linocut, 15 x 9.5



Crann, 1990
Etching, 17.5 x 14

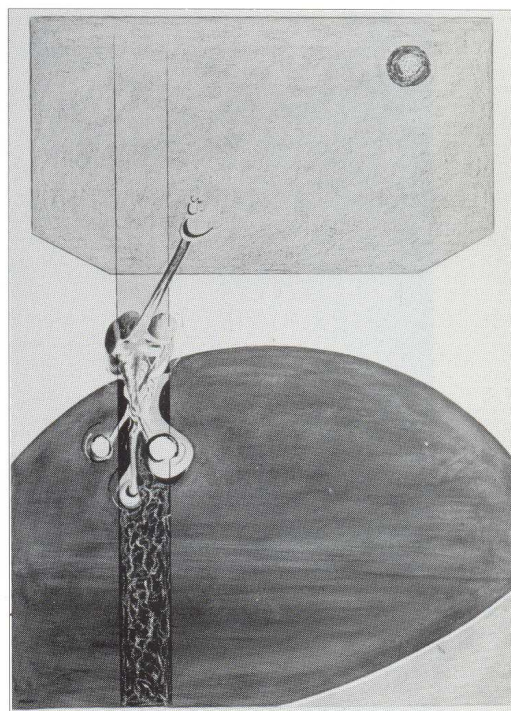
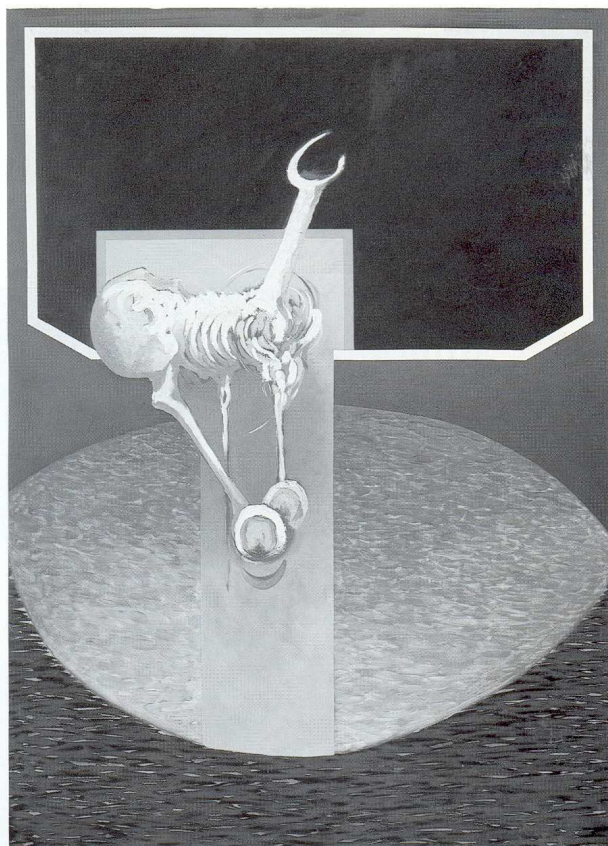


Figure with Sun, 1979
Mixed media on paper, 74 x 54

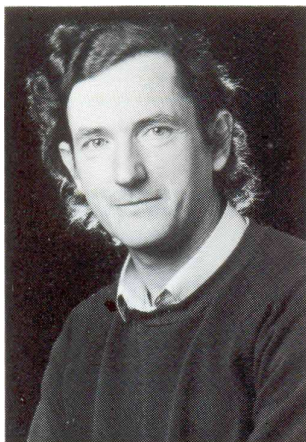


White Figure, 1979
Oil on board, 122 x 81



"Nor was He Bishop", 1992
Monoprint, 50 x 50

BIOGRAPHY



Padraic Reaney was born in Carraroe, County Galway in 1952. Basically self-taught, he went to art college for a few years, encouraged by Oisín Kelly, and has been a full-time artist since leaving college. He painted for several years in Galway: later he built a studio in Moycullen, where he now lives and works.

In addition to his painting he has worked extensively in graphics, sculpture and ceramics, and he has recently created a series of wall-hangings done in the studio of V'Soske-Joyce.

A founder member of Western Artists, Island Connection, and Drimcong Press (with Brian Bourke and Jay Murphy), he was awarded The Padraic Mac Con Midhe Prize at the Oireachtas in 1979.

He also represented Ireland in the XVI Grand Prix International d' Art Contemporain de Monte Carlo in 1982. His work is in public and private collections in this country as well as in Europe, Canada, the United States, Brazil, and Japan.

One-Man Shows

1992
The Tain and Before, Pan Celtic International Festival, (invited artist).
1991
Graphics and Sculpture through the years, Dolon Moore Gallery, Athlone.
1991/87/85/83/82/81/80
Stone Art Gallery, Spiddal, County Galway. 1990
United Arts Club, Dublin.
Windows on the Tain, Heritage Centre, Strokes town, (invited artist).

1990/88
Hotel Carraroe, County Galway.
Clifden Arts Week, Clifden, County Galway. 1989
Winnower Gallery, Galway.
1984
Carroll Gallery, Longford.
Quincentennial Exhibition, Galway.
1979
Exhibition of Prints, Congress of Celtic Studies. University College Galway, (invited artist).

Collections/Commissions

Dublin Writers Museum
Wall-hanging for Arus Na Gaeilge Building, UCG Bard Ireland Ltd.
Office of Public Works
Udanis na Gaeltachta
National Museum of Malta

Macalla UCG
County Library Collection, Kildare, (Arts Council Purchase)
Urawa Wood-Cut Prints, Japan UCG Staff Club.

Ostan Cheathni Rua, Co. na Gaillimhe
Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, Mount Sion, Waterford.
Bank of Ireland
Irish Embassy, Moscow.

Group Exhibitions

1992
Island Connection, Centre de Arte Recova, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, (travelling show).
Oilean Oireachtas '92, Dingle, County Kerry.
Music and Musicians, Kenny Gallery, Galway.
Art at the Airport, Belfast Airport, Belfast. 1992/91/90/89/82/81
Stone Art Gallery, Spiddal, County Galway. 1992/90
RHA Banquet Exhibition, Gallagher Gallery, Dublin.
1992/91/90/89/88/87/86
Western Artists Exhibition, Galway Arts Festival, Galway.

1991
Personal Theme Travelling Show.
COE '91, Claremorris, County Mayo.
The 10th Mimi Print International Cadaques 1990-91, Cadaques, Barcelona, and Andorra. Faces in a Bookshop. Gaelige '91, Derry.
1990
Landscape Exhibition, United Arts Club, Dublin.
Dolan Moore Gallery, Athlone.
Soviet and Irish Art Exhibition, Mansion House, Dublin.
An Exhibition of Illustrations for Contemporary Literature, Arts Centre, Galway. 1990/86/85 /84/83
International Independante Exhibition of Prints. Japan

1989
Arts Club, Dublin.
3 Irish Artists in Malta, Bridge Mills Gallery. Galway.
Graphics, Stone Art Gallery, Spiddal.
The 9th International Wood Block Prints Exhibition, Japan.
"Tree of Life" Royal Hospital, Kilmmainham, Dublin.
1988
Painting '88, Stone Art Gallery, Spiddal, County Galway.
National Museum, Valletta, Malta.

1987
"Celebration of the Bog", Carroll Gallery, Longford and The Royal Hospital Kilmmainham, Dublin.
1982
International Artists Exhibition, Galway Arts Centre, Galway.
Arteder '82, International Graphic Art Exhibition, Bilbao, Spain.
The XVIth International Grand Prix of Contemporary Art of Monte Carlo.
1982/81/78
Listowel Graphic Exhibition, Listowel

1980
Young Artists Exhibition, Lad Lane Gallery, Dublin.

