THE POWER OF DISPLAY: EXHIBITION CULTURES AND EXHIBITED CULTURES IN IRELAND 1973 – 1991

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1. Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work. I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the Library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement. I do not consent to the examiner retaining a copy of the thesis beyond the examining period, should they so wish (EU GDPR May 2018).

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2. Summary

When considering the general nature, objectives and justification of public museums and their role and function within society, different elements should be taken into account. From their conception and establishment, during the Age of Enlightenment up to the present, public museums have been considered primarily as educational institutions and knowledge as the commodity that they have to offer. However, museums are also important sites of cultural production, collective memory making, and are crucial for the construction of narratives and identity.[1] Based on this principle the aim of this research project has been to formulate terms and questions that can be applied both to exhibited culture, what museums and others put on display, and to exhibition culture, the ideas, values, and symbols that pervade and shape the practice of exhibiting. In asking how museums accord particular significances, in examining the politics of museum exhibitions and display strategies, and in comparing policies and attitudes toward museum publics over time, this research project will attempt an inquiry into modes of cultural construction in Ireland.

Over the last fifty years a broad range of critical analyses of the museum have converged on trying to unmask the structures, rituals, and procedures by which the relationship between objects, bodies of knowledge, and processes of ideological persuasion are enacted. While outside Ireland museum studies has been considered as coming of age, within the Irish context the current state of knowledge is yet to fully develop. Critical attention and analysis of the relationship between museums and display has been largely overlooked from an Irish perspective. There have been a number of works addressing the relevance of museums as sites of cultural production and the impact of the display of art as a significant cultural feature such as Elizabeth Crooke's, *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum of Ireland: an Expression of National Life*, and Fintan Cullen's *Ireland on show: art, union and nationhood*.[2] Nevertheless, the vast majority of studies, including both works by Crooke and Cullen, have almost exclusively focused on the analysis of the creation of national identity. Both Crooke and Cullen's studies present an insightful and empirically grounded history of the links between nationalism, display and museums. While their studies answer some of the questions such as the who, what, where, when and why of the creation of identity through

[1] M. Bourke, *The story of Irish Museums 1790-2000: Culture, Identity and Education* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), xxxi.; E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1-22; ICOM, *Conference Proceedings of the 21st ICOM General Conference* (Wien: ICOM-Austria, 2007), 165; A. McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7-12; D. J. Sherman and I. Rogoff, "Introduction: Frameworks for Critical Analysis," in *Museum Cultures: Histories, Discourses and Spectacles,* eds. D. J. Sherman and I. Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), xix-xxii.

[2] E. Crooke, *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum of Ireland: an Expression of National Life* (Dublin: Irish Academy Press, 2000); F. Cullen, *Ireland on Show: Art, Union, and Nationhood* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012).

display, how exactly the parameters of identity, national or otherwise, are created within the museum context is unclear.

This research project has drawn from three key theoretical post-modernist cultural criticism, theory and analytical perspectives applied to Museum Studies and New Museology: the "Foucauldian/power model of museums", Textualisation and the Circuit of Culture Model. While the "Foucauldian/power model" of museums and Textualisation perspectives present numerous advantages such as the opportunity through which to explore issues of power, subjectivity and imagination in the case of Foucaldian/museum Power Model and the advantages of moving away from privileging or compartmentalising a particular aspect of the museum (i.e.: its building, collections, individual staff, organisational status) that presents the understanding of museums in terms of text as narratives, they both have their weaknesses. Both suppose too clear-cut a conscious manipulation by those involved in creating the exhibitions and a too passive and unitary public; and ignore the often compelling agendas involved in exhibition making, the difficulties of the process itself, interpretative agency of the visitors, and do not necessarily exhaust all possible accounts of production. What is necessary in order to capture the multifaceted nature of museum, and to be fully "textual" in a broader sense is a combination with other methods of cultural analysis.[3] This research project has addressed that necessity by also focusing on the 'Circuit of Culture' model as designed by Du Gay et al, which addresses the production and circulation of meaning from a framework that considers cultural meanings of commodities holistically.

Similarly, this research project has considered a multifaceted path of research approaches. Using the principles of the Circuit of Culture model as a basis of analysis, the moments of which are representation, production, consumption, regulation and identity, as points of departure, a number of different case studies were established to address the interaction between modes of cultural production and modes of cultural consumption in shaping cultural practices and meaning. A case study model provided the optimum methodological structure relevant to the exploration of these concerns. Perhaps most important is the use of multiple sources of evidence in the construction of case studies, allowing consideration of several processes at work in both the production and consumption of the particular exhibition at hand. In the context of this study, the adoption of this method allowed for the development of rich primary data, and for crosschecking of ideas presented by one set of data against those suggested by others. This is important not only in terms of the validity of the study, but also in the exploration of the key ideas presented in theoretical literature. This required the gathering of information about the text, the context and the producer because of the possible relationship or non-relationship between preferred, ancillary or alternative readings of exhibition narratives.

[3] R. Mason, "Cultural Theory and Museum Studies", in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. S. MacDonald (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 25.

The case studies for this study were drawn from exhibitions produced between 1973 and 1991 by some key museums and galleries in Ireland such as the Douglas Hyde Gallery, National Museum of Ireland, National Gallery of Ireland and Irish Museum of Modern Art, as well as exhibitions/projects directly commissioned by the state through the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and its governmental bodies. The date range offered the opportunity of contextualising key changes in the creation of cultural policy and cultural practice in Ireland – from the influence of European cultural strategies because of Ireland joining the European Union in 1973, and the beginning of the widespread re-examination of the role of museums within society during the 1970s, to the challenges presented by the globalist aspect of art. Various sources were utilised in the gathering of data pertaining to each case study. These comprised of archival documentation such as: exhibition proposals, design proposals, budgetary information, loan agreements and correspondence; policy documents such as Government strategy papers and annual reports; secondary literature such as critics' reviews, newspapers, television and radio programming; semi-structured one-to-one interviews with those active in the production of the experience aimed at generating qualitative data on the subjective perceptions, values and attitudes underlying the production of meaning in museums; and primary observation of the interpretation and display.

With this multifaceted theoretical approach of textual representation, interpretation of institutional conditions of production and discussion of audiences and consumptions, this research project intends to position itself at the intersection of theory and practices as opposed to a mode of enquiry which stands from the outside looking inwards. Finally, this project hopes to address much-needed critical attention and analysis to a subject that has been largely overlooked from an Irish perspective as well as posing a model of analysis where research results could be transferred and contextualised as part of the variety of relationships between the cultural industries and the creation of cultural policy.

The major themes that have arisen from answering these questions are those of narrative, difference or diversity, and identity, as they are articulated through individual interpretive processes and museum pedagogy. The concept of 'identity' is the central rational instrument to the findings of this study. If the medium of temporary exhibition is taken as a cultural artefact or product as defined by Mary Kelly as: "a discursive practice involving the selection, organisation, and evaluation of artistic texts according to a particular genre, displayed in certain types of institutions, within specific legal structures, and preserved by definite material techniques in various ways",[4] therefore it will be possible to trace through the analysis of exhibitions the continuous process of change and redefinition that has formed cultural identities

[4] M. Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism", in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: an anthology of changing ideas*, ed. C. Harrison and P. Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2014), 1063.

in Ireland. Identity has been a point of analysis as to, firstly, how the exhibitions under discussion have claimed to reflect or express political and cultural ‘shifts’ or ‘perpetuations’ and, secondly, the extent to which these curatorial ambitions have been perceived as such by audiences, and in turn, its importance of the role of identity representation in the construction and significance of the role of the museum within the society that it serves.

3. Acknowledgments

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4. Introduction

From the moment of their establishment during the age of Enlightenment, up to the present, museums have been considered primarily as educational institutions, and knowledge as the commodity that they have to offer.[1] Museums are also considered as institutions in the service of society and of its development, open to the public; which acquire, conserve, research, communicate, and exhibit, for the purpose of study and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of the lives of people and their environment. Each museum is different, due to its activities and place in history, but their motivation is ideally: to provide people with trustworthy places in which to experience "pleasure through enlightenment" as they discover the story of their heritage.[2] Museums are also important sites of cultural production, collective memory making, and crucial for the construction of narratives. This construction of cultural character is accomplished through the way objects are presented, analysed, and conveyed, to create and reinterpret their meaning. This constant creation and re-creation of meaning through recognisable signs and symbols goes towards the making of new codes of interpretation and seems to be a fundamental aspect of the way in which humans understand the world and come to terms with their place in it. These signs and symbols are an important part of the imaginative process by which people make sense of their common past and present activity, and within this, museums and their exhibitions play a significant role.

Every exhibition is a communication event in its own right, a vehicle that embraces many different media, but in which the whole is richer than the sum of its parts. An exhibition is a specific work of culture or cultural product, a synthesis whose content can be analysed at a number of levels and from a range of standpoints. Exhibitions in their morphological juxtaposition of plan, graphics, and in particular selected objects, create their own kind of knowledge. Furthermore, as active agents in the production of knowledge, museum displays have been increasingly accepted as documents of significance to the evolution of ideas. For instance, during the twentieth century, exhibitions were the medium through which most art became known. Not only have the number and range of exhibitions increased dramatically in recent years globally, but also museums and art galleries across the world now often display their permanent collections as a series of temporary exhibitions. Exhibitions are the primary site of exchange in the political economy of art, where significations are constructed, maintained, and occasionally deconstructed. Part spectacle, part socio-historical event, part

[1] In this dissertation, 'museum' will be used as a collective term for a mix of museums, galleries, collection centres, and centres of display.

[2] M. Bourke, *The story of Irish Museums 1790-2000: Culture, Identity and Education* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), xxxi.; E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1-22; ICOM, *Conference Proceedings of the 21st ICOM General Conference* (Wien: ICOM-Austria, 2007), 165; A. McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7-12; D. J. Sherman and I. Rogoff, "Introduction: Frameworks for Critical Analysis," in *Museum Cultures: Histories, Discourses and Spectacles,* eds. D. J. Sherman and I. Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), xix-xxii.

structuring device, exhibitions establish and administer the cultural meaning of art.[3] Furthermore, the history of art has conventionally focused on artistic production, emphasising the individual artists in the studio and the influences on his or her practice. This dissertation challenges this approach by advocating for an examination of art in the context of its presentation in the public realm. Every decision about the selection and installation of work, the choice and use of the venue, the marketing strategy, and the accompanying text and literature, informs our understanding of the art on display.

Based on these principles, the aim of this research project is to formulate terms and questions that can be applied both to exhibited culture, what museums and others put on display, and to exhibition culture, the ideas, values, and symbols that pervade and shape the practice of exhibiting in Ireland. How and why is it that museums select and arrange artefacts, shape knowledge, and construct a view? What is this view and how does it articulate with wider social perspectives? How do museums produce values? How does this change? And how do active audiences make meaning from what they experience in museums? The major themes that arise from answering these questions are those of narrative, difference or diversity, and identity, as they are articulated through individual interpretive processes and museum pedagogy. How does culture shape consciousness, and how do museums relate to this process? This dissertation will turn to theory, to museum archives, and to exhibition analysis, to explore two essentially empirical questions: how are objects and collections used by museums to construct knowledge, and how can the relationships of museum audiences to this knowledge, be understood in relation to cultural identity? In asking how museums accord particular significances, in examining the politics of museum exhibitions and display strategies, and in comparing policies and attitudes toward museum publics over time, this research project will attempt an inquiry into modes of cultural construction in Ireland, and it will turn those sets of inquiries to an historical end. It has been suggested that Ireland presents a unique case study due to the relatively late formation of a modern art world, providing the possibility to identify how the different interests: artists, audiences, critics, public and private galleries, and government institutions contributed to that formation.[4] As such, the historical timeline, 1973-1991, addressed by this research project will offer the opportunity of contextualising key changes in the creation of cultural policy and cultural practice in Ireland – from the influence of European cultural strategies because of Ireland joining the European Economic Community, now the European Union, in 1973, and the beginning of the widespread re-examination of the role of museums within society during the 1970s, to the challenges presented by the globalist aspect of art and the cultural collisions in Irish life during the 1990s between the local and

[3] R. Greenberg, B. Ferguson and S. Nairne, "Introduction", in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.

[4] N. Webb and E. Barber, "Contemporary art in Ireland, part one: institutions, viewers and artists", in *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, ed. Emma Barker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 105.

global, between traditional and modern, between Catholic and secular, and between rural and urban. Debates between undermining the importance of the institution of the museum versus the fulfilment of the museum's democratic and populist impulses are not only related to timeframe addressed in this research project new or only related to the 21st century museum. As such, over the years, museums have experimented with countless forms of authorship and narratives, from an intangible, omniscient voice of authority in exhibitions such as *Treasures of Early Irish Art* to an increasingly composite, collective, sometimes conflict-ridden polyphony in exhibitions such as *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day* or *Inheritance and Transformation*

In terms of cultural policy making, the time addressed in the historic timeline in this dissertation proved to be a fructiferous period in Ireland. Despite the passing of the Arts Bill which led to the creation of the Arts Council of Ireland in 1951, during the 1950s and 1960s,[5] the Irish government did little to alter the general policy vacuum that reverted back to the early days of the funding state during the 1920s.[6] According to Patrick Cooke, the worldwide movement that challenged the establishment mood of the 1960s was apparent in the demands of the arts sector, leading to institutional change that took place with the introduction of the Arts Act in 1973.[7] This set out the composition of the reconstituted Arts Council, and made provision for elective funding of the arts by local government. The transfer of responsibility in 1975 for the funding of a number of major arts bodies to the Arts Council further established the Council's status as the state vehicle for the arts. According to Anne Kelly, despite low funding, the more independent stance of the agency as well as a greater seriousness of intent in relation to its brief, dates from this period – in particular regional development and education, with a significant number of art centres created outside Dublin. The appointment of specialist arts personnel by local authorities also accelerated in the 1990s. The launch of the new honours system Aosdána in 1983, providing institutional recognition and support by the state for distinguished creative artists, was universally hailed as the culmination of a series of Arts Council policies in support of the individual creative artist. The publication in 1987 of the Government White Paper, *Access and Opportunity*, reaffirmed the role of the Arts Council but the promised doubling of funding by 1990,[8] via the National Lottery, failed to materialise. In the early years, the advent of a new stream of funding from the Lottery (from 1987) afforded some relief to the Arts Council. It was not until 1993 with the establishment of the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht that the planning context for the arts in Ireland took a step

[5] Notably, the according of tax free status to artists for their creative work introduced by Charles Haughey in 1969.
[6] P. Cooke, "Cultural Policy", in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, eds. C. Andrew, C. Marshall, and P. Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 110-112.
[7] Ibid, 112.
[8] A. Kelly, *Cultural Policy in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Museums Trust, 1989), 5-7.

forward.[9] This Department was the first significant attempt by government to bring the state apparatus for cultural support under the aegis of one body, and also most importantly, gave the sector full ministerial representation. As part of several Departmental initiatives embracing broadcasting, heritage, film, and the Irish language, the Arts Council was invited in 1995 to prepare the first plan for the arts. This resulted in an immediate doubling of funding to the Council. In addition, a programme of significant capital investment in the physical arts infrastructure throughout the country was launched by government, using EU structural funds.[10]

As well as the application of structural funds, joining the European Union was one of the most significant steps Ireland has taken in its journey as a nation. For more than four decades now, European Union membership has helped improve almost every aspect of Irish life, from the everyday work environment and travel opportunities, to the quality of our environment, opportunities for learning, and the way businesses buy and sell goods and services. Even though Ireland was an independent country long before joining the European Union, Ireland in 1973 was still economically dependent on the UK and struggling to find its feet in the international community. That is no longer the case and Ireland now exports all over the world and influences global events through its voice in the European Union.

debates between undermining the importance of the institution of the museum versus the fulfilment of the museum's democratic and populist impulses are not new or only related to the 21st century museum. As such, over the years, museums have experimented with countless forms of authorship and narratives, from an intangible, omniscient voice of authority in exhibitions such as *Treasures of Early Irish Art* to an increasingly composite, collective, sometimes conflict-ridden polyphony in exhibitions such as *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day* or *Inheritance and Transformation*.

In section five, a review of previous literature will be offered in order to create a concise definition of the topic under consideration as well as the scope of the related literature being investigated, in order to summarize the key findings, and identify notable commonalities and dissimilarities between works, as well as identifying the gaps that will be addressed by the research. The evaluation of previous sources will be divided into two distinctive themes: museum studies, and exhibition analysis. Within the evaluation of the current state of knowledge in the field of Museum Studies, particular attention will be paid to evaluating the sources that address the role of the Museum in society. Within the evaluation of the current state of knowledge in the field of exhibition analysis, special attention will be paid to

[9] P. Cooke, Op. Cit. (note 6), 113.
[10] Ibid, 113.

evaluating the sources that address the knowledge-making capacity of exhibitions, as well as the evaluation of the art history subfield of exhibition history. In both cases, the previous literature will be addressed from international and Irish perspectives.

The previously mentioned widespread re-examination of the role of museums within society that commenced during the 1970s under the term 'new museology' examined the system of power that shaped both the institution and the experience of museums in the modern West. As such, the dissertation will consider in section six, as part of the theoretical framework, 'new museology' as a specific ideology that has affected expectations around the purpose of museums. New museology evolved from the perceived failings of traditional museum practices. In its origins, new museology was initiated from the idea that the role of museums in society needed to change. During the early 1970s, it was claimed that museums were isolated from the modern world, elitist and obsolete. "Traditional ideas around museum practices, which were seen to have contributed to this, were functionally based around collections and held curatorship as being central to the museum enterprise".[11] Within this context, in order to understand how the systems of power that have shaped both the institution and the experience of museums, also as part of the theoretical framework, this dissertation will turn to Michel Foucault's theories and their application to museums. His studies include a rethinking of the relationship between power and knowledge, the creation of that knowledge, and the way that histories are written, or what Rhiannon Mason has coined as the Foucauldian/museum Power Model.[12] Foucault presents a useful tool to rethink the past and present of knowledge and meaning, by describing the structures of knowing as they shifted over time, from the Renaissance to Modernity. Foucault poses structures of knowing as non-absolute but shaped by culture and varying across time and discursive declarations. The final section of the theoretical framework will focus on 'Textualization' as a theoretical framework. In her work on museums, similarly to Foucault, Mieke Bal proposes that exhibitions are descriptive, discursive declarations that follow story telling models, that is: a first person (the specific exhibition, or the larger museum) tells a story about a third person (the artworks or objects selected, a particular time period) to a second person (the visitors at the exhibition or museum).[13] This narrative model or 'Textualization' model allows exhibition historians to see the exhibition as a story that is told to an audience, and facilitates the possibility to examine meanings that are created through the juxtaposition of artworks and objects, space design, and text. According to Kristina Wilson, more importantly, this model of analysis defines three moments where meaning is made in an exhibition: "the curatorial eye; the eye of the audience, which does not

[11] K. Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s: A Survey of World Trends* (Paris and London: UNESCO/Macmillan, 1997), 15.
[12] R. Mason, "Cultural Theory and Museum Studies", in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. S. MacDonald (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Pub, 2013), 25.
[13] M. Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 8.

always follow the clues of the curator; and the objects themselves, which resonate with multitudinous references beyond their immediate setting".[14] As indicated by Rhiannon Mason in her essay *Cultural Theory and Museum Studies*, the Foucauldian/Power Model of museums and Textualization perspectives present numerous advantages – in the case of the Foucauldian/museum Power Model the opportunity to explore issues of power, subjectivity, and imagination. Textualization and the understanding of museums in terms of text as narratives has the advantage of moving away from privileging or compartmentalising a specific aspect of the museum (i.e. its building, collections, individual staff, organisational status). However, both perspectives have their weaknesses. As mention in the summary section, both suppose too clear-cut a conscious manipulation by those involved in creating the exhibitions and a too passive and unitary public; and ignore the often-compelling agendas involved in exhibition making, the difficulties of the process itself, interpretative agency of the visitors, and do not necessarily exhaust all possible accounts of production.[15] As suggested by Mason and others, what is necessary in order to capture the multifaceted nature of the power relations at the museum, and to be fully 'textual' in a broader sense, is a combination with other methods of cultural analysis.[16] As such the dissertation will also be focusing on the 'Circuit of Culture' model as designed by du Gay et al. as a theoretical and methodological framework in section six. The 'cultural circuit' model was developed in the late 1990s by a group of British cultural theorists and is based on Stuart Hall's semiotic theory of 'encoding/decoding' and his constructivist view of representation. The idea is aligned with the semiotic and discursive approaches of Ferdinand de Saussure and Michel Foucault, also applied by Mieke Bal. The 'circuit of culture' model not only examines the processes of representation in which meaning is constructed and conveyed through language and other symbolic media, but also emphasizes the primacy of power in the dyad of structure and human agency which operates in discursive relationships. The circuit serves as a tool for understanding the process by which culture, knowledge, and power converge. It enables us to analyse the specific conditions of every stage in a communication process unfolding in any given culture. There are five major processes, namely production, consumption, identity, regulation, and representation, and they relate to and co-construct each other in the circuit. Adopting du Gay et al.'s 'Circuit of Culture' model of analysis as the analytical vehicle presenting exhibitions as 'textual' entities in this project will clarify how exhibited cultures and exhibition cultures interact.[17]

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[14] K. Wilson, *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the Art of the Exhibition 1925-1934* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 13.
[15] R. Mason, Op. Cit. (note 12), 27.
[16] R. Mason, Op. Cit. (note 12), 28; F. McLean, "Museums and the construction of national identity: a review", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 3, No.4 (1998), 244-46; S. Cooke and F. McLean, "Our common inheritance? Narratives of self and other in the Museum of Scotland", in *Celtic Geographies: Old Culture*, *New Times*, eds. D. C. Harvey, R. Jones, N. McInroy, and C. Milligan eds. (London, Routledge, 2002), 109-220.
[17] P. du Gay, S. Hall, L. Jones, et al., *Doing cultural studies: the story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage Publications in association with the Open University, 1997; S. MacDonald, "Exhibitions of power and powers of

In the museum field, the circuit model has been used for discussing the issue of national identity.[18] However, it has not been widely adopted. This might be due to the difficulty of accessing the behind-the scenes information necessary to elucidate the processes of production and regulation. Museum professionals are often not open to critical interrogation of their practices because of their personal investment, or the political sensitivities involved in museum work.[19] In spite of these challenges, this project will use other methodological approaches in order to achieve empirical verification, namely, interview with museum professionals, archival research, and an online questionnaire to address analysis. Also as part of section six, the research design will be used to structure the research in order to show how all of the major parts of the research project, including the sample, measures, and methods of assignment, work together to address the central research questions in the study. The research design will be defined by the principles of the Circuit of Culture model as a basis of analysis. Three different case studies will be established to address the interaction between modes of cultural production and modes of cultural consumption in shaping cultural practices and meaning. A case study model will provide the optimum methodological structure relevant to the exploration of these concerns. Paramount to this study will be the use of multiple sources of evidence in the construction of case studies, allowing us to consider several processes at work in both the production and consumption of the particular exhibition at hand. In the context of this study, the adoption of this method will allow for the development of rich primary data, and for cross-checking of ideas presented by one set of data against those suggested by others. This is important not only in terms of the validity of the study, but also in the exploration of the key ideas presented in theoretical literature. The three exhibitions addressed in this project were selected based on two principles. Firstly, the three exhibitions represent three unique projects as all of them made departures from previous curatorial practices in Ireland. Secondly, and more importantly, the three projects represent three different attempts through three different exhibition typologies to engage with the ideologies of transforming the 'new museum'.

Section seven will discuss the first of the case studies. The 1977-1979 and 1982-1984 touring exhibition *Treasures of Early Irish Art*.[20] The exhibition consisted of some masterpieces of prehistoric art and medieval metalwork in the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), as well as a selection of illuminated manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), and Trinity College Dublin (TCD), including the *Book of Durrow* and two of the four volumes of the *Book of Kells*.

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exhibition: An introduction to the politics of display," in *The politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture,* ed. S. MacDonald (New York, Routledge, 1998), 2-3.

[18] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 16).

[19] R. Mason, Op. Cit. (note 12), 29.

[20] The title for the first leg of the exhibition in USA was *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* The title for the second leg of the exhibition around Europe was *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D*. For the purpose of this research project, when addressing the touring exhibitions as a whole it will be referred to as *Treasures of Early Irish Art*. When addressing the touring stages individually, they will be referred to using the corresponding full title of the show.

This collection was sent on a tour for nearly four years, to New York, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Boston, and Philadelphia from 1977 to 1979; and from 1982 to 1984 to Paris, Berlin, Cologne, near Copenhagen, and Amsterdam. Focusing on the blockbuster exhibition phenomenon and its impact on the popularization of the museum, this section will seek to explore the function of art and exhibitions as an instrument of cultural diplomacy by the state and by non-governmental actors, as well as the degree to which the arts contribute to intercultural dialogue in a political context. It will also explore the ability of exhibitions as cultural exchanges to promote the character and aspirations of a whole people and nation, examining the case of Ireland. The main theme of the section is the issues related to the role of art, diplomacy, and the politicization of cultural identity and will consider how the arts in Ireland have pursued narratives of alterity in Europe and worldwide.

Section eight will address the second case study, the exhibition *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the present day*. This exhibition was jointly organised, as one of the first multi-institutional exhibitions in Ireland, by the Douglas Hyde Gallery (DHG), National Gallery of Ireland (NGI), and the Dublin Municipal Gallery the Hugh Lane (DMGHL), to coincide with a major conference held at Trinity College Dublin in 1987 by the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women. Dealing with a topic never pursued before within the Irish context, the historical underpinning of the exhibition was to celebrate the amount of artistic activity generated by women in modern and contemporary art in Ireland. This section will seek to explore three issues: revisiting the past as validation of the present; the production of art history; and negotiating identities in the museums and the art historical canon. This will be achieved by taking into consideration models for critically engaging with artistic canons, the problematics of this canon and the possibilities of reading women artists' work beyond established art historical movements as well as the analysis of art historical narrative arcs.

The final case study will be addressed in section nine. This section will address the 1991 sequence of inaugural exhibitions *Inheritance and Transformation* held at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) during Dublin's tenure as the European City of Culture. This section will focus on two aspects: the role and limits of public leadership in the social construction of cultural needs as well as the challenge of the old, canonical idea of the museum, and the creation of a new museum where there was no longer a single governing narrative in art history or practice and where predetermined art historical and institutional boundaries are not accepted. To achieve this, the section, firstly, will focus on the conceptual and practical elements of the exhibition type that has had various nomenclatures: 'acontextual', 'atemporal', or 'ahistorical'. Secondly, it will explore the origins of museums of modern and contemporary art internationally and in Ireland, in order to position *Inheritance and Transformation* and the creation of IMMA within international and local context.

5. Exhibitions as objects of cultural inquiry

Over the past decade museum studies has come of age. Museum studies as a discipline has moved from being an uncommon and minority topic into the mainstream of academia. Disciplines which previously paid little consideration to museums have come to recognise museums as sites through which some of the most interesting and significant of their debates and questions can be explored in novel ways. The beginning of this shift can be related with the ascendance of cultural theory within academia during the 1970s and 1980s, and cultural theory's interdisciplinary nature and the challenge of traditional academic parameters. At the forefront of this first wave of new museological studies, setting the tone for future work, was Peter Vergo's seminal collection of edited essays from 1989: *The New Museology*. Vergo's introduction sets the tone of the volume, characterizing 'the old museology' as being: "too much about museum methods, and too little about the purpose of museums".[1] Vergo does not attempt to define new museology in any detail, instead he advocates for social, political and philosophical questions within the museum's context to be reconsidered:

"Unless a radical re-examination of the role of museums within society … takes place, museums in this country [UK], and possibly elsewhere, may likewise find themselves dubbed 'living fossils'."[2]

While *The New Museology* does not provide this radical re-examination of the role of the museums, it does, through its various contributions, raise many of the questions with which such reappraisal must deal. In *The New Museology* several chapters address issues concerned with museum objects. In particular, the transformation in the meanings of artefacts affected by collection and exhibition-making is discussed by Charles Saumarez Smith, Peter Vergo, and Ludmilla Jordanova. In all three chapters the focus is on the meanings we can read into the museum's display, a process of deciphering that entails understanding both the conscious and unconscious processes of exhibition creation, and of the socially and culturally defined readings in which the visitors will engage.

In his essay 'Museums, Artefacts and Meanings', Saumarez Smith gives us an outline of the history of the relationship between museums and their objects. According to him, this relationship shifted in Britain's last museum boom, at the end of the nineteenth century, from a representation of objects "purely for their own sake as fragments from a shattered historical universe" to their use as "possible indicators, as metonyms, for comparative study".[3] He suggests, nevertheless, that the relationship may have to change again because the "belief in a single overriding theoretical system" that governed the late nineteenth century displays is being

[1] P. Vergo, "Introduction", in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 3.
[2] Ibid, 3-4.
[3] C. Saumarez Smith, "Museums, Artefacts and Meanings", in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 9.

displaced by "a much more conscious sense of the role of the reader or the spectator in interpretation".[4] The three case studies he presents of the changing interpretations and different possible histories attributed to three particular objects in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, highlight the range of interpretations that may be constructed, but also raises questions concerning exhibition cultures such as the establishing of priorities in display and exhibition-making.

In his contributing essay "The Reticent Object", Vergo argues that exhibition-making in museums has for the most part been "curiously unreflective" and unreflected upon by the outside world.[5] Vergo argues that curators in museums do not think enough about museum display. According to him, curators are divided into those concerned with aesthetics that let the objects speak for themselves and those who want to contextualize everything and write volumes on the walls. He has no preference between either of the approaches, but instead advocates a happy compromise where the purpose of the exhibition should be made clear and the visitor, at the same time, has the opportunity of interpreting its purpose for themselves. Vergo advocates for exhibition-making processes at the museum as ways of communicating information while compromising neither the integrity of the museum nor the control and intellect of the user.[6]

Jordanova's essay, "Object of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums", explores the ways in which objects are used to represent "facts" and shows how they inevitably conjure up much more than a world of objective knowledge within exhibition and exhibited cultures. Curators might, she suggests, analyse objects as "trophies", artefacts gained from the business of mastering the natural world, in the case of natural history museums, or, in the case of ethnological museums, other people. The analysis would then delve into the "class, race and state interests" that a display of such trophies might serve.[7] Jordanova argues, however, that this alone would be an incomplete account: objects are too suggestive of meanings to be read in terms of a single interpretative framework. She suggests that curators might analyse objects as "fetishes", acknowledging their "ambivalent status" as both products of mastery and triggers capable of eliciting a sense of the "magical" and other "psychic responses".[8] Taking the example of museums of childhood, in particular the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood in London, she illuminates the duality of the process of "gaining knowledge" from such museums, a process in which museum visitors:

[4] C. Saumarez Smith, Op. Cit. (note 3), 20.
[5] P. Vergo, "The Reticent Object", in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 43.
[6] Ibid, 55-61.
[7] L. Jordanova, "Object of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museum", in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 32.
[8] Ibid, 38.

"Whether they are aware of it or not, both reify the objects they examine, treating them as decontextualized commodities, and identify with them, allowing them to generate memories, associations, fantasies".[9]

The collection of essays edited by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, from 1991, *Exhibiting Cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display* does provide a radical re-examination of the role of museums as called for by Vergo. However, they pay closer attention to the presentation of culture in museum settings, raising the questions of what constitutes a museum object? what is its status? what is the role of visitors? and how they are implicated in the process of producing meaning in and through exhibitions? As the editors indicate on the opening page:

"Every museum exhibition, whatever its overt subject, inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it", and "the very nature of exhibiting … makes it a contested terrain".[10]

As Carol Duncan points out in one of this volume's two historical essays, "the museum experience" is itself "a cultural artefact",[11] introducing the dominant theme, that museum objects and displays, and encounters with them, are determined by a museum culture.

The book offers an insightful and provocative survey of several key areas of contemporary museological debate of its time that are still significantly relevant today. Its theoretical orientations suggest how museum displays can be made more sensitive and effective.

For Karp and Lavine, the poetics of display refers to how objects function in particular configurations to produce responses, while the politics of display refers to the ideology in play, the functioning of cultural assumptions in choice and positioning of objects, in the kind of propositional knowledge or context offered, and in the interaction between viewers and institutions. *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display* also highlights the relative importance of object and context, the 'museum effect' by which all objects are turned into works of art or symbolically charged artefacts.[12]

The underlying premise of the editors, one that is shared by most, but not all of the authors, is that museum exhibitions reflect the cultural assumptions and resources of their creators, or exhibition culture, regardless of the culture or cultures that they attempt to represent. An unstated but equally strong assumption actively at work in the book is that, like it or not, museums are agents of social change, and despite claims to political neutrality, they cannot remain neutral in the debate regarding culture.

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[9] L. Jordanova, Op. Cit. (note 7), 25.

[10] I. Karp and S.D. Lavine, "Introduction", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991),1-8.

[11] C. Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 90.

[12] I. Karp and S.D. Lavine, Op. Cit. (note 10), 1-8.

This dominant theme, that museum objects and displays, and encounters with them, are determined by a museum culture or exhibition culture is more prevailing in the first section of the book: "Culture and Representation". In their respective chapters, Svetlana Alpers and Stephen Greenblatt adopt a close perspective, defending the traditional art museum's favouring of the visual over other sensory channels, a practice explored in less controversial terms by Michael Baxandall.[13] However, what is evaded in these three chapters is that professional orientations and institutional histories are embedded in larger processes, such as 'political economy' and 'institutional economy' which supply external criteria for assessing curatorial decisions.

A parallel theme, on the culturally-embedded character of art and of display itself, is presented in essays by B.N. Goswamy and Masao Yamaguchi, who raise the question of how far an exhibition can incorporate, by selecting and arranging objects, the cognitive structure of another culture. And yet the question is really only another variation on that of 'autonomous' versus 'mediated' display presented by Vergo. According to Goswamy and Yamaguchi there is undoubtedly much to be gained from making the 'exhibit' the exhibition itself and provoking an audience into rethinking its assumptions. According to them, insight on this matter is more likely to emerge from tension between the unfamiliar style of an exhibition and its more familiar museum setting, or from a careful interpretation in the form of labels and information panels, than from an 'un-mediated' exhibition.[14]

This publication is stronger on the poetics than on the politics of museum display, mainly due to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's original important theoretical essay, "Objects of Ethnography".[15] This essay is a richly perceptive analysis of museological refractions of the cultural 'other' through its material products and it serves as an appropriate conclusion to the book, weaving together several themes appearing in the book. Using Michel Foucault as a point of departure, she discusses the 'museum effect' as a two-way 'street': on the one hand, museums make ordinary things seem special by putting them in the museum context; on the other, the museum experience itself becomes a model for experiencing life in general. According to her "life is experience as if represented".[16] Here, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett considers

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[13] S. Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 21-32., S. Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991),42-56., M. Baxandall, "Exhibiting Intentions: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991),33-41.

[14] B.N. Goswamy, "Another Context, Exhibiting Indian Art Abroad", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 68-78., M. Yamaguchi, "The Poetics of Exhibition in Japanese Culture", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991),57-67.

[15] B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 386-443.

[16] Ibid, 386.

the issues of 'visual interest' that concern art historians within the volume of essays: Alpers and Baxandall. She also takes into account the didactic function of exhibitions as ways to popularize new interpretations and knowledge and elaborates on concepts from institution-specific processes and phenomena. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett further examines in detail the problems of providing context for objects, whether by means of label, association with other objects, or 'natural' settings, or by means of historical re-enactments, folk festivals, or audio-visual aids. She points out that many objects seen in historical, ethnographic, or natural history museums, have little or no meaning without explanation. Yet there are dangers, for explanation requires interpretation and interpretation is not neutral.[17]

Also dealing with new interpretations and knowledge associated with concepts of exhibition culture and meaning creation or 'shaping of knowledge' is Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's book: *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 2000. Through her previous work, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 1992, and *Museums and their Visitors*, 1994, Hooper-Greenhill has drawn attention to the complexities associated with broader concerns such as purpose, interpretation, understanding, and construction of knowledge and the meaning of museums.[18] *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* also relates to Vergo's debates of ideological, epistemological and governmental functions fulfilled by museums. Hooper-Greenhill's book addresses all three of these core issues by firstly building on earlier discussions of the modern museum's formative functions. The analysis asks how the museum idea can respond to challenges posed by postmodernism and post-colonialism. According to Hooper-Greenhill, at the time of writing, the museum is seen as a dated institution and needs to re-examine its social role and pedagogic strategies. She argues that the museum must move from conceiving itself as a site of authority to a site of mutuality – a movement that will see the contemporary museum replaced by what Hooper-Greenhill terms the 'post museum'. Secondly, the book illustrates the relevance of these questions by discussing the multiple processes through which meaning and authority are constructed within the museum. Thirdly, through discussions of material and visual culture, the book extends contemporary theoretical debates concerning the construction of meaning in the museum. These three themes are addressed through a combination of theoretical discussions and case studies, and are motivated by a political and pedagogic activism that seeks to illustrate how: "individual curators can make a difference according to the position they take toward issues of democracy and empowerment".[19] Hooper-Greenhill claims that education and learning are primary functions of a museum and the reasons for its existence. Her constructivist view of knowledge

[17] B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Op. Cit. (note 15), 390.
[18] E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000) E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000b).
[19] E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000b), 19.

transmission within the museum acknowledges that visitors are free agents who control their inclination to learn by making sense of the information the museum makes accessible. She also identifies and treats museums and their exhibitions as part of a larger communications discipline, questioning how information is structured and presented within their spaces. Exhibitions, according to Hooper-Greenhill, have always been a real and forcible tool for pedagogy and propaganda within the museum because it is one of the major visual means that museums use to "produce and communicate knowledge".[20]

Exhibitions as primary vehicles for the production of knowledge within the museum context is the point of departure for a collection of essays edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne from 1996, *Thinking about Exhibitions*. In their joint introduction to the publication, they identify exhibitions as collections of discrete entities compiled for the purpose of validation and distribution. Within exhibitions, objects and texts are always assembled and arranged according to arbitrary schema intended to construct and convey meaning. According to them, exhibitions are, by definition, selective and exclusive due to the biases of the organizers, and the actual or perceived constraints of space, finance and availability of works. According to them, the 'totality', which many exhibitions seem to claim to embody, is a fiction and even a "fantasy". Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne also claim that exhibitions have become the epitome of recent intellectual and cultural manifestations:

"They are virtually synonymous with postmodernism's tropes of built-in obsolescence, fragmentation and inherent contradiction. But however piecemeal, and however provocative, there is always an attempt, acknowledged or not, at some form of synthesis and narrative closure".[21]

For them, this is the reason why exhibitions are frequently used as introductions to specific phenomena. Underlying most of the essays in the anthology is a conception of the exhibition as fiction, an argument which maintains that art exhibitions do not simply present objects as a series of discrete entities within a neutral space, but inevitably construct narratives in the selection, combination and organization of objects for display.[22]

The contention that exhibitions have messages is certainly not a novel one. The ideological underpinnings of art and museum exhibitions have been an important topic of discussion in recent decades from a number of fronts. For instance, since the early 1970s, the exclusion of women artists from the permanent displays of most art museums has generated much protest and has raised important questions concerning the construction of art historical canons and the relations of power within the art world that maintain them.[23] Emerging from a similar

[20] E. Hooper-Greenhill, Op. Cit. (note 18), 4.
[21] R. Greenberg, B. Ferguson and S. Nairne, "Introduction," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.
[22] Ibid, 3.
[23] See for example: C. Duncan, "The MoMA's Hot Mamas", in *Art Journal*, XLVIII:2, Summer 1989, 171-178.

awareness of an institutional disposition towards entrenching power relations was the move in critical anthropology to expose the recurrence of the archetype in museum displays as well as in critical texts.[24] While these and other critical moments in cultural analysis have been important in making apparent the constructed nature of exhibition cultures and the disciplinary formations that underscore them, such critiques have largely remained at the level of political visitor number counting: a statistical accountability where representation is accorded greater importance than presentation.[25] This is not to argue that careful attention to representation, in particular where exhibitions deal with cultures and ways of life that differ from those of the institution, is not a necessary consideration in the organization and staging of exhibitions. However, it is not the only aspect that requires critical attention. As the authors in *Thinking about Exhibitions* make apparent, the mode of exhibition, of presentation, is as central to the understanding of art and culture as are the objects themselves.[26]

The larger portion of the essays in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, however, considers work that specifically addresses the role of exhibitions in the production of knowledge and in the construction of aesthetic and art historical narratives. This analysis takes two forms: first, the documentation of important exhibitions; and second the exploration and analysis of the role of exhibitions, rather than museums, in the dissemination and understanding of, mainly, contemporary art. In the first instance, the documentation of events that are temporally and geographically inaccessible provides an important background for the discussion of the discursive implications of exhibition with which many of the essays are concerned.

With discursive implications of exhibitions at the centre of her paper, Mieke Bal's essay "The Discourse of the Museum", sets renewed interest in museology, close to the ideals of Vergo's new museology, in the context of increasing awareness in the humanities of the self-referential, ultimately aesthetic, configuration of the museum domain and the museum's problematic relation to 'real social issues'. As a solution, Bal identifies the need to systematically analyse the "narrative-rhetorical" structure of museums, establish the connection between "museal discourse" and the institution's foundation and history, and self-critical analysis.[27]

In *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, 1998, Mary Anne Staniszewski's approach to the analysis of exhibitions is similar to what Bal suggests. Looking at the 'narrative-rhetorical' structure through self-critical analysis, she

[24] See for example: J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988).
[25] This is apparent in such collections as: I. Karp and S.D. Lavine, eds, *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), and I. Karp, S.D. Lavine and C. Mullen Kreamer, eds, *Museums and Communities: the politics of public culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).
[26] R. Greenberg, B. Ferguson and S. Nairne, Op. Cit. (note 21), 4.
[27] M. Bal, "The Discourse of the Museum", in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 214-216.

establishes the connection between 'museal discourse' and the foundation and history of MoMA. In this ground-breaking examination of installation design as an aesthetic medium and cultural practice, Staniszewski provides a historical and theoretical framework for a primary area of contemporary aesthetic practice-installation-based art. Staniszewski treats installations as creations that manifest values, ideologies, politics, and aesthetics. Incorporating analysis of display techniques used in department stores, natural history museums, non-Western art galleries, and the international avant-garde exhibitions of the first half of the twentieth century, she makes visible both the explicit, and covert meanings found in exhibitions. Some of the questions she addresses are: What sorts of viewers do different types of installations "create"? How do exhibition designs affect the meanings and receptions of specific objects, images, artefacts, and buildings, when they are displayed? How do installations shape the viewer's experience of the cultural ritual of a museum visit? How does an amnesia-regarding exhibition design affect art history, the art world, and collective cultural memories? Staniszewski's in-depth analysis illuminates how museum display defined the visual, social, and political interests of MoMA, and its impact on twentieth century museum installation. Implicit in the issues she explores is an engagement with the semiological and historical dimensions of representations. According to Staniszewski, this approach, which forecloses any possibility of a transparency between form and content, language and meaning, and intention and reception, acknowledges the historicity of all meanings.[28]

Similarly, *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, 1999, edited by Emma Barker,[29] examines trends in the display of art since the mid-twentieth century, focusing particularly on institutional issues. The contributors present a series of case studies that illuminate the practices of museums, galleries, and exhibitions in Western Europe and the United States, and that encourage reflection on the experience of the museum spectator. The first section of the book considers the traditional 'sanctum of art', the museum, and how approaches to display have changed as modern museums have sought to become accessible to new audiences. In the second section, case studies address issues surrounding temporary exhibitions, their dominance of the display of art today, and the implications of this for artists, spectators, and the institutions that stage such exhibitions. The third section considers the wider social context in which art is displayed today, and discusses the widespread reliance on urban regeneration projects, with special reference to modern art museums and the place of heritage in Britain. Sandy Nairne's essay in part two: "Exhibitions of Contemporary Art", introduces the topic by stating: "Art and exhibitions have evolved together, so that contemporary art cannot be fully

[28] M. Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 350.
[29] E. Barker, ed., *Contemporary Cultures of Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

understood independently of its presentation".[30] Nairne also offers a concise history of the display of contemporary art, with an emphasis on the London scene and the rising influence of such ostensibly international exhibitions as the *Venice Biennale* and *Documenta*. This section is engaging because the discourse revolves around specific artists' interactions with exhibitions, institutional/curatorial agendas, and the international art market. Nairne's introduction to the art market addresses the ramifications of the emergence of new exhibition types and how a wider range of venues over the last century has been bound up with a shift away from clear-cut artistic conventions or classifications to a far more complex and diverse form of artistic practice. According to Nairne: "once contemporary art had left the conventional frame and plinth behind, it was inevitable that it should depend more directly on the whole context in which it is seen".[31] These developments have allowed for greater interaction between art and audience, encouraging visitors to develop their own responses rather than simply be passive spectators. However, these developments involve the danger of emphasizing spectacle over contemplation, activity over engagement.[32]

The book concludes with an exploration of the art world in contemporary Ireland and the role of Irish institutions in the production and reception of art within the international context of exhibition analysis. In the essay by Nick Webb and Emma Barker: "Contemporary art in Ireland, part one: institutions, viewers and artists", Ireland is identified as a unique case study "due to the relatively late formation of a contemporary art world" providing the possibility to identify how the different interests: artists, audiences, critics, public and private galleries, and government institutions, contribute to that formation. Using the set of arguments presented in Declan McGonagle's essay "A new necessity" as a point of departure, Webb and Barker challenge inherited ideas of the separation between art and society, exhibition cultures and exhibited cultures, noting that while that has been the dominant theory it is now being successfully confronted, or at least questioned and debated.[33]

Within the context of Irish museum studies, Marie Bourke's *The story of Irish Museums 1790-2000: Culture, Identity and Education,* Fintan Cullen's *Ireland on Show: Art, Union, and Nationhood*, Elizabeth Crooke's *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum of Ireland: an Expression of National Life*, and David Brett's *The Construction of Heritage* collectively present a detailed historical exploration of the links between the 'narrative-rhetorical' structure of museums and exhibitions in Ireland, establishing the connection between the foundation of these Irish cultural institutions and Irish 'museal discourses.'

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[30] S. Nairne, "Exhibitions of contemporary art", in *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, ed. Emma Barker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 105.
[31] Ibid, 106.
[32] Ibid, 120.
[33] N. Webb and E. Barker, "Contemporary art in Ireland, part one: institutions, viewers and artists", in *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, ed. Emma Barker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 105.

While not critically profound, Bourke's work provides an insightful account of the history of Irish museums that attempts to produce a chronological, incremental description of the development of museums in Ireland, taking into consideration the complex historical and socio-political framework of museum development in Europe and the US. Bourke argues that museums as public institutions have played an important part within the emerging political structure of the modern Irish state, acquiring a formative role in the shaping of the nation. She also addresses the various pieces of legislation and other governmental requirements that have increasingly affected museum management, especially in the field of education policies. For her, the developmental trends of major national museums, as discussed in the cases of the National Museum of Ireland and the National Gallery of Ireland, reveal an important part of the historical analysis of the nation. Bourke even designates Ireland as:

"An important case study because its profile conveys the distinct textures of a particular 'national' instance… while the worldwide development of museums shows that they are bound up with national identity and the creation of the nation-state, the interesting situation in Ireland is that most of the major museums were established prior to the foundation of the state".[34]

Similarly, influenced by Vergo's *New Museology*, Cullen's work contributes to recent work on Irish museum culture by moving beyond Bourke's nationalist-revisionist controversies to bring the study of Ireland into conversation with the study of European visual culture, the impact of nationalism, and the politics of display. Cullen's work is less a comprehensive retelling, than a provocative illustrated argument, and is often thin on social or historical context.[35] He asks the question of what was actually displayed, rather than what might be of retrospective interest to nationalist historiographies of Irish art: that is, it attempts to disrupt and question nationalist narratives that go back to find evidence of a supposedly authentic Irish art or national school.[36]

Differently to Cullen's approach, Crooke suggests that:

"In order to understand the values held in Ireland that underpinned the establishment of a public museum, one must consider how important 'the past', and the institutions that manage the past, were to Irish nationalism".[37]

Crooke links this prevalent view of the Irish past within the context of the National Museum of Ireland to an underpinned sense of the social and political function of Irish archaeology. The way in which certain forms of the past are presented as 'heritage' provides them with a political identity as well as the continual act of using the past to support social and political

[34] M. Bourke, *The Story of Irish Museums 1790-2000: Culture, Identity and Education* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), xxxi.
[35] P. McEvansoneya, "Ireland on Show: Art, Union, and Nationhood", *Irish Studies Review*, 21:2, 2013, 231-233.
[36] F. Cullen, *Ireland on Show: Art, Union, and Nationhood* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 94.
[37] E. Crooke, *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum of Ireland: an Expression of National Life* (Dublin: Irish Academy Press, 2000), 100.

agendas or the continual re-interpretation of the past according to its potential for the present, create a particular memory that is partly shaped and stage-managed by the institution.[38]

Memory shaped and stage-managed by institutions is also central to Brett's study. He approaches 'heritage' and its manifestations with a mind informed by design history, architectural theory, and the practice of art criticism; and makes extensive use of aesthetic concepts rather than literary models. The visual connotations are deliberate, since this book is more concerned with issues of visual representation, and with the ideological implications of imagery. The book is eager to elevate the heritage industry above mere myth-making. According to Brett, heritage is too easily a "dream-like refuge" from the real responsibilities of historical time. In contrast, the author strives to build a positive criticism of heritage, grounding heritage in a realistic sense that human beings are both historically created and self-creating. The thrust of Brett's book is, therefore, not so much to examine or even criticize the Irish heritage industry, but rather to establish general principles for the criticism of heritage in any time or place. According to Brett, unlike written historiography, heritage is expressed mainly through artefacts, images and architectural spaces. The analysis of the narrative of a museum or heritage centre, therefore, is only analogous to the analysis of a written text. Brett's aim, therefore, is to contribute to building a theoretical apparatus that can be used in the analysis of heritage. However, the most effective use of Brett's critical perspectives on the construction of heritage is not as an argument for the dismissal of popular history but as a "method for uncovering and questioning the underlying ideologies of heritage exhibitions".[39]

Many of the foregoing studies, in particular those by Vergo, Karp and Lavine, Greenberg et al., Crooke, Cullen, and Bourke present in some cases an insightful critical, and in other cases empirically grounded analysis of museums, their development and the knowledge-making capacity of museum displays. While these studies collectively answer some of the questions such as the who, the what, the where, the when and the why of exhibition-making, the parameters of how museums and their exhibits become active agents in the production of knowledge is unclear. This is where Hooper-Greenhill's, Staniszewski's, Barker's and Brett's more specific studies on the relationship between museums, knowledge, exhibitions and objects displayed, or the relationship between exhibition cultures and exhibited cultures, could help to evaluate these parameters, particularly within the context of exhibition history and the unexplored context of contemporary Ireland, which is the purpose of this study.

Exhibitions, whose short-lived nature makes them problematic to historicize, receive far less historical and theoretical consideration than museums. According to Julian Myers, this lack of study is especially true in the sphere where they matter most: art history.[40] Historical

[38] E. Crooke, Op. Cit. (note 37),154-156.
[39] D. Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 165.
[40] J. Myers, "On the value of a History of Exhibitions", in *The Exhibitionist*, 4, 2011.

considerations of specific exhibitions first appeared in the late 1960s. According to Kathryn M. Floyd, between then and the early 1990s histories of biennials, and other exhibitions by authors like Lawrence Alloway, Ian Dunlop, Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, Patricia Mainardi, and Francis Haskell, [41] were emerging from nineteenth-century studies, institutional critique, and a postmodern attention to the issue of art and commodity. In the introduction to the book, published in 2007, *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology*, Florence Derieux contextualizes the development of Exhibition History going as far as to state that: "It is now widely accepted that the art history of the second half of the twentieth century is no longer a history of art work, but a history of exhibitions".[42] Not everyone agrees with this, however. For example, art historian Julian Myers in his essay 'On the value of a history of exhibitions', understandably disapproved this statement when he suggested that the history of art and the history of exhibitions are inextricably linked.[43] Julian Myers' statement echoes the premise already discussed by Greenberg et al. that exhibitions are the main site or unit of interchange in the political economy of art, where signification is created, sustained and occasionally deconstructed.[44]

The number of publications about curating and the history of exhibitions has grown significantly since 2007. One book that is often quoted is Bruce Altshuler's *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions that Made Art History: 1962-2002*, published in 2013. [45] However, according to Linda Boersma and Patrick Van Rossem, the publication of *Biennials and Beyond* also kindled a apprehension that writing a history of exhibitions would follow the same 'canon-based' rational that was used in art history. Another disadvantage of this exhibition focus was "phobia" of artworks.[46] Myers even refers to it as "fetishization".[47] Therefore, the question arises of how a significant connection can be created between object focused art history and the turn to exhibition history.

As part of the interest in exhibition history, the "remembering exhibition", the term introduced by art historian Reesa Greenberg, has a special place. 'Remembering exhibitions' are exhibitions that remember past exhibitions. [48] In the past ten years alone, 'remembering

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[41] K.M. Floyd, 'Salon to Biennial—Exhibitions That Made Art History, Volume I: 1863–1959', Modernism/modernity, 17. 262-264; L. Alloway, *The Venice Biennale, 1895-1968; from Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1968).; I. Dunlop, *The Shock of the New: Seven Historic Exhibitions of Modern Art* (Winter Park, Florida: American Heritage Press, 1972).; E. Gilmore Holt, *The Art of All Nations: 1850-1873: The Emerging Role of Exhibitions and Critics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).; P. Mainardi, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1994).; F. Haskell, T*he Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

[42] F. Derieux, *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology* (Zurich: JRP Ringer, 2007), 8.

[43] J. Myers, Op. Cit. (note 40), 24.

[44] R. Greenberg, B. Ferguson and S. Nairne, Op. Cit. (note 21), 4.

[45] B. Altshuler's, *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions that Made Art History: 1962 -2002* (London: Phaidon, 2013).

[46] L. Boersma and P. Van Rossem, "Rewriting or Reaffirming the Canon? Critical Readings of Exhibition History", in *Stedelijk Studies*, Issue 2, 2015, 2.

[47] J. Myers Op. Cit. (note 40), 27.

[48] R. Greenberg, "Remembering Exhibitions: From Point to Line to Web", in *Tate Papers*, Issue 12, 2009.

exhibitions' have been organized in various institutions including the Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin (*ROSC exhibitions from 1967 to 1988*) in 2017.[49] These 'remembering exhibitions' adopt various forms, and the reasons behind their organization are quite varied. They vary from attempts at reconstruction such as *ROSC exhibitions from 1967 to 1988*, which involves the challenge of offering the viewer an accurate experience in the form of an archival documentation exhibition that aims at apprising the past, to more multidimensional or 'corrected' representation of the original exhibition, such as Jens Hoffman's *Primary Sculptures*, New York, 2014, which also incorporated sculptures by artists working in the 1960s across the world re-examining the exhibition of 1966 from a global point of view.

According to Boersma and Van Rossem, "despite these ground-breaking studies, a fundamental integration of the topic into standard art historical discourse was never fully established".[50] Oftentimes, scholars often recognise exhibitions to be the set of views of curators and other museum practitioners. A noteworthy factor in their ostracism may be the fact that exhibitions exist not as fixed engagements, instead they include complex, immaterial, and often conflicting elements such as professional and personal networks, political circumstances, institutional cultures, and other foundations that often escape the archive of history. According to Boersma and Van Rossem, "behind the organized displays of artworks in any exhibition lies an untidy, and often unrecorded, web of forces that challenge art history's traditional focus on discrete objects created intentionally by individuals working alone".[51]

According to Floyd, In *Biennials and Beyond*, Altshuler concludes an approach he embarked upon earlier in his publication, *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume 1: 1863-1959*,[52] one of the first attempts to offer an historical narrative through the grouping of several exhibitions. The first part of *Salon to Biennial* explored the reciprocity between experimental exhibiting and artistic experimentation, Altshuler presented the exhibition as a social space for modern artistic praxes. The second part, *Biennials and Beyond*, however, proposes a different evaluation. Among the twenty-five events used to illustrate the period from 1962 to 2002, only *Freeze*, produced in 1988, can be connected with a group exhibition of artists. According to Floyd, this historical proposition which progressively abandons the categories previously linked with artistic practices as well as models based on national representation, favours a methodology which is more institutional and more globalized.[53] Some of the historians and critics discussed here may remain sceptical about the

[49] Such as at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (*Moving Movement* an exhibition from 1961) in 2011; Kunsthalle Bern and La Fondazione Prada Venice (*Live in your head: When attitudes become Form* an exhibition from 1969) in 2013; the Jewish Museum New York (*Primary Sculptures: Younger American and British Sculpture* an exhibition from 1966) in 2014.
[50] L. Boersma and P. Van Rossem, Op. Cit. (note 46), 3.
[51] Ibid, 4.
[52] B. Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume 1: 1863-1959* (London: Phaidon press, 2008).
[53] K. M. Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 41), 263.

marginalization of the recent artistic uses of the exhibition, but the direction chosen by Altshuler raises questions, for example, when he considers if the distancing of the visual spectacle in favour of the discursive approach remains the only way, for the by now very extensive exhibition industry, to link back up with a "socially meaningful function".[54]

Altshuler's *Biennials and Beyond* presents contrasted approaches as two distinct ways of considering the nature of exhibitions. First, as a convenient account of particular events that can be epitomised in texts and images, defining exhibitions as "discrete objects" constrained by space and time. As such, the exhibition is the sum of its visible parts: a public presentation that engage with the viewer from the past through visual representations. Secondly, Altshuler considers that exhibitions are possibly better understood as shapeless social domains that are made of not only the arrangements of objects in space but of linkages of forces: personal, economic, political, and institutional that meet to shape them 'behind the scenes'. According to Floyd, these mechanisms must not only be applied to exhibitions to help interpret their objectifiable characteristics, "as traditional art historical methods employ history and culture to interpret autonomous objects". Instead, "these elements should be understood as inherent components of exhibitions, a more sociological perspective that necessitates new art historical methods if exhibition histories are to become fully integrated into the discipline".[55]

The recent debate on the relationship between histories of exhibitions and art history tends to consider the former as supplementary to the latter. While it is certainly not the case that art history of the second half of the century should be reduced to a history of exhibitions, given the variety of contexts in which artists have operated, exhibition histories should likewise not be addressed only to enrich art historical narratives, or be selected according to their relationship to an art historical canon. In fact, exhibition histories provide critical tools to approach history in itself: by revealing cultural debates of the past, they help in retracing histories of ideas; their expanded field highlights the connections between art and other realms, such as commerce, and they reveal politics and policies of an institution, stressing the latter in order to create a narrative to understand the present and imagine the future.

The Irish Museum of Modern Art exhibition: *Rosc exhibitions from 1967 to 1988*, was partly curated around the research work on the history of the *Rosc* exhibitions by Peter Shortt previously published as: *The Poetry of vision: The ROSC Art Exhibitions 1967-1988*.[56] *Rosc* was a series of contemporary art exhibitions that took place in Ireland during the second half of the twentieth century. Initiated by architect, Michael Scott, Ireland was to host an international art exhibition, approximately every four years, from 1967 to 1988. According to Shortt, and

[54] B. Altshuler, Op. Cit. (note 45), 20.
[55] K. Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 41), 263.
[56] P. Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision: The ROSC Art Exhibitions, 1967-1988* (Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2016).

others,[57] the *Rosc* exhibitions brought the Irish public and Irish artists into contact with developments in international contemporary art. Shortt maintained that *Rosc* also helped to contest the conservative academicism of Irish art education of the 1960s, which had disregarded avant-garde developments. While the *Rosc* project was rooted in idealism, due to its contested nature it sparked controversy from beginning to end.[58]

Treating the *Rosc* exhibitions as amorphous social spheres that are composed not only of arrangements of objects in space but of networks of forces, Shortt's *The Poetry of Vision* is a welcome addition to the international analysis of exhibitions. Internationally, according to Nick Webb and Emma Barker, as already mentioned: Ireland presents a unique case study due to the relatively "late formation of a contemporary art world", providing the possibility to identify how the different interests: artists, audiences, critics, public and private galleries, and government institutions, contributed to that formation.[59] From the Irish perspective, while there have been archival and historical compilations, amongst others, of the *Royal Hibernian Academy Annual Exhibitions*, the *Irish Exhibition of Living Art* and *EVA International*,[60] Shortt's in-depth contextualization and multidisciplinary analysis of exhibition-making history applied to *Rosc* offers a study of exhibition history in line with similar international studies. It is in its application of institutional history, art history and its socio-cultural analysis that the strength and relevance of *The Poetry of Vision* lies. Shortt's analysis of primary sources sheds light onto the conventional strategies of heritage and culture manipulation by different Irish governmental bodies at the different periods when the exhibitions took place.

Similarly, amongst other studies, Lucy Cotter's Ph.D. thesis: *Curating, cultural capital and symbolic power: representations of Irish art in London, 1950-2010* is a significant contribution to conventional strategies of heritage and culture manipulation from the Irish perspective.[61] Through the lens of recent research it shows that there is a significant discrepancy between the prevailing view of the art world as a largely globalized sector and practice, which shows that a limited number of powerful countries determine its financial, conceptual and formal interests, Cotter suggests that the 'masterpieces' of these countries underlie the historical definitions of (great) art. Furthermore, Cotter questions how this value of artistic production is determined by

[57] B. Moore-McCann, "A Poetry of Vision: The Rosc Exhibitions", *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, Vol. 18 (2002), 124-132; J. Nunn, "Poetic Eyeballs: Rosc '84", *Circa*, No. 18 (Sep.-Oct., 1984), 14-19; P.T. Murphy, F. O'Toole, L. Parker, P. Murphy, D. Walker, T. Fitzmaurice, M. Donnelly and G. Barry, "8 Views of ROSC '88", *Circa*, No. 42 (Oct.-Nov., 1988), 18-26.

[58] P. Shortt, Op. Cit. (note 56), 5.

[59] N. Webb and E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 33), 105.

[60] L. Cotter, *Curating, cultural capital and symbolic power: representations of Irish art in London, 1950*-2010, (Ph.D. thesis: University of Amsterdam, 2011). Amongst others: A.M. Stewart, *Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts: Index of Exhibitors and Their Works, 1826-1979* (Dublin: Manton, 1985); M. Hartigan, Marianne. "The Irish Exhibition of Living Art." *Irish Arts Review (1984-1987)*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1987, pp. 58–59.; M. Cutaya, "EVA International", *Irish Arts Review (2016), 33*(1), 76-77.

[61] Such as: F. Barber, 'Excavating Room 50: Irish Painting and the Cold War at the 1950 Venice Biennale', in F. Cullen & J. Morris (eds), *A Shared Legacy. Essays on Irish and Scottish Art and Visual Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), pp.207-17; R. Kennedy, 'Made in England', *Third Text* (*Ireland Special Issue*), 19, Issue 5 (September 2005), pp.475-87.

investigating how curatorship and exhibition-making processes relate to this process of value creation. By means of a case study, exhibitions of Irish art in London between 1950-2010, she analyses how the transaction-oriented art world uses 'identity' to particular representational ends, namely cultural value. According to Cotter, even though artists cannot be captured in one identity and belong in several places, the current standards of curatorship do not do justice to this complexity. Cotter argues that the development of a 'new style' of curatorship is of great importance for the redistribution of cultural and symbolic capital. She provides ideas for further development of post-structural and post-representative forms of curatorship as well as addressing exhibitions as multimodal curatorial acts articulating how institutional identify and values of the norms of professional curation are interwoven.

Echoing Cotter's suggestions on the creation of cultural value within the representation of art, fittingly enough, Shortt's book starts with a relevant quotation from Greenberg et al., *Thinking about exhibitions*. The editors who, in the introductory chapter, define the relevance of exhibitions, and especially exhibitions of contemporary art in a meaningful way:

"Exhibitions have become the medium through which most art becomes known … Part spectacle, part socio-historical event, part structuring device, exhibitions – especially exhibitions of contemporary art – establish and administer the cultural meaning of art".[62]

As already discussed, according to Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, exhibitions are also the main site or unit of interchange in the political economy of art, where signification is created, sustained and occasionally deconstructed. Exhibitions in their morphological juxtaposition of plan, graphics, and in particular selected objects, create their own kind of knowledge – not only when considering temporary exhibitions, but also in the way in which museums display their permanent collections as a series of temporary exhibitions. Every exhibition is a communication event in its own right, and a specific work of its own culture. Every decision about the selection and installation of work, the choice and use of the venue, the marketing strategy and the accompanying exhibition literature informs the construction of understanding of the art on display, therefore determining the exhibition's subsequent influence and impact. The editors advocate for a holistic or multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary analysis of exhibitions, a theme also reflected in the selection of essays included in *Thinking about Exhibitions*. Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne pointedly suggest a solution to the binary debates about the relevance of exhibition history by recommending exhibition studies that combine analysis of representation, institutional conditions of production and a discussion of audiences and consumption, as the best mode suited to capture the complexities of exhibitions as cultural phenomena, framing exhibitions as cultural products.[63]

[62] R. Greenberg, B. Ferguson and S. Nairne, Op. Cit. (note 21), 3.
[63] Ibid, 4.

It is the intention of this dissertation to adopt the recommendations by Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne of combining analysis of representation, institutional conditions of production and a discussion of audiences and consumption, as the best mode suited to capture the complexities of exhibitions as cultural phenomena. Framing exhibitions as cultural products by adopting cross-disciplinary theoretical and methodological frameworks aiming, firstly, to establish the parameters of how museums and their exhibits become active agents in the production of knowledge. Secondly, with the intention of creating meaningful relationships between objects, focused art history and exhibition history by answering the questions: How do exhibition designs affect the meanings and receptions of specific objects, images, artefacts, and buildings, when they are displayed? How does exhibition design affect art history and collective cultural memories? But fundamentally how do these instances of exhibition culture and exhibited culture interact? And thirdly, the aim is to integrate the exhibitions addressed by the project into the Irish art historical discourse as a form of cultural inquiry.

6. Methodology

The above exploration of the relevant literature and resulting central questions establishes the parameters of how museums and their exhibits become active agents in the production of knowledge and how exhibition-making affects art history, the art world, and collective cultural memories within the Irish art historical discourse. The above exploration also establishes that in order to capture the complex nature of exhibitions and exhibition-making processes it is necessary to consider a multifaceted approach to achieve a meaningful analysis. To that end the parameters of the theoretical framework and the design of the methods of analysis have been informed and shaped by, an evolving, cumulative and multifoil research and exploration approach of different philosophies and ideologies.

The point of departure of this exploration is New Museology as a philosophy that places emphasis on the contextual presentation of artworks and the social role museums play in public cultural life. This contextual presentation of artworks and its direct link to the social role museums play in public cultural life informed the exploration of Michel Foucault's interpretations of the relationship between power and knowledge, and how these relationships are used as a form of social regulation through societal institutions. As discussed later on in this section in more detail, in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault poses structures of knowing as non-absolute, but shaped by culture and changing across time. Foucault suggests that what counts as knowing is largely dependent on specific elements, including cultural, social, and political amongst other components. These components inter-relate and work with or against each other in a state of constant fluidity, so that meaning is continually defined and redefined. These elements also change, as culture, society, and politics/policies are redefined, rationalizing how certain meanings and ways of thinking gain credibility at particular times.

This interaction between modes of cultural production and modes of cultural consumption and how they shape cultural practices and meaning at the time when they took place informed the subsequent exploration of the *Circuit of Culture* as a philosophy and tool of analysis aiming to achieve a 'complete' analysis of the exhibitions addressed in each of the case studies. As a result of the exploration of this 'complete' analysis of exhibitions as cultural products presented by the *Circuit of Culture* and the emphasis of New Museology on the contextual presentation of artworks the final ideology investigated by the research project is Textualisation which presents social semiotic theory to interrogate the multimodal sites of the museum exhibition. Textualisation demonstrates that meaning is produced through the contexts and environment of the exhibition rather than through individual objects.

To the structural end of this dissertation, each of the case studies addressed will present these theoretical frameworks as a tool of analysis. New Museology will be used as a starting point at the beginning of each case study for the contextualisation of the transformation of the different museological practices and typologies highlighted for each exhibition. In order to interrogate the multimodal sites of the museum exhibitions and explore exhibited culture, what museums put on display for each of the case studies, a subsection within each case study will utilise Textualisation as a reference of analysis. Similarly, in order to explore exhibition culture, the ideas and values that permeated and shaped the practice of exhibiting for each case study a subsection within each case study will utilise Circuit of Culture as a reference of analysis in order to provide an understanding of the integrated nature of cultural meaning produced by exhibition displays, through the interrelated processes of Representation, Production, Consumption, Regulation and Identity.

Like many historical projects, this research project will present this critical examination of the history of exhibitions as a gateway to understand the relationship between historical phenomena and museum contemporary practices. Rather than addressing exhibitions as isolated curatorial acts, this project wishes to articulate how the internal dynamics and values of the norms of professional curation interweave. To that end, within each case study the concluding section will present museological solutions to the problems investigated utilising Michel Foucault's interpretations of the relationship between power and knowledge, and how these relationships are used as a form of social regulation through exhibition-making processes.

6.1. Theoretical framework

6.1.1. Towards the 'New Museology'

The dissertation will take 'new museology' as a specific ideology that has affected expectations around the purpose of museums. As previous mentioned, new museology evolved from the perceived failings of traditional museum practices. In its origins, new museology was initiated from the idea that the role of museums in society needed to change. During the early 1970s it was claimed that museums were isolated from the modern world, elitist and obsolete.[1] Conventional ideas around museum practices, which were perceived to have contributed to this, were functionally built around collections and held curatorship. The original idea of museums as building-based, collections-centered institutions prevailed, with the conception of a general public understanding that the museum is a "cultural authority", safeguarding and communicating "truth".[2]

[1] K. Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s: A Survey of World Trends* (Paris and London: UNESCO/Macmillan, 1997), 15.
[2] J. D. Harrison, "Ideas of Museums in the 1990s", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 13, no. 2 (1993): 161.

The significance of this has been understood to be that the interests of a particular social grouping controlled how museums operated on the basis of a declared exclusivity, regulating the role of museum.[3] According to Tony Bennet, this exclusivity has been linked to claims about cultural standing and the Foucauldian concept that the major social function of museums has been to "civilise" and "discipline" the mass of the population to reflect their position within society.[4] This was achieved through differentiating between 'high' and 'elitist' cultural forms which were worthy of preservation, and 'low' or 'mass' ones, which it has been argued were not.[5]

New museology is a dialogue around the political and social responsibilities of museums, urging new methods of communication and new styles of manifestation in contrast to classic, collections-based museum models.[6] New museology has become a theoretical and philosophical interpretation linked to a shift in emphasis and purpose within museums, away from the functional idea of museums. Areas that have been reconsidered in new museology include the position of museums in conservation, the epistemological standing of artefacts on display, and the fundaments and reasoning of museum scholarship.[7]

New museology has been broken down to changes in "value, meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity" within museums. This also includes the redeployment of power within museums and 'curatorial redistribution'.[8] As part of this curatorial redistribution, new museology also advocates for a redefinition of the association that museums have with audiences and their communities. This change comprises of a drive for broader access and representation of diverse groups, "as well as a more active role for the public as both visitors and controllers of the curatorial function, shifting the identity of museum professionals from 'legislator' to 'interpreter' and towards a more visitor-orientated ethos".[9]

These considerations can be argued to be part of a shift in emphasis from objects to ideas within new museology, according to Hooper-Greenhill, with language and education having a central position within museums.[10] This development has come with an consciousness of social responsibility and social, as well as moral, accountability in the museum. New museology, and a considerable section of museological literature, considers that as a consequence of this

[3] E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 10.
[4] T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), 47.
[5] W. Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World* (London: Pine Forge Press, 2008), 6.
[6] F. Mairesse and A. Desvallées, eds, *Key Concepts of Museology* (Paris: ICOM & Armand Colin, 2010), 20.
[7] C. Saumarez Smith, "Museums, Artefacts and Meanings", in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 20 -21.
[8] D. Stam, "The Informed Muse: The Implications of 'The new museology' for Museum Practice", Museum Management and Curatorship 12, no. 3 (1993): 269.
[9] M. Ross, "Interpreting the new museology", Museum and Society, 2, no. 2 (2004): 86.
[10] E. Hooper-Greenhill, Op. Cit. (note 3), 13; K. Message, *New Museums and the Making of Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 9.

reconsideration of the purpose of museums, significant changes has taken place in both the activities that museums embark on and the understanding of the function of the museum.[11]

As already discussed, the beginning of this shift can be associated with the ascendance of cultural theory within academia during the 1970s and 1980s and cultural theory's interdisciplinary nature and disregard for academic boundaries. Academic interpretations such as Vergo's *The New Museology* and Karp's and Lavine's *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* were at the forefront of this 'first wave' of new museological studies, setting the tone for future work. Since the late twentieth century when those seminal works were published, there have been changes. In Ireland, Europe, and throughout the rest of the world, museums are more numerous and popular than ever before. There has also been a widespread development in the social range of the objects that museums collect and exhibit. Museums, it appears, have become more accessible – since the 1980s, the atmosphere of exclusiveness and intellectual asceticism has largely given way to a more democratic climate.

This dissertation considers the climate of change in a particularly transformative museological period in Ireland, raising questions of what lies behind this movement; what social forces are shaping and propelling the new museology in Ireland? Older narratives of nationalism, class, race and science are seen by professionals as inappropriate to the requirements of a pluralistic, multicultural society. Additionally, with the integration of new curatorial practices, cultural institutions allowed space for contested histories and voices to be represented in exhibitions that challenged conventional historical narratives and collective memories. As Ian Lawley stated:

"Museums must come to terms with a plurality of pasts, sometimes in conflict with each other. As one of the principal means by which people gain access to their history, museums must dismantle the cultural barriers that impeded widespread participation in their activities. They must become more community focused, and museum workers must look to the people they serve, rather than their peers, for approval".[12]

According to Max Ross, on the one hand, there are "pressures" for museums to become more accessible and representative of multicultural society. On the other hand, there are forces of opposition for the undoing of traditional cultural boundaries which pose a threat to socio-cultural identities, and to the value of what Bourdieu calls 'cultural capital'.[13] This raises further questions, for example: what are the relations of power that lie behind this new and democratized politics of representation? what political, economic and social pressures give impetus to change in the museum world?[14]

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[11] D. Stam, Op. Cit. (note 8), 275.
[12] I. Lawley, "For whom we serve", in *The New Statesman and Society*, 17, 1992, 38.
[13] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984),12.
[14] M. Ross, Op. Cit. (note 9), 43.

In her study, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill applies new museology and the concept of cultural capital to display and exhibition-making, focusing on the importance of looking at museum objects through multiple viewpoints and recognizing that their meanings shift with time, context, and in relation to other information or contexts. In the preface, Hooper-Greenhill explains the two main questions the study investigates: "How are objects and collections used by museums to construct knowledge?" and "How can the relationships of museum audiences to this knowledge be understood?".[15]

To answer these questions and to comprehend the socially, politically and culturally structured ways in which meaning is created, communicated and reproduced at the museum, Hooper-Greenhill investigates the inception in 1856, and initial decade of collecting by the National Portrait Gallery, London. In this case study she questions the collection and display of the portraits and complicates the narrative they create. Of the two hundred and twenty-five portraits acquired during the museum's first decade, two hundred and three were of men and twenty-two were of women. The men fit into a variety of categories including government officials, artists, clergy, scientists, philosophers, educators, or members of the royal family. Most of the women, fourteen, represented in the collection were members of the royal family. During the first decade of the National Portrait Gallery, more than two hundred million people were under the rule of the British Empire; however, people of colour and white women are largely invisible in this collection. Hooper-Greenhill explains that:

"The public display of these collections makes a visual narrative which naturalises these underpinning assumptions and which gives them the character of inevitability and common sense".[16]

Additionally, she raises the idea that the museum's collection policies and displays contributed to forming the British national identity. By displaying and therefore reinforcing certain visual images while concealing others, the museum created a master narrative of British history.

According to Hooper-Greenhill reflecting on new museology, in order to comprehend the socially, politically and culturally structured ways in which meaning is created, communicated and reproduced within museums and their exhibitions, a poly-dimensional theoretical model of analysis is essential for their study. In analysing museums and their exhibitions, we need to take into account: their collections and how they were collected, which involves material culture studies, art history, and other historical studies; the social and cultural role of the museum, which involves cultural studies and sociology; the production of knowledge through exhibitions (museum studies, visual culture studies); learning in museums (education theory); and, more broadly, the experience of the visitor (psychology, sociology, and museum visitor studies). This poly-dimensional theoretical model needs to combine useful analytical

[15] E. Hooper-Greenhill, Op. Cit. (note 3),5.
[16] Ibid, 23.

approaches of cultural theory that are simultaneously sensitive to the unique differences of museums and exhibitions as objects of cultural enquiry.[17] To address these needs, this dissertation will draw from three key theoretical post-modernist cultural criticisms, theory and analytical perspectives applied to Museum Studies and new museology: what Rhiannon Mason has termed the "Foucauldian power model of museums",[18] Textualisation, and the Circuit of Culture Model.

6.1.2. Foucault at the museum: Foucauldian power model of museums

Michel Foucault's ideas have been particularly influential in museum studies since the end of the 1980s. His studies include a rethinking of the relationship between power and knowledge, the creation of that knowledge and the way that histories are written.[19] In his text, *The Order of Things*,[20] Foucault presents a useful tool to rethink the past and present of knowledge and meaning, by describing the structures of knowing as they shifted over time, from the Renaissance to Modernity. Foucault poses structures of knowing as non-absolute, but shaped by culture and varying across time. To describe the context of knowing, he developed the concept of the *episteme*, the unconscious, but positive and productive set of relations within which knowledge is produced and rationally defined. Foucault suggests that what counts as knowing is largely dependent on specific elements, including cultural, social, political, and scientific amongst other components.[21] These components inter-relate and work with or against each other in a state of constant fluidity, so that meaning is continually defined and redefined. These elements also vary, as culture, society, politics/policies, and science change and are redefined, rationalizing how certain meanings and ways of thinking gain credence at particular times.[22]

Foucault was concerned with the production of knowledge, rather than just meaning. Through what he called *discourse* his aim was to analyse "how human beings understand themselves in our culture".[23] According to Stuart Hall, Foucault presented discourse as a system of representation focusing on the rules and practices that produced meaningful statements and regulated discourse in different historical periods. Foucault, cited by Hall, defines discourse as:

"[A] group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. … Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But since all social practices entail

[17] E. Hooper-Greenhill, Op. Cit. (note 3), x.
[18] R. Mason, "Cultural Theory and Museum Studies", in *A Companion to Museum* Studies, ed. S. McDonald, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 25.
[19] Ibid, 22.
[20] M. Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock Publication, 1970).
[21] M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publication, 1974), 191.
[22] E. Hooper-Greenhill. Op. Cit. (note 3), 12-13.
[23] M. Foucault, Op. Cit. (note 20), 23.

meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect".[24]

Hall also suggests that it is important to note that Foucault's notion of discourse in this usage is not purely a 'linguistic' concept: It is about language and practice. Foucault attempts to overcome the traditional distinction between what one says: language, and what one does: practice.[25] According to Foucault, discourse constructs the topic and it defines and produces the object of our knowledge. It also governs the way in which a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also shapes how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the behaviour of others. Just as discourse 'rules in' particular ways of expression about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to communicate or conduct oneself, so also, by default, it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of communicating or conducting ourselves in relation to that topic or constructing knowledge about it.[26] Discourse, Foucault argues, never consists of one statement, one text, one action or one source. The same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time: episteme, will appear across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct and at a number of different institutional sites within society.[27]

In his later work Foucault focused on how knowledge was put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of others. He focused on the relationship between knowledge and power, and how power operated within what he called institutional *apparatus* and its *technologies* (techniques). Foucault's conception of the *apparatus of punishment*, for example, included a variety of diverse elements, linguistic and non-linguistic:

"… discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic propositions, morality, philanthropy, etc. … the apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain co-ordinates of knowledge, … This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge".[28]

Together, these ideas applied to the museum, have enabled an understanding of the museum as a civilizing instrument designed to effect consensual governance through the organization and transmission of culture. The best known and most sophisticated iteration of this view came from Australian cultural critic Tony Bennett, first in his influential essay of 1988: *The Exhibitionary Complex*, and later in his book of 1995: *The Birth of the Museum*. In his work, Bennett understood the museum as a tool that helped to cultivate the disciplined eye and the

[24] S. Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: The Open University/Sage Publications, 1997), 44.
[25] Ibid, 43.
[26] M. Foucault, Op. Cit. (note 20), 25.
[27] M. Foucault, Op. Cit. (note 21), 45.
[28] M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighíon: Harvesíer, 1980), 194-196.

self-regulating subject. Moving away from traditional interpretations of Foucault's linkage between knowledge and power, presenting power operating in a direct and brutally repressive fashion, dispensing polite things like culture and knowledge, Bennett argues that museums were no mere reflections of ideology. Instead, they contained in their spatial arrangements and their modes of classification the very tools required for liberal governance. Bennett encapsulated these notions under the umbrella of the *exhibitionary complex*.[29]

Using Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* as a point of departure, in *The Birth of the Museum*, Bennett advocated for a Foucauldian methodology of critique. Bennett applied Foucault's ideas about disciplinary power, panopticism, and governmentality to the development of the public and disciplinary museums in the nineteenth century. He argued that the museum should be understood as an institution that was designed not only to "improve" the populace as a whole but also to encourage citizens to regulate and police themselves. This is understood as part of a broader shift towards governmentality, defined by Hall as "how the state indirectly and at a distance induces and solicits appropriate attitudes and forms of conduct from its citizens".[30] Bennett arrives at this conclusion by constructing a genealogy that works by analogy; the end point of this teleology is the elaboration of the museum's social instrumentality as a disciplinary apparatus and tool of governance. In these *discourses*, the museum becomes a mode of articulation that references other cultural occurrences or situations.

On the *Exhibitionary Complex*, Bennett analyses the exhibition in modern history, presenting it not only as a typology, but also as a way of thinking. With reference to Foucault's prison, the exhibition is presented as an alternative mode of authoritative communication, which ultimately seeks to empower its visitors through education. Bennett draws a distinction between the "institutions of confinement" such as prisons, which are Foucault's focus, and "institutions of exhibition" such as museums.[31] Where Foucault identifies a society of surveillance (panopticon penitentiary), distinct from the society of spectacle found in antiquity (public floggings and executions), Bennett suggests that the two exist simultaneously; the self-disciplining nature which surveillance engenders is reinforced through the spectacle of exhibition. To illustrate this point, the author refers to Graeme Davison's description of the Crystal Palace: "The Crystal Palace reversed the panoptical principle by fixing the eyes of the multitude upon an assemblage of glamorous commodities. The panopticon was designed so that everyone could be seen; the Crystal Palace was designed so that everyone could see".[32] According to Bennett, the event communicated the notion of power to society through the

[29] T. Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991),81-112; T. Bennett, Op. Cit. (note 4), 62.
[30] S. Hall, Op. Cit. (note 24), 47.
[31] T. Bennett, Op. Cit. (note 29), 82.
[32] Ibid, 84.

sharing of knowledge. By presenting industrialized goods to the working public, the exhibition became a place to reflect on the "progress" of industrial society. Its visitors became empowered by a collective sense of achievement, rendering visible mankind's progress under the guidance of the knowledgeable and powerful.[33]

Unlike the panoptical model of the prison, the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace sought to house its visitors and installations together as a collective entity. Everyone could see the exhibits and everyone could see each other, such that the space ultimately promoted a self-regulating system in which visitors became conscious of their actions and indeed the greater forces of power. These tactics sought to "place the people – conceived as a nationalized citizenry – on this side of power, both its subject and beneficiary".[34]

In this sense, modern society saw new modes of power manifest themselves, not only in the oppressive prison, but also in the form of a collective, decentralized exhibition space that sought to educate its visitors through the sharing of knowledge. According to Bennett, the exhibition and the prison both represent forms of power – only the former seems to rely on affective empowerment, while the latter through isolation and instruction.[35]

Bennett sees the Crystal Palace exhibition acting as an early museum, as a powerful institution of knowledge creation. Echoing Walter Benjamin's discussion in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" on the importance of artworks shifting from cult value to exhibition value, Bennett, citing Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, describes the *exhibition complex as*:

"[Comprised of] institutions… [that] were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains which they had been previously displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society". [36]

However, this notion, along with the larger theoretical heritage from which it derives, has come under some scrutiny. Some critics have dismissed the exhibitionary complex as a version of "social control" dressed up in a Foucauldian guise; others have deemed it an excessively abstract, if theoretically illuminating tool for considering the spaces, forms, and contents of museums.[37]

In his book: *Pasts beyond memory: evolution, museums, colonialism*, Bennett picks up where he left off in *The Birth of the Museum*. Early on, he identifies these shortcomings of Foucauldian governmentality and Bennett's own analogue, the *exhibitionary complex*. Despite

[33] T. Bennett, Op. Cit. (note 29), 86.
[34] Ibid, 82.
[35] T. Bennett, Op. Cit. (note 4), 110.
[36] Ibid, 112.
[37] See, for instance: P. Barlow, and C. Trodd, (eds), *Governing Cultures: Art Institutions in Victorian London*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

Foucault's own concern with knowledge as power, Bennett explains, governmental analyses of museums – his own included – have not paid heed to the various forms of technical expertise that gallery displays made manifest. Nor have they given attention to the cultural politics of the later nineteenth century and the institutions that it spawned. Instead, they have favoured the mid-nineteenth century moment of classical liberalism, when general survey museums sought to educate a democratizing public.[38]

Bennett's notion of the *exhibitionary complex* has two major methodological consequences. First, it implies that the public museum belongs to a system of modern institutions in which techniques of power are at work, organizing regimes of visibility and associated modes of subjectivity. Second, it establishes that any critical account of the nature and the function of an exhibitionary apparatus must take into consideration its constitutive affiliations to a set of other apparatuses, discourses, and technologies, linked together into a loose yet coherent network. As already discussed, Bennett's work mainly discusses world exhibitions and fairgrounds from the period between the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth century, and their relationships to discourses of natural history and anthropology. However, it is the claim of the present study that his concept remains valid for a study of late twentieth-century and contemporary exhibition practices and their related discourses.

Bennett's recommendation of any critical account of the nature and the function of an exhibitionary apparatus must take into consideration its constitutive affiliations to a set of other apparatuses, discourses, and technologies, linked together into a loose, yet coherent set of networks. This consideration was addressed by Foucault in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, where he advocates for history to be performed as archaeology. *Archaeology*, according to Foucault is the treatment of the human sciences as an object of discourse or a discourse-object, without regard to their presumed external "value". The discourse object is neither true nor untrue; it is an object to be studied from a stance of neutrality as to truth or meaning. In other words, the archaeologist studies not so much the object itself, but how the object was constructed out of discourse. The mechanics of discursive formation, as it were, and how the discourse was created had to be studied without being concerned about what "truth" content the discourse might or might not contain. This was an intellectual move that re-directed the way in which historians treat documents, meaning that if what was analyzed was the mechanisms of creating a discursive object, then the intellectual would be "disengaged" and critique would be re-located to mechanics and away from effects.[39]

Foucault's use of the term archaeology helps to distinguish his understanding of history as opposed to what he termed 'total history' and 'traditional history'. According to Foucault, total history or traditional history is longitudinal: it studies the development of something over a

[38] T. Bennett, *Pasts beyond memory: evolution, museums, colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 10.
[39] M. Foucault, Op. Cit. (note 21), 25.

period of time. Foucault rejects the notion of a continuous, smooth, progressive, totalising, developmental history. He works instead with the concepts of 'general history' and 'effective history', a view of the past that emphasises discontinuity, rupture, displacement and dispersion.[40] The basis of general history and effective history is an opposition to the pursuit of the founding origin of things, and a rejection of the approach that seeks to impose a chronology, an ordering structure, and a developmental flow from the past to present. According to Foucault, history must abandon its absolutes, and instead of attempting to find generalisations and unities, should look for differences, for changes and ruptures. The differences between things, rather than the links, become significant taking into consideration its constitutive affiliations to a set of other apparatuses, discourses, and technologies, linked together into a loose, yet coherent set of networks.[41]

A history of the museum and museum exhibitions, and their relationship to the creation of knowledge and meaning, written from the combined standpoints of power, discourse, exhibitionary complex, archaeology, general history or effective history should reveal new relationships and new articulations. By focusing on when and how museums in the past changed, and the reason for and why long-standing practices were ruptured and abandoned, this Foucauldian model will provide a context for the understanding of cultural and practical shifts at the museum. It will also clarify how certain meanings and ways of thinking gain credence at particular times as how exhibited culture, what museums put on display, and exhibition culture, the ideas, values, and symbols that permeate and shape the practice of exhibiting, interact.

6.1.3. Exhibited cultures: Exhibitions as texts

According to Rhiannon Mason, in addition to the Foucauldian model of museums, the other, most influential, cultural studies/museum studies approach of recent years is the *textual approach*. This involves reading the object of analysis like a text for its narrative and semiotical structures and strategies. In museums, the textual approach can involve analysis of the spatial narratives set up by the relationship of one gallery or object to another, or it might consider the narrative strategies and voices implicit in labeling, lighting, or sound.[42] Mieke Bal, for example, has written about the museum-as-text using concepts of narratology, discourse and the voice adopted by exhibitions. Bal also suggests a distinction between textual and spatial narratives and the ways in which they might conflict, thus producing dislocation within

[40] M. Foucault, Op. Cit. (note 21), 26.
[41] Ibid, 32.
[42] R. Mason, Op. Cit. (note 18), 26.

the overall text of the exhibition or museum.[43] Roger Silverstone has similarly applied the idea of narrative and discourse to museums:

"The study of the narrativity of the museum or the heritage display involves a study of an exhibition's capacity to define a route (material, pedagogic, aesthetic) for the visitor, and to define thereby a particular logic of representation, a particular legitimate and plausible coherence for itself".[44]

Semiotics, as originally defined by Ferdinand de Saussure, is "the science of the life of signs in society".[45] 'Social semiotics' expand on Saussure's founding insights by exploring the implications of the fact that the "codes" of language and communication are formed by social processes. Furthermore, social semiotics extends its general framework beyond its linguistic origins to account for the growing importance of visual images and material culture, and how modes of communication are combined in media.[46] The label social semiotics is useful to explain an approach to semiotics, which is based in a social, historical, and cultural exploration of meanings. Therefore, social semiotics can be considered as the study of the social dimensions of meaning as well as the study of the power of human processes of signification and interpretation in shaping individuals and societies. Social semiotics focuses on social "meaning-making" practices of all types, whether visual, verbal or aural. These different systems for meaning-making, or possible "channels", speech, writing and images, are known as semiotic modes.[47]

Theorists such as Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen have provided new "grammars" for semiotic modes other than linguistics. Like language, these grammars are seen as socially formed and changeable sets of available "resources" for the making of meanings. "Multimodality", that is the communication in and across a range of semiotic modes including verbal, visual, and aural, is considered of particular importance given the significance of the visual mode in contemporary communication.[48]

The framework of this project investigates how social semiotic analytical theory may be extended to museum exhibitions as multimodal sites. The museum exhibition is multimodal in that different semiotic resources such as photographs, three-dimensional physical objects, space and language are co-deployed in complex ways to construct meaning. A semiotic approach towards museum communication is not new: Esad Delibašić, for instance, has

[43] M. Bal, "The Discourse of the Museum", in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 210.
[44] R. Silverstone, "Heritage as media: some implications for research", in D. Uzzell (ed.), *Heritage Interpretation, vol. 2: The Visitor Experience* (London: Frances Pinter, 1989), 143-144.
[45] F. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 6.
[46] G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.
[47] P. J. Thibault, *Social Semiotics as Praxis: Text, Social Meaning Making, and Nabokov's Ada* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 154.
[48] G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, Op. Cit. (note 46), 15.

considered the museum as "filled with signs or systems of signs, which are at the disposal of those who know how to interpret them".[49]

Broadly speaking, at least two perspectives may be discerned from the various semiological approaches undertaken in museum studies. The first tends to centre on the collection of material objects as the means *par excellence* of communication in a museum. Susan M. Pierce, in her article 'Objects as meaning; or narrating the past' using Saussure's linguistic model, evaluates the qualitative difference between objects in circulation and objects in collections and within the collections, what objects come to the fore as part of the museum's narrative. She considers this selective process to create the museum's exhibition on itself as "a specific work of culture", which generates meaning and consequently its "own kind of knowledge".[50]

In such analysis the conclusion that the artefactual significance of the object also lies in the socio-cultural relations of its production, circulation, and use, is noteworthy. However, it is also crucial to recognise that the values of the artefactual objects are as much arbitrated by the institutional environment of their display in a museum. This leads us to the second perspective, which emphasises the appropriation and interpretation of artefactual objects in relation to the composite design of an exhibition as a whole. As Charles Saumarez Smith explains:

"Artefacts do not exist in a space of their own, transmitting meaning to the spectator, but on the contrary, are susceptible to a multiform construction of meaning which is dependent on the design, the context of other objects, the visual and the historical representation, the whole environment".[51]

Such a perspective may be increasingly more relevant now, given the prevailing trend to democratize museums through the creation of audience-orientated exhibitions, where "a shift in focus from individual objects to a 'whole' gallery experience", is encouraged in museums. Herein lies the pressing motivation to conceive the exhibition as a multimodal social semiotic, where objects are rarely left to "speak for themselves" but instead their significance is created in correlation with other semiotic modalities, such as space and language.[52]

Multimodality in a museum exhibition implies the analysis of the different layers that are employed to create the museum's messages. While this has been acknowledged in various studies of museum exhibitions, what remains unclear is 'how' these layers underline the exhibition's construction of meaning. In this regard, Michael Halliday's three metafunctions for languages of ideational, interpersonal, and textual, applied to visual interpretations by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, provide a useful means of organizing this multi-

[49] Esad Delibašić, "Sign and Museum" (PhD thesis, University of Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 1991), 34.
[50] S. M. Pierce, "Objects as meaning; or narrating the past", in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, ed. Susan M. Pierce (London: Routledge, 2003), 21.
[51] C. Saumarez Smith, Op. Cit. (note 7), 9.
[52] A. Pang Kah Meng, "Making history in 'From Colony to Nation': a multimodal analysis of a museum exhibition in Singapore", in *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Systemic Functional Perspectives*, ed. Kay O'Halloran (London: Continuum, 2004), 31.

layered potential meaning of exhibitions. Alluding to Halliday's model, Alfred Pang Kah Meng, Kress and Van Leeuwen agree that the museum exhibition performs an ideational function in representing a cultural practice that constructs social 'realities'. It realizes an interpersonal function by addressing and shaping the interest of visitors in particular ways, while the textual function orders the interconnected flow of both the ideational and the interpersonal meanings to compose an exhibition as a coherent and cohesive whole.[53]

The advantages of understanding museums in terms of texts and narratives is that it moves away from privileging or compartmentalizing a particular aspect of the museum; for example, its building, collections, individual staff, or organizational status. All these components remain crucial, but a textual approach argues that they must be viewed in concert to understand the possible meanings of the museum. Another useful aspect of the idea of textuality is that it raises the question of unintentional meaning, omissions, or contradictions present within displays.

Another benefit of the textual analogy is that it can shift emphasis away from the curator-as-author and his/her intentions toward the visitor-as-reader and his/her responses. The visitor is therefore understood to be a crucial participant in the process of meaning-making. These ideas correlate with the introduction of constructivist communication theory within museum studies, visitor and non-visitor studies, cultural diversity work on the role of cultural capital in shaping visitor responses, and research into the visitor experience.[54]

As indicated by Rhiannon Mason in her essay *Cultural Theory and Museum Studies*, the Foucauldian/power model of museums and Textualisation perspectives present numerous advantages. The Foucauldian Model museum provides a structure through which to explore issues of power, subjectivity and imagination. Textualisation and the understanding of museums in terms of text as narrative has the advantage of moving away from privileging or compartmentalising a particular aspect of the museum, such as its building, collections, individual staff, and/or organisational status. However, both perspectives have their weaknesses. As already mentioned, both suppose too clear-cut a conscious manipulation by those involved in creating the exhibitions, and a too passive and unitary public; they ignore the often compelling agendas involved in exhibition making, the difficulties of the process itself, interpretative agency of the visitors, and do not necessarily exhaust all possible accounts of production.[55]

[53] Ibid, 32; G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, Op. Cit. (note 46), 32.
[54] S. McDonald, "Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction", in *A Companion to Museum Studies,* ed. S. McDonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 11.
[55] R. Mason, Op. Cit. (note 18), 27.

As suggested by Mason and others, what is necessary in order to capture the multifaceted nature of museums, and to be fully 'textual' in a broader sense, is a combination with other methods of cultural analysis.[56]

6.1.4. Exhibition cultures: Exhibitions as cultural products and the 'Circuit of Culture'

In order to capture the multifaceted nature of museums, Mason and others suggest the Circuit of Culture model as a suitable tool of cultural analysis. The Circuit of Culture's roots can be linked to the origins of British cultural studies whose adherents sought to imagine the complex interplay of agency and determination in human experience.[57] The earliest work centred on class,[58] but later the topics of race and gender figured heavily in the discussions.[59] Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley argued that, though people are limited by the meanings in the discourses to which they are exposed, they are often privy to a wide selection of discourses.[60] Stuart Hall expanded upon this notion. Reaching back to Marx's idea of a "circuit of capital" connecting industrial production with the circulation of commodities, Hall conceived of the cultural experience of television as being an articulation of distinct linked moments, including production, distribution, circulation, and reproduction. No one moment can ever be considered the ultimate source of meaning, he argued. Hall used his "encoding/decoding" concept to state that the meaning the producer (or "encoder") intends to communicate in a message may not be the meaning the consumer (or "decoder") ascribes to that message.[61]

R. Johnson took up this idea and developed it further, imagining a more detailed heuristic construct. Rather than being a theoretical representation of a reality, this "circuit of culture" was intended to serve as a symbolic device, a pedagogic model, meant to help us understand the often complex, integrated nature of cultural meaning. According to Johnson's construct, one can imagine culture in terms of distinct processes, or moments. Johnson encouraged

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[56] Ibid, 28; F. McLean, "Museums and the construction of national identity: a review", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 3, No. 4 (1998), 244-46; J. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century. Cambridge*, (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997), 23; S. Cooke and F. McLean, "Our common inheritance? Narratives of self and other in the Museum of Scotland", in *Celtic Geographies: Old Culture*, *New Times*, eds. D. C. Harvey, R. Jones, N. McInroy, and C. Milligan eds. (London, Routledge, 2002), 109-220.

[57] See: C. Barker, *Cultural studies: Theory and practice*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003) 35; C. Barker, *The Sage dictionary of cultural studies*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004) 22.

[58] See: R. Hoggart, *The uses of literacy: Changing patterns in English mass culture* (Fairlawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1957); E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (New York: Pantheon Books,1964); R. Williams, *Culture and society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); R. Williams, *The long revolution*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

[59] See: S. Hall, "Race, culture, and communications: Looking backward and forwards at cultural studies", in *Rethinking Marxism*, 5, 1992, 10–21; S. Franklin, C. Lurg, and J. Stacey, (eds.), *Off-centre: Feminism and cultural studies (*London: HarperCollins, 1991).

[60] C. Brunsdon, and D. Morley, *Everyday television: "Nationwide"*(London: British Film Institute, 1978), 10.

[61] S. Hall, "Encoding/decoding", in S. Hall., D. Hobson, A. Lowe, and P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 129.

researchers to think of the inseparability, the connectedness, of these cultural moments. "Each moment depends upon the others and is indispensable to the whole", he wrote.[62]

But there remained a critique that cultural studies scholars over-celebrated audience negotiation and opposition. Some feared that it dangerously ignored the power to control meaning inherent in the encoding of cultural texts.[63] Due to this, as well as questions about how the model would actually be applied in real-world research,[64] a group of cultural scholars associated with the Open University in the United Kingdom set out to further refine the model, simultaneously publishing a series of six edited books called the "Culture, Media and Identities" series.[65]

The Open University 'circuit of culture' supporters expanded the Johnson heuristic by presenting cultural experience in terms of five interrelated "processes" or "moments", including production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity.[66]

According to du Gay and his colleagues, in order to analyse the biography of a cultural text, cultural artefact or cultural moment, its articulation must be considered. This involves exploring not only the social identities that are associated with it, but also how the artefact is represented, how it is produced and consumed, and the mechanisms that regulate its distribution and use. These five stage processes interrelate, whilst creating meanings via symbolic systems of representation. Rather than privileging one single phenomenon in explaining the meaning that an artefact comes to possess, du Gay and his colleagues argue that: "it is in a combination of processes – in their articulation – that the beginnings of an explanation can be found".[67]

6.1.4.1. Representation

Representation is meant to stand for the process within which a particular language or other forms of symbolic systems are used to present potential meanings. A representation, often in the form of text, serves as a "shared cultural 'space'" from which participants in a culture may draw meanings. It is believed that the way a message is structured may influence how

[62] R. Johnson, "The story so far: And further transformations?" in D. Punter (Ed.), *Introduction to contemporary cultural studies* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1986), 283-284.
[63] See: J. Clarke, *New times and old enemies: Essays on cultural studies and America*, (London: HarperCollins Academic, 1991); M. Ferguson, and P. Golding, (eds.), *Cultural studies in question* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).
[64] See: J. Cruz, and J. Lewis, *Viewing, reading, listening: Audiences and cultural reception.* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); B.C. Taylor, C. Demont-Heinrich, K.J. Broadfoot, J. Dodge, and G. Jian, "New media and the circuit of cyber-culture: Conceptualizing Napster", in *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 46, 2002.
[65] P. du Gay, (ed.), *Production of culture/Cultures of production* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); P. du Gay, S. Hall, L. Janes, H. Mackay, and K. Negus, *Doing cultural studies: The story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); S. Hall, Op. Cit. (note 83); H. Mackay, (ed.), *Consumption and everyday life* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); K. Thompson, (ed.), *Media and cultural regulation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); K. Woodward, (ed.), *Identity and difference* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).
[66] Ibid, S. Hall, 3; Ibid, K. Thompson, 4.
[67] P. du Gay et al., Op. Cit. (note 65), 3.

meanings are interpreted. In these representations, or "signifying systems", discursive participants share enough experience with that history, they can translate meanings in similar enough ways to enable understanding.[68]

Representation is the process by which members of a culture produce meaning. Meaning is not only derived directly from the artefact, but from the way in which it is represented. Therefore, an artefact or cultural text takes on a range of cultural meanings, partly as a result of how it has been represented in visual, material and verbal forms. Different meanings are produced by different symbolic systems, and so the meanings may be disputed and variable.[69] Where is meaning produced? According to the Circuit of Culture, meanings are produced at several different sites and circulated through different levels of command. Meaning is constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction in which we take part. Meaning is also produced whenever we express ourselves in, make use of, consume or appropriate cultural 'things'. Meanings also regulate and organize our conduct and practices – they help to set the rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed. They are also, therefore, what those who wish to govern and regulate the conduct and ideas of others seek to structure and shape.

An analysis of the representational aspects of the exhibition considered the ways in which it creates meaning through language and signifying practices. Henrietta Lidchi views museums and galleries as systems of representation, where meaning is produced through classification and display.[70] She makes a distinction between the physical presence of an object and its meaning, which is constantly changing over time. Museums and galleries articulate or reinforce frameworks of knowledge in display, and convey meaning and validity upon objects. These discursive formations influence the ways in which displays are planned and managed, and form an aspect of regulation.

Focusing on the context of museums, Lidchi proposes that to understand representation in museums, it is necessary to examine how meaning is created through display and classification. She reiterates that museums are not solely concerned with artefacts, but also with ideas, "notions of what the world is, or should be".[71] There is therefore a distinction between the physical presence of artefacts and their meaning. According to Lidchi, museums generate representations, and attribute value and meaning in line with certain perspectives or classificatory outlines which are historically specific. Museums classify and constitute cultural difference systematically and coherently, "in accordance with a particular view of the world that emerges in a specific place, at a distinct historical moment and within a specific body of

[68] S. Hall, Op. Cit. (note 26), 5-10.
[69] P. du Gay et all, Op. Cit. (note 65), 4.
[70] H. Lidchi, "The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting other Cultures", in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,* edited by S. Hall (London: Sage, 1997), 160.
[71] Ibid, 100.

knowledge".[72] However, a degree of selection takes place which favours certain meanings to the exclusion of others, meanings which are considered by the curator to be important to the visitor.[73]

6.1.4.2. Production

Production stands for all of those things having to do with the creation of many forms of goods, services, and experiences. In this way, as B. C. Taylor et al. explained, in the "design, manufacture, and distribution of a particular cultural object", the creation is "both material and cultural". Production takes place in relation to social and logistical constraints that may influence the way meanings are eventually encoded.[74]

Production, according to the Circuit of Culture, refers to the processes involved in producing an artefact that is being represented. It refers first to the culture of production that is the culture of the organisation itself, its 'way of life'. This requires an analysis of the distinctive characteristics of the museum's own culture. The impact that the museum's organizational structure has on the ultimate product that is offered to the museum's public is rarely recognized. Yet it is well documented that museums are subject to political control, and that a government-controlled museum will encounter restrictions or interference which may not be experienced, or not to the same extent, for example in a volunteer-run museum. Therefore, the organisation's identity, its corporate identity, could be a significant indicator in identity construction in a museum.[75]

An analysis of the production of an exhibition explores the social practices that gave it cultural meaning.[76] This helps to explain how the structures that participants engage with in order to make meaning are formed. It also informs how those outside the museum or gallery, such as members of the public and government agencies, perceive it and ascribe various identities to it. The culture of production amongst many museums and galleries is actively managed by the organisations themselves and can be seen as a form of regulation. Changes in the culture of museums and galleries will influence the nature of the messages that are being encoded. The introduction of a more audience-centred approach has meant that different meanings have been encoded by curators into objects used in display. It is also evident that the increase in the importance of subjects such as social history has meant that museums have collected and encoded a whole range of art works and objects with value and meaning that they once would not have done. It is important to emphasise the articulation between production and

[72] Ibid,162.
[73] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 56), 248.
[74] B.C. Taylor et al., Op. Cit. (note 65), 617.
[75] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 56), 250.
[76] B. Dicks, *Heritage, Place and Community* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 5; B. Dicks, "Encoding and Decoding the People: Circuits of Communication at a Local Heritage Museum", *European Journal of Communication* 15, no. 1 (2000), 62.

consumption. The production of the exhibitions is controlled by assumptions that are made about the way that it will be consumed and the meanings that visitors will take away.[77]

Production involves cultural intermediaries, those designers who produce meanings through encoding artefacts with a symbolic form. In the museum context, this will include the designers of the museum building, the exhibition designers, as well as those responsible for marketing the museum.[78] Developing this further, Mark O'Neill argues that as museum objects are human creations: "they are given or acquire through use and association many of the attributes of people and in effect become containers of feeling and sensations". Therefore, instead of curators preserving, displaying, interpreting, and communicating objects, they could reflect "people's selves back to them, through objects, enabling them to cope with selves which were different from their own".[79] Consequently museums can cultivate and renegotiate identities by embodying and discussing social relations.

6.1.4.3. Consumption

"Consumption", according to H. Mackay, is the moment, or cultural process, in which we "appropriate and make sense of various cultural forms in our routines in everyday settings".[80] It is what, as previously discussed, Hall meant by the act of "decoding".[81] This concept has been a symbol of cultural studies, something that has delineated it from more critical, materialist approaches to the understanding of human experience. Although some scholars have celebrated the act of consumption in terms of pleasure, poaching, and bricolage (de Certeau, 1984; Fiske, 1989),[82] the Open University circuit of culture supporters have taken a more measured approach, recognizing "a balance between creativity and constraint" in the practice of everyday life, on the one hand, and the limits of cultural structures, such as production, representation, and regulation, on the other.[83]

In post-modern accounts, cultural consumption is seen as being the very material out of which we construct our identities; McLean proposes that we become what we consume.[84] Therefore the examination of consumption should consider the process of meaning-making. Du Gay and his colleagues identify three perspectives on consumption: the production of consumption, where production and consumption are linked; consumption as socio-cultural differentiation, which addresses the diversity of meanings attached to an artefact; and consumption as

[77] Ibid, 7.
[78] Ibid, 251.
[79] M. O'Neill, "Curating Feelings: issues of identity in museums", *Canadian Art Gallery/Art Museum Educators,* January (1995), 20; M. O'Neill, "Museums and the Renegotiation of Identities", *Museum Ireland,* 4 (1994), 18-19.
[80] H. Mackay, Op. Cit. (note 65), 1.
[81] S. Hall, Op. Cit. (note 26), 4.
[82] See: M. de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984); J. Fiske, *Understanding popular culture* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
[83] K. Mackay, Op. Cit. (note 64), 11.
[84] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 56), 250.

appropriation and resistance, which explains how objects are made meaningful in the process of consumption.[85] The challenge, then, is to examine the consumer's reading of the museum, and to ascertain the extent to which their reading is linked to the intentions of the producers; the diversity of readings; and the way in which meaning is made.

According to Michael Ames, since museums are dependent for their survival on the public, they must appeal to the public, by making the collection, the exhibition, and the museum meaningful. In order to do this the messages transmitted by the museum must in some way accord with the collective view of the museum's audience. Ames then identifies two implications of this. As educational institutions, museums tend to remain neutral and non-confrontational, which broadly accords with the view of social reality that the visitor holds. Secondly, since museums are attempting to reach wider and more diverse audiences, their public will have more, and competing, demands.[86] Moreover, as museums become more dependent on the public, as they become more commercially driven and concerned with image, the degree of influence of the public over the museum increases.[87]

Consumption is viewed by J. Baudrillard as "a systematic act of the manipulation of signs" which are used for the purpose of communicating meanings for identity construction. While classification systems are important for meaning-making in terms of representation, they are equally important for the process of consumption. Without terms of reference or what Bourdieu describes as "habitus", the unconscious dispositions and classification systems used to make choices, meaning and identity cannot be constructed. For the viewer, their habitus is constructed through their background and environment. Their personal experience manifests itself through the meanings constructed.

An important aspect of consumption is the ability of the viewers to decode the messages present in ways that enable them to make sense of a particular experience. In order to do this, visitors need the correct form of cultural capital, a concept associated mainly with Bourdieu and defined by J. Gershuny as "knowledge related to the participation in, and enjoyment of, the various forms of consumption in society".[88]

Published reviews provide helpful documentation of the responses to the exhibition of individual critics. Nevertheless, critics are indoctrinated in the same professional discourse of art that motivates curators, and therefore, their response to the exhibition should be interpreted by taking into account the cultural capital that is part of their consumer experiences. Furthermore, how their particular consumer experience impacts the subjectivity of individual members of the public should also be considered. Information about the experiences of the

[85] P. du Gay, et al., Op. Cit. (note 65), 8.
[86] M. M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: the anthropology of museums* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), 14.
[87] F. McLean, *Marketing the Museum* (London: Routledge,1997), 20.
[88] J. Gershuny, "A new measure of social position: social mobility and human capital in Britain", ISER: Working Papers Number 2002-2, 8.

general public is, on the other hand, difficult to obtain. The story that an individual member of the public takes away from an exhibition is, of course, invariably influenced by their own subjectivity, and it constitutes a degree of infinite variation within a large audience. However, the experience of the individual is also swayed by the larger cultural trends and perspectives that they carry into the exhibition space with them. Therefore, it is also important to examine trends within the larger cultural moment and to hypothesize about points of reference that may be shared amongst many members of the audience and that may shape their experience.

6.1.4.4. Regulation

"Regulation" stands for the attempt to codify, or control, in some way, practices related to the other processes of the circuit of culture; it is often the goal of those with the power to do so to fix meanings in ways they deem desirable. The term "regulation" is rather loosely used, representing everything from quite formal, institutionally based regulation, to local norms and other limiting cultural values. According to K. Thompson, thinkers such as Gramsci, Althusser, Foucault, and Habermas expended a great deal of time and energy trying to understand the role of regulation in economic, political, and social practice.[89]

The regulation of culture means that the object is both public and private, where public refers to the formal institutions, while private is represented by the realm of the personal. An example of the public realm of the museum is preservation and conservation, which, when legislated by the state, secures for the nation objects that embody the national community. Museums reinforce and promote the dominant power base and exclude minority groups which are marginalised in society. Moreover, as Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine argue: "Decisions about how cultures are presented reflect deeper judgements of power and authority and can, indeed, resolve themselves into claims about what a nation is or ought to be as well as how citizens should relate to one another".[90]

An analysis of how exhibitions are regulated explores the social forces that control the ways that encoded meanings used for identity construction by the participants and visitors were formed and used.[91] The political and professional environment can be divided into external regulation which is imposed upon an organisation or project, and internal regulation formed by 'professional practice', that interacts with the external regulation.

6.1.4.5. Identity

[89] K. Thompson, Op. Cit. (note 65), 5.
[90] I. Karp and S.D. Lavine, "Introduction", in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 2.
[91] S. Hall, "Encoding/Decoding", in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79,* edited by S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1980), 130.

"Identity", or perhaps more properly, "identities", according to du Gay el al., can be thought of as "stories", "social profiles", "types", that circulate throughout cultures in the processes of production, consumption, regulation, and representation.[92] What delineates identities from more 'general discourses': those already discussed in relation to Foucault and Hall definitions of "discourse", is the way in which individuals and groups may take up these "stories" and present them to others, and to themselves, as indicators of who they are, or are not, or at least who they would wish to appear to be, or not to be.

According to P.A. Curtin and T. K. Gaither, any concept, including material objects, events or relationships, may be associated with an identity.[93] L. Grossberg suggests that these stories may be provided and acquired, or forced upon people, by greater society, for example: identities associated with demographics including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and economic status, which are creatively integrated into unique combinations that we might consider emerging identities. These identities may be defined by the way they co-exist and overlap with other identities,[94] which may be contradictory, or they may be made more clearly meaningful by what they are not.[95] Curtin and Gaither explained that "identity is often constituted through difference",[96] such as the dichotomies of gender, race, wealth status, and so forth. Circuit of culture supporters argue that powerful individuals and groups, those forces with the ability to influence perceptions of reality, can control production, consumption, regulation, and representation to the point that their preferred identities seem authentic, natural, or at least unavoidable.

Finally, identities derive from a multiplicity of sources which may be in conflict. K. Woodward has recognised a number of causes which need to be considered when addressing questions of identity, namely "difference, social and material conditions and, the ultimate issue, identification, or the positions which people take up and identify with".[97]

Identity is often considered to be fixed and unchanged, therefore producing a sense of belonging. These considerations may be grounded on nature, kinship and race. Nevertheless, the claims are informed by an essentialist view of history and of the past, where history is fashioned or epitomised as an unchanging truth. Woodward argues that: "the heritage industry seems to present only one version". Arguably however, according to this argument, identity is relational, "and difference is established by symbolic marking in relation to others".[98]

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[92] P. du Gay, et al., Op. Cit. (note 65), 10-15.
[93] P.A., Curtin, and T.K. Gaither, "Contested notions of issue identity in international public relations: A case study", in *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18, 2006, 67–89.
[94] L. Grossberg, "Identity and cultural studies: Is that all there is?" In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 91
[95] P. du Gay, et al., Op. Cit. (note 65), 15.
[96] P.A., Curtin, and T.K. Gaither, Op. Cit. (note 93), 82.
[97] K. Woodward, ed, *Identity and Difference* (London: Sage, 1997), 19.
[98] Ibid, 20.

Similarly, it has been considered that there is no "unitary privileged history", only different histories and perspectives of those histories. But by emphasising the multiplicity of positions, the question is whether these are equal or whether one historical appraisal has greater validity than others. Relating this to museums, Robert Foster suggests that because historical memory is a construction, struggles over the definition of the nation-as-community will inevitably be marked by struggles over the constitution of an authorised collectively held past.[99]

An analysis of exhibitions using the perspectives of regulation, representation, consumption and production presents a holistic view of the social forces that influence the process of identity construction. What are less clear are the factors that drive meaning-making and therefore identity formation by those who have consumed the exhibitions. An approach that helps to determine why particular identities are created has been suggested by R. F. Baumeister and M. Muraven, who view identity as an adaptation to context:

"History, culture and the proximate structure of social relations create a context in which the individual identity must exist [and] individuals actively choose, alter and modify their identities based upon what will enable them to get along best in that context".[100]

In apparent agreement with J. E. Cote's view that identity is constructed in response to the needs of the present is the idea, presented by J. Urry and drawing on the work of G. H. Mead, that the past – a context used for identity construction – is being continually re-created in the present. Only the present is real – the past and future are representational.[101]

Visitors give complex, often contradictory, meanings to exhibitions and museum objects, meanings that are representative of their personal perceptions of identity. Exhibitions are cultural moments where people actively made and remade their identities. They selected, rejected and manipulated the identities found, in a way that was guided by their needs at that particular time. Such a view is supported by M. J. Lee, who states that "people invest a certain amount of their self in material objects as a way of managing their sense of place, social position and identity",[102] and by J. Fiske, who suggests, "commodities can be used by the consumer to construct meanings of self".[103]

6.2. Methods

[99] R. J. Foster, "Making National Cultures in the Global Ecumene", *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 20 (1991), 242.
[100] R. F. Baumeister, and M. Muraven. "Identity as an Adaptation to Social, Cultural and Historical Context", in *Journal of Adolescence* 19 (1996), 405.
[101] J. E. Cote, "Sociological Perspectives on Identity Formation: The Culture-Identity Link and Identity Capital", *Journal of Adolescence* 19 (1996), 420; G. H. Mead, *The Philosophy of the Present* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1959), 59; J. Urry, "How Societies Remember the Past", in *Theorizing Museums,* edited by S. Macdonald and G. Fyfe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 45.
[102] M. J. Lee, *Consumer Culture Reborn: The Cultural Politics of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993), 26.
[103] J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989), 11.

This research project will consider a multifaceted path of research approaches. Using the principles of the Circuit of Culture model as a research tool for both designing the research strategy and examining the results, three different case studies have been established to address the interaction between modes of cultural production and modes of cultural consumption in shaping cultural practices and meaning in the timeframe addressed by the dissertation. Further qualitative data will be gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with the museum professionals, artists, art critics, and art historians directly involved on the different projects addressed in the case studies. In order to evaluate visitors' experiences, the research strategy used in this dissertation will consist of a questionnaire.

6.2.1 Research strategy

For each of the case studies addressed, the same set of fundamental questions will be posed for each of the five different moments of the Circuit of Culture.

In relation to production: Who is financing the exhibition, and/or backing it, and why? Where are the financial (and other resources) coming from? Who is creating, making or producing the exhibition, and why? What is his/her/their/its story? What are their interests (cultural, social, financial and otherwise)? What are their positions or biases?

In relation to consumption: Are the people who visit the exhibition different from the people who produce it? If so, what is his/her/their/its story? What are their interests (cultural, social, financial and otherwise)? What are their positions or biases? Why do audiences visit exhibitions? Are they advertised or marketed? If so, how, where, why, and to whom?

In relation to regulation: Is the exhibition against established rules? What rules? Who makes and enforces them? How and why are they enforced? Is the exhibition subversive? Why, and according to whom? What kind of certification, acceptance, and/or approving do you need before you can produce or consume the exhibition? Who does this certifying, accepting, and/or approving?

In relation to representation: What does the exhibition signify (what is the exhibition a signifier for)? What signifies it (what is it a signifier of)? And to whom: to its creators/authors/audiences? In what context do you find it? What's going on around it? What kind of language and tone and feelings are involved, and how do they work? How is it structured/mediated? What genre conventions does it work with? What gives it away (what signifies adherence to these conventions)? How does it live up to, not live up to, or transcend the expectations of those conventions? What does it look and feel like – to makers, and to visitors? What arguments is it making – intentionally or not? How, and why, does it make them?

In relation to identity: Who produces, consumes, and regulates the exhibition? Who thinks the exhibition is relevant? And why? What do you have to know, understand, and believe in order to visit the exhibition? How does the exhibitions create insiders and outsiders – or, an "us" and a "them"? Who is "us"? Who is "them"? Who decides? How?

In order to gather data to answer these questions; various primary and secondary sources will be utilised pertaining to each case study. These will comprise archival documentation such as: exhibition proposals, design proposals, budgetary information, loan agreements and correspondence; policy documents such as Government strategy papers and annual reports; secondary literature such as institutional historical accounts, critics' and visitors' reviews, newspapers, television, and radio programming.

6.2.2. Case studies

A case study model will provide the optimum methodological structure relevant to the exploration of these concerns. Robert Yin suggests that case study research is an empirical inquiry of a particular phenomenon "within its real life context".[104] In contrast with quantitative methods, case studies seek out rather than ignore "the particularities and complexities of real life circumstance".[105] Perhaps most important is the use of multiple sources of evidence in the construction of case studies, allowing us to consider several processes at work in both the production and consumption of the particular exhibition at hand. In the context of this study, the adoption of this method will allow for the development of rich primary qualitative data, and for cross-checking of ideas presented by one set of data against those suggested by others, thus seeking out diverse organisational actors within each case to gain multiple perceptions of practice.

This approach is important not only in terms of the validity of the study, but also in the exploration of the key ideas presented in theoretical literature. This strategy requires the gathering of information about the text, the context, and the producer, because of the possible relationship or non-relationship between preferred, ancillary, or alternative readings of exhibition narratives.

The case studies have been drawn from exhibitions produced between 1973 and 1991 by key museums and galleries in Ireland – the Douglas Hyde Gallery, National Museum of Ireland, National Gallery of Ireland, and Irish Museum of Modern Art, as well as exhibitions/projects directly commissioned by the state through the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The date range will offer the opportunity of contextualising key changes in the creation of cultural policy and cultural and museum practice in Ireland, from the influence of European

[104] R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (London: Sage, 1994), 13.
[105] T. Brannick and W. Roche, *Business Research Methods – strategies, techniques and sources* (Dublin: Oak Tree Press, 1997), 99.

cultural policy as a consequence of Ireland joining the European Union in 1973 and the reconstitution of the National College of Art and Design in 1971, to the emergence of new curatorial practices in Ireland in the 1990s.

The case study selection criteria has been based on the principles of Foucault's 'general history' or 'effective history' theory, already discussed, whereby a view of that past that emphasises discontinuity, rupture, displacement and dispersion is given priority rejecting that which seeks to impose a chronology, an ordering structure, and a developmental flow from the past to present of museum practices in Ireland. The three case studies selected represent three cultural moments where either/or discontinuity, rupture, displacement and dispersion took place culturally and within museum and cultural practices.

The first case study will focus on the 1977 to 1984 touring exhibition *Treasures of Early Irish Art*. In 1977 the *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D*. exhibition began in the United States. It involved the display of sixty-nine items of ancient Irish art and encompassed the majority of Ireland's most precious historic objects. It was organised collaboratively by the Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College Dublin and the National Museum of Ireland. The exhibition travelled to five cities within four states in America – The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (October 1977 to January 1978); M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco (February to March 1978); Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh (June to September 1978); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (October 1978 to January 1979); Museum of Art, Philadelphia (February to May 1979). Following the travelling exhibition in the United States, the collection of items were displayed together in the National Museum of Ireland, from May 1980 to November 1981.

Carrying on the success of the American tour, the exhibition moved to Europe in 1982, under a new title: *Treasures of Ireland: Irish Art 3000 B.C.-1500 A.D.* Almost the same items travelled, with some additions and small variations from the original list of items, with a total of one hundred and eight objects exhibited. As with the United States, the exhibition travelled to five different cities, and within four different countries – Grand Palais, Paris (October 1982 to January 1983); the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne (February to May 1983); the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin (June to October 1983); the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (November 1983 to February 1984); and the Louisiana Museum at Humlebæk near Copenhagen (March to June 1984).[106]

The exhibition was conceived in secrecy and born in controversy. It consisted of nearly all the masterpieces of prehistoric and medieval metalwork in the National Museum of Ireland, as well as the most famous illuminated manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy and Trinity College, including the Book of Durrow and two of the four volumes of the Book of Kells. Most

[106] UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). "Memory of the World Register - Book of Kells (Ireland)". August 2010, accessed July 26, 2016.

of the curators in charge in Dublin, and many specialists in Europe and the United States were outspoken in their opposition. As already mentioned in the introduction section, Richard Burke, then Minister for Education in Ireland, had the idea for the exhibition when he saw the *Scythian Gold* exhibition in Paris in 1974. He made the arrangements without consulting the curators responsible, and in October 1977 justified his action in a statement to the Irish press:
"Sending the treasures abroad was a political decision. The image of Ireland, which has become associated with violence and strife, will benefit from this demonstration that we are a nation with a rich and deep cultural past".[107]

Based on the purpose and scope of this dissertation as part of the analysis of this exhibition, the research project has focused on two of the museums that hosted the exhibition: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. While all the different stages of the touring exhibition will be discussed, the selection of these two institutions will provide the ideal framework of analysis due to their conceptual, institutional and physical similarities.

The second case study will focus on the exhibition *Irish Women Artists from the Eighteenth Century to Present Day*. This exhibition was jointly organised, as one of the first multi-institutional exhibitions in Ireland, by the Douglas Hyde Gallery, National Gallery of Ireland, and The Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery,[108] to coincide with a major conference held at Trinity College Dublin by the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in 1987. The Congress meets every three years with the aim of bringing together scholars and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines, to explore issues of importance to women throughout the world. Dealing with a topic never pursued before in the Irish context, the historical underpinning of the exhibition was to celebrate the immense amount of artistic activity generated by women in modern and contemporary art in Ireland, which, according to P.T. Murphy, curator of the exhibition, was unique in comparison to other countries in the West. The parameters of the exhibition were questioned and whether women's art should be shown separately from that of men – since in Ireland both sexes have mostly been featured together in major group exhibitions.[109]

The third case study will address the 1991 sequence of inaugural exhibitions *Inheritance and Transformation* held at the Irish Museum of Modern Art during Dublin's tenure as the European City of Culture. With the designation of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham as the home for the new museum in 1987, there was a measure of relief that an Irish government had at long last taken firm action on the creation of the new institution of modern art which had been

[107] D. H. Wright, "Short changed at the Met", *N. Y. Review of Books*, May 4, 1978, 32.
[108] Now known as Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane.
[109] "Letter from Patrick Murphy to Homan Potterton", March 7, 1986, Irish Women Artists from the Eighteenth Century to present day exhibition papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Trinity College, Dublin.

advocated for most of the twentieth century.[110] However, there was also an undercurrent of apprehension because the location was considered to be unsuitable due to the physical isolation from other cultural institutions and the building's inappropriateness for art display. The unease over the designation of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham as a museum of modern art was tempered by the knowledge that the decision was final, by the fact that this decision was arrived at behind closed doors at the Department of the Taoiseach, and by the apparent lack of progress on the project between 1987 and 1990. When in 1990 further information about the new museum began to emerge, the timescale seemed staggeringly unachievable. In the space of less than a year, a director was to be appointed, the Royal Hospital Kilmainham converted to its new function, and the art installed.

The sequence of inaugural exhibitions emphasized the spatial variety and complexity of the spaces, a simultaneous artistic diversity, and "a commitment to addressing past, present and future in one institution".[111] The exhibitions also denoted what was to surface again and again as a fundamental tenet of the museum's programming: the presentation of unexpected juxtapositions of works, creating new contexts and questioning consensual analysis. It had been pointed out that a potential problem for any Irish museum of modern art was the view that no collection of modern art then identified as world class, other than the Hugh Lane Gallery collection of impressionist art, existed in Ireland, and the cost of acquiring one, apart from the question of the availability of the appropriate works, was deemed prohibitive. The view of Declan McGonagle, IMMA Director from 1990 to 2001, was that the lack of such a canonical collection "should" be regarded as an advantage, allowing the museum a greater flexibility of approach in enabling the avoidance of tying it down to one dominant view of modern art history.[112]

6.2.3. Interviews and questionnaire

Further qualitative data related to the three case studies was gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews with the museum professionals, artists, art critics, and art historians directly involved in the different projects addressed in the case studies. Each interview will consist of two parts. The first part of the interview will address practical questions associated with the production of each exhibition with the intention of addressing gaps that archival research might pose as well as addressing the various aspects of the museum's work: changes in its internal organisation, the priorities of its staff, and its relations with the community that it serves. For instance: how far have any developments in the museum's internal organisation, and its relationships with other institutions, central government, or private sector enterprise, for

[110] J. Fowler, "Inheritance and Transformation: Old Grounds, New Contexts?", *Circa* 59, no. 5 (1991): 32.
[111] A. Dunne, "The IMMA Decade", *World of Hibernia*, 7, no. 1 (2001), 155.
[112] Ibid, 156.

example, been felt as either enabling or constraining? How was the task of communication accomplished, and what modes of classification, interpretation, and display can most effectively communicate history and culture in ways to which diverse publics could relate? The second part of the interview will consist of a set of three questions addressing conceptual elements of exhibition making aiming to generate data on the subjective perceptions, values, and attitudes underlying the production of meaning in museums. The four questions are: What are the functions of an exhibition? How significant is display? How significant is education, and mediation?

In order to evaluate visitors' experiences the research methodology used in this dissertation will consist of a questionnaire. Front-end evaluation analysis when researching audience reactions, expectations, attitudes, and interest in exhibition topics, themes, and concepts, can uncover and explain issues and reactions which may not be expected, anticipated or even surfaced during general quantitative surveys. The aim of this questionnaire will be to generate qualitative data on the visitors' perceptions, values and attitudes underlying the reception of meaning. To achieve this, the questionnaire will be divided into two sections. The first section will consist of a single question: What motivates you to visit the museum or gallery? The aim of this question is to explore what visitors want or expect from their visit to an exhibition. The second section of the questionnaire will consist of a listing of all the case study exhibitions in order for contributors to identify which of the shows they viewed, accompanied by a single question: what is their memory of that particular exhibition? The aim of this question is to identify whether the objectives proposed by the exhibition makers involved in the different case studies had succeeded in effective communication, as well as the overall impact of the exhibitions. Recruitment of contributors will be carried through social and printed media calling out for anyone who was part of any of the audiences at each exhibition addressed in the project to contribute to the questionnaire. Due to the retrospective nature of the study, these data will be supported with existing universal analysis of visitors' experiences as well as existing visitor surveys associated with the different case studies. The questionnaire will be presented on a dedicated website and the data stored directly on a web server provider accordingly. The call out for responses resulted in twenty two contributions.

6.3. Methodology relevance

With this multifaceted theoretical approach of textual representation, interpretation of institutional conditions of production, and discussion of audiences and consumptions, this research project intends to position itself at the intersection of theory and practices, as opposed to a mode of enquiry which stands from the outside looking inwards. This multifaceted approach will also address a wider problem within museum studies: namely, the gap between

museums and universities, and practitioners and critics. This is partly a practical issue about conducting research. Academics are rarely able to be immersed within museums and as such often find it difficult to access the kind of 'behind the scenes' information necessary to reflect on the processes of production and regulation. Conversely, practitioners are often enmeshed in the day-to-day practical issues and may not be inclined to the longer, historical view preferred by academics.[113] To hold research as separate from practice is not as useful as producing research that will begin to change or influence practice. Academic research, at least in this area, should benefit from confronting actual scenarios. The approach to museum studies research may be seen by some to be contentious. This research will take the view that in the study of museums it is essentially not helpful to produce work that merely analyses events and which does not address the real pragmatic empirical scenarios within which these events are constructed, and within which the events themselves construct knowledge.

[113] R. Mason, Op. Cit. (note 18), 32.

7. (Re) Constructing cultural distinctiveness: *Treasures of Early Irish Art* exhibitions 1977-1984

This chapter will discuss the 1977-1979 and 1982-1984 touring exhibition *Treasures of Early Irish Art*.[1] The exhibition consisted of masterpieces of prehistoric art and medieval metalwork in the National Museum of Ireland, as well a selection of illuminated manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy and Trinity College, including the *Book of Durrow* and two of the four volumes of the *Book of Kells*. This collection was sent on a tour for nearly four years, to New York, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Boston, and Philadelphia from 1977 to 1979; and from 1982 to 1984 to Paris, Berlin, Cologne, Copenhagen, and Amsterdam. This exhibition was apparently conceived in secrecy and born in controversy as some of the curators in charge in Dublin, and some specialists in Europe and the United States, were outspoken in their opposition "to send so many irreplaceable objects out of Ireland at one time".[2] As already mentioned, according to D. H. Wright, Richard Burke, then Minister for Education in Ireland, had the idea for the exhibition when he saw the *From the Lands of the Scythians: Ancient Treasures from the Museums of the U.S.S.R., 3,000 B.C. to 100 B.C.* exhibition in Paris in 1974. He made the arrangements without consulting the curators responsible, and in October 1977 justified his action in a statement to the Irish press:[3]

"Sending the treasures abroad was a political decision. The image of Ireland, which has become associated with violence and strife, will benefit from this demonstration that we are a nation with a rich and deep cultural past".[4]

Focusing on the blockbuster exhibition phenomenon, this chapter will seek to explore the function of art and exhibitions as an instrument of cultural diplomacy by the state and by non-governmental actors, as well as the degree to which the arts contributed to intercultural dialogue in a political context. It will also explore the ability of exhibitions as cultural exchanges to promote the character and aspirations of a whole people and nation, as we examine the case of Ireland. The main theme of the chapter is the issues related to the role of art, diplomacy, and the politicization of cultural identity, and will consider how the arts in Ireland have pursued narratives of alterity in Europe and worldwide. To achieve this, firstly, this chapter will initially explore the phenomenon of blockbuster exhibitions. Secondly, this chapter will explore the impact of cultural diplomacy and its relationship with blockbuster

[1] The title for the first leg of the exhibition in USA was *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* The title for the second leg of the exhibition around Europe was *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D*. For the purpose of this research project when addressing the touring exhibitions as a whole, it will be referred to as *Treasures of Early Irish Art*. When addressing the touring stages individually they will be referred to using the corresponding full title of the show.
[2] C. Walsh, "Art treasures to be shown in US", *The Irish Times*, June 30, 1977.
[3] Ibid; D. H. Wright, "Shortchanged at the Met", *N. Y. Review of Books*, May 4, 1978.
[4] Ibid.

exhibitions in general, and international exhibitions of Irish art, in particular. Thirdly, this chapter will look at the relationship between cultural diplomacy, exhibition-making, and the representation of national identity at the Museum. This will be achieved by answering questions such as: how can art serve as a neutral platform for exchange to promote dialogue and understanding between states? How can art and exhibitions cultivate transnational identities? What are the implications for art as an instrument of diplomacy in a postmodern age, where geopolitics and power are increasingly mobilized by image-based structures of persuasion?

Due to the scope of this research project, this chapter will focus on two of the ten museums that hosted the exhibition *Treasures of Early Irish Art*: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. The selection of these two particular sections of the tour was based on the similarities of institutional standing and curatorial practices. Both Museums shared similar mission statements focusing on encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts. Similarly, both institutions are at the forefront of exhibition-making values and innovation.

7.1. Blockbuster exhibitions and cultural diplomacy: national identity at the museum

There has been a vast amount written about art blockbusters. Understandably, most of this discussion has occurred in the literature of art history and museum studies. This discourse has tended to focus on professional and ethical issues affecting art curatorship and museology. Often polarized, the terms of this debate have revolved around elite versus accessible culture, permanent collections versus temporary exhibitions, and aesthetic contemplation versus popular entertainment.[5] This polarization is also apparent when looking at the definition of blockbuster exhibitions. There seems to be two different lines of thought. On the one hand, scholars such as Albert Elsen, have defined it as: "a large-scale loan exhibition which people who normally don't go to museums will stand in line for hours to see".[6] Shearer West, in the essay "The devaluation of 'cultural capital': post-modern democracy and the art blockbuster", rejects Elsen's "straightforward" view of the blockbuster as a popular phenomenon, and emphasises the calculation and even manipulation required to stage a blockbuster exhibition: "[blockbuster is] an exhibition that aims for maximum coverage and maximum publicity to attract maximum attendance".[7] From the standpoint of the first of the above quotations, the blockbuster exhibition is an enterprise which serves to educate and entertain the public, bringing prestige and profit to the lending and hosting institutions. However, as the second

[5] A. Elsen, "Museum Blockbusters: Assessing the Pros and Cons", *Art in America*, 74, June 1986, 24-27.
[6] Ibid, 24.
[7] S. West, "The devaluation of 'cultural capital': post-modern democracy and the art blockbuster", in *Art in Museums*, ed. S.M. Pearce (London: Atlantic Highlands, 1995), 75.

quotation suggests, blockbuster exhibitions can also be seen from a more negative position. According to Emma Barker, one of these negatives views is that such exhibitions have a very narrow range of subjects and, contrary to the justifications put forward to staging them, "seldom shed any new light on the history of art or the subject that they address". Barker also suggests that another criticism to be considered when evaluating blockbuster exhibitions, is whether the seeming democratization of art brought about is an illusion; the huge crowds attending the exhibition and the hype surrounding them means that visitors are unable to have any meaningful or even enjoyable contact with the works of art.[8] According to Jim Berryman, blockbuster exhibitions have a popular, and populist, appeal and are usually "aimed at people who normally don't go to the museum".[9] Large crowds and long queues are synonymous with the genre. Also, because these exhibitions venerate the big names, periods, and movements of the art-historical canon, their 'masterpiece' subject matter seldom deviates from textbook art history. Other staples include exotic 'treasures' themes, such as the exhibition addressed in this case study, *Treasures of Early Irish Art*, and usually exhibitions of artefacts from ancient and mysterious civilisations. As one of many critics, Shearer West argues: "The blockbuster gives limited misleading and distorted perspectives on the history of art by attempting to satisfy the public's desire for familiarity".[10] The counter argument is presented by S. J. Freedberg: "Education [at the blockbuster exhibition] need not consist in the communication of an intellectual thesis solely; it may also result from the viewer's experience of art assembled on more flexible terms, of which the burden may be the demonstration of varieties of human experiences".[11]

According to Barker and others, the motivation and history of the blockbuster exhibition can be traced back to 1967, when Thomas Hoving was appointed director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At a time when American art museums were under scrutiny for being elitist, Hoving introduced and instituted widely influential policies designed to draw upon, and create, broad-based public interests, which were tapped through sophisticated marketing techniques. In this process, the civic responsibility of the museum, its mission to reach and educate as large a public as possible, was reinvented in terms of boosting visitors figures through such temporary exhibitions. Other museums, in America and elsewhere followed suit.[12]

Since the 1970s the death of the blockbuster has often been predicted. Factors cited include rising insurance costs and the concerns of conservators about the potential damage of works of art as a result of their being loaned to other museums for exhibition purposes. Nevertheless, the

[8] E. Barker, "Exhibiting the canon: the blockbuster show", in *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, ed. E. Barker, (Washington, DC: Yale University Press, 1999), 129.
[9] J. Berryman, "Art and national interest: the diplomatic origins of the "blockbuster exhibition" in Australia", *Journal of Australian Studies,*37:2, 160.
[10] S. West, Op. Cit. (note 7), 80.
[11] S.J. Freedberg, "On Art History and the 'Blockbuster' Exhibition" *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 2 (1987): 295-98.
[12] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 129; A. Elsen, Op. Cit. (note 5), 24; S. West, Op. Cit. (note 7), 75.

blockbuster continues to flourish, with the difference that the 'treasures of…' types of show are very infrequent, and now tend to be overshadowed by exhibitions of famous artists or elements of 'popular' culture such as music or fashion, similarly linked to prominent individuals in those fields. Among the highest attendances at a single venue in recent years were the *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* exhibition at the V&A, London, 2019, or *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2018. According to Barker, by making charges of elitism less credible, museums not only enhance the museum's public image, but also thereby safeguard its financial viability.[13] As Anne Higonnet put it: "blockbusters help to maintain an extremely fragile equation in which attendance equals popularity equals 'cultural democracy' equals ideological justification equals funding".[14] At the time of Higonnet's statement, it referred specifically to the United States, where the majority of museums now rely on funding from a variety of sources, including government agencies, corporations, and individual philanthropy. According to Barker, significantly, the blockbuster developed precisely during the period in which North American museums ceased to be substantially supported by wealthy donors. Blockbuster exhibitions also represent an important source of revenue in their own right, through the sale of tickets and souvenirs. Barker maintains that while it is usually only major institutions in major cities that can attract the necessary crowds, the blockbuster format has also facilitated a solution to the financial problems of small private museums, by lending their collections to larger museum on a touring exhibition format.[15]

According to Higonnet, by comparison to the United States, Europe as a whole has much less of a tradition of blockbuster exhibitions. Her main reason to justify that assumption is that, as in Europe as a whole, the running costs of public museums and galleries have been covered by the state, so they have not had the same incentive to make money out of exhibitions.[16] Again, this has changed in recent years as public museums in Europe are adopting the American philanthropic model of financing, where corporations and individual philanthropists have been engaged in supporting the work of museums more regularly, perhaps influenced by fluctuating governmental financial support of cultural institutions during periods of economic recession. At the same time, museums around Europe, including Ireland, have been given greater control over their own affairs and assured that they could keep any money they earned instead of having to hand it over to the government – oftentimes, as in the case of Ireland, aiming to self-finance capital projects and other ancillary activities within the museum. According to Barker, in general terms, these developments can be seen as partial privatization of public institutions.[17]

[13] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 128.
[14] A. Higonnet, "Whither the Barnes?" *Art in America*, 64 (March, 1993), 62-69.
[15] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 129.
[16] A. Higonnet, Op. Cit. (note 14), 65.
[17] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 130.

The blockbuster exhibition format, however, comes with its curatorial consequences. The public's expectations have been transformed, and as such those expectations cannot be met without still bigger and better blockbusters, which often are promoted with alluring titles promising gold, treasures, or glimpse into a great 'age'. According to Richard E. Spear, the integrity of exhibitions of substantial historical value based on "intellectual" rather than marketing considerations were curtailed or modified, and therefore their "educational value", due to the blockbuster exhibition effect.[18] Responding to Spear's article, S. J. Freedberg questions the "intellectual educational compromises" of blockbuster exhibitions.[19] As already quoted, according to Freedberg, education through exhibition-making need not consist solely in the communication of intellectual theses; "it may also result from the viewer's experience of art assembled on more flexible terms, of which the burden may be the demonstration of varieties of human experiences: even beauty, subjective and variable as its definition is, may be a sufficient pretext for the gathering of pictures into an exhibition".[20] Freedberg continues by suggesting that anthological blockbuster exhibitions that compile 'treasures' from the collections of a single museum or national collection, and bring them to another museum's public seems entirely justifiable on grounds of their educational benefit, and a great advantage to those sections of the public who cannot afford to visit these 'treasures' in their place of origin.[21]

The continuation of the blockbuster exhibition format suggests that such exhibitions have become indispensable to the institutions that stage them, in terms of generating income and attracting audiences. As such, programming at the museum revolves around the possibility of hosting major exhibitions. Any major exhibition, whether or not it attains blockbuster status, takes several years to plan and typically involves the collaboration of various museums. According to Barker, whether or not a particular museum succeeds in becoming one of the venues for the exhibition depends on what it can offer in exchange.[22] Using Impressionist and Post-impressionist blockbuster exhibitions as an example, Barker suggests that this themed blockbuster would be seen in at least one city in the United States and probably also Paris, because these are the places that have major collections in this kind of art.[23] From the Irish perspective, Barker's argument can be illustrated by the 2017 touring exhibition *Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting: Inspiration and Rivalry* at the National Gallery of Ireland. The exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, and the Musée du Louvre, Paris. The exhibition was curated by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., curator of northern baroque paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington;

[18] R. E. Spear, "Art History and the 'Blockbuster' Exhibition", *The Art Bulletin*, 68, no. 3 (1986): 358-359.
[19] S.J. Freedberg, Op. Cit. (note 11), 296.
[20] Ibid, 296.
[21] Ibid, 295.
[22] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 130.
[23] Ibid,130.

Adriaan Waiboer, head of collections and research, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, who initiated the exhibition concept; and Blaise Ducos, curator of Dutch and Flemish paintings, Musée du Louvre, Paris. The National Gallery of Ireland's 'bargaining tool' was the significant group of Dutch paintings within its collection, namely: Johannes Vermeer's, *Lady Writing a Letter, with her Maid* (c.1670), and Gabriel Metsu's *Woman Reading a Letter* (1664-1666) and *Man Writing a Letter* (1664-1666) amongst others.

Whether motivated by a new sense of social "relevance," such us the exhibition *Harlem on My Mind*, or potential of mass appeal, such as *Treasures of Tutankhamun* or *The Splendours of Dresden: 500 years of Art Collecting*, the early blockbusters attracted large crowds, which created unprecedented revenues for art museums: from admissions, and specially from sales of related merchandise.[24] According to various scholars, the *Treasures of Tutankhamun* can be considered one of the first of the blockbuster exhibitions.[25] When the enormously popular exhibit opened in London in 1972, considerable queues formed outside the British Museum. As a result of the London exhibition success, on June 1974, the then president of the United States, Richard Nixon, and his Egyptian counterpart, Anwar-El-Sadat made a joint public statement proposing a touring exhibition across the United States of fifty-five masterpieces from the National Museum of Egypt under the title *Treasures of Tutankhamun*. The exhibition was aimed to serve as an expression of the mutual understanding and cooperation between both countries. The agreement was corroborated and signed by Henry Kissinger, U.S.A. Secretary of State, and Ismail Fahmy, Egyptian Minister of International Affairs, and the exhibition was to coincide with the fifty-fifth anniversary of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon.[26] The Metropolitan Museum of Art was to coordinate the participation of the other six participating institutions: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; New Orleans Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Seattle Art Museum; and the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco. During its two year duration, between November 17th 1976, when it opened in Washington D.C, and September 30th 1979, when it closed in San Francisco, the exhibition *Treasures of Tutankhamun* not only changed exhibition-making concepts, but also exhibition design and installation procedures, moving away from those used in Europe and the rest of the world at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s when dealing with archaeological exhibitions. The richness of the objects exhibited was matched by innovative forms of display and staging.[27]

[24] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 131.
[25] Ibid, 129; A. Elsen, Op. Cit. (note 5), 24; S. West, Op. Cit. (note 7), 75.
[26] "Fact Sheet: Treasures of Tutankhamun Exhibition", Press Releases 1976, National Gallery of Art Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.
[27] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 130; A. Elsen, Op. Cit. (note 5), 24; S. West, Op. Cit. (note 7), 76.

As well as the already discussed characteristics of blockbuster exhibitions: "[maximum spectacle] maximum coverage and maximum publicity to attract maximum attendance", the aim of the *Treasures of Tutankhamun* exhibition was to serve as an expression of mutual understanding and cooperation between Egypt and U.S.A.[28] This also illustrates another characteristic of early blockbuster exhibitions: as motivators and tools of cultural diplomacy.

According to Milton C. Cummings, cultural diplomacy is best described as "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding".[29] Cultural diplomacy comprises cultural exchanges between the actors of international relations: states, institutions, corporations, the media, and individuals, in different countries. These exchanges take form in a variety of different ways for a variety of different purposes. Cultural diplomacy is in essence the mobilization of what Joseph Nye referred to as "soft power". In Nye's words, soft power "rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others".[30] Nye suggests that "the soft power of a country rest primarily on three sources: its culture…, its political values…, and its foreign policies…".[31] By allowing a country to expose audiences of other nationalities to its culture, society, and people, and by increasing personal connections between people of different countries, cultural diplomacy enables a country to make its political ideals and policies more attractive in the eyes of international onlookers. When a country's culture includes universal values and interests other share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationship of attraction and duty that it creates.[32] Cultural diplomacy is a two-way communication process that involves efforts to promote a nation's image and values amongst other foreign audiences as well as to try to understand the culture, values, and images of other countries and their people. Gifford Malone, former Deputy Assistant and Associate Director of the United States Information Agency suggests that: "if we strive to be successful in our efforts to create understanding for our society and for our policies, we must first understand the motives, culture, history, and psychology of the people with whom we wish to communicate".[33] In other words, according to M. J. Wyszomirski et al., as countries seek to project a positive image, they presume that cultural capital can be used to generate social capital, and thus, foster international trust, cooperation, and collaboration.[34]

It is necessary to make some observations concerning the nature of cultural diplomacy, and to consider to the way it differs from traditional diplomacy. The latter is formulaic, typified by its

[28] "Fact Sheet: Treasures of Tutankhamun Exhibition", Op. Cit. (note 26).
[29] Milton C. Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey* (Washington, DC: Center for Arts and Culture, 2003), 1.
[30] J. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means of Success in World Politics* (Public Affairs, New York, 2004), 5.
[31] Ibid, 5.
[32] Ibid, 5.
[33] Cited by M. J. Wyszomirski et al., *International Cultural Relations: A Multi-Country Comparison* (Washington, DC: Centre for Arts and Culture), 2003, 1.
[34] Ibid, 1.

conservatism, as it is a form of state-to-state communication, where individuals act in an official capacity. While such actions may influence public opinion, it is not their key purpose to do so. According to Wyszomirski et al., "cultural diplomacy, on the other hand, is by its very design a means by which a state can engage – or attempt to engage – with public opinion in another state, by presenting the latter's population with creative output for its enjoyment, hopefully cultivating a favourable disposition towards the country of origin".[35] Furthermore, it would be incorrect to establish a close distinction between the two, as diplomatic personnel are frequently involved both in developing cultural initiatives and in bringing them into practice.[36] No considerable embassy is complete without a cultural attaché, "and the very existence of this role is evidence of the historical importance of diplomatic activity's cultural dimension".[37] The extent, form and multiplicity of programmes may vary considerably in different countries, yet cultural diplomatic programmes feature on the foreign policy plan of most contemporary states. It seems rational to assume that in investing funds in an international cultural initiative, policymakers anticipate obtaining something in return. In other words, aside from fostering mutual understanding between peoples, the policymakers would anticipate the initiative to generate a particular results: achieving a foreign policy purpose, increasing external influence, or rising the attractiveness of that state to potential allies or donors. As such, "states have searched for means of harnessing their potential to increase their relative attractiveness and to bolster their prestige, and these efforts are reflected in the funding that cultural diplomatic initiatives receive".[38]

Wyszomirski et al. have also identified a set of activities that constitute the cultural diplomacy repertoire implemented by a large number of countries. This repertoire of programme tools includes the following: the exchange of individuals for educational and cultural projects; sponsoring seminars and conferences both in-country and abroad that include international participants; support for language studies programmes and institutions; support for infrastructure in the form of cultural institutes/centres/forums abroad; resources in the form of staff and personnel (both at home and abroad); support for country studies programmes (e.g. American studies, Austrian studies, etc.); international cooperation on cultural programmes and projects; activities that are related to trade in cultural products and services; and sending exhibitions and performances abroad.[39] According to Wyszomirski et al., the organization of art exhibitions overseas represents a convenient and under-explored area of cultural diplomacy, and one that is of substantial inherent interest in view of the light it can shed on wider questions regarding the connections between visual culture and state power. There is a visual

[35] M. J. Wyszomirski et al., Op. Cit. (note 33), 4.
[36] Ibid, 4.
[37] Ibid, 5.
[38] Ibid, 5.
[39] Ibid, 12.

element to various aspects of global politics, and the capacity to impact their appearance, through media representations, for example, can have a consequence on individual decision-making, and therefore, on state behaviour. According to Wyszomirski et al.: "visual culture, in both its 'low' forms of mass advertising and popular entertainment, and its 'high' forms of fine art, design, and architecture, plays an important role in shaping perceptions".[40]

The political instrumentalization of art is not a new phenomenon. According to art historian Boris Groys, "art has always attempted to represent the greatest possible power, the power that ruled the world in its totality – be it divine or natural power. Thus, as its representation, art traditionally drew its own authority from this power."[41] As one of the most powerful means of conveying abstract ideas and manifesting human experience, art in its many forms has been mobilised to further political interests from the origin of recorded history. For instance, religious art, in both the ancient and modern world, is not only representative of the beauty of the spiritual realm, but a notable reminder of the power and prosperity of religious institutions. The artistic inheritance of preceding eras mirrored the preoccupations, hierarchies, and agendas of the patrons who commissioned the artworks, and in this sense they can be considered to be political. However, according to Groys, when addressing the active as well as the passive role of art, its relationship with politics seems rather less one-sided. Therefore, culture can be presented both in the passive, as an expression of beliefs, a mirror, or an historic artefact, and in the active, as a source of information and opinion, a formative force that shapes what people believe.[42] Walter Benjamin, in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction",[43] tried to establish a new art theory that would identify the importance of the practice of politics to the modern artwork. His condemnation of the *Futurist* movement's beautification of war arose from a belief in art's capacity to entice the viewer into finding particular ideas, in this case fascistic ones, alluring, through bestowing them with an appealing aesthetic. Moreover, Benjamin placed importance on the cumulative value of the exhibition as a form of visual communication, which liberated the artwork from the conventional limitations of religious practice or the traditionalism of patrons' tastes.

As such the blockbuster exhibition presents a unique medium by which cultural diplomacy can achieve its goal of generating social capital. As cultural diplomacy is either directly or indirectly connected with government, some scholars have questioned the significance of this social capital.[44] According to Barker, cultural exchanges motivated by diplomacy can be perceived to relegate arts and culture to a form of government propaganda deprived of

[40] M. J. Wyszomirski et al., Op. Cit. (note 33), 12.
[41] B. Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2013), 2.
[42] Ibid, 4.
[43] W. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt (London: Fontana, 1968), 214-218.
[44] M. J. Wyszomirski et al., Op. Cit. (note 33), 2.

independence and criticality.[45] Furthermore, according to T. Mirrlees, cultural diplomacy may also manifest itself as a new form of cultural imperialism which promotes an unequal power relationship between Western and post-colonial nations.[46] Associations between museums and governments can be complex, and divergent values in museums and politics may cause tension. Museums can be considered as ideal institutions to support cultural diplomacy aims because they are often times public bodies that exhibit and promote culture.[47] Morally, museums ambition is to exhibit, collect, and interpret impartial content. As such, being associated with governmental agendas may jeopardize the institution's values and intellectual integrity.[48] Detractors express logical concerns about the challenging expropriation of cultural institutions that are too closely involved with governmental aims.[49] Nevertheless, it is probable that museums' participation in cultural diplomacy will remain.[50] Partly, this phenomenon arise from globalisation, which has amplified trader and tourism and generally induced cultural and economic interdependence amongst countries.[51] The incentive to improve cultural understanding between countries is even more significant during periods of political unrest. Today, this is apparent in the increasing tension between the West and the refugee crisis in Europe,[52] or in the past as this case study will explore, when looking at the Irish Government's cultural diplomacy actions during The Troubles. In this dynamic ecosystem, museums play an significant role in maintaining and constructing relationships amongst nations.[53] State-sponsored museum activities are a tangible product of a complex interaction between museums and governments. However, due to the difficulty of measuring its effects, there have been few critical studies of cultural diplomacy in the field of museum studies.

Museum and government activity combine in cross-cultural relationships that are organized to encourage economic, political and cultural understanding amongst nations. Cultural diplomacy and relationship building by nations through museum activity is not a new industry, but has existed since the development of the modern museum.[54] As defined in the introduction, cultural diplomacy is presented here to describe the cultural exchange and

[45] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 131.
[46] T. Mirrlees, "American soft power, or, American cultural imperialism?" in *The new imperialists: ideologies of empire,* ed. C. Moore (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 199-228.
[47] M. A. Johnson & W. Sink, "Ethnic Museum Public Relations: Cultural diplomacy and cultural intermediaries in the digital age", *Public Relations Inquiry* 2:3 (2013): 355.
[48] M. Nisbett, "Protection, Survival and Growth: An analysis of international policy documents", International Journal of Cultural Policy 19:1 (2013): 85.
[49] T. Jenkins, "Why should artists be agents for the government?" *The Independent UK*, 28 February 2007.
[50] M. Nisbett, "New Perspectives on Instrumentalism: An empirical study of cultural diplomacy", International Journal of Cultural Policy 19:5 (2013): 558.
[51] H. Zipsane, "Instrumentalism in Heritage Learning", Museum International 63:1-2 (2011): 130.
[52] M. Nisbett, "The Art of Attraction: soft power and the UK's role in the world", *Cultural Trends* 24: 2 (2015): 183-185.
[53] L. Yongping, "Cultural Exchanges Promoted through Exhibitions on Silk Road Objects", *China & the World Cultural Exchange* 5 (2012): 1.
[54] L. Gibson, "In Defence of Instrumentality", *Cultural Trends* 17: 4 (2008): 249

collaboration amongst nations, in order to strengthen relationships and increase mutual cultural understanding.

Touring exhibitions are one of the most visible outputs of national and international organizational partnerships. One of the earlier noteworthy pieces of research on international touring exhibitions was *Assessing International Museum Activity: The Example of International Travelling Exhibitions from Canadian Museums, 1978-1988* by Tamara A. Tarasoff. She considered that while museums commonly engage in international activity, the literature only describes the specific event, and not the international nature.[55] The research also suggests that international museum activity is pursued with the idealistic notion that museums are innately capable of increasing intercultural communication and understanding, but that the practice occurs without quantifying this ability, and without specific parameters or evaluation.[56]

Tarasoff's study intended to establish the philosophical motivations for pursuing, and develope the valuation criteria for, international museum activity. The range of the research was limited to federally-funded Canadian exhibitions that toured internationally between 1978 and 1988.[57] She compared the ideal and actual outcomes of 132 exhibitions, assessing the variables such as quantity, degree of outside limitations, medium, geography, message, format and long-term effects of these exhibitions. Tarasoff found the results were unbalanced and differed greatly from the idealistic plans articulated in the literature. A major influence on the deficiencies of touring exhibitions was the lack of 'freedom from outside constraints', specifically from the federal funding agencies. Tarasoff concluded:

"The support agencies [have significant influence in the] ways the exhibitions are travelled. These constraints are negative for museums, since they make it very difficult for them to pursue the ideals in subject type, object type, message, and long-term effects … These pressures should not have such widespread negative results. That they do indicates museums and support agencies have different objectives for international museum activity, differences that must be reconciled".[58]

This argument raises question around the challenges between museums and their sponsors about the evaluation, objectives and development of international projects. However, Tarasoff did not address how to encourage methods for museums and support agencies to work together more positively.

Throughout her investigation, Tarasoff emphasised the need for further research and detailed studies of individual examples. Lee Davidson responds to this appeal in her 2015 chapter

[55] T.A. Tarasoff, *Assessing International Museum Activity: The example of international travelling exhibitions from Canadian museums, 1978-1988* (Masters Thesis: University of Toronto, 1990), 3.
[56] Ibid, 82.
[57] Ibid, 1-5.
[58] T.A. Tarasoff, Op. Cit. (note 55), 71-72.

"Border Crossings and Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Touring Exhibition: An Aotearoa New Zealand-Mexico Exchange," which presents two ongoing, long-term studies of touring exhibitions from Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.[59] Davidson examines how museum professionals and audiences experience international touring exhibitions through cross-cultural museum practices in a 'mobile contact zone'.[60] She usefully summarizes the key motives for international touring exhibitions stating that:

"At the institutional level, museums develop touring exhibitions programmes to fulfil strategic objectives such as relationships building with major overseas counterparts, enhancing international reputations, sharing expertise, engaging international audiences and enabling future exhibitions exchanges".[61]

Davidson expands upon this account of the positive attributes of international touring exhibitions, adding that by hosting international exhibitions, museums make cultural heritage accessible to local audiences and influence the museum through boosting visitation, growing tourism, and engaging new audiences.[62] Furthermore, recent literature discusses how international touring exhibitions can increase cross-cultural understanding,[63] and expand the scale and scope of museum activity.[64]

However, there remains an assiduous counter-argument for international touring exhibitions.[65] This literature focuses on the exhibited content, arguing that blockbuster art exhibitions are frequently 'politically safe' self-promotions of national identities,[66] that discourage rather than facilitate a more profound cross-cultural connection, due to the superficial representation of the exhibited culture.[67]

Research on the relationship between museums, nationalism and national identity such as Tim Barringer's and Tom Flynn's, *Colonialism and the object: empire, material culture and the museum*, have been an important beginning in exploring the general links between nationalism, museums and exhibitions. This volume of twelve selected essays presents museums from an historical perspective as part of the political processes of post-colonisation. Central to this group of essays and critical historiographies is the role of museums, their collections, and exhibitions as both products and agents of social change, with the creation of

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[59] L. Davidson, "Border Crossings and Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Touring Exhibition: An Aotearoa New Zealand-Mexico Exchange" in *Transpacific Americas: Encounters and engagements between the Americas and the South Pacific*, eds. Eveline Dürr and Philipp Schorch (New York: London: Routledge, 2015) 3.
[60] Ibid, 2-3.
[61] Ibid, 1.
[62] Ibid, 1.
[63] K. Bound et al., *Cultural Diplomacy: Culture is a central component of international relations: It's time to unlock its full potential* (London: Demos: 2007), 77.
[64] M. Nisbett, Op. Cit. (note 48), 557.
[65] L. Davidson, Op. Cit. (note 59), 1.
[66] T. A. Tarasoff, Op. Cit. (note 55), 36.
[67] B. Wallis, 'Selling Nations: International exhibitions and cultural diplomacy' in *Museum Culture: Histories, discourses, spectacles*, eds. Daniel J. Sherman and I. Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 279.

cultural and national identities raising a number of challenging questions such as: what impact the imposition of colonial power had on indigenous societies and on cultural production within them? But fundamentally, what impact do the power relations of colonialism have on the interpretation of objects? [68] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's article within the book, "Perspectives on Hinemihi: A Maori meeting house", evaluates the cultural diplomacy moment of transferring a Maori meeting house to what is now a National Trust park in Surrey, England, examining how new frameworks of meaning have been constructed around the house, but also how the building can still help to establish and reinforce national identity in a postcolonial world. At the macro level, the article presents how the transformation of identity has taken place within the backdrop of "imperial atrophy", decolonization, and globalization. At the micro level, the article challenges the reconciliation of promoting national integration within the plurality and diversity of identity, that is, how the building can still help to establish and reinforce identities in a postcolonial world. In a way the Hinemihi stands as a testimony to the power of objects and images to reshape their own past, present, and future.[69]

Similarly, Flora E. S. Kaplan's *Museums and the making of 'ourselves': the role of objects in national identity*, places museums from the historical perspective of the political processes, in this case, the processes of democratization. Also central to their critical historiography is the role of museums, their collections, and exhibitions, as both products and agents of social change. The essays propose museums themselves be analyzed as significant social institutions, where contested access to means of publicly defining self, cultural and national identities takes place, among elites, ethnic, and other constituent groups within society. Also chronicled in the volume of essays is the important role that objects play in forging nation-states and in promoting national agendas. Probably the most comprehensive account of national identity in museums is Flora E. S. Kaplan's introductory note. She considers museums in specific historical contexts and relates them to processes of change. She demonstrates the many ways in which museums have been significant in creating national identity and in promoting national agendas. Kaplan also considers the symbolic significance of particular objects that stand for the nation, embodying the nation for the people, for instance, the Old Testament Bible in the case of Israel.[70]

This symbolic significance of particular objects that stand for the nation, which is how the *Treasures of Early Irish Art* exhibitions were constructed, the impact that the imposition of colonial power have on indigenous societies and on cultural production within them, and the

[68] T. J. Barringer, and T. Flynn, "Introduction" in *Colonialism and the object: empire, material culture, and the museum*, eds. T. J. Barringer, and T. Flynn (London: Routledge, 1998), 4-16.
[69] E. Hooper-Greenhill, "Perspectives on Hinemihi: A Maori meeting house", in *Colonialism and the object: empire, material culture, and the museum*, eds. T. J. Barringer, and T. Flynn (London: Routledge, 1998), 129-143.
[70] F. S. Kaplan, "Introduction", in *Museums and the Making of "ourselves": The Role of Objects in National Identity*, ed. F. S. Kaplan (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 1-12.

influence that the power relations of colonialism have on the interpretation of objects, could be translated to the context of Ireland when looking at the way in which particular objects have repeatedly been used to illustrate Celtic ancestry as part of the agenda to configure national identity. For instance, high crosses, round towers, and artefacts such as the *Tara Brooch* or the *Ardagh Chalice* were used as examples of the art and architecture that an Ireland free from English power could produce. Through their constant representation in different popular magazines and books on Irish history, the monuments and artefacts were recognizable to the entire population and therefore could easily become a medium through which to create a sense of shared heritage. Furthermore, this symbolism gave nationalist ideologies authenticity and historical realism, but fundamentally it created a group identity.[71]

The assumption by Kaplan, and Barringer and Flynn, is that national identities are in principle collective and essentialist constructs that entice to the community as a whole (as opposed to the individuals) and set up a group of mainly pretend signs of assimilation to bond political interests in the form of language, mythology, religion, ethnicity, religion, common heritage, and/or common geographies. Furthermore, national identity is a political discussion on how nations construct their internal rationality, identifications and belonging. Or, as Bahar Rumelili claims: "Identities in the modern nation-state system rest on the construction of clear and unambiguous inside/outside and self/other distinctions".[72] According to César Villanueva Rivas from a cultural diplomacy perspective: "it is important to clarify the theoretical foundations of the representations of National Identity, because it helps us to understand three issues: self-naturalization, sources, and ideology".[73]

According to Villanueva Rivas, self-naturalization is related to the matter of cultural diplomacies representing the "normal and natural" emergence of nations and their collective identities.[74] David Boswell and Jessica Evans suggest in their book *Representing the Nation* that: "particular ideas of the nation are created and embedded in the exhibitionary forms of a range of cultural practices and institutions, such as tourism, museums, expositions and heritage displays".[75] Many of these ideas function under what Umut Özkirimli argues as "primordialist view" in opposition to the "modernist view".[76] The former suggests that cultural and ethnic identifications, of any political type, have continually existed and changed in a consistent pathway all the way into the present day, therefore making claims of an

[71] E. Crooke, *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum in Ireland: An Expression of National Life* (Dublin: Irish Academy Press, 2000), 42.
[72] B. Rumelili, "Constructing identity and relating to difference: understanding the EU's mode of differentiation", *Review of International Studies*, 30, 2004: 40.
[73] C. Villanueva Rivas, *Representing Cultural Diplomacy: Soft Power, Cosmopolitan Constructivism and National Branding in Mexico and Sweden* (Växjö: Växjö University Press, 2007), 97.
[74] Ibid, 98.
[75] J. Evans, and D. Boswell, "Introduction", in *Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories, Heritages and Museums,* eds. J. Evans and D. Boswell (London: The Open University/Routledge, 1999), 2.
[76] U. Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: a Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 68-84.

elemental identity that innately evolves and appears through "primordial symbols" and "mythical foundational origins" into the modern nation-state.[77] The second view suggest that modernity (democratic rule, industrialization and urbanization) facilitates the creation, construction or imagination of "national identities", instrumental in the defence, dissemination and expansion of capitalism and state-community structure.[78] According to Villanueva Rivas, the main argument is that nationalism is mainly fabricated on constructed mythical historical foundations and lacks any substance other than the convenience to the society in question at that particular moment. In other words, national identities are social constructs, as opposed to something natural, and therefore subject to political interests.[79]

Villanueva Rivas also suggests that most scholars accept that nationalism is indeed a form of ideology. In this sense, the "Romantic approach" originated by J. G. Herder in Germany during the eighteenth century and its followers rests on the proposition that nationalism is a way to establish or reinstate the original state of nature, the legitimacy and distinctiveness of each nation, by considering the essential symbols, traces, links or cultural codes in conjunction with the community and the histories where they originated and developed.[80] This is chiefly related with the recognised given processes and structures, such as traditions, languages, folk music or literature, but at the same time negates the agency that probably sets forth a incentive for this to be the case. The first reason for "subsuming nationalism" to conceptual discourses is historical. For the most part, the concept of nation did not appear in most languages in Europe until modern times, until the coming of political, social, and industrial revolutions.[81] E. Hobsbawm suggests that: "without entering further into the matter [we] accept that in its modern and basically political sense the concept nation is historically very young", recommending that: "the best way to understand its nature, I suggest, is to follow those who began systematically to operate with this concept with their political and social discourse during the Age of Revolution, and especially, under the name of 'the principle of nationality' from about 1800 onwards".[82] The second reason and a more significant one for this study is of a political nature, as Hobsbawm also acknowledges, "The primary meaning of 'nation', and the most frequently ventilated in the literature, was political".[83] The fundamental question is not whether or not Nationalism is ideological but whether the political role of nationalism can be derived from the ideological motivation of

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[77] See: A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and G. S. Smith, "Reinventing Diplomacy: A Virtual Necessity", *Virtual Diplomacy*, Series no. 6, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, February 2000.
[78] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1991), 5.
[79] C. Villanueva Rivas, Op. Cit. (note 73), 98.
[80] Ibid, 98.
[81] E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7.
[82] Ibid, 18.
[83] Ibid,19.

any sort of agency in the form of a political discourse of unity.

In her study of Cultural Diplomacy, Manuela Aguilar pays particular attention to how the understanding of the idea of "culture" by nations forms cultural diplomacy rhetorics in a particular way (for example, the German division between culture and civilization).[84] In other words, she argues that the government's understanding of the concept of "culture" from the national identity standpoint informs what that government's "cultural diplomacy" can be in the interaction with other governments and their publics. For cultural diplomacy, the use of national identity as an endo-representation[85] poses many challenges. The first one is the appeal to essentialist and foundational signs of national unity that erase plurality and diversity, therefore functioning as a cultural diplomacy of hegemonic practice of domination. The second is to escape a sense that the sources of nationhood are permanent and static, therefore encasing the national-self in a "metaphysical institutional discourse". The third challenge is in coping with the nationalistic division of the world between "us" and "them".[86]

7.2 Irish cultural diplomacy: (Re) constructing cultural distinctiveness

According to O'Mahony and Delanty, early nationalist historiography tends to see Ireland as subject to endless misrule and interference by English powers since 1169, invoking the brutality of Cromwell's re-conquest, and the harsh Penal Laws as examples. However, narratives assuming "that the 'British' inflicted on the 'Irish' 700 years of conquest and colonisation are no longer given much credence in historical writing".[87] Nowadays, there is more support for a thesis that looks to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as significant, and the polarisation between Protestant and Catholic, respectively opposed and in favour of independence for Ireland, as central to the creation of the Irish national character.[88] Also central to the creation of Irish national identity is the significance given to Ireland's Gaelic past. Societies such as the Royal Irish Academy were, by the 1850s, focussing on Irish material.[89] But this Irish past took on a nationalist tone with the 'Gaelic Revival' of the 1880s. This permeated Irish society, and nationalist leaders such as Collins and Pearse greatly valued this Gaelic past, perhaps because "the vision of an ethnic golden age told modern Irish men and

[84] M. Aguilar, *Cultural Diplomacy and Foreign Policy: German-American Relations, 1955-1968* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).
[85] According to Villanueva Rivas endo-representation is the discursive process through which identities are constructed and discursively fixed in a core-culture/nation. C. Villanueva Rivas, Op. Cit. (note 71), 93.
[86] Ibid, 99.
[87] G. Delanty, and P. O'Mahony, *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity and Ideology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 33.
[88] Ibid, 33; C. Kinealy, *Politics in Ireland, in A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain* (Oxford; Malden, MA; Melbourne: Blackwell Publishers, 2004) 480; A. Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: politics and war* (Oxford; Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) ,1.
[89] E. Crooke, Op. Cit. (note 71), 104.

women what was 'authentically theirs' and how to be 'themselves' once again in a free Ireland".[90]

This emphasis on a Gaelic past was emphasised in the new Irish Free State, and Patrick F. Wallace suggested that prehistoric archaeology, especially Ireland's ancient Celtic culture, was favoured at the expense of medieval historical archaeology, including the study of the Viking Age and Anglo-Norman invasions, until the 1960s.[91] The discovery of the remains of a significant Norse settlement during work at Wood Quay in Dublin in the 1970s helped to change this. Perhaps the museum could have done more to portray "the Vikings and the heritage of urbanisation as much a part of Ireland as the Celts or as any of the prehistoric peoples".[92] Since then the National Museum has created a Viking gallery to display the finds, and in 2001 opened Medieval Ireland 1150-1550, including sections on the Anglo-Normans. However, the collections remained focused on Ireland's Celtic past. Directors of the National Museum of Ireland such as Joseph Raftery "agreed with the then received orthodoxy that early Irish society was familial, rural, and hierarchical, a world in which towns [such as Viking Dublin] had no place".[93] Not unreasonably therefore, Irish archaeologists and academics want to understand the origins of their rich Celtic past but the Viking and Anglo-Norman ages are still seen as 'foreign'. While EU membership, political changes in the 1980s, powerful economic growth, and a more pluralistic society have brought a willingness to look with fresh eyes at a difficult history, Irish national identity remains focused on its Celtic past.[94] Current archaeological explanations have managed neither to displace traditional myths, whereby everything is visualised through a misty Celticized filter, nor to challenge oversimplified views of the past or consequently the broad public perceptions of that past.[95] Elizabeth Crooke links this prevalent view of the Irish past within the context of the National Museum of Ireland to an underpinned sense of the social and political function of Irish archaeology. The way in which certain forms of the past are presented as 'heritage' provides them with a political identity as well as the continual act of using the past to support social and political agendas, or the continual reinterpretation of the past according to its potential for the present, creates a particular memory that is partly shaped and stage-managed by the institution.[96]

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[90] A. D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 67.
[91] P. F. Wallace, "Irish Archaeology and the Recognition of Ethnic Difference in Viking Dublin", in *Evaluating multiple narratives: beyond nationalist, colonialist, imperialist archaeologies*, eds. J. Habu, C. P. Fawcett, and J.M. Matsunga (New York: Springer, 2008), 166.
[92] P.F. Wallace, "Conservatives Lose out in Museum Race", *Archaeology Ireland,* 3 (Spring), 1989, 24.
[93] P.F. Wallace, Op. Cit. (note 91), 169-170.
[94] A. Sawyer "National Museums in the Republic of Ireland", in *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010, conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity, Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen*, eds P. Aronsson & G. Elgenius (Linköping: Linköping University Press, 2011), 436.
[95] G. Cooney, "Building the future on the past: Archaeology and the construction of national identity in Ireland", in *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*. eds. M. Díaz-Andreu and T. C. Champion (London: UCL Press, 1996), 159-160.
[96] E. Crooke, Op. Cit. (note 71), 154-156.

From the Irish cultural diplomacy perspective, according to Aodhán Rilke Floyd, following the declaration of the full independence of the Irish Republic, it was a government priority to promote art abroad.[97] As such, the initial government motive to intervene in cultural matters resulted in the establishment of a committee to promote international cultural relations in 1949. The Cultural Relations Committee survived until the establishment in 2005 of Culture Ireland, the national agency to promote Irish arts and artists overseas since then. Dorothy Walker points out that, 'the [Cultural Relations Committee was the] first official body of the State in support of the arts; the Arts Council was not established until 1951".[98] The conclusion that could be drawn from the creation of the Cultural Relations Committee as the first official cultural body of the State is that it was a government priority at the time to promote art abroad rather than within Ireland.[99]

The Cultural Relations Committee, the Advisory Committee of the Department of External Affairs (now Foreign Affairs) was the government agency charged with the task of promoting Irish cultural identity within an international arena. The remit of the Cultural Relations Committee, later Culture Ireland, are similar. Fundamentally, their aim is to ensure that diverse Irish cultural practice is understood and valued internationally, to build relationships that aerate Irish cultural practice through exposure to international debates, and to advise the Minister and government on international cultural issues and relations.[100] The cultural division of the Department of Foreign Affairs works primarily through Irish embassies abroad, and in co-operation with government departments, state bodies, and individuals. It promotes international educational exchanges, supports Irish studies in universities abroad, and works with and developed the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris. The establishment of Culture Ireland represented a significant stepping up of this area as well as the location of international arts within the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Similarly, the Arts Council has taken a lead in encouraging international contacts since the middle of the 1990s, establishing in co-operation with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the British Council Northern Ireland, an International Arts Desk, which also hosts the European Cultural Contact Point Ireland and serves as an information point. In general, the Arts Council offers support for artist mobility, networking, information, circulation, and access of artistic works. Irish agencies and arts groups have been active in availing of European funding for cultural projects, as well as

[97] A. Rilke Floyd, *Repositioning Irish identities: exhibiting Irish contemporary art abroad (1980 – 2005)*, (Masters Thesis: Trinity College Dublin, 2008), 11.
[98] D. Walker, *Modern Art in Ireland* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1997), 189.
[99] A. Rilke Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 97), 13.
[100] "Cultural Relations Committee Booklet Distribution", Department of Foreign Affairs papers: 6/438/8b I, National Archive of Ireland, Dublin; "Culture Ireland 2017-2020", https://www.cultureireland.ie/downloads-public/Culture_Ireland_Strategy_2017-2020_1.pdf, accessed: June 20, 2018.

participating in networks, developing contacts and adding international dimensions to their programmes.[101]

Touring exhibitions or exhibitions of Irish content abroad were central to the Cultural Relations Commission praxes. Prior to the creation of the Cultural Relations Committee, Rilke Floyd credits Hugh Lane as the "inventor" of what Rilke Floyd calls the International Exhibition of Contemporary Irish Art. In 1904 Lane organized *An Exhibition of works of Irish Painters* at the Guildhall Art Gallery in London. Rilke Floyd also credits the exhibition as the "first and only [International Exhibition of Contemporary Irish Art] blockbuster".[102] Hilary Pyle described the exhibition as a "huge exploratory exhibition ... the first exhibition of its kind in which an attempt was made to define what Irish art was".[103] The success of this event and the momentum it generated were to provide Lane with the necessary support to establish a collection of 'Modern Art' in Dublin.[104] It was largely brought about through the personal initiative and enterprise of Lane himself once he had decided that, "although a British art exhibition would take place... Ireland ought to be independently represented" at the 1904 World Fair in St. Louis.[105] According to Marta Herrero *An Exhibition of Irish Painters* was envisaged as "the first real opportunity we have had of proving to the world the artistic talent that Irishmen possess and which has led them with very great encouragement to produce great works".[106] In the catalogue prefatory note Lane argued that, while every artist offered insight into a period and a culture, a distinctively Irish art will draw upon an early Christian heritage and a "common race instinct". In the meantime, "to allow the pictures of men who belong to us by birth or blood be hung everywhere but in Ireland, is an injustice that we must do away with".[107] According to Rilke Floyd, Lane's initiative (and cultural nationalism in general) has been read in terms of "an attempt [by an Anglo-Irish class] ... to carve out their own distinctive identity within Irish culture".[108] However, according to Rilke Floyd, it is tempting to think of the possible involvement of the Irish Free State's first and short-lived Arts Ministry in the organisation of *Exposition d'Art Irlandais* held in connection with the Race Conference in Paris in January 1922.[109] When reappraising the catalogue entry from Arsène Alexandre for *Exposition d'Art Irlandais*, Hilary Pyle observes that it was a missed opportunity to define what qualities distinguished English and Irish schools of art. According to Pyle, Alexandre's

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[101] "Ireland", in *Compendium Cultural Policies and Trends*, https://www.culturalpolicies.net/database/search-by-country/country-profile/?id=19, accessed: January 15, 2018.
[102] A. Rilke Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 97), 9.
[103] H. Pyle, *Irish Art 1900-1950*: *Catalogue of an Exhibition in Association with Rosc Teoranta, at the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork, December 1, 1975-January 31, 1976* (Cork: Rosc Committee, 1975), 9.
[104] A. Rilke Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 97), 11.
[105] R, O'Byrne, *Hugh Lane 1875-1925* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000), 48.
[106] H. Lane, Letter to Irish Times, 22 January 1904 quoted in M. Herrero, *Irish Intellectuals and Aesthetics, The Making of a Modern Art Collection; 1893-1915* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 48.
[107] A. G. Temple, *Catalogue of the exhibition of works by Irish painters: with descriptive and biographical notes* London: Blades, East & Blades, Printers, 1904.
[108] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 106), 45.
[109] A. Rilke Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 97), 11.

strategy was instead to celebrate "this immaterial and deliciously elusive something which one calls Irish".[110] According to Rilke Floyd, Alexandre's "lyricism" and "poeticism" were the expressions that were to delimit the discourse of "contemporary Irish art" until well into the 1980s,[111] and perhaps it has continued to delimit the discourse indirectly beyond then, as most discussion around Irish art internationally associated with exhibition projects tries to negotiate and define what Irish art is for an international audience. For instance, exhibitions of contemporary Irish art such as *Re/Dressing Cathleen* (McMullen Museum, Boston, 1997) try to challenge in themselves these lyrical and poetic cultural stereotypes or of the problematic relationship of "Irish/Woman/Artwork" in the case of this particular show.[112]

By the time Culture Ireland was established in 2005, for the first time, independent representations were mounted for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland at the Venice Biennale. Sarah Glennie's commission included the work of seven artists in partnership with various cultural and educational institutions.[113] The aim of the project was to portray a modern, dynamic, open image of Ireland's art sector by creating a vignette of individual art practices. Perhaps the overriding agenda for Sarah Glennie was to acknowledge multiplicity by providing what she terms as a 'snapshot' of contemporary art in Ireland at that particular point in time, presenting a view of quickly changing circumstances, rather than aiming to construct a comprehensive survey or an authoritative argument on Irish identity.[114] Reviewing Glennie's proposal, Declan Long suggested the idea of the snapshot as a telling metaphor in this regard, for though it might in one obvious sense be suggestive of a static scene, an image frozen in time, Long suggests Glennie's curatorial 'snapshot' also refers to multiple fragments, unresolved narratives, and the passage of time also relate to tendencies in the work of the artists set to 'represent' Ireland.[115] On the other hand, Fiona Kearney suggests that "Glennie's curatorial process reflect[s] on the individual contributions of the participating artists and as a result [helps the audience] to consider issues of national representation in an increasingly globalized cultural arena". [116]

This concept of globalisation has also become a prominent feature of International Exhibitions of Contemporary Art discourse, often presented as a reconfiguring of metropolitan

[110] H. Pyle, Op. Cit. (note 103), 9.
[111] A. Rilke Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 97), 12.
[112] H. Robison, "Irish/Women/Artwork; selective readings", *Feminist Review*, 50 (1995), 89.
[113] Exhibiting artists were: Stephen Brandes, Mark Garry, Ronan McCrea, Isabel Nolan, Sarah Pierce, Walker and Walker – represented Ireland at the 51st International Art Exhibition. The exhibition partners included the Lewis Glucksman Gallery, IADT – Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology through the MA in Visual Arts Practices; Embassy of Ireland, Rome; The Irish Museum of Modern Art; Limerick School of Art and Design/ L.I.T and the Sculptors' Society of Ireland.
[114]D. Long, "The Multitude: Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland at the 2005 Venice Biennale", *Circa*, no. 112 (2005): 38-49.
[115] Ibid, 38- 49.
[116] F. Kearney, *Ireland at Venice 2005* (Cork: Glucksman Gallery Publications, 2005), 3.

hierarchies.[117] Instead of a centre-periphery binarism, the effect of globalisation has been to create even more complex patterns of cultural production in an international art-world consisting of a fluid transit of artists, exhibitions, curators, private sponsorship, and a novel breed of entrepreneurial collectors.[118]

The concept of 'the Pale' was introduced into contemporary Irish art discourse by Declan McGonagle to account for the historical positioning of Irish culture and identities as 'liminal' or 'peripheral' in colonial discourse and the legislative intellectual practices that he argued underpinned a modernist theory of 'best social order'.[119] To this matter Rilke Floyd poses two questions: "If contemporary art practices are no longer circumscribed or determined by national or regional borders can they be said to be Within the Pale? What are the implications for the art historical, art critical and curatorial practices underpinning the field of Irish Exhibitions of Contemporary Irish Art?"[120] To answer those questions it should be considered that the framing of any exhibition under the nationality umbrella would inevitably influence narratives, discourses and interpretations associated with nationalism and national cultural identity, and the relationship between both.

However, according to Rilke Floyd, the Venice Biennale differs from an art-fair as an artistic platform because of a 'lingering public remit'.[121] On the other hand, Declan McGonagle has asserted that the 'blockbuster' model of international exhibition, that *Rosc* and the Venice Biennale Irish representations stand for were "incapable of stepping outside its own frame of reference",[122] the legislative and celebratory functions they had fulfilled no longer had any critical currency. Instead, from McGonagle's perspective, the potential for international viability lay in the relevance of the process of enquiry into what it might be "to be Irish".[123] Hutchinson, writing in a review of *Sense of Ireland '88*, curated by McGonagle, was in agreement: "it is the collision between the specifics of local culture and the methodology of current art practice that generates art that is both substantial, in human terms, and which lies within the parameters of international contemporary discourse".[124]

At this level, thinking about Irish Exhibitions of Contemporary Irish art was in terms of strategic 'interventions', Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith's observation summed it up, if "well-chosen, well-planned and well-supported ... exhibiting under national auspices can still avoid the dead hand of cultural stereotyping."[125]

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[117] A. Rilke Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 97), 48.
[118] M. C. Ramirez, "Brokering Identities: Art curators and the politics of cultural representation", in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 22.
[119] A. Rilke Floyd, Op. Cit. (note 97), 48.
[120] Ibid, 49.
[121] Ibid, 38
[122] D. McGonagle, and D. Brett. "Centre of Gravity", *Circa*, no. 60 (1991): 26-31.
[123] Ibid, 27.
[124] J. Hutchinson, "Sense, Direction & Selected Images: Irish Art in the 1980s", *Circa*, no. 50 (1990): 33-36.
[125] C. Mac Giolla Léith, "Playing the Green Card", Circa, no. 90 (1999): 28-29.

In his article Mac Giolla Léith quotes Patrick T. Murphy's advice to Irish cultural commissars keen on promoting Irish art in the US as follows: "Do not support anything flying under the Irish flag unless you want to fulfil existing preconceptions".[126] Reviewing 1999, a particularly prolific year of exhibitions of contemporary Irish art in New York, Roberta Smith, in-house critic at the *New York Times*, evaluated four of the exhibitions taking place. In her review, Smith made two basic points: first that much of twentieth-century Irish art is derivative and/or parochial, and, second, that Ireland's contribution to the visual arts over the past hundred years continues to be greatly overshadowed by the country's achievements in the literary field.[127] Mac Giolla Léith rightly critiques Smith's, and other American art critics at the time, attitudes as lazy and predictable in juxtaposing the nineteenth century literary field with contemporary Irish visual culture.[128] However, Mac Giolla Léith also understands Smith's journalistic gambit, as two of the shows under Smith's review draw their titles from W. B. Yeats' turn of-century manifesto *To Ireland in the Coming Times*, and that these shows coincided with an exhibition on the poet's life and work at the New York Public Library.[129]

While exhibitions of contemporary Irish art internationally seem to want to move away from the established lyrical and poetic Celtic rhetoric of Irish national cultural identity, international exhibitions of antiquity Irish art, which is the focus of this chapter, seem to have contributed to the reassertion of that Irish national cultural identity, that is Patrick T. Murphy's "stereotypes" and Roberta Smith's derivative and/or parochial interpretation.

Exhibitions such as *Treasures of Early Irish Art* reinforced the already discussed notion of a stereotypical and derivative Celtic past. Less recurrent than Irish exhibitions of contemporary Irish art, perhaps due to the logistical complexities of staging such shows, exhibitions of Irish antiquities abroad can be originally linked within the context of International Art fairs. Since the inception of World Fairs in 1851, art, contemporary and from antiquity, has been at the centre of Irish entries to various world fairs – perhaps more of the former than the latter. However, according to Charles Fanning one of the most impressive efforts was at the 1933 Chicago's World Fair: *A Century of Progress*, was the collaboration of the National Museum of Ireland, the Royal Irish Academy, and the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland to present *A Century of Progress in Irish Archaeology*.[130] The accompanying fifteen-page booklet explained the history of organizations involved in the project and their commitment to the

[126] C. Mac Giolla Léith, Op. Cit. (note 125), 28-29.
[127] R. Smith, "The Irish Struggle for a Visual Poetry To Call Their Own", *The New York Times*, June 25,1999
[128] C. Mac Giolla Léith, Op. Cit. (note 125), 28-29.
[129] Ibid, 28-29; The W. B. Yeats show mentioned by Mac Giolla Léith is *Such Friends: The Work of W.B. Yeats* at the New York Public Library. The other exhibitions reviewed by R. Smith were: *When Time Began to Rant and Rage: Figurative Painting From 20th-Century Ireland* at the Grey Art Gallery and Study Center at New York University; '*0044* at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City; and *A Measured Quietude: Contemporary Irish Drawings* at the Drawing Center in SoHo.
[130] C. Fanning, "Duelling Cultures: Ireland and Irish America at the Chicago World's Fairs of 1933 and 1934", *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, 15, no. 3 (2011): 94-110.

field, and emphasized recent spectacular archaeological finds. The booklet also announced "Ireland's ambition towards becoming a favourite tourist resort" by inviting Americans to visit the sites and artefacts described.[131] The booklet also alludes to the newness of the Free State by declaring that: "archaeology is a great force in the shaping of a sound self-consciousness in a nation because knowledge of its own past and of the achievements of former generations adds to a proper appreciation of national growth, and of the cultural heritage for which we are indebted to former generations".[132]

The text argues that in Ireland's two "Golden Ages", the early Bronze (2000 B.C. to 1500 B.C.) and early Christian (600 to 850 A.D.), "the island outshone many other countries of much greater size in cultural activities", and that in the second period, "Ireland may claim to have saved a great portion of Europe from a relapse into complete barbarism". The exhibition included both replicas and actual artefacts along with photographs of archaeological sites.[133] The booklet described in detail replicas of *St. Patrick's Bell*, the *Ardagh Chalice*, the *Tara Brooch*, and pages from the gospels *Book of Kells* and *Book of Durrow*. None of these priceless artefacts actually made the trip to Chicago, however the booklet calls attention to the exhibition's most exciting real object, a gaming board from about the year 600 that had been discovered in 1932, and to the great "monumental relics" – ring forts and dolmens and neolithic passage graves – which were represented by an "Album" of photographs taken by "Mr. T. Mason", Royal Irish Academy member and pioneer of antiquarian photography. The booklet also highlighted a series of still prints "connected with the film Man of Aran, a Gainsborough Picture, directed by Mr. Robert J. Flaherty which will be on the screen in the autumn of the present year".[134]

Similarly, the exhibition *Treasures of Trinity College Collection* of 1961 at the Royal Academy London turned to photography as a curatorial gambit to represent art from antiquity from their collections. However, it was the first of four times that the *Book of Kells* was exhibited outside Ireland. Two of the other three were *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* and *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* While the purpose of the exhibition was not intrinsically an act of cultural diplomacy, as Trinity College acted on its own behalf using the exhibition as a means of collecting funds for the refurbishment of the old library, this exhibition served as a logistic and curatorial model for *Treasures of Early Irish Art* and built on the experience and the involvement in both projects of F. G. Mitchell, Trinity College Registrar between 1952 and 1966, and President of the Royal Irish Academy between 1976 and

[131] A.M. Mahr, *A century of progress in Irish archaeology; exhibits collected by the National Museum of Ireland* (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 1933), 2.
[132] Ibid, 3.
[133] A.M. Mahr, Op. Cit. (note 131), 4.
[134] Ibid, 3-5.

1979.[135] The exhibition in London, included "St. Matthew's Gospel" from the *Book of Kells* and the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, dating from the late seventh century, and lent for the occasion by the Trustees of the British Museum. Nearby were displayed other illuminated Gospels such as the *Book of Durrow*, the *Book of Dimma*, and the *Book of Armagh*. Around them on the walls were hung enlarged photographs of pages from the *Book of Kells*, images of early Irish work in metal and stone, and photographic views of Irish scenery. The exhibition also included manuscripts of later dates and holograph letters by famous sons of Trinity College, an assembly of busts from the Long Room of the College Library, and some paintings including a portrait of Edmund Burke, attributed to James Barry.[136]

In 1980 Ireland was one of the eight countries of focus for *Europalia* and the National Museum of Ireland contributed to the European cultural festival with a selection of treasures from its collection. Furthermore, while not directly involved in the project, several objects from the collection of the National Museum of Ireland were on display at *The Vikings* exhibition organized by the British Museum, London, which travelled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Minneapolis Museum of Fine Art between 1980 and 1981. Similarly, a substantial number of works from the National Museum of Ireland collection travelled to the exhibition *The Work of Angels: Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork, 6th-9th Centuries A.D.* which was also organized by the British Museum, London in collaboration with the National Museum of Ireland, and travelled to National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, and also visited the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin in 1990.

The fourth and final time that the *Book of Kells* was exhibited outside Ireland was in 2000 at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra in the exhibition *The Book of Kells and the Art of Illumination*. The Australian exhibition, like *Treasures of Early Irish Art*, was apparently conceived in secrecy and born in controversy. Reports at the time show the extent of dissent between the Taoiseach at the time, Bertie Ahern, and the then Arts Minister, Síle de Valera, over a decision to allow the manuscript to travel to Australia. Bertie Ahern overruled his minister's unwillingness to allow the book an export licence to travel to Canberra. According to journalist, Martina Devlin, Síle de Valera's concerns were guided by a report from an expert group which advised strongly against it. She lodged her disagreement in writing. "I refer to our meeting yesterday afternoon and I wish to reiterate my very strong opposition to the Book of Kells going to Australia", said de Valera. "There is also opposition from the Director of the National Museum of Ireland and unanimous opposition from the Council of National Cultural Institutions". Her concerns were justified when pigment damage to one of the display pages

[135] "Telex from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", April 22, 1976, Box 30, Folder Treasures of Early Irish Art Exhibition, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York

[136] *Treasures from Trinity College Dublin: [an exhibition chosen from the College and its Library at] Burlington House, London WI, 12 January-5 March 1961* (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 1961), 4-12.

occurred described as a "slight change in condition" in a letter to the arts department from Trinity College in April 2000.[137]

But even before the loan was agreed, there were behind-the-scenes decisions made involving the authorities at Trinity College Dublin, Bertie Ahern, and the National Gallery of Australia, which wanted to exhibit it as part of a diaspora celebration. It appears the arts minister was displeased because overtures were made without consulting her. According to Devlin, Síle de Valera heard about the *Book of Kells* going to Australia via an Australian newspaper report. The decision to loan the volume was Trinity's, however because an export licence was mandatory, the final consent lay with the arts minister. Nevertheless, Bertie Ahern became directly involved when he stated "it would be nice if such a request can be facilitated" in a speech before William Deane, then Australian Governor General. He also referred to an Aus$7m donation from Australia to the International Fund for Ireland. The request for a licence was made to the arts minister in July 1999, in which Trinity's Provost Tom Mitchell said curators from the university had examined the Canberra gallery and were confident that preparations were satisfactory, and the exhibition would "bring considerable prestige" to Ireland. But in the meantime, Brian Kennedy, the Irish director of the National Gallery of Australia, bypassed Síle de Valera by writing directly to the Taoiseach, asking him to authorise the loan "as a gift to the people of Australia". Despite the Council of National Cultural Institutions advising against it, the export licence was granted.[138]

The idea behind *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* has been documented to come from the minister of education at the time, Richard Burke, Minister for Education from 1973 to 1976. It has been said that he was inspired by his visit to the exhibition *From the Lands of the Scythians: Ancient Treasures from the Museums of the U.S.S.R., 3000 B.C. to 100 B.C.* in Paris in 1974.[139] However, an internal memo from Karl Katz, Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, mentions that he had already suggested the possibility of an exhibition of Irish Treasures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art to his circle of contacts in Ireland, prior to the initial conversations about the *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* project taking place.[140] As with *The Book of Kells and the Art of Illumination* exhibition, there was a great deal of controversy around the manner in which the initial stages of the project were mismanaged by the department of education. The initial processes for the organisation of the exhibition were detailed by David Greene, President of the Royal Irish Academy between 1973 and 1976, in an open letter responding to an article by D. H. Wright. Greene recounts that Burke began to discuss the project in the second half of 1975, when

[137] M. Devlin, "Papers show Book of Kells loan was bitterly disputed", *The Irish Independent*, June 18, 2001.
[138] M. Devlin, Op. Cit. (note 137).
[139] D. H. Wright, Op. Cit. (note 2).
[140] "Letter from Karl Katz to Ralph Cohen", January 20, 1976, Box 30, Folder Treasures of Early Irish Art Exhibition, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York

Greene was President of the Royal Irish Academy, and those with whom Burke talked at the time to start up the project were the Provost of Trinity College, F. S. L. Lyons, and Greene himself. Greene also notes that he and the Provost of Trinity attended the first official meeting with Tom Hoving, Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, when Hoving met the Minister and the then Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave. According to Greene, Cosgrave gave his unreserved approval to the project at the point when the first exhibition proposal was put together. By the time that the proposal had been accepted, and thorough negotiations were establishment, the Council of the Royal Irish Academy had decided to nominate Frank Mitchell as Greene's successor in the Presidency. Mitchell was duly elected on March 16, 1976. It was Greene who suggested that, in view of Mitchell's interest in the subject of the exhibition, and his position in both of the institutions involved, he should be the coordinator at the Irish end. This was agreed, and Peter Brown, Librarian of Trinity College, and Greene were appointed as the other members in charge of directing the day-to-day planning of the exhibition, and accountable to a larger committee which met at irregular intervals. All Professor Mitchell's actions, including the lay-out of the catalogue, were approved by Brown and Greene and, at a later stage, by the main committee.[141] Wright points out that while he "greatly admired Professor Greene's scholarship in philology, and Professor Mitchell's in geology, and respected Mr. Brown's position as Librarian of Trinity College",[142] none of them is a specialist in the care and handling of early medieval art or of early medieval manuscripts. Wright also notes as significant the absence from the executive panel of the Keeper of Manuscripts of Trinity College, the Director of the National Museum of Ireland, or any other suitable curator and any of the Irish scholars internationally renowned for their work and publications in early Irish archaeology and art. According to Wright, had such professionals in the field of Irish art been given larger and more direct responsibilities for the selection and scholarly presentation of the objects, the exhibition would have been more successful.[143]

On his open letter, Greene ratifies that the early planning of the exhibitions "was done at the top level, and the final decisions taken, before the curators were informed". Greene also ratifies the political aims of the exhibition: "The Minister's decision to issue the invitation was a political one, but the decision to accept it was taken by responsible academics who are the trustees of the treasures involved". In the open letter, Greene downplays the level of controversy surrounding the exhibition by mentioning "that there were objections from some of the curators. … That may have been because the decision had already been taken over their heads". According to Greene, the curators were consulted when it came to the selection of the items, and nothing which they thought unfit to travel was included. In the case of the

[141] D. Greene, "'Treasures of Early Irish Art': An Exchange", *N. Y. Review of Books*, July 20, 1978
[142] D. H. Wright, Op. Cit. (note 2).
[143] Ibid.

manuscripts, they laid down such strict requirements for temperature and humidity control that the Metropolitan Museum had to design a new type of display case for the occasion of the exhibition".[144]

The origins of the second leg of the exhibition, *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* were similar to those of the *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D*. In this case Charles Haughey, Taoiseach at the time, was the politician who agreed to have the exhibition of Irish treasures travel to Paris. Addressing the Oireachtas, Haughey announced the agreement: "I mentioned to the Prime Minister of France at our recent meeting in Paris that there was a good possibility that an exhibition similar to the exhibition of *Treasures of Early Irish Art* could be organized to go to Paris in a year or two. Any such arrangement would, of course, be subject to the agreement of the relevant authorities here. The necessary planning will be undertaken by the Department of Education".[145] This decision making without consultation created some controversy again. However, it is worth noting that during the American tour of the exhibition there were already talks about having the exhibition at the Musée du Louvre. Similarly, the Royal Irish Academy received requests to host the exhibition in London from the British Museum in London and in Australia.[146] As with *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D*., the European leg of the exhibition was also framed under an act of cultural diplomacy. Addressing the Oireachtas, the Taoiseach at the time, Garrett FitzGerald, evaluated the success of the European tour but also framed this success as an act of cultural diplomacy: "The past year has also seen the further success and generous public acclaim by the European public for the tours of the "Treasures of Ireland" exhibitions. At a time when the international news media is tending to focus on the more negative news items emanating from this country, this exhibition serves to remind the world of our proud creative heritage".[147]

In February 1976, Richard Burke officially announced the confirmation that *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* was going to take place. In his official statement Burke notes that "it is my earnest hope that this exhibition will make a notable contribution to a happier and truer image of Ireland than the one too often propagated at the present time. In mounting it, the organisers wish to persuade as large a public as possible to look beyond our contemporary troubles to the record of a rich and ancient civilization".[148] This statement by Burke refers to the impact the Troubles had on Ireland's international image. Addressing the Oireachtas, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Michael O'Kennedy reflects on the American

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[144] D. Greene, Op. Cit. (note 141). This controversy will be discussed at a later section within this chapter.
[145] "Ceisteanna - Questions. Oral Answers. - Early Irish Art Exhibition", Dáil Éireann Debate, April 23, 1980. https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1980-04-23/, accessed: July 20, 2017.
[146] "Letter from D. M. Wilson to A. Duggan" November 5, 1981, Royal Irish Academy Archive, Boxes C/6/4/misc. I-K.
[147] "Dáil Éireann díospóireacht – Déardaoin", Dáil Éireann Debate, December 15, 1983. https://www.oireachtas.ie/ga/debates/debate/dail/1983-12-15/20/, accessed: May 3, 2018.
[148] "Statement by the Minister for Education, Mr. Richard Burke, T.D", February 4, 1976, Box 42, Folder 8, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

exhibition but also ratifies the government's concern, expressed by Burke, with transforming the image of Ireland abroad as the negative impact of the Troubles: "The outstanding success of the exhibition of Treasures of Early Irish Art in the United States illustrates the value to the nation of making known abroad what we have to offer in the area of art and culture. It helps to counteract the cumulative effect of all the bad publicity which events in the North have had on the image of Ireland and Irishmen".[149] Fionna Barber suggests that Jack Lynch, Taoiseach between 1973 and 1976, and the Irish government were put in a difficult position by the unfolding violence in the North. While the Irish government didn't want to become involved with the politics of the North, it still wanted to be seen as attempting to alleviate the situation of Northern Catholics.[150] Public sensitivity ran high, and the events of Bloody Sunday in January 1972 were met by mass protests in Dublin, culminating in the IRA's burning of the British Embassy in Merrion Square. According to Barber: "Yet this turned public opinion against acts of violence as a solution, a view only reinforced by the bombings in Monaghan and Dublin by the UVF in 1974".[151]

By the time that the European tour of the exhibition was being prepared and took place, the violence in the North continued. Following a prolonged protest by republicans in an attempt to gain recognition as political prisoners, Bobby Sands, the Provisional IRA's commander, and other republican prisoners at HM Prison in Maze, Co. Down, went on hunger strike, resulting in ten men starving to death by the time the strike was called off. There was an increase in nationalist support, even from those who did not agree with the aims and methods of the Provisional IRA. According to Barber, "a sense of outrage that the British government of Margaret Thatcher was prepared to stand by as Irish men died of starvation also evoked memories of the Famine".[152] This nationalist support within both Northern and Southern Ireland was also reinforced by widespread international condemnation of the British government's decision to let the men die. However, a major setback to nationalist support came with the IRA bombing of a Remembrance Day commemoration in Enniskillen in 1987. According to Barber, the extensive media coverage that resulted had a significant negative impact on support for the IRA, "particularly among Irish-Americans, many of whom had helped to fund the military campaign".[153]

However, the political turmoil was not the only intentional attention that Ireland was receiving at the time when the *Treasures of Irish Art* exhibitions took place. The Irish economy was also being noticed, firstly within a positive context as 1960s economic progress continued in the South for much of the decade, regardless of the 1970s global oil crisis that had a severely

[149] "Estimates, 1979. - Vote 48: Foreign Affairs", Dáil Éireann Debate, May 31, 1979. https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1979-05-31/9/, accessed: September 25, 2017.
[150] F. Barber, *Art in Ireland since 1910*, (London: Reaktion Book, 2013), 169-178.
[151] Ibid, 178.
[152] Ibid, 207.
[153] Ibid, 208.

damaging effect in the North. However, towards the end pf the 1970s, Ireland's economic expansionism was increasingly financed by foreign borrowing, producing debts that would lead to a significant economic recession.[154] Another key historical moment during the 1970s was when Ireland joined the European Union in 1973. In 1972, future Taoiseach Charles Haughey remarked that Europe will offer "a gateway to an entirely different world with great new horizons opening up before us".[155] It was clear that European Union membership would not only open up new horizons in the political and economic spheres. By entering the European Union, Ireland was re-connecting and re-integrating with Europe; naturally, EC membership was going to have huge social consequences. Where the dichotomies 'Ireland-England' and 'islands versus continent' had long been dominant, the idea of what brought Europe together now became stronger. This shift away from a negative anti-English self-identification to a positive pro-European outlook was most clearly shown when Ireland left the sterling area in 1979 and joined the European Monetary System. In other words, joining the European Union brought to Ireland many socio-cultural and economic changes, but there was also a platform for Ireland to decolonize itself from Britain economically, politically, and culturally.

Against this political and economic background, the *Treasures of Irish Art* exhibitions and their framing under cultural diplomacy should be considered the duality of Irish international relationships with America and Europe. To illustrate this point, we can look at two statements, the first by Mary Harney, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), Minister for Enterprise and Industry of Ireland and leader of the Progressive Democrats:

"Geographically, we are closer to Berlin than Boston. Spiritually, we are probably a lot closer to Boston than Berlin".[156]

And the second by Bertie Ahern, Taoiseach:

"The impact of the EU is not just economic. Membership has helped to broaden our horizons and to modernize our society, by raising our standards, in areas such as gender equality and protection of the environment. It has helped to make our identity and our culture more self-confident and outward-looking, without obliging us to sacrifice what is essential and unique. Our enthusiastic commitment to the EU has in no way damaged our very special relationships with other parts of the world, such as the United States, Australia, or Africa. Indeed, it has added a new dimension to them, in particular to that with the U.S. Working with our partners, pooling our sovereignty and our resources, we can do more to promote around the world our basic values as a people than is possible on our own".[157]

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[154] F. Barber, Op. Cit. (note 150), 208.

[155] D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-1989* (Cork-Dublin, Hibernian University Press, 1990), 244.

[156] M. Harney address to the American Bar Association, July 21, 2000. Cited by J. Fischer, "Boston or Berlin? Reflections on a Topical Controversy, the Celtic Tiger and the World of Irish Studies". *The Irish Review* (1986-), no. 48 (2014): 81-95.

[157] B. Ahern, *Address to the European Movement Ireland group, November 6, 2000*. https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2005/4/4, accessed: August 17, 2018.

While these statements were made some twenty years after the exhibition *Treasures of Irish Art*, the observations are a reflection of what the exhibition *Treasures of Irish Art* was trying to achieve and the way in which the organizers attempted to achieve it.

Harney's extended speech goes on to describe what she considers fundamental differences between America and Europe: "Political and economic commentators sometimes pose a choice between what they see as the American way and the European way. They view the American way as being built on the rugged individualism of the original frontiersmen, an economic model that is heavily based on enterprise and incentive, on individual effort and with limited government intervention. They view the European way as being built on a strong concern for social harmony and social inclusion".[158]

Harney readily agrees that these two models of interpretation are simplistic. However, she also notes that there is an element of truth in them too. According to Joachim Fischer, while Harney's comments were coloured by the audience that she was addressing, they are quite accurate particularly from the way in which Irish Studies have supported these stereotypes, and the way in which Irish-American and Irish-European relationships have been analyzed within scholarship.[159] Part of this scholarly perpetuation of these stereotypes was reflected in the different exhibition-making processes involved in the *Treasures of Irish Art* exhibitions. At the American leg the exhibition-making processes focused on presenting cultural heritage and cultural identity as an 'entrepreneurial origin' of an 'individual' cultural identity. While the European tour exhibition-making processes also focused on highlighting Irish cultural heritage and cultural identity as unique and individual, it primarily focused on the connection between Europe and Ireland, presenting cultural heritage and cultural identity as a shared past. Ahern believed Ireland gained socially and economically from its connection with Europe and emphasized the way ties with Europe and the rest of the world had enabled Ireland to rise above inward-looking tendencies. He stressed the essential and unique nature of Irish culture which has also benefited from closer contact with the outside world and claims that further international community. Here the key words are unique and value. He, as with the organisers of the exhibition, was focusing on distinctness – in this case a constructed or reconstructed cultural distinctiveness camouflaged by dual transnational identities and cultural diplomacy.

7.3. Exhibited cultures: Symbolic associations and national identity

Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1,500 B.C. – 1,500 A.D. opened to the public at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in October 1977 and ran until January 1978. The exhibition then moved to the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco from February to March 1978; the

[158] Cited by J. Fischer, Op. Cit. (note 156), 81.
[159] Ibid, 85.

Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh from June to September 1978; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston from October 1978 to January 1979; and the final stop was the Museum of Art, Philadelphia from February to May 1979. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was the institution in the U.S.A. in charge of coordinating the entire project and as such it suggested the exhibiting partner venues. The original proposal by the Metropolitan Museum of Art included museums in San Francisco, Chicago, and Philadelphia. However, there was also an additional list of museums that requested the exhibition directly to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. That list included museums in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Dallas, Detroit, and Denver. In an early exhibition proposal, Karl Katz notes that the decision of where the touring exhibition would go was to be decided by the organizing committee in Dublin, however, the Metropolitan Museum of Art would provide the committee with a priority rating to help the committee with the selection process.[160] In a letter to Karl Katz, the then U.S. Ambassador to Ireland, Walter J. P. Curley, seemed to have tipped the final selection of Pittsburgh instead of Chicago:

"I am somewhat curious about the decision on "the five cities" in which the exhibit will circulate. Who decides what cities, who specified the dates? I wonder, for example, if consideration was given to Pittsburgh – which has an active, generous Scotch-Irish/Irish community, and a pre-eminent museum. I am familiar with the Museum, its facilities, and I am very close to the President of the Carnegie Institute. The Pittsburgh community is terribly keen to have the exhibit there".[161]

Curley's mention of Scottish-Irish and Irish communities in Pittsburgh highlights the importance in selecting the venues for the exhibition. Interestingly, out of the five cities where the touring exhibition took place, three of them, Boston, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh represent the top three cities in the U.S.A. with the largest Irish community,[162] with New York also having a significant American-Irish community, and San Francisco being one of largest migration centres for Irish diaspora in the 1840s and 1850s.[163] If we consider the exhibition under the cultural diplomacy umbrella and taking into account that the exhibition aimed, according to Burke, "to persuade as large a public as possible to look beyond our contemporary troubles to the record of a rich and ancient civilization",[164] it seems somewhat contradictory for the selection of venues to focus on the urban centres with large American-Irish connections. This selection perhaps would guarantee success in relation to attendance numbers due to the local interest in the subject matter. However, the 'preaching-to-the-converted' approach would limit the impact and outreach of persuading as large a public as possible.

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[160] "Letter from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", April 7, 1976, Box 42, Folder 9, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[161] "Letter from W. J. P. Curley to K. Katz", April 6, 1976, Box 42, Folder 9, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[162] "America's Most Irish Towns", *Forbes Magazine*, March 15, 2013.
[163] Ibid.
[164] "Statement by the Minister for Education, Mr. Richard Burke, T.D", Op. Cit. (note 145).

The suggested venue by the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the Boston leg of the exhibition was the Museum of Fine Arts. This presented concerns to the Council of the Royal Irish Academy. In a letter to Thomas Hoving, Frank Mitchell wrote:

"The Boston Museum [of Fine Art] is obviously going to be the sick man of the outfit, and we may be forced to consider skipping it. At the Council meeting of the Academy last week – which gave general blessing to the sequelae of your visit, there was very strong criticism of that museum. I do not know the details, but apparently not very long ago they secured the Emly Shrine, which used to be on exhibition in the National Museum, and left Ireland without application being made for an export license. It was forcibly suggested that it would be too much for the Academy treasures to appear cheek by jowl with illegitimate exports".[165]

The way in which this argument was resolved is unclear, however, the Boston Museum of Fine Art became part of the touring exhibition and the *Emly Shrine* was exhibited as part of the American leg of the exhibition. The *Emly Shrine* was the only object outside the Trinity College Dublin and Royal Irish Academy collections that was part of the exhibition. In a letter to Frank G. Mitchell, Karl Katz set some of the parameters for the selection of objects to be displayed: "I hope now that all the objects that I have included are R.I.A and T.C.D. and there are no N.M. objects, as I understand we are scrupulously avoiding the latter group in order to avoid any unnecessary complications".[166] The unnecessary complications that Katz refers to, transpired to be around the ownership of the objects selected. As a result of the exhibition planning, questions had arisen whether particular significant objects from the Royal Irish Academy collection, normally exhibited in the National Museum of Ireland, including the *Tara Brooch* and the *Ardagh Chalice*, actually "belonged" to the Royal Irish Academy. The Academy did, in 1890, enter into an agreement with the Irish State to "give, grant, assign, transfer, convey, and make over" to the State its collection of antiquities; but the agreement also specified that the "charge and custody of the said collection … shall remain with the said Royal Irish Academy, subject to such regulations and directions as may from time to time be prescribed by the [State] … but so as to leave the Royal Academy as unfettered in the charge and management of the Museum [collection] as circumstances will allow".[167] In this ambiguous situation it was reported that Joseph Raftery, the Director of the National Museum, considered the objects being presented as belonging to the Royal Irish Academy rather than the National Museum of Ireland raising an "awkward legal point", and that exhibitions should refer to the members of the Royal Irish Academy Council as "trustees" of the treasures in the

[165] "Letter from F. G. Mitchell to K, Katz", February 11, 1976, Box 42, Folder 9, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[166] "Letter from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", Op. Cit. (note 160).
[167] *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Third Series, Volume I, 1889-1891 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1891), 65.

exhibition.[168] In a letter to Karl Katz, Frank G. Mitchell, also referred to the need "to repair damaged fences"[169] with the then Director of the National Museum, Anthony T. Lucas, and the Keeper of Irish Antiquities at the time, Joseph Raftery. Again, the "damaged fences" seemed to be fixed, and within the catalogue, while the collection of artefacts as a whole was referred as from the Trinity College Dublin and Royal Irish Academy Collections within the introductory note, the provenance entry to the relevant objects in the catalogue and the exhibition labels was referred to as National Museum of Ireland. Similarly, the subheading from the exhibition title was changed from *Irish Masterpieces from the Royal Irish Academy and Trinity College Dublin* to *from the collections of the National Museum of Ireland, Royal Irish Academy, and Trinity College Dublin*.[170]

An early exhibition proposal by Thomas Hoving indicated the thematical purpose of the exhibition: "Although the title of the exhibition must be worked out the theme is clear; viz., superior treasures from earliest times through the late-medieval period showing through incomparable works of art the unique and dynamic styles of Celtic and Early Irish Art in both objects of precious materials and in book illumination, indicating, particularly in the latter how strong and persistent was that flame of civilization, to use Kay Clark's words that illuminated not only Ireland in the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries but so many other European centers as well".[171] In blockbuster exhibition 'fashion', Hoving indicates the parameters of the exhibition: "The exhibition will be deliberately didactic, attempting to show by the use of works of art and photography, where necessary, the history of art produced in Ireland. It will be scholarly not dull, penetrating and not recondite, popular but not superficial".[172] In total sixty-nine objects were exhibited. One, as already mentioned, from the Boston Museum of Fine Art; one from the Royal Irish Academy Library; nine from Trinity College Dublin Library; and the other fifty-eight from the Royal Irish Academy collection in custody at the National Museum of Ireland. The date range of the objects exhibited during the American tour ranged from the early bronze age *Pair of gold discs*, c. 2000 A.D.-1800 A.D. to the late medieval period *Processional cross of Lislaughtin*, c. late fifteenth century. The exhibition space at the Metropolitan Museum of Art was located on the second floor of the museum's building within the temporary exhibition galleries.[173]

In the display, and the catalogue, the objects were divided into five chronological subsections: *The Bronze Age*; *Foreign Influences and the Beginnings of Christian Art*; *The Christian Triumph: The Golden Age*; *The Viking Impact*; *Irish Art in the Romanesque and Gothic*

[168] D. H. Wright, Op. Cit. (note 2).
[169] "Letter from F. G. Mitchell to K. Katz", Op. Cit. (note 165).
[170] "Letter form K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", Op. Cit. (note 160).
[171] "Letter from T. Hoving to D. I. D. Howie", February 11, 1976, Box 42, Folder 9, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[172] Ibid.
[173] "Security Procedures: Treasures of Early Irish Art", Box 42, Folder 9, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

Periods. As well as these historical periods the exhibition included an orientation area following Karl Katz's recommendation: "orientation room… [should include] great photographs of Ireland, time lines, maps, superb photographs of great crosses on high places and other sites, in a sense an establishing [an] educational area".[174] The European leg of the tour also included a reduced selection of the same photographs. This inclusion of photographs is a curatorial rubric that was associated with 'treasures blockbuster' exhibitions in general, but also with the already discussed Irish treasures exhibitions such as *A Century of Progress in Irish Archaeology* and *Treasures from Trinity College*. According to S. Daniels, national identity is often formulated through the identification of "legends and landscapes", foundation myths located in symbolic homelands.[175] This can involve the (re)creation of a national 'folk culture' which fluctuates between being fashioned as an 'authentic' pre-modern state of national being, or as unchanging and regressive.[176] According to Steve Cooke and Fiona McLean, such photographs in the museum act as commanding statements that give the appearance of fact or 'verisimilitude', naturalising the work of representation by producing a seemingly 'real' context through which the material culture can be observed.[177] Photographs have a distinctive communicative presence that becomes a selective but certain view of 'what has been' with a sentimental perspective. The photograph, with its appearance of reality, attempts to sidestep the more obvious representational strategies of reconstruction, diorama and art.[178] According to Cooke and McLean, this approach is challenging in the sense that the distinct 'otherness' of past cultures may be denied by their representation as 'ourselves in the past', and is also identified by R. Samuels with respect to photographs and their ability "[t]o turn out subjects, metaphorically speaking, into contemporaries, physiognomically recognisable as likenesses of ourselves".[179]

Katz continues in the exhibition proposal by explaining the spatial distribution: "The installation will have to make it possible for people to get as close as is practicable, so as to enjoy as much detail as possible".[180] The lighting of the exhibition was crucial in order to consider the fragile nature of the different manuscripts exhibited, however, this premise was considered an advantage rather than an hindrance: "I think lighting will play an important role since the light levels for the manuscripts will have to be kept very low, whereas the prehistoric objects should be emerging from dark into golden light, and the metal objects should be bathed

[174] "Letter from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", Op. Cit. (note 160).
[175] S. Daniels, *Fields of Vision. Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993) 3.
[176] M. Crang, "Picturing practices: research through the tourist gaze". *Progress in Human Geography* 11, 3, 1997, 359-373.
[177] S. Cooke and F. McLean, "Picturing the nation: The Celtic periphery as discursive other in the archaeological displays of the museum of Scotland", *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 118:4, 2002, 283-298.
[178] Ibid, 284.
[179] R. Samuels, *Theatres of Memory. Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 322.
[180] "Letter from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", Op. Cit. (note 160).

in light".[181] Light as metaphorical linguistic expression was also central of the different titles considered for the exhibition. Titles such as *A Light in the Dark*; *A light in the West*; *The Flame of Civilization*; amongst others such as *At Edge of the Beyond*; *The Western Shore*; *The Edge of Europe*; *Of Kings and Clerks*; *Of Saints and Scholars*; *The Spiral and the Cross* were considered. Again, in blockbuster exhibition 'fashion', the theatrical lighting and the 'mysterious' exhibition title form part of the early tradition of 'treasures' exhibitions. The date range included in the early provisional title was originally set to match the date range of the objects exhibited from 2000 B.C. to 1500 A.D., however, the reason for that change seems unclear.

In terms of objects, the most populated section was *Foreign Influences and the Beginnings of Christian Art* with seventeen objects; followed by *The Christian Triumph: The Golden* Age and *The Viking Impact* with fifteen objects each; *The Bronze Age* with thirteen objects; and *Irish Art in the Romanesque and Gothic Periods* with nine objects. Karl Katz, Frank Mitchell, and Peter Brown were in charge of selecting the objects, as already mentioned with the premise that all of them were from the Royal Irish Academy and Trinity College Dublin collections.[182] In an early internal memorandum from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the considerations of the exhibition were explained: "The main divisions of the exhibition will be essentially chronological and will focus on objects of personal adornment and of liturgical use. There are other objects, however, including the famed Brian's Harp, dating from the 14th Century. This harp is the national symbol and is pictured on the stationery and publications of the Republic of Ireland. Also included will be a large Bronze cauldron, bronze weapons and even a remarkable pig cast in bronze".[183]

Within these sectional divisions and object selections, the curators' choices and presentation criteria reveal scales of value. This is reflected in how particular themes and sub-themes are favoured above other subjects or periods, which things are valued and, simultaneously, those things that are not valued for the purpose of the exhibition narrative. For instance, the exhibition's emphasis on promoting particular historical and cultural elements, such as Christianity, reflects a bias in its narrative. Out of the sixty-nine objects exhibited more than half, thirty-six, were objects associated with Christian religion. This is achieved with visual design whether at macro or micro contexts through the utilisation of external imagery, such as images of the *Ardagh Chalice* being reproduced as part of the marketing campaign, or internal signage and imagery, such as the set of photographs already discussed, that supported the exhibition (Fig. 1), favouring particular objects and themes above others. Similarly, in *The Viking Impact,* the linguistic design of the exhibition presents the Vikings in Ireland as central

[181] "Letter from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", Op. Cit. (note 160).
[182] Ibid.
[183] "Treasures of Early Irish Art Memorandum", Box 42, Folder 8, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

to the development of town-life in Ireland and their impact on indigenous craftsmanship; however, the linguistic design exclusively centres on descriptions of Vikings as raiders throughout the catalogues with narratives of warfare and barbaric imagery. This is presented in opposition to the Celts, although also an 'invading' culture, they are presented as the 'origin' of Irish culture and society.



Figure 1: Installation view, "Orientation Area". *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archive.

Central to this narrative is also its plea to establish a 'vision' of Irish national identity based around its ethnic heritage, which has been constructed as an 'authentic' pre-modern state. In emerging nations where there is a contest over new identities, past origins, traditions, mythologies and boundaries are reinvented.[184] From a strictly archaeological standpoint, these historical interpretations are a misuse of material culture, since the discipline stands on the ability of the archaeologist to interpret human artefacts in terms of themselves alone and to derive significance therefrom.

Within these historical interpretations, special emphasis was also given to the authentication of the objects as pinnacles of Irish history whether art history or craft history. The interpretation of the artefacts as works of art depends upon the acceptance that the object embodies a very particular kind of symbolic power with a universal significance, not taking into account the original functionality of the artefacts. For instance, the exhibition title *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* emphasizes the relevance of the artefactual contents as artistic treasures and the period accounted in its display as a repository or period of abundance, constructing its narrative and ideology around this ideal.

In the exhibition and the catalogue narratives, the idea that national identity is symbolically grounded in 'folk' or the pure, original people is also dominant. The exhibition and catalogue narratives invested in a form of nostalgia in which the past was viewed as the epitome of

[184] B. Anderson, Op. Cit. (note 78), 251.

coherence and order, something simpler and emotionally fulfilling, with more direct and integrated relationships. Therefore, identity has symbolic associations that are emotionally invested in a sense of place. According to Fiona McLean and Mark O'Neill, museums offer ritual devices, the artefacts of past generations, which reinforce, or help people regain, a lost sense of place.[185] The National Museum of Ireland and the *Treasures of Irish Art* exhibitions have played a significant role in reinventing these identities and developing an imagined community. This national identity is articulated around a number of multiple representational strategies, which are built through the internal ordering and conjugation of the separate but related components of the exhibitions.[186] These representational strategies range from the artefactual emphasis of particular chronological periods and exhibition morphology, to more complex interrelations of components such as linguistic, visual and spatial representational strategies. For instance, the section within the exhibition *Irish Art in the Romanesque and Gothic Periods* was originally planned to be called *The Anglo-Norman Impact*.[187] And while the Metropolitan Museum of Art was in charge of the exhibition design, the catalogue entries that dictated the periods within the show seem to treat the Anglo-Norman period as a moment to maintain cultural distinctiveness or decolonize historical narratives. In his essay in the catalogue, Roger A. Stalley states: "The colonization of Ireland was a slow process, and in artistic matters there was a long period of cultural "overlap". Nevertheless, the ultimate effect of the invasion was the extinction of native styles and techniques. It is true that some of the invaders valued Irish craftmanship… but it remains a fact that no Anglo-Norman patron appears to have employed Irish artists in the decades following the invasion".[188] Whether the scholarship behind the statement perhaps cannot be challenged, it is in the drastic contradictory declaration that while some patrons valued Irish craftmanship, the ultimate effect of the invasion was the 'extinction' of native craft.

Within the artefactual emphasis all the artefacts are represented as art objects. This functionalist stance shows how various craft techniques were operated in the past and tries to create a picture of a whole mechanically-functioning self-sufficient society. On the other hand, there is also a common thread through the interpretation of the objects as works of art where the interpretation of artefacts depends upon the acceptance that the object embodies a very particular kind of symbolic power with a universal significance, partly not taking into account the original functionality of the artefacts. Furthermore, the internal furniture of the exhibition has a part to play in the way things can be spaced, placed and known. Space and knowledge are

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[185] F. McLean, and M. O'Neill, "'The Social Museum' and its Implications for Marketing", in *Museum Marketing: Competing in a Global Marketplace*, eds. R. Rentschler and A. Hede (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., 2007), 218.

[186] H. Lidchi, "The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures", in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. S. Hall (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, in association with the Open University, 1997) 168.

[187] "Letter from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", Op. Cit. (note 160).

[188] R. A. Stalley, "Irish Art in the Romanesque and Gothic Periods", in *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, ed. F. G. Mitchell (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art Publication, 1978), 192.

articulated in exhibitions in a specific manner. The spatial arrangements of the exhibition divide, control, and give meaning to the material things and the desires of the curator. Within the exhibition morphology, the display cases themselves also dictate the organization of knowledge and emphasize some themes above others. The combination of objects is generally linear. They must be consumed while on the move, walking past a series of fixed points. The effect of laying out objects for linear consumption is to produce a single narrative, generally with only one viewpoint, or one argument presented. The emphasis on particular narratives and how they are constructed through spatial modes was particularly evident when evaluating the exhibition's layout and the micro-level analysis of particular artefacts.[189] Out of the artefacts included in the exhibitions, not all of them were equally highlighted. Some were given prominence above others either by their visual emphasis whether as a single centralised artefact within the rank unit of the gallery such as the *Processional Cross of Cong* and the *Harp* (Fig. 2), or as part of a display case such the *Emly Shrine* (Fig. 3), or by allocating individual gallery spaces such as the *Book of Kells* (Fig. 4), creating emphasis of meaning and symbolism within the exhibition's narrative. For instance, as already mentioned, within the exhibition rhetoric the Brian Boru *Harp* was often referred to as the national symbol of Ireland as it is pictured on the official stationery and publications of the Republic of Ireland, and it forms part of Guinness branding, perhaps the most internationally successful Irish company at the time, and it was also included in Irish coinage. The chronological order of the exhibition situated the *Harp* as the very last object of the exhibition, and whether the selection of objects was based around this particular scenario is unclear. However, spatial and visual prominence was given to the *Harp* (Fig. 2) emphasizing the connection between past and present as closing moment of the exhibition.

[189] E. Hooper-Greenhill, "The Space of the Museum", *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, vol. 3 no 1 (1990), 56-69.



Figure 2: Installation view, Exhibition End Hall. *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archive.



Figure 3: Installation view, "The Christian Triumph: The Golden Age – Display 1". *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archive.



Figure 4: Installation view, "The Book of Kells Room". *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archive.

As for the rest of the venues in the American tour it was stipulated in early exhibition proposals that the exhibition should be the same throughout the United States. That is, the same cases, decks, mounts and plexiglass were to be used throughout, as well as the special enlarged photography and descriptive panels as a "package", colours of galleries, and while maintaining the chronological narrative, precise ordering of the cases varied slightly in individual institutions.[190] While the exhibition took place there were advanced discussions to extend the tour to include the Smithsonian Institution, and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., and as already mentioned the Musée du Louvre in Paris.[191] While the Metropolitan Museum of Art was on board with the idea of the extension originally, the executive team at the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the support of Peter Brown, rejected the idea on the basis of not wanting to extend contractual obligations from the Metropolitan Museum of Art point of view, and conservation issues from Trinity College Dublin point of view.[192]

Prior to the end of the American tour, the Irish Ministry of Education decided to mount *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* in the National Museum of Ireland as soon as the exhibition returned to Dublin. In order that the exhibition could be installed in Dublin under standards similar to the ones maintained during the American tour, the Ministry requested of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that the cases, mounts, and photo panels used during the American tour be sent to Ireland. Philippe de Montebello, newly appointed director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, agreed to the request and as such the "package" exhibition opened in Dublin in 1980 before the European tour commenced.

Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D opened to the public at the Grand Palais, Paris in October 1982 and ran until February 1983. The exhibition then moved to the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne from February to May 1983; the Dahlem Museum, Berlin from June to October 1983; the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam from November 1983 to February 1984; and the final stop was the Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek, near Copenhagen from March to June 1984. Unlike the American tour, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art oversaw coordinating and heavily contributing to the different exhibition-making processes that were part of the tour, the European Tour was co-ordinated by the Royal Irish Academy. On this occasion, the project management team included the National Museum, and previous partner for the American tour, Trinity College Dublin. Different to the American Tour also was the creation of subcommittees through the different embassies of the four countries involved in the project. While these subcommittees were not involved in fundamental decision-making processes, they were in charge of looking after promotion of the exhibition locally, by co-ordinating events associated

[190] "Letter from T. Hoving to D. I. D. Howie", Op. Cit. (note 171).
[191] "Letter from C. T. Little to F. G. Mitchell", November 11, 1976, Box 42, Folder 9, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[192] "Letter from P. de Montebello to F. G. Mitchell et al", May 10, 1978, Office of Secretary Records - Loan Exhibition 1977 T.E.I.A - Proposal additional locations, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

with the exhibitions such as cultural and lecturing programming, and press and media. For instance, the 'Treasures sub-committee' for the Rijksmuseum was made up of the Irish Ambassador to the Netherlands; one member of the Irish Industrial Development Authority; one member of the Irish Exports Board; one staff member from the exhibition sponsor, Aer Lingus; two members from the Dutch Friends of Ireland association; and one staff member from the Rijksmuseum.[193]

The selection of venues for the European Tour, as already discussed, was dictated by the 'diplomatic agreement' between Charles Haughey and then prime minister of France, Raymond Barre. While during the American leg of the exhibition it had been planned to present the exhibition at the Louvre, the selected venue in Paris in the end was the Grand Palais. The Grand Palais was the venue in Paris that had hosted some of the early blockbuster exhibitions and international fairsm and as such it seemed a sensible solution. The way in which the other venues were selected is unclear. France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark, were four of the strongest and better established economies in Europe at the time. Likewise, Germany's political power within the European Union was undisputed. So perhaps it is understandable that the exhibition toured in two cities in Germany. Like the American tour, there is also a sense of 'preaching-to-the-converted' when evaluating the selection of venues for the European leg of the exhibition, as all the countries involved in the project had historical links to a Celtic cultural past. The Louisiana Museum in Humlebaek, near Copenhagen, as a chosen venue however, seems to be the anomaly within not only the museums selected for the European tour, but also as part of the overall touring exhibition. The Louisiana Museum was the only museum located outside a large urban centre, as well as being the only museum of contemporary art where *Treasures of Irish Art* was shown. This perhaps resonated with early *Rosc* exhibitions and the juxtaposition of antiquity and contemporary art as a way of explaining a continuity of art expression.[194]

The involvement of the Netherlands in the European tour can be traced back to April 1978, when a Dutch cultural commissioner visited Dublin. The visit was jointly organized by the Dutch government and the Cultural Relations Committee in Ireland, and according to the final report from the Dutch cultural commissioner, the aim of the visit was to "explore facilities and possibilities in Ireland in the field of museums and exhibitions, partly in connection with possible exchanges".[195] As such the Dutch cultural commissioner visited the Chester Beatty Library and the National Museum of Ireland where he met the then director of the institution, Joseph Raftery. According to the Dutch report, central to their discussion was the possibility of

[193] "Treasures of Ireland Exhibition Meeting", July 5, 1982, Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946-1995, Noord-Hollands Archief.
[194] This argument about the *Rosc* exhibitions and their inclusion of antiquity art will be expanded on a later chapter.
[195] "Treasures of Ireland Exhibition Meeting", July 5, 1982, Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946-1995, Noord-Hollands Archief.

hosting the *Treasures of Irish Art* exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in the later part of 1979, after the exhibition had been shown in Paris.[196] Early attempts to prolong the American tour were obviously unsuccessful, and it was not until May 1980 that the then Director of the Rijksmuseum, H. S. Levie, was contacted by the Irish Ambassador to the Netherlands at the time, Seán Morrissey, offering an exhibition of Irish Treasures after their "conversation at a U.S. Embassy Dinner".[197] What Morrissey offered to Levie was the exhibition of gold and other objects from the National Museum of Ireland that was going to be shown at *Europalia* in October 1980. Responding to Morrissey Levie wrote: "It is most kind of you to draw my attention to the 'Europalia' exhibition in Brussels next Autumn. I looked over the list of objects to be shown in Brussels and I compared it with the catalogue of the 'Treasures of Early Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.' exhibition. I am sorry to say that this leads me to the conclusion that only the latter exhibition can be of interest to the Rijksmuseum".[198]

The *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* exhibition was in many ways a referential point to the European show. As already discussed the aim of the European exhibition was also to transform the image of Ireland abroad: "At a time when the international news media is tending to focus on the more negative news items emanating from this country, this exhibition serves to remind the world of our proud creative heritage".[199] In terms of exhibition-making processes, as with the American tour, the exhibition was deliberately didactic using works of art, photography, and the exhibition catalogue to tell the history of art produced in Ireland. However, within the organizing committee in Dublin, there was a sense that the exhibition, and particularly the catalogue from the American show, were not scholarly and "penetrating" enough.[200] As such the catalogue was revisited and new entries were commissioned. Equally a larger and more varied selection of objects was made. In total ninety-one objects were exhibited during the European leg. The same items from the American tour travelled, with some additions to illustrate the extension of the timeframe of the exhibition, and minus the *Cross of Cong* which was deemed too delicate to go on loan again, and the *Emly Shrine*, from the Boston Museum of Fine Art collection. The exhibition organizers requested a loan of the shrine but it was not granted.[201] In total the objects were divided by contributing collection as follows: one object from the Royal Irish Academy Library; nine from Trinity College Dublin Library; fifty-seven from the Royal Irish Academy collection in custody at the National Museum of Ireland; and the other twenty-four from the National Museum of Ireland

[196] "London – Dublin, 3-9 April 1978", Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946-1995, Noord-Hollands Archief.
[197] "Letter from S. Morrisey to H. S. Levie", May 22, 1980, Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946-1995, Noord-Holland Archief.
[198] "Letter from H. S. Levie to S. Morrisey", June 2, 1980, Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946-1995, Noord-Holland Archief.
[199] "Dáil Éireann díospóireacht – Déardaoin", Op. Cit. (note 147).
[200] R. Ó Floinn, interview by the author. Dublin, 6th of June 2019.
[201] Ibid.

collection including objects from, at the time, recent excavations at Fishamble Street, Dublin. The date range of the objects exhibited during the European tour ranged from the early bronze age *Carved Stone*, c. 3000 B.C. to the late medieval period *Wooden Harp – 'The Brian Boru' Harp* c. late fifteenth century.

The exhibition space at the Rijksmuseum was in the west wing of the ground floor of the museum's building within the temporary exhibitions galleries (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: Installation views, "General Installation Views". *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, Rijksmuseum. Source: Rijksmuseum Archive.

Within the display the objects were presented chronologically with material and technique subsections. This was also reflected in the European version of the catalogue. In the catalogue the chronological, material, and technique sections were divided as follows: *The Early Prehistoric Period*; *Irish Prehistoric Gold Working*; *The Iron Age ca. 300 B.C. - 450 A.D.*; *Early Christian Ireland ca. 400 A.D. - ca. 1,000 A.D.*; *Metalwork and Style in the Early Christian Period 7th - 10th Century A.D.*; *Irish Manuscripts in the Early Middle Ages; Viking and Romanesque Influences*; and *The Norman Conquest and the Later Middle Ages*.[202] As well as these historical periods and subsections, as with the American tour, the exhibition included an orientation area which included photographs, a general timeline, and a map marking the location of where the objects originated from (Fig. 6).

[202] *Treasures of Ireland: Irish Art 3,000 B.C. to 1,500 A.D.*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1983).



Figure 6: Installation view, "Orientation Area". *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, Rijksmuseum. Source: Rijksmuseum Archive.

While not presented as a 'package' exhibition as each institution in the European tour was given certain curatorial freedoms, the legal agreement for the exhibition was very specific about the way in which the objects were to be displayed. This was the case in order to emulate the American tour display. For instance, the general guidelines to mount the exhibition were provided by the National Museum of Ireland to each European hosting institution as follows: "The objects should not be displayed on patterned backgrounds. As many are of a brown bronze in colour, strong brown backgrounds should be avoided. Light should strike objects obliquely to create shadow to bring out detail".[203] Again, in blockbuster exhibition 'fashion', the theatrical lighting formed part of the early tradition of 'treasures' exhibitions (Fig. 7). Therefore, similar arguments in relation to exhibition-making processes can be made for both exhibitions. Firstly, the way in which historical interpretations gave emphasis to the authentication of the objects as pinnacles of Irish history whether art history or craft history. Secondly, the way in which space and knowledge were articulated in both exhibitions in a specific manner to produce a single narrative, generally with only one viewpoint, or one argument presented. And thirdly, a 'vision' of Irish national identity based around its ethnic heritage, which has been constructed as an 'authentic' pre-modern state.[204]

[203] "Revised guidance to the mounting of the object in 'Treasures of Ireland Exhibition'", Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946-1995, Noord-Holland Archief.
[204] E. Hooper-Greenhill, Op. Cit. (note 189), 56-69.



Figure 7: Installation view, "Metalwork and Style in the Early Christian Period 7th - 10th Century A.D – Display 3". *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, Rijksmuseum. Source: Rijksmuseum Archive.

However, the origins of this 'vision' is where the exhibitions differ. In terms of objects, the most populated section was the one that covered the time period 3000 B.C. to 400 A.D. with thirty-six objects. This time period was covered in the catalogue by the sections: *The Early Prehistoric Period*, *Irish Prehistoric Gold Working*, and The *Iron Age ca. 300 B.C. - 450 A.D.* The section that covered 400 A.D. to 1000 A.D. included thirty-five objects. This time period was addressed in the exhibition catalogue by the chapters: *Early Christian Ireland ca. 400 A.D. - ca. 1000 A.D.* and *Metalwork and Style in the Early Christian Period 7th - 10th Century A.D.* with thirty-five objects. Finally, the section that covered the time period 1000 A.D. to 1500 A.D. included twenty objects. This time period was covered by the catalogue under the chapters: *Irish Manuscripts in the Early Middle Ages*, *Viking and Romanesque Influences*, and *The Norman Conquest and the Later Middle Ages*. Selection of the additional objects was made by curators at the National Museum of Ireland. While most of the selection of additional objects focused on covering the expanded timeline of the exhibition, additional objects were also added to the pre-established selection created for the American tour. However, while the American tour focused on objects of personal adornment and of liturgical use, the additional objects for the European tour also included warfare objects such as *Bronze Sword* and *Shield*, and tools such as *Hammer Heads*. As already mentioned, the curators' choices and presentation criteria reveal scales of value. While the addition of new 'functional' objects did not fully transform the overall narrative of the exhibition presented in the American tour such as Christianity, or the Celts as the origin of an 'abundant' 'mechanically-functioning self-sufficient' Irish society with a rich cultural past, the added objects created additional layers of socio-cultural context for the European tour. This new additional layer of socio-cultural context focused on creating a shared past with Europe, rather than the 'exclusive' sense of the origin of an Irish cultural past presented at the American tour. This was reiterated by the way in which the additional objects were described within the catalogue entries, such as the *Bronze Sword*

described as of "continental origin".[205] While the American catalogue for the exhibition included 'unavoidable' references to European influences in Irish art, particularly in the section *Foreign Influences and the Beginnings of Christian Art*, the catalogue entries from the American catalogue were also expanded to create this new narrative of a shared past. For instance, in the European catalogue, the description of the *Brian Boru Harp* focused on creating links to Scotland as part of describing the Irish and Scottish shared regional past during the later middle ages. However, the American catalogue only focuses on the rarity of the object with no reference to similar examples and with no mention of possible external influences.[206]

Catalogues warrant special attention within the blockbuster phenomenon because they are sites where the various and often contradictory values of the blockbuster exhibition meet. According to Jim Berryman, on the one hand, the catalogue can perform as a justification for commercial and economic interests, "by providing a scholarly or educational justification for these spectacular events".[207] On the other hand, the catalogue is merchandise: a commemorative commodity "highly conducive to the interests of marketing and sponsorship branding".[208] The catalogue is the published record of the exhibition, a research output written by curators and experts for a peer and popular audience. It is a learning tool. However, it is also a souvenir and visual memento of the masterpieces we saw in the congested exhibition space. The blockbuster catalogue is also merchandise, a commodity we buy in the exhibition shop, along with postcards, fridge magnets, coffee cups, and other art paraphernalia. It is branded with the logos and testimonials of political and corporate sponsors, who extol the virtues of art and culture: "Indeed, nothing denotes an exhibition's blockbuster status more than a large and lavishly illustrated catalogue".[209] The exhibition catalogue has a particular status in the symbolic order of blockbuster merchandise. This legitimacy is derived from the catalogue's distinctive association with the aesthetic and scholarly aims of the exhibition. A legitimacy, in turn, which is derived from the art museum's aesthetic mission: "to educate and edify the public".[210] For this reason, the catalogue is a necessary commodity, one that serves to justify and validate the blockbuster's legitimacy in aesthetic and scholarly terms. As one commentator put it, the catalogue is "the single most important commodity associated with a blockbuster" and "the one with the greatest intellectual respectability".[211]

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[205] *Treasures of Ireland: Irish Art 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, Op. Cit. (note 199), 192.
[206] Ibid, 180.; *Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* ed. F. G. Mitchell (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art Publication, 1977), 218-219.
[207] J. Berryman, "The Blockbuster's 'Alibi': The Exhibition Catalogue and Legitimacy", in *Aesthetics, Politics and Histories: The Social Context of Art, Conference Proceedings, Melbourne December 5-7, 2018.* Sidney: AAANZ Publications, 2018.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] E. Barker, Op. Cit. (note 8), 133.

One of the variations between the American and European tours was the difference in title. For the European tour the words 'art' and 'early' were dropped from the title.[212] This can be interpreted as an emphasis on the idea of a timeless/continuous abundance without timeframe or formal specifications of the past. Regardless of these fundamental differences, as with the American tour, in the European exhibition and catalogue narratives the idea that national identity is also symbolically grounded in 'folk', however the origin of that identity comes from a shared past. Likewise, the American and European tour narratives invested in a form of nostalgia in which the past is viewed as the epitome of coherence and order. Therefore, identity has symbolic associations that are emotionally invested in a sense of place – Irish Motherland for the American tour, and Europe's shared Celtic past for the European tour. This duality is at the centre of the contextual identity parameters set by the exhibitions. Through the attention to the formation of cultural heritage within the exhibition-making process, it can help us understand the ways in which national identity in Ireland at the time was infused with transnational connections, U.S.A. (Irish motherland) and EU (shared past), as well as Great Britain (decolonisation), and how alternative versions of the nation were imagined in each section of the touring exhibition.

7.4 Exhibition culture: fostering mutual dialogue and understanding

The dual version of the exhibition and the national and ethnic homophily approach to the selection of venues had a positive impact, particularly on the responses of local Irish groups and Irish diaspora and their sense of Irishness. According to Mollica et al. in their analysis of ethnic or national homophily in diaspora networks, they have found that ethnic minorities exhibited greater sense of national homophily.[213] For instance, Gavin P. Murphy, Secretary-General of the American Irish Historical Society at the time, reflects on the impact of the exhibition on behalf of the Society:

"It has been, by any measure, a unique event in our nation's cultural history. Never before, (and in all probably, never again), have Americans been able to view first-hand such a collection, evidencing the incalculable aesthetic and intellectual contribution made by Irish of antiquity in the evolution of our civilization".[214]

[212] This was the case for the exhibition and catalogues for the tour, which were created in the language of each participating country translated from English. However, in the English version of the catalogue published by the National Museum of Ireland, the title's tag line includes *Irish Art.*

[213] K. A. Mollica, B. Gray, and L. K. Trevino, "Racial Homophily and Its Persistence in Newcomers", *Social Networks Organization*, 14, 2003, 123-136.

[214] "Letter from G. P. Murphy to P. de Montebello", April 23, 1979, Box 30 - T.E.I.A. – Correspondence, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

This was also reflected in one of the answers to the survey carried out for this study: "While I never was much of a sentimental for Irishness, as an Irish student living abroad at the time, seeing the [Paris] exhibition made me feel proud".[215]

The Irishness presented through the exhibition is placed around the Celtic foundational myth. As already discussed, representational strategies and symbolic systems of classification and display created for the *Treasures of Irish Art Exhibitions* of a linear chronological narrative, visual 'idyllic' illustrations and the textual presentations in the catalogue. Central to these representational strategies is not only the selection of objects themselves but the way in which those objects were original collected.

As already discussed, the Celtic foundational myth has its origins in the late nineteenth century Gaelic Revival. The Gaelic Revival lent great importance to the collections of antiquities, so that they supported a renewed Gaelic identity in contrast to Anglo-Saxon England.[216] With this in mind, it should be considered that the Royal Irish Academy's collection has its roots in the Anglo-Irish elite that was at the centre of the Gaelic revival, as they were the principal collectors that bequeathed or sold their antiquities to the Royal Irish Academy. The Royal Irish Academy was founded in 1785. Its royal charter, granted the following year, declared its aims to be the promotion and investigation of the sciences, polite literature, and antiquities, as well as the encouragement of discussion and debate between scholars of diverse backgrounds and interests. The early academy was concerned to provide an opportunity for the development of antiquarian studies and was the first Irish society to successfully balance the requirements of the sciences and the humanities. The academy was housed first at Grafton Street, Dublin (adjoining the Royal Dublin Society at the time), but its increasing collection of antiquities was one reason why it moved in 1851 to the present premises at Dawson Street. In anticipation of the British Association coming to Dublin in 1857, William Wilde organized a new display for the museum objects and prepared a ground-breaking catalogue of antiquities (1857-62). As already mentioned, the whole collection was transferred in 1890 to the new Dublin Science and Art Museum (now the National Museum of Ireland), with the academy retaining custody under certain conditions. This material included some of the country's best-known treasures, such as the *Cross of Cong*, the *Tara Brooch*, and the *Ardagh Chalice*; some of these had been donated or bequeathed to the academy, others bought through subscriptions from individual members.[217]

As previously discussed, both exhibitions *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* and *Irish Treasures: 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D.* were clearly subject to political motivations.

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[215] F. Sanchez-Migallon Cano, "The Power of Display: Exhibition Cultures and Exhibited Culture in Ireland 1973-1991 – Online Questionnaire", entry no. 8, June 9, 2019.
[216] A. Sawyer, Op. Cit. (note 94), 435-460.
[217] T. Ó Raifeartaigh (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy: a bicentennial history, 1785-1985*, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1985), 1-5.

These political motivations dictated and regulated all the elements of the exhibition – production, representation, consumption, and identity. As already quoted, the exhibition was organized with the aim of portraying Ireland of the late 1970s as something other than a place of "violence, conflict, bombs, bullets and bloodshed".[218] This refers to the already discussed period of fighting and civil unrest, primarily in Northern Ireland but also in the Republic, referred to as 'The Troubles', with religious and political differences at the core. F. G. Mitchell, on the other hand, in his preface to the exhibition catalogue for the American tour does not enter into the rhetoric of transforming the image of Ireland abroad and states that the reason behind the exhibition was: "Ireland paying tribute to the American people for the generous help she has received throughout the past two hundred years".[219]

Homan Potterton at the time argued that there were no financial gains to be had for Ireland, but there were also no costs; the host institutions covered all finances and funded an exhibition that the Irish would not have been able to afford at home.[220] That was the case for the European leg of the tour. However, for the American tour, as well as covering the cost, each of the institutions contributed a nominal fee of $50,000. How this nominal fee was used is unclear. There are two archival entries with two different sets of information. The first one refers to Trinity College Dublin and the Royal Irish Academy using the nominal fee for "scholarly purposes".[221] The second one refers to the money going to the National Museum of Ireland and Trinity College towards the reinstallation and preservation of treasures.[222] Furthermore, in both exhibitions part of the lengthy contractual negotiations was the discussion around the commission percentage from merchandise sales to be received by the Irish institutions.[223] However, with the inclusion of the Irish Export Board, the Irish Industrial Development Authority, and Aer Lingus as part of the organising subcommittee for each of the hosting countries, the political aim of transforming the image of Ireland internationally gained a commercial dimension. For instance, at the Rijksmuseum, the Industrial Development Authority hosted a number of private viewings of the exhibition.[224] It is important to remember that the original purpose of blockbuster exhibitions was to provide museums with additional streams of funding. However, the involvement of governmental organizations in charge of economic development could be seen as political action to further the economy in Ireland whether through tourism or other enterprises.

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[218] D. Rushe, "There is More to Ireland Than Violence", *The New York Times*, September 7, 1977.
[219] F. G. Mitchell, et al*., Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), ix.
[220] H. Potterton, "America's Gain, Ireland's Loss?" *The Irish Times*, November 2, 1977.
[221] "Proposed Exhibition", Box 42, Folder 3, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[222] "Letter from K. Katz to J. D. J. Moore", March 28, 1977, Box 42, Folder 3, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[223] "Letter from P. K. Bardel to J. Fontain" June 23, 1977, Office of Secretary Records - Loan Exhibition 1977 T.E.I.A - T.E.I.A. at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[224] "Exhibition Opening Schedule", Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946 – 1995, Noord-Holland Archief

Whether the *Treasures of Irish Art* would have financially benefitted Ireland is unclear and difficult to measure. However, it would certainly have brought in funds for the host institutions. Although they had to cover costs, they were all large institutions which charged entry fees, and particularly in America, the number of visitors suggests that the museums would have made a profit rather than a loss. For instance, the annual report of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, indicated that the financial year was closed with some gains.[225] Apart from any direct financial gain on either side of the exhibition, the aim was clearly to put Ireland on the map, increase its popularity abroad, and portray it as a country "that for thousands of years produced art of a quality as high as that to be found anywhere else in the world".[226]

As already mentioned, there were several controversies surrounding the *Treasures of Irish Art* exhibitions. Namely, the lack of transparency and logistical involvement in the early stages of the exhibition-making process, as well as concerns for the safe keeping of the objects while outside Ireland. David Greene, in his editorial response to S. H. Wright, tries to subtract importance from the issue particularly about the complaints: "He [Wright] tells us that "most of the curators in charge in Dublin and many specialists in Europe and America were outspoken in their opposition" to the project. There were objections from some of the curators, but "outspoken" they were not".[227] There are always two sides to every argument, however, there are records that suggests that there was a general concern amongst experts in Dublin and America. For instance, in an editorial letter to the New York Times, Ernst Kitzinger, Professor of Medieval Studies at Harvard University, expressed his concerns in relation to the safe keeping of the objects travelling to the U.S. Responding to a letter from Philippe de Montebello, he reiterates his argument: "I have no doubt that these measures have been most carefully and expertly devised and that the staffs of all the museums involved are fully conscious of their responsibility. But, … all the travel is intrinsically hazardous". In the same letter, Kitzinger also includes a shared statement signed by forty-one local experts.[228] Kitzinger was not proved right during the American leg of the tour, however, he was to be proved right when the Book of Kells was damaged during *The Book of Kells and the Art of Illumination* exhibition.

This concern for the safe keeping of the objects was central to the production and the consumption of the exhibitions. For instance, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, perhaps to appease some of the critics of the exhibition, released a press statement indicating the different measures taken to safeguard the objects titled: Metropolitan Museum designs special environmental unit for precious illuminated manuscripts on loan from Ireland for exhibition

[225] "Annual Report July 1,1978-June 30, 1979" *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 75, No. 327 (Winter, 1979).
[226] B. Gill, "Out of the Bogs", *The New Yorker*, October 31, 1977,
[227] D. Greene, Op. Cit. (note 141).
[228] "Letter from E. Kitzinger to P. de Montebello" Box 30 - T.E.I.A. – Correspondence, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

(Fig. 8). The press release details the technical elements of the units, but also mentions that Stuart O Seanóir, Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts of Trinity College, was to travel with the manuscripts throughout their United States tour.[229]

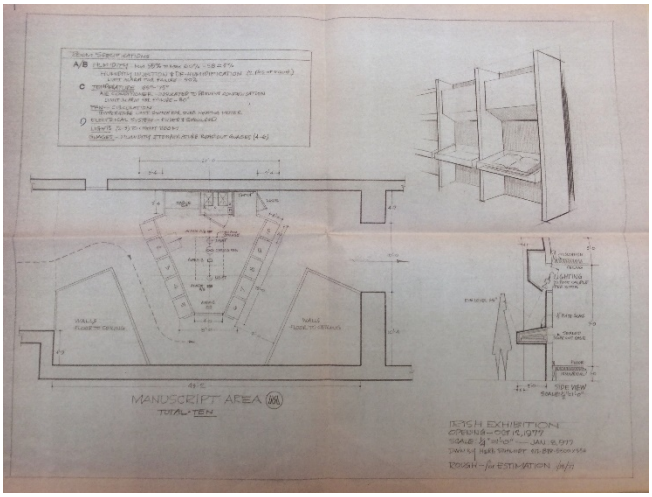


Figure 8: Environmental Unit Design. *Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: Royal Irish Academy Archive, Boxes C/6/4/misc. I-K.

A similar measure was taken for the rest of the objects and a curator from the National Museum of Ireland travelled with the objects. The same arrangement was made for the European leg of the tour. These extraordinary measures were also reflected in the way in which the exhibition was consumed, as additional security measures were put in place particularly for the American section of the show. The particulars of these measures were detailed in one of the later exhibition proposals: "The exhibition will be designed so that cases are widely spaced, which will allow more open space in the galleries for surveillance by Museum security personnel and monitoring by closed circuit T.V". Charles Little, Head of Exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art at the time continues: "The traffic from the exhibition will be routed form the Great Hall, up the escalator to the second floor Great Hall balcony. This long routing will permit the guards on the balcony to survey visitors prior to their entrance into the first gallery of the exhibition". Finally, Little concludes: "If the political situation warrants added precaution, visitors will be either physically searched, or searched by use of electronic Rapidex".[230] Also, with conservation in mind, central for the production and consumption of the exhibition was lighting. As already quoted: "lighting will play an important role since the light levels for the manuscripts will have to be kept very low, whereas the prehistoric objects should be emerging from dark into golden light, and the metal objects should be bathed in

[229] "Press Release" June 4, 1977, Box 42, Folder 9, Exhibition Office records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.
[230] "Security Procedures: Treasures of Early Irish Art", Op. Cit. (note 173).

light".[231] This blockbuster 'theatricality' as a by-product of object preservation had its impact on visitors:

"… being so rushed through the dimly lighted room in which the Book of Kells was displayed that [we] lacked not only time to read the explanatory card shown with that famous manuscript, but also adequate light to see either the treasure or its card": Visitor at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco. "Disappointing. Crowds of people, a dimly lighted room, a limited time permitted per viewer": Visitor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[232]

Crucial to these comments and the way in which the exhibition was consumed was the 'crowds'. In blockbuster 'fashion', the exhibitions' attendances could be considered a success. Initially it was expected that the American tour alone would draw 100,000 visitors per month.[233] Whilst this number was not quite attained, over its eighteen month display period in the U.S.A., the exhibition did draw close to one million visitors, with another 600,000 attending the exhibition on its return to Ireland.[234] During the European tour, the exhibition attracted almost half a million people, half the number of visitors of the U.S.A. despite the two tours comprising roughly the same amount of time and the same number of cities in total, however a substantial figure none the less.[235] Paramount to obtaining these attendance figures as part of the consumption process was substantial publicity campaigns. For instance, according to the Metropolitan Museum Archives over sixty reviews of the exhibition were published. While most of these reviews of the American tour were well disposed toward the exhibition, and not overly critical as such, their focus was on the cultural significance of the occasion. Others, such as Desmond Rushe for the *New York Times* focused on the political aim of the exhibition, but also focused on the essentialism of Irish national identity: "The early art exhibition will recall times of exquisite duplicity with which, on the more profound levels of heart, soul and mind, the modern Irish might more validly identify".[236] Similarly, with a more 'decolonising' approach, Pete Hamill from *Daily News* wrote: "They educated the English teaching them to write, introducing them to art, welcoming them to free instruction at their monasteries. The final irony of all is buried there somewhere; in those ignorant and ugly years of the Dark Ages, intelligence was a most spectacular gift, and as history shows, the English showed the Irish no gratitude at all. Perhaps this show's greatest triumph will be to help readdress some of the imbalance in the English speaking world".[237] Others, such as Robert Hughes at *Time Magazine*, were more critical, particularly of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

[231] "Letter from K. Katz to F. G. Mitchell", Op. Cit. (note 160).
[232] S. Powers, "Why Exhibit? The Risks Versus the Benefits", *The American Archivist*: July 1978, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 297-306.
[233] H. Potterton, Op. Cit. (note 220).
[234] R. Doyle, "Irish treasures show ends a triumphant tour". *The Irish Press*, October 31, 1981,
[235] Aidan Duggan, "Treasures of Ireland" - European Tour, Draft of article for *Cara Magazine*, July 1984, Royal Irish Academy Archive, Boxes C/6/4/misc. I-K.
[236] D. Rushe, Op. Cit. (note 218).
[237] P. Hamill, "The roots of Irish Art", *Daily News*, October 23, 1977.

and the blockbuster exhibition format: "Its only fault, a too common one at the Metropolitan, is the installation – a gross Tiffany-in-Vegas effort, with each item so harshly spotlit that the exaggerated shadows break up the intricate gold surfaces, eliding the exquisitely delicate transitions of depth and texture which were the very essence of the Celtic jewellers' art. Everything looks as if it were for sale".[238] Also using the shopping experience as a metaphor, John Russell at the *New York Times*, understood the exhibition differently: "An ingenious design has insured that even the smallest of the many small objects in the show can be seen close-up. No one tries to tell us what to think. Export exhibitions of 'national treasures' can end up looking like an ethnic thrift shop, but in this case, we walk out bemused, bedazzled, hungry for more".[239]

Another hallmark of blockbusters exhibitions is their aim for reciprocity and building partnerships. Reciprocity was at the centre of the debate at the Oireachtas, when the Taoiseach announced his agreement to have the *Irish Treasures 3000 B.C. to 3000 A.D.* exhibition visit Paris. Neither Paris, nor the other European or American museums reciprocated with exhibitions of their own.[240] Working together and collaborating offers museums the opportunity to learn from, and also in a sense, monitor one another, potentially helping to ensure best practice. Reciprocity and collaboration provide museums with a network and support system of peers. Partnering on exhibitions means that expertise can be shared and even once the loans are complete, hopefully a good working relationship will have been established and advice and assistance would be available when needed. There is a sense that the Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College Dublin, and the National Museum of Ireland benefited from the exchange. Had an exhibition of this scale been hosted in Ireland, it would have incurred massive costs. When the exhibition did return to Ireland before moving on to Europe, all the objects would already have been prepared and the display planned, meaning the whole operation would have been less costly and time consuming than if they had planned a new exhibition.

According to Raghnall Ó Floinn, former Director of the National Museum of Ireland, and one of the curators travelling with the exhibitions during both tours, the main impact that the exhibitions had, particularly on the American leg of show, was a level of expertise that did not exist in Ireland at the time. According to Ó Floinn, at the time of the American tour the National Museum of Ireland did not have a lighting system in place or even controlled humidity within the galleries. As already mentioned, part of the benefits of the American tour was that a 'treasures' exhibition was already in place, whether to be exhibited in Dublin or to be sent to Europe. Ó Floinn also suggests that another benefit from the American tour was the

[238] R. Hughes, "Gold for the Dark Ages", *Time Magazine*, November 11, 1977.
[239] J. Russell, "From their Isle to our isle, a treasury of Irish art", *The New York Times*, October 14, 1977.
[240] "Ceisteanna - Questions. Oral Answers. - Early Irish Art Exhibition", Op. Cit. (note 147).

exhibition management skills gained during the process. An intermediary institution such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art was not required for the European leg of the tour and the Royal Irish Academy in collaboration with the National Museum of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin co-ordinated the European show.[241]

However, the travelling exhibition would have alerted other international museums to the expertise possessed by the curators, conservators, and organisers in the Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College Dublin, and the National Museum of Ireland, and may have led to long term partnerships in relation to seeking professional advice. Equally, the loan of the Book of Kells to the National Gallery of Australia would have furthered an exchange of knowledge between staff. Whether it led to reciprocal loans is unclear, however working relationships appear to have been positive. This newly gained expertise from the American tour was reflected in the way in which certain elements of the exhibition-making process at the Rijksmuseum took place. For instance, the Rijksmuseum curators requested the possibility of changing the fabric on the background panels within the cases where the manuscripts would be exhibited. While the reason behind the change was aesthetic, the curators at Trinity College deemed it unnecessary due to the danger of using untested materials.[242]

Treasures of Early Irish Art: 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D. was among the first exhibitions to be partially indemnified by the U.S.A. government under 1975 *Arts and Artifacts Indemnity*. This was central to regulation of the exhibitions and without this policy, Ireland would not have been able to afford the insurance and everything that goes with mounting such a loan exhibition.[243] Meredith Hindley explains that after seeing a copy of the budget from the British Museum's 1972 Tutankhamun show, Thomas Hoving was concerned. The insurance costs alone were staggering, not to mention the additional staff and logistical support required. Help appeared on the insurance front when Congress passed the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act in December 1975. As such *Treasures of Tutankhamun* was at the centre of discussion during the different hearings that led to the passing of the new law.[244] According to Hindley, it was the political intervention to materialise the Treasures of Tutankhamun project that led to passing of the bill making the *Treasures of Tutankhamun* the first international art exhibition indemnified under the new law.[245]

The Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program is an insurance policy for U.S. museums. As of 2015, it provided up to $1.8 billion in coverage for any single exhibition, and a cumulative $15 billion in insurance for museum exhibits around the country at any one time, when objects are

[241] R. Ó Floinn, interview by the author, Op. Cit. (note 200).
[242] "Letter from P. Brown to R. van Eijle", July 11, 1983, Tentoonstelling Ierse Kunst, Rijksmuseum 1946-1995, Noord-Holland Archief
[243] H. Potterton, Op. Cit. (note 220).
[244] "Art and Artifacts Indemnity Act", H.R.7783, Library of Congress, Washington DC
[245] M. Hindley, "King Tut: A Classic Blockbuster Museum Exhibition That Began as a Diplomatic Gesture", *Humanities*, September/October 2015, Volume 36, Number 5.

borrowed from international lenders. With art loans within the U.S. itself, the limits are up to $1 billion for a single exhibition and a cumulative $7.5 billion. And to keep pace with art values, the federal indemnity cap periodically has been raised by act of Congress.[246] Frederick Ilchman, chairman of the Art of Europe department at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and curator of the blockbuster exhibition, "Goya: Order and Disorder", called the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act: "Essential. Without the indemnity program, the exhibition would have had to be substantially smaller, half the size, perhaps. This exhibition was a once in a lifetime event, and we were able to think big and look thematically over a broad range of themes and media, bringing in works from all over the U.S.A. and Europe. Those lenders would not have let us borrow those pieces if we weren't able to insure them for their entire value".[247]

Between 1975, when the program began, through the end of 2014, approximately 1,200 exhibitions have been insured in whole or in part, "saving museums over $410 million in insurance premiums, the amount they would have paid if there had been no indemnity," said Patricia Loiko, the indemnity program's administrator since 2012. Nevertheless, as of 2015 there have only been two claims for a total of $104,700.[248]

7.5. Conclusion: Identity at the museum as contested site

According to Brian Wallis: "visual representations are key elements in symbolizing and sustaining national communal bonds. Such representations are not just reactive (that is, depictions of an existing state of being), they are also purposefully creative and they can generate new social and political formations".[249] Wallis also suggests that within the "engineered overproduction" of certain types of images, or the censorship or suppression of others, and through governing the way images are viewed or by regulating which are preserved, cultural representations can also be used to produce certain views of a nation's history.[250] Echoing the principles of creation of identity within the Circuit of Culture model, Wallis also suggest that, production and distribution of the symbols of nationalism are by no means controlled exclusively by the governing class; on the opposite, national symbols, such as the *Tara Brooch*, originate their power specifically from the fact that they are universally understood as symbols. Wallis indicates that in either case, nevertheless, the point is that national culture and identity do not exist separately from their social construction: there is no

[246] D. Grant, "The Masterpiece Trade: Meet the U.S. Agency That Makes Museum Blockbusters Possible", *Observer*, March 25, 2015.
[247] Cited by D. Grant, Ibid.
[248] Ibid.
[249] B. Wallis, Op. Cit. (note 67), 280.
[250] Ibid, 280.

national essence, no distinctive Americanness or Irishness, apart from that determined by precise political contexts.[251]

Blockbuster touring exhibitions such as *Treasures of Early Irish Art* are among the means by which nations pursue to create their national identity for international audiences, in the case of *Treasures of Early Irish Art*, American and European audiences. As previously discussed, these exhibitions are intricate, multi-layered engines of international diplomacy, which, when staged appropriately, are almost indiscernible as self-promotions. Their forthright aim is to transform negative stereotypes into positive ones and, in the process, to enhance the economic and political status of their country. According to Wallis: "in an era when global extension and international flows of capital and information, along with the disintegrative forces of separatism, have made 'the nation' seem like a threatened species, national cultural festivals [and the blockbuster exhibitions associated with them] are a very particular sign of the repackaging of the imagery of that political entity".[252]

K. Woodward, also from the prospective of the Circuit of Culture model, has identified several considerations which need to be considered when addressing matters of identity, such as "difference; social and material conditions; and, the ultimate issue, identification, or the positions which people take up and identify with".[253] According to Fiona McLean, identity is often argued to be fixed and unchanged, therefore creating a sense of belonging. The claims are often based on an essentialist interpretation of history and of the past, where history is constructed or embodied as an unchangeable truth.[254] This line of thought regarding identity is very much in use in the social sciences up to date, and has been identified as an essentialist position.[255] In Cultural Diplomacy terms, essentialism considers that representative subjects and their cultures function in a fairly unitary idealized footing that passes through time and is capable of capturing trans-historical principles. For example, Aztecs are Mexicans' true identities, just as the Vikings are the Swedes', or Celts are the Irish and Scots.[256]

Woodward suggests that: "The heritage industry seems to present only one version".[257] According to McLean, identity is relational, and difference is established by symbolic marking in relation to others, such as being Irish and not English.[258] Similarly, according to M. Featherstone there is no unitary privileged history, only different histories.[259] Therefore, there

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[251] Ibid, 281.
[252] B. Wallis, Op. Cit. (note 67), 282.
[253]K. Woodward, "Concepts of Identity and Difference", in *Identity and Difference*, ed. by K. Woodward. (London: Sage, 1997), 7.
[254] F. McLean, "Museums and the construction of national identity: A review", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 3:4, 1998, 244-252.
[255] S. Hall, "The question of cultural identity", in *Modernity and its futures*, eds. S. Hall, D. Held, A. McGrew (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University, 1992), 274-316.
[256] C. Villanueva Rivas, Op. Cit. (note 71), 94.
[257] K. Woodward, Op. Cit. (note 253), 9.
[258] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 254), 250.
[259] M. Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (Sage, London,1991), 37.

are multiple versions of the past, and as such it is necessary to negotiate between them. But by claiming the plurality of opinions, the question is whether these are identical or whether one historical legacy has greater validity. Relating this to museums, R. J. Foster indicates that because "historical memory is a construction", tussles over the definition of the "nation-as-community" will inexorably be marred by struggles over the creation of a sanctioned collectively held past.[260] Furthermore, M. O'Neill has proposed that "museums tend to show a past with few internal tensions, without looking at how people negotiate their identity with the prevailing culture".[261] However, according to A. E. Coombes, reaffirming New Museology as a philosophy at its application to museuological analysis, museums are increasingly taking this criticism on board, adopting a policy of dialogue or "poly-vocality" with various voices and interpretations.[262] According to McLean, they are also shifting towards integrating hybrid and syncretic objects in displays, and allowing those who are represented to have a say in exhibition construction.[263] The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. is an excellent example of this, where multiple indigenous communities across the U.S. were consulted during the construction of the museum. The community was directly involved in the creation of exhibits, and the collection of the museum was transformed from a traditional, static, no access model, to a lived collection where indigenous communities are granted access and objects are preserved according to formal and spiritual traditions. In his essay "The question of cultural identity", Hall defines national culture as "a discourse, a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves". According to Hall, national cultures create meanings for our nations that we can identify with, incorporating identities of both the past and the future. He then asks, how is this discourse told? Using elements of Foucault's theory of discourse, he suggests five elements which combine to tell the narrative of a national culture. The first element is the narrative of the nation as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media, and popular culture.[264] McLean suggests that tracing the retelling of the narrative of nations in museums and their exhibitions can be particularly illuminating. According to her, using decolonization as example, the representation of nations colonised by the British empire has shifted quite significantly in the twentieth century. Instead of presenting Britain as a colonial power which excludes the experiences and histories of those people Britain colonised, museums now confront and challenge past accounts of colonised peoples.[265] The second of Hall's five

[260] R. J. Foster, "Making National Cultures in the Global Ecumene", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, No.20, 1991, 235-260.
[261] M. O'Neill, "Museums and the Renegotiation of Identities", *Museum Ireland*, Volume 4, 1994, 9-19.
[262] A. E. Coombes, "The Recalcitrant Object: culture contact and question of hybridity" in *Colonial Discourse/postcolonial theory*, eds. F. Barker, P. Hulme and M. Iverson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 84-114.
[263] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 254), 251.
[264] S. Hall, Op. Cit. (note 255), 304.
[265] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 254), 252.

elements are the origins, continuity, tradition, and timelessness of the national character. The invention of tradition, the foundational myths and pure original people or "folk", which locate the origin of the nation are further elements. In emerging nations, such as Ireland, for example, where there is a contest over new identities, past origins, traditions, mythologies and boundaries are reinvented. In this regard, "it is recognized by Irish academic historians of very different hues that there has been a failure in their part to displace the simplified mytho-history that serves the public view of the past".[266] This is more acute in Irish archaeology where culture-historical narratives emphasized by a period-based view of the past prevail. In this sense it could be argued that Irish archaeology has implicitly supported nationalistic ideologies by letting a one-dimensional perception and presentation of the past (a myth) invert the multidimensional readings to which the archaeological evidence is open. In terms of broad public perceptions of the past in Ireland, archaeological explanations have managed neither to displace traditional myths, whereby everything is visualized through a misty Celticized filter, nor to challenge oversimplified and over-quantified views of the past that are a reflection of a present-day fascination with a continuing search for a sense of identity in an increasingly anonymous world.[267] For example, some of the objects included in the *Treasures of Irish Art* exhibitions have been endlessly reproduced as symbols of Irish national and cultural identity, and have even been adopted by the Irish Tourist Board to attract visitors to Ireland. These artefacts have consequently become detached from their original human, cultural, and social contexts. In this sense it could be argued that by default archaeologists are allowing the selection and manipulation of elements from the past to be used to dictates of the present, "for example in the heritage and more broadly in the tourism industry, which is so central in the projection of a modern Irish identity".[268]

As argued by Cooke and McLean "Museums [and their exhibitions] are imbued with institutional power, the authorial voice of the museum being an authoritative voice".[269] This argument resonates with Foucault's interpretation of the relationship between power and knowledge, and how they are used as a form of social regulation through societal institutions. Similarly, museums have become arbiters of meaning since their institutional position allows them to articulate and strengthen their scientific standing of structures of knowledge through their methods of display.[270] In museums, the systems of communication produce meanings through objects and their display. The telling and retelling of history in museums is therefore dependent on material evidence. Here the scope of their collection and the biases of that collection are significant and by implication, museums can only tell partial histories. Although

[266] G. Cooney, Op. Cit. (note 95), 159.
[267] Ibid, 159-160.
[268] Ibid, 160.
[269] S. Cooke and F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 177), 284.
[270] H. Lidchi, Op. Cit. (note 186), 198.

the artefacts give the museum an immediacy to history, that history is being narrated by the various keepers and curators who both collect and select, display and interpret the artefacts.[271] The museum's authority also extends to the political, whether the political overtones are implicit or explicit. Kaplan claims that the creation of national museums tends to coincide with surges of nationalism.[272] For instance, the National Gallery of Ireland collection was formed from the Great Exhibition of 1853, which paraded the wares of the British Empire.[273] On the other hand, the creation of some national museums had more explicit nationalistic appeals. Similar to Ireland is the case of the creation of the national museum in Estonia in the 19th century, in order to re-create a nation that was not considered to be a nation at that time.[274] The National Museum of Ireland's mission statement states its purpose: "The National Museum of Ireland's vision is for a museum of international quality and standing, rightly positioned and valued at the forefront of Ireland's cultural life, by preserving and presenting the stories of Ireland and its place in the world".[275] That is, the Museum as a discursive site where the narratives of Ireland can be told, a place to communicate the stories of a whole nation through its material culture. However, a tension therefore exists between the desire to tell the story of a nation and leaving room for alternative narratives. Museums have a significant role to play in reinventing these identities and developing a distinctive imagined community, that is the idea that we have of a national identity.[276] As already mentioned, the fifth element identified by Hall in order to tell the narrative of a national culture is the idea that national identity is symbolically grounded in 'folk' or the pure, original people, illustrated by the burgeoning of folk museums in Western Europe in the latter half of the twentieth century[277] – in the case of Ireland as previously discussed the creation of the Royal Irish Academy collection. Therefore: "Successive generations have invested in a form of nostalgia in which the past is viewed as the epitome of coherence and order, something which was more simple and emotionally fulfilling, with more direct and integrated relationships".[278] According to McLean, identity then, has representational connections which are emotionally invested in a sense of place.[279] J. Urry suggests that museums and exhibitions offer ceremonial devices, the artefacts of past generations which reinforce, or help people regain, a lost sense of place.[280] According to McLean, another issue when considering identity is that identity is sustained by social and

[271] S. Cooke and F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 177), 285.
[272] F. S. Kaplan, Op. Cit. (note 70), 6.
[273] M. Bourke, *The Story of Irish Museums 1790-2000. Culture, Identity and Education* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 227.
[274] F. McLean, "Introduction: Heritage and Identity", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2006, 12:1, 3-7
[275] "Strategic Plan 2019-2022", National Museum of Ireland, https://www.museum.ie/NationalMuseumIreland/media/Corporate-Information/Statement of Strategy/, accessed: February 16, 2018.
[276] B. Anderson, Op. Cit. (note 78), 12.
[277] S. Hall, Op. Cit. (note 255), 306.
[278] M. Featherstone, *Undoing Culture: globalization, postmodernism and identity* (London: Sage, 1995), 7.
[279] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 254), 251.
[280] J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, (London: Sage,1990), 26.

material circumstances: "Each is a different process but they are both necessary for the marking and maintaining of identities".[281] She also suggests that conceptualising identity requires the "examination of classificatory systems" which demonstrate how social relationships are orchestrated and divided. Some of these differences may be evident, but at the same time, some may be concealed, where the assertion of national identity may omit gender or social class differences.[282] Museums have often been accused of obscuring or even ignoring such differences, particularly gender differences.[283] Museums are increasingly confronting this neglect through revaluation and discussion of those who are 'different'. By privileging and suppressing identities in this way, museums reveal an articulation of national identity which has been contested and negotiated.[284]

National identity and its representation within cultural diplomacy is elusive and its meanings are constantly changing. According to McLean, consequently, "despite wide recognition that national identity is integral to the meanings of a museum, there has been little real understanding of the ways in which it is contested and negotiated".[285] The above discussion, which inevitably is selective in its consideration of the various meanings involved in identity construction, has, however, revealed a number of factors which need to be addressed. By locating current thinking of national identity in museums within the cultural and social theories, and in particular within the circuit of culture model, this chapter has not only developed our understanding of this thinking, but has identified a means of articulating the meanings of national identity in exhibitions as part of cultural diplomacy and national identity representation agendas. According to Lidchi, echoing New Museology principles and Foucault ideologies, changes in the wider cultural and social environments have influenced changes in thinking at the museum. Issues of identity are becoming more dominant in society, as such curatorial activities in the museum have increasingly become a contested site. This does not only impact exhibition-making processes but also the acquisition and reinterpretation of collections, and ultimately on the policy and culture of museums and their governing bodies.[286] According to McLean, it is time to set a research agenda in museums, one which will have universal significance for the understanding of national identity in the social and cultural spheres.[287] As D. McCrone has suggested: "the totems and icons of heritage are powerful signifiers of our identity".[288]

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[281] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 255), 252.
[282] Ibid.
[283] G. Porter, "Putting Your House in Order: representations of women and domestic life", in *The Museum Time-Machine*, ed. R. Lumley (London: Routledge, 1988), 102-127.
[284] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 255), 251.
[285] H. Lidchi, Op. Cit. (note 186), 199.
[286] Ibid, 200.
[287] F. McLean, Op. Cit. (note 255), 252.
[288] D. McCrone, et al., *Scotland the Brand: the making of Scottish heritage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 5.

8. Revising and reconfiguring art history: *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day* exhibition, 1987

The following chapter will focus on the exhibition *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the present day*. This exhibition was jointly organised, as one of the first multi-institutional exhibitions in Ireland, by the Douglas Hyde Gallery, National Gallery of Ireland, and the Dublin Municipal Gallery, to coincide with a major conference held at Trinity College Dublin in 1987 by the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women. Dealing with a topic never pursued before within the Irish context, the historical underpinning of the exhibition was to celebrate the amount of artistic activity generated by women in modern and contemporaneous art in Ireland, according to Patrick T. Murphy at the time, which is unique in comparison to other countries in the West. The parameters of the exhibition were questioned as was whether women's art should be shown separately from that of men, since in Ireland both sexes had mostly been featured together in major group exhibitions. This chapter will seek to explore three issues: revisiting the past as validation of the present; the production of art history, and following the conclusion of the previous chapter, the negotiation of identities. To achieve this, this chapter, firstly, will focus on the conceptual and practical elements of all-female exhibitions by looking at similar international and Irish historical examples within the context of feminist art history and feminism. Secondly, it will explore the context within which *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the present day* was part of the cultural programming of the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women. Furthermore, it will also explore the institutional context of the organizations that led the exhibition project as well as Irish governmental cultural bodies, in order to assess their impact on the exhibition-making. This will be achieved by taking into consideration models for critically engaging with artistic canons, the problematics of this canon and the possibilities of reading women artists' work beyond established art historical movements as well as the analysis of art historical narrative arcs, particularly those that deal with female artists and the building of lasting art-historical legacies. This chapter will contribute to the aims of the thesis by addressing the possibilities and limits of employing cultural diversity and how this predicament of diversity impacts on the work of the museum by addressing questions such as how the selection, staging, historicizing and reviewing the canon influence the production of art history, and by addressing questions concerned with the role of institutions and curators with respect to the artistic production of marginal or peripheral groups.

8.2. All-female artist exhibitions as necessary correctives

While some see all-female artist exhibitions as the antidote to a long history of all-white-male artist exhibitions, others heartily disagree, arguing that both all-male and all-female exhibitions

are problematic.[1] Part of these arguments bank on the significant difference between curating all-male shows, which uphold a gender-biased status quo, and all-female, or rather, all-non-male exhibitions which could potentially shed light on subjectivities that have been historically marginalized. Single gender artist exhibitions raise a series of questions, in particular asking the reasons why exhibitions are based on selective demographics of the particular artist, by, say, gender or race: why organize exhibitions based on gender, or race, anyway? Are gender and race useful curatorial rubrics? For instance, Hamza Walker's exhibition *Black Is, Black Ain't* (Renaissance Society, Chicago, 2008) argued that 'blackness' is not a politically irrelevant category. The exhibition explored a shift in the rhetoric of race from an earlier emphasis on inclusion to a moment when racial identity is being simultaneously rejected and retained. The exhibition examined contemporaneous society where the cultural production of so-called 'blackness' is concurrent with efforts to make race socially and politically irrelevant.[2] Any such attempts deny the structural racism that permeates everyday life. While some argue that curators should not ascribe so much power to gender and race as categories, this supposition ignores the fact that gender and race are structuring elements in everyone's lives.[3] To argue that gender is a socially irrelevant category denies that everyone sees themselves, the world and others through structuring elements such as these. On the opposite side, and diverging from the comparison with race, gender exists on a spectrum that is self-identified, and continually expanding and redefined culturally. To suggest that there is only one womanhood, or only two genders, would be at its root, retrograde.

Taking into consideration the *Bad Girls* exhibition (Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1993; The Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, 1994),[4] and its sister shows *Bad Girls* (New Museum Of Contemporary Art, New York, 1994),[5] Maura Reilly addresses some of the already discussed ideas and the impact of all-female artist exhibitions. Looking at how the term 'bad girls' was defined in the London catalogue as "sly, in-your-face, disturbing, provocative, haunting, subtle, sensual, shocking, sexy", Reilly suggests that the exhibition series pursued to commend the diversity of feminisms in the 1990s, undermining inclinations toward the didactic and essentialist voices of early feminist work.[6] "Irreverent, personal, shocking, funny, and fey", the curators explained the show "dares to attack on two fronts at once: offending proscriptive

[1] G. Pollock, "Feminism, Femininity and the Hayward Annual Exhibition 1978", *Feminist Review*, no. 2 (1979): 33-55.
[2] H. Walker, "Introduction", in *Black Is, Black Ain't*, ed. H. Walker (Chicago: The Renaissance Society, 2008), 2.
[3] Ibid, 4.
[4] Curated by Kate Bush, Emma Dexter, and Nicola White, which included the work of six British and International women artists: Helen Chadwick (1953–1996), Dorothy Cross (b. 1956), Nicole Eisenman (b. 1965), Rachel Evans-Milne (1965–2009), Nan Goldin (b. 1953), and Sue Williams (b. 1954).
[5] Curated by Marcia Tucker, which exhibited the artwork of forty-five artists, female and male, including Janine Antoni (b. 1964), The Guerrilla Girls and Carrie Mae Weems (b.1953), and Bad Girls West (Wight Art Gallery, University California, Los Angeles, 1994) curated by Marcia Tanner, which exhibited the work of forty artists including Yoko Ono (b. 1933), Sherrie Levine (b. 1947), and Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010).
[6] M. Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 50.

feminism as well as the reactionary forces of patriarchy". The curators' aim was not to present work in the lineage of 1980s artists such as Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), Barbara Kruger (b. 1945), and Jenny Holzer (b. 1950), whose works, they argued, "put a feminist gloss upon the power and manipulations of the media, movies, and advertising", but rather to hearken back to "the surrealist traditions of Louise Bourgeois and Meret Oppenheim (1913–1985) as well as the aggressive camp of Judy Chicago's (b.1939) *Dinner Party*". It did not purport to be a definitive survey of current trends within feminist art, but rather a "sympathetic grouping" that allowed for "intriguing and provocative correspondences" between the works.[7]

The London exhibition received mixed reviews. Brian Sewell, writing in the *London Evening Standard*, criticized the show, arguing that the works displayed demonstrated "anti-male prejudice at its silliest and most obsessive – hysterical and violent propaganda utterly contemptible as art".[8] Laura Cottingham, writing in *Frieze* magazine, who also wrote for the exhibition catalogue, was also critical of the exhibition, taking particular issue with the title itself, as did Iwona Blazwick, who suggested that it highlighted an "infantile, naughty, rebellious posture whereas there was actually a very serious and powerful thrust to a lot of the work in the show". Cottingham claimed that the exhibition presented some of "the artistic products of feminism's partial success in the form of an apology, a laugh". The curators, Cottingham suggested, attempted to plea to "the tritest cliché of male chauvinist charges – that feminists have no sense of humour". The "girlie giggle", she sustained, "an unconscious social signifier women deliver as a sign that you (men) need not take us seriously, is put forward as the controlling rhetoric. This 'It's So Funny!' curatorial posture betrays both feminism and art: none of the artists included in this exhibition is either a failed or an aspiring comedian, and all are undeservedly trivialized by this mockery".[9]

Others were more sympathetic. Ekow Eshun in *Elle* magazine, suggested that while the images were alarming and provocative, they also defied a history of art in which women are merely reflexive subjects: "And bleak as their subject matter is, the cumulative effect of the new generation's work is liberating rather than depressing".[10]

As with London, the *Bad Girls* exhibitions in the United States drew mixed reactions from critics. Most of the critics questioned the title, arguing that it was "trendy", "angry," "a cheap hook", and that it "eclipsed any real debate around the work".[11] Other critics suggested that the exhibitions were based on a feeble idea and that trivialized the work of female artists.[12] Others

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[7] C. Smith, "Bad Girls", in *Bad Girls*, ed. L. Cottingham and C. Smith (London: ICA,1993), 12.

[8] B. Sewell, "Bad Girls Exhibition", *London Evening Standard*, 12th of November 1993, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001180/19930805/, accessed: November 14, 2018.

[9] I. Blazwick and L. Cottingham, "Who's Bad?". *Frieze Magazine*, https://frieze.com/article/whos-bad, accesssed November 12, 2018.

[10] E. Eshum, "Bad Girls", *Elle Magazine UK*, December 1993, 152-153.

[11] H. Chadwick, "Who's Bad?", *Frieze Magazine*, https://frieze.com/article/whos-bad, accesssed, November 12, 2018.

[12] I. Blazwick and L. Cottingham, Op. Cit. (note 9).

questioned the conceptual setting of the exhibition was regressive: "a by-line for a fashion magazine". As Jan Avgikos explained in *Artforum*, "once feminist-oriented art has been disparagingly categorized as the work of 'bad girls' it can be laughed off, crated up, and shipped out to sea." Avgikos also sustained, "This curatorial misadventure … is particularly egregious, given that the show's organizers happen to be women".[13]

And while some praised the quality of the work on view,[14] others claimed that it was "not 'bad' enough". [15] Benjamin Weissman from *Artforum* agreed: "the badness is elegant, safe, conventional, and, most important, museum-ready".[16] Roberta Smith of the *New York Times* was disenchanted by the New York City exhibition. She had anticipated a "reasonably accurate view of the new, angrily ironic feminist art … that has been percolating up through the galleries and alternative spaces in the last few years". She suggested that this third generation of feminist artists to emerge since the 1970s "built on the attitudes of the photo-appropriation feminists of the 1980s (Barbara Kruger, for example), confidently branching out into painting and sculpture and installation art. It's a good time to assess their efforts and consider the issues they raise". Smith believed the exhibition fell short of doing so.[17] Yet a critic from the *New York Observer* argued that "*Bad Girls'* satirical sendup of feminism is refreshing … excess and outrageousness is the rule".[18] Elizabeth Hess of the *Village Voice* declared, "Tucker should be congratulated for staking her territory smack in the middle of current feminist debates".[19]

Out of this debate around the *Bad Girls* exhibitions, questions arise: why did the *Bad Girls* exhibitions relegate themselves to primarily considering marriage, fashion, food and sex? Why not politics? Why not STEM fields? Does this family/male-friendly interpretation of radical feminism serve its purpose? Does the curating-by-gender inevitably delve into the realm of un-progressive cliché?

In her essay "Feminist Interventions in Art's Histories",[20] Griselda Pollock answers some of these questions from the feminist art criticism point of view. Pollock's essay drew upon a foundational essay by Linda Nochlin "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" and in order to identify cause and effect she analyses the embedded privilege in the predominantly white, male, Western art world and argues that women's outsider status allowed them a unique viewpoint to not only critique women's position in art, but to additionally examine the discipline's underlying assumptions about gender and ability. By questioning the mechanisms of canon formation, the mythology of artistic genius, and the masterpiece theatre version of art

[13] J. Avgikos, "Bad Girls Blues", *Artforum*, 32.9, May 1994, 86.
[14] B. Ruby Rich, "Who's Bad?", *Frieze Magazine*, https://frieze.com/article/whos-bad, accessed: November 12, 2018.
[15] N. Tyson, "Who's Bad?", *Frieze Magazine*, https://frieze.com/article/whos-bad, accessed: November 12, 2018.
[16] J. Avgikos, Op. Cit. (note 13), 86.
[17] R. Smith, "A Raucous Caucus Of Feminists Being Bad", *New York Times*, January 21,1994.
[18] As quoted on the MTI press website, https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/bad-girls, accessed: November 12, 2018.
[19] E. Hess, "And Everything Nice", *Village Voice*, February 1994.
[20] G. Pollock, "Feminist Interventions in Art's Histories", *Kritische Berichte* 16, no. 1. (1988), 5.

history, Pollock's essay develops the different arguments that restricted the artistic development of women, preventing them, with rare exception, from honing their talents and gaining entry into the art world.[21] In her essay "The Missing Future: MoMA and modern Women",[22] Pollock takes these concepts further by questioning the institution of the museum, and its continued habits of exhibition, as the fundamental author of specific narratives and the architect of cultural experiences whose structural elements render the disavowal of women's place as artist questioning the fundamental purpose, strategies and aims behind all-female artists exhibitions.[23]

In her essay "Float the Boat!: Finding a Place for Feminism in the Museum", Aruna D'Souza takes Pollock's argument further. D'Souza suggests that in order to accommodate the contributions of women and feminist artists the museum needs not to simply make space for that work: to include women artists as a matter of course in its exhibitions and gallery rotations, but rather to reimagine itself as an institution in a very fundamental way, to reorient the institution according to the political imperatives of feminist art itself.[24] In her essay "How to install art as feminist", Helen Molesworth takes D'Souza's argument further by presenting two separate but crucial issues. Posing the hypothetical problem of how she would rehang a museum's galleries to include the works by women artists, she notes the difficulty of this task given the years of institutional and conceptual assumptions that structured the exclusion of women from the narrative of modernism in the first place:

"Is it a revolution of the deepest order to insert women artists back into rooms that have in fact been structured by the absence? What would it mean instead perhaps to take this absence as a particular historical condition, under which the work of women artists is both produced and understood?"[25]

Molesworth's comments raise the problem of the relationship between the work of women artists and feminism, and women's art and feminist exhibitions. Not all women artists were feminist: many of the better known artists such as Frida Kahlo (1907–1954), Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986), Lee Krasner (1908–1984), and Eva Hesse (1936–1970), predated the advent of second-wave feminism, and many post-1968 female artists focus primarily on issues other than gender and difference, nor are all feminist artists women.[26] D'Souza's essay also provides a significant distinction between women's art and feminist art: "the former a term that implicitly

[21] G. Pollock, Op. Cit. (note 20), 6-8.
[22] G. Pollock, "The Missing Future: MoMA and modern Women", in *Modern Women: Women artists at the museum of Modern Art*, ed. C. Butler and A. Schwartz (MoMA; New York, 2010), 51.
[23] Ibid, 10.
[24] A. D'Souza, "Float the Boat!: Finding a Place for Feminism in the Museum", in *Modern Women: Women artists at the museum of Modern Art*, ed. C. Butler and A. Schwartz (MoMA; New York), 2010, 57.
[25] H. Molesworth, "How to install art as feminist", in *Modern Women: Women artists at the museum of Modern Art*, ed. C. Butler and A. Schwartz (MoMA; New York, 2010), 498.
[26] H. Molesworth, "Reconsidering Feminism: A Year in Review", panel discussion that took place November 20, 2007, at MoMA, New York. www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/17/247, accessed: April 20, 2018.

acknowledges the historical occlusion of certain artists from the modernist canon, the latter one that identifies art taking part in a political project that aims to interrogate and dismantle such partialities".[27] In her introduction to the publication edited by Eimear O'Connor, *Irish women artists, 1800-2009: familiar but not unknown*, Yvonne Scott adds another axis to this argument. According to Scott, the shift in emphasis in the respective analysis of the artwork of earlier female artists, as opposed to the artwork of contemporary artists should be considered:

"Generally, the discussion of artists and contexts in earlier periods was about recovery of the basic facts: who the artists were, training received, if any, what they produced, and whether their work was shown. By comparison, more recently it is the content of the work and the issues addressed, rather than the lives of contemporary artists, as historical facts give way to theoretical and philosophical analyses".

Scott suggests that this shift is related to the nature of the content of the art, as well as to the shifting methodologies of art history towards a more critical approach.[28]

Regardless of this shift towards more critical approaches, the debate around the aims of all-female artist exhibitions is as equally conflicted as the discussion in favour or against the all-female artist exhibitions presented so far in this chapter. Whether or not all-women shows are an effective long-term strategy for achieving gender equity in the art world at large remains a subject of heated debate. Some artists, art historians and curators argue that gender-based shows encourage tokenism and relegate women to the side-lines, while others argue that, after centuries of art shows that featured only men, all-women artist shows are a necessary corrective.[29] The gender disparity in the art world regardless of the progress made since the emergence of feminist art criticism and the feminist art movement in the 1970s is still quite significant. According to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, even though fifty-one percent of visual artists working today are women in the United States, just five percent of artwork featured in major United States museums is made by women; only twenty-five to thirty-five percent of women artists have commercial gallery representation; and women working across arts professions make an average of twenty thousand dollars less per year than men.[30] From the Irish perspective The Guerilla Girls Irish intervention of 2008 highlights a similar set of statistics. According to their research, in 2008 solo shows at the Irish Museum of Modern Art were eighty-six percent male and group shows at the Glucksman Gallery were seventy-five percent male. This lack of representation contrasts with another of The Guerrilla Girls statistics: seventy-one percent of art students in Ireland in 2008 were women. However,

[27] A. D'Souza, Op. Cit. (note 24), 59.
[28] Y. Scott, "Foreword", in *Irish Women Artists 1800-2009: Familiar but Unknown*, ed. E. O'Connor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 3.
[29] D. Richter, "Feminist perspectives in curating", in *Curating in Feminist Thought*, ed. D. Richter, E. Krasny, and L. Perry (Zurich: On-Curating, 2016), 64-76.
[30] "Get the facts", National Museum of Women in the Arts Archive, https://nmwa.org/advocate/get-facts, accessed: August 8, 2018.

when addressing who controlled the academic hierarchy in art colleges in 2008 the female student majority is not reflected accordingly. At the University of Ulster, the student body were sixty-nine percent female, yet seventy percent of full professors were male. At the National College of Art and Design, seventy percent of students were female, eighty-nine percent of department heads were male. Finally, at the Crawford College of Art and Design, while seventy-seven percent of the student body were female, one hundred percent of the department heads were male.[31]

The central tension around this debate between support and limitation lies at the base of every form of identity politics. This is because group identification is both supportive and limiting. Is it progressive and liberating to create these spaces of opportunity for a historically oppressed group of people, or does it ghettoize them, and end up doing exactly the opposite of its intention: confining an artistic work to the particulars of the body that created it? This dichotomy is particularly accentuated amongst female artists. Cited by H. M. Sheets, for instance, Georgia O'Keeffe categorically refused to take part in the exhibition *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 1976; Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1977), because it was all-female. To legitimise her refusal, she argued that she considered herself as "a great painter" rather than a great woman artist, objecting to her own categorisation because of her gender. This position reinforces the dichotomy that this type of exhibition would lead to a form of ostracising of female artists. Regardless of Georgia O'Keeffe's refusal to lend her work, the curators of the show, in an ethically questionable decision, exhibited two works by O'Keeffe.[32] Commenting on her participation in the *Bad Girls* exhibition, artist Dorothy Cross highlights the tension of identity politics around all-female artists' exhibitions: "I don't like separatist shows. I don't think they are necessary. But I think that the overall context and ideology of the Bad Girls exhibition was fine". On being labelled as a woman artist she says: "The work is what is important and whether the work is good or bad. To cover everything up under the blanket of women's art sets you to be read, regarded in a certain way".[33] Dorothy Cross's blanket of women's art echoed some of the ideas presented by Linda Nochlin in "Why have there been no great women artists?". One of the central themes of Nochlin's essay is that the belief in a "feminine essence", which would be the source of common points between the works by female artists, is a myth based on the romantic fabrication of the work of art being the sole product of the inner expression of the artist's true nature. She argues that what are usually considered feminine traits in an artwork: softness in both colour and composition, "delicate, inward looking", are far from being present in every

[31] Guerrilla Girls, "I'm not a feminist", Guerrilla Girls Archive, https://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects/ireland, accessed: August 8, 2018.
[32] H. M. Sheets, "Female Artists Are (Finally) Getting Their Turn", *The New York Times*, March 29, 2016,
[33] D. Cross, interview by the author. Dublin, 10th of April 2019.

work by women artists. According to her, the only similarities shared by those artists arise as results of the systemic limitations imposed on those artists because of their gender.[34]

While there have been various attempts to create the chronologically all-female artist exhibitions, according to Maura Reilly and Joan Fowler, their recurrence, content and ways in which they were trying to achieve gender equity can be paralleled to the different waves of feminism.[35]

Waves of feminism are the models of discourse for discussing different historical periods in the feminist movement. Feminist historians have identified four distinctive waves of feminism: first-wave feminism of the late 19th century and early 20th century promoted equal contract and property rights for women, opposing ownership of married women by their husbands. By the late 19th century, feminist activism was primarily focused on the right to vote.[36] Second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1980s focused on issues of equality and discrimination. Second-wave feminists coined the phrase 'the personal is political' as a means of highlighting the impact of sexism and patriarchy on every woman and on every aspect of women's private lives.[37] Prominent feminists such as Betty Friedan also made it clear that feminism in its second wave was about breaking down gender stereotypes, thus emphasizing that feminism was of importance to men as well as to women. In 1963, in her book *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan criticized the idea that women could find fulfilment only through childrearing and homemaking. She hypothesized that women are victims of false beliefs requiring them to find identity in their lives through husband and children.[38]

Yet second-wave feminists considered women as a uniform group, without considering the many axes of difference that "cleave apart" the singular category of women.[39] bell hooks' book *Ain't I a Woman* noted the devaluing of black femininity, and the exclusion of women of colour within the feminist movement. This, she suggested, sustained racism and classism within the movement, and the only ones who suffered were women themselves.[40] According to E. Munro, hooks' book was essential in the expansion of the third wave of feminism, as it pulled attention to the necessity for multiple feminisms. Munro also argues that third-wave feminism has been criticised for its emphasis on individual emancipation, in contrast to the 'personal is political' debates of the second wave. While the third wave's emphasis on micro politics is in keeping with a well-documented move towards individualism in the latter years of

[34] L. Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?", in *Art News*, vol. 69 (January 1971), 22-39.
[35] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 4), 37; J. Fowler, "Speaking of Gender: Expressionism, feminism and sexuality", in *A New Tradition: Irish Art of the Eighties*, ed. M. Ruane (Dublin, Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1990), 46.
[36] E. Munro, "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?", *Political Inside*, Volume 4, Issue 2, 2013, 22 – 25.
[37] Ibid, 22.
[38] B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: Norton, 1963), 5.
[39] E. Munro, Op. Cit. (note 36), 23.
[40] b. hooks, *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), 7.

the 20th century, some dispute that this can be depoliticizing, moving the responsibility for change onto the individual, therefore making wide-reaching evolution more difficult to effect.[41] According to Munro, many critics consider that the internet itself has assisted a move from 'third-wave' to 'fourth-wave' feminism. What is definite is that the internet has created a 'call-out' culture, in which sexism or misogyny can be 'called out' and confronted. This culture is symptomatic of the enduring influence of the third wave, with its focus on micro politics and challenging sexism and misogyny as they appear in everyday rhetoric, visual culture and the media.[42]

An early example of an all-female art exhibition is *The Women's Exhibition* (Prince's Ice-Skating Rink in Knightsbridge, London, 1909) organized by the Women's Social and Political Union. For what seemed superficially to be a traditional village fete selling arts and crafts, was in fact used to raise funds for the militant feminist wing of the suffragette movement, the Women's Social and Political Union, whose members were already being sent to prison for their radical tactics trying to win votes for women.[43] According to Jane Robison, *The Women's Exhibition* was a tipping point in women's struggle for equal rights.[44]

Since the 1960s, there has been a series of all-female and feminist art exhibitions that have acted as correctives to the omission of women artists from art-historical records. In the 1970s and 1980s, shows in the UK, Europe, Canada, and the USA drew attention to women artists as important cultural producers worthy of consideration. Projects such as the exhibition, *Women artists: 1550-1950*, excavated and reclaimed women artists from history and inserted them into the historical canon from which they had been excluded; others projects such as *Womanhouse* (533 N. Mariposa Street, Los Angeles, 1972) celebrated contemporary artists whose work embodied the second-wave feminist dictum 'the personal is political'. According to Linda Nochlin, in the book *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*, the aim of the exhibition was to: "help women restructure their personalities to be more consistent with their desires to be artists and to help them build their art making out of their experiences as women".[45]

In the 1990s, internationally, feminism continued its forward momentum, with a number of benchmark exhibitions in major venues, such as the already discussed *Bad Girls*, *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and From the Feminine*,[46] and *Sexual*

[41] E. Munro, Op. Cit. (note 36), 24.
[42] Ibid, 25.
[43] A. Sebba, "The Women's Exhibition", *The Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, April 26, 2009.
[44] J. Robison, *Hearts And Minds: The Untold Story of the Great Pilgrimage and How Women Won the Vote*, (London: Black Swan, 2019), 40.
[45] L. Nochlin, "Foreword", in *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*, ed. T. Gouma-Peterson, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), 5.
[46] This touring exhibition took place at four different venues: Beguinage of Saint-Elizabeth Kortrijk, Belgium, 1994-1995; Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, 1996; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, 1996; Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, and Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, 1997.

Politics: Judy Chicagos's "Dinner Party" in Feminist Art History (Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996). According to Reilly, these shows were particularly relevant by calling attention to non-male cultural producers; this series of shows challenged the broader framework of contemporary art and its exhibition practices for being almost unconditionally male. As counter-hegemonic projects, they expanded the canons of art history and contemporary art discourses to include what the canon hitherto refused: women, in particular, breaking down gender stereotypes as called out by third wave feminism.[47]

From the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a wealth of high-profile women's art and feminist art exhibitions that has generated important debate about feminist artistic production challenging sexism or misogyny as advocated by fourth wave feminism. Projects such as the exhibition *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, [48] and the exhibition project *Elles@centrepompidou* (Pompidou Centre, Paris, 2009-2011). According to Reilly, each show specifically addressed the art world's inherent biases by offering up a counter-discourse and/or parallel narrative that focused on work produced by women and feminist artists.[49]

From the Irish perspective, according to Catherine Marshall in her essay "Women and the visual arts in Ireland": "when compared to the rest of the western world, women have played a particularly important part in the history of Irish art in the twentieth century".[50] Marshall suggests that at key moments in that history, women have been entirely responsible for change and development. Marshall attributes the introduction of Modernism to Irish art, virtually, as the exclusive achievement of Mainie Jellett (1897–1944), Evie Hone (1894–1950) and those women who followed them abroad, seeking an alternative to academicism in vogue in Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Marshall: "Few people now dispute the importance of women artists such as Jellett, Hone, Mary Swanzy (1882–1978) and Nano Reid (1900–1981) in the emergence of Modernism in Ireland in the 1920s, '30s and '40s, and of a later generation such as Alanna O'Kelly (b. 1955), Pauline Cummins (b. 1949), Kathy Prendergast (b. 1958), Alice Maher (b. 1956), Dorothy Cross, Louise Walsh (b. 1963), who were to the forefront from the 1980s onwards in instituting new practices and challenging traditional artistic hierarchies".[51] As such this special circumstance present Ireland as a case study worthy of consideration in the development of the integration of women artists into art historical narratives.

In relation to all-female group exhibitions, the Yeats sisters, Lily (1866–1949) and Elizabeth (1868–1940), and Florence Vere O'Brien (1854–1936), exhibited their work representing

[47] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 6), 38.
[48] This touring exhibition took place at four different venues: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2007; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, 2007; MoMA PS.1 Contemporary Art Centre, New York, 2008; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, 2008-2009.
[49] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 6), 39.
[50] C. Marshall, "Women and the Visual Arts in Ireland", in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, ed. C. Marshall and P. Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 482-96.
[51] Ibid, 484.

Ireland internationally under Cuala Industries at the *Women of All Nations Exhibition of Arts, Crafts & Industries* (Olympia, London, 1909).[52] While not as intrinsically political as the Women's Social and Political Union *The Women's Exhibition* of earlier in 1909, commentators of the period highlighted the relevance of such a show:

"There is now at Olympia an exhibition which is described as "The Women of all Nations' Exhibition", and although the work of very few foreigners is to be found there, and the majority of the exhibits are those of business firms, there is quite enough of the feminine element around to make the exhibition to be worth a visit. Don't imagine, however, that such a display touches the fringe of the industries and professions in which women from every nation throughout the world are now engaged – and in many instances earning their bread – in preference to demoralising dependence – or the workhouse".[53]

As Fionna Barber suggests in her essay "Excavating Room 50: Irish Painting and the Cold War at the 1950 Venice Biennale",[54] it is important to note how women artists had been representing Ireland internationally well in advance of the late twentieth century. For example in 1950, two women were selected to represent Ireland at Ireland's inaugural participation in the twenty-fifth Venice Biennale, Nano Reid and Norah McGuinness (1901–1980). This means that solely women artists represented Ireland in the Venice Biennale before women artists represented the US, UK, France or Germany, as the Guerrilla Girls' installation at the 51st Venice Biennale pointed out.[55]

As internationally, the 1970s also brought all-female exhibitions to Ireland such as the *Woman's Show* (Projects Art Centre, 1978). Veronica Bolay (b. 1941), Bernadette Madden (b. 1948), Aileen McKeogh (1952–2005), Irene Plazewska (b. 1949), amongst others were the artists exhibiting at the show. In line with second wave feminism, journalist Rosita Sweetman considered the exhibition at the time to be both interesting and of a high standard:

"Having an all-female show draws attention to the discrimination faced by women artists. While women account for half of the students graduating from art colleges, they do not equally represent in exhibitions. Not one woman's work was hung in *Rosc'77* and only nine percent of the exhibitors in the 76 Living Art Exhibition were women".[56]

In the late 1980s and 1990s, there were several significant group exhibitions of contemporary women artists from Ireland, which marked a collective and more feminist push for increased

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[52] *Women of All Nations Exhibition of Arts, Crafts & Industries Exhibition Catalogue*, http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Images/Women%20of%20all%20Nations%20Exhibition%20of%20Arts%20and%20Crafts%20%20Industries/, accessed: May 2, 2019.

[53] "Outside the Gates: Women's Work at Olympia", *The British Journal of Nursing*, 40 (11th Sept. 1909), 224-225.

[54] F. Barber, "Excavating Room 50: Irish Painting and the Cold War at the 1950 Venice Biennale", in *A Shared Legacy: Essays on Irish and Scottish Art and Visual Culture*, ed. F. Cullen and J. Morrison (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 207-224.

[55] Guerrilla Girls, "Benvenuti alla Biennale Femminista!", Guerrilla Girls Archive, https://www.guerrillagirls.com/exhibitions, accessed: February 2, 2019.

[56] "Woman's Show", RTE Archive, https://www.rte.ie/archives/2018/0509/961248-womans-art-show/, accessed: February 17, 2019.

recognition, diversity and visibility as advocated by third wave feminism. These exhibitions include the present case study, *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day* (National Gallery of Ireland, Douglas Hyde Gallery and The Hugh Lane Dublin Municipal Gallery, 1987), as well as *Irish Art of the Eighties: Sexuality and Gender* (Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 1990) and *Re/Dressing Cathleen* (McMullen Museum, Boston, 1997) amongst many others.

From the beginning of the twenty-first century there have been fewer all-female group exhibitions in Ireland. However, there have been solo artists that have questioned the role of female artists in Ireland such as the Guerrilla Girls Irish tour in 2009 and more recently, Jesse Jones' (b. 1978) exhibition *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES – a Feminist Parasite Institution*. The latter show was motivated by the idea that a feminist curatorial practice could be experimental, collaborative, multi-authored and counter to the value judgements that have historically been used to marginalize feminist and other art practices. Jesse Jones invited a number of women to form a collaborative curatorial collective, and to curate an exhibition of works by female artists selected from the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery collection. They were exhibited together for the first time and many were restored for the project. *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* aimed to frame feminist artistic practice as a radical counter history that had the power to destabilise the museum, and the project of art history itself. The title, *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES*, references a 1969 publication by the American militant separatist feminist organization CELL 16, which proposed a performative, political and sensual aesthetic of a world without men. *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* echoed this strategy of separatism through its curatorial and 'film-making' approach – attempting to redress or renegotiate omissions in the historical canon of art.[57]

Furthermore, as part of the *38th EVA International* (Limerick, 2018), echoing fourth wave feminism ideals of a global community of feminists and activism, members of the Artists' Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment enacted a street procession in Limerick and presented an exhibition, archive and information hub. This included the work of a number of female artists such as Sarah Cullen (n.d.), Rachel Fallon (n.d.), Alison Laredo (n.d.), Alice Maher, Breda Mayock (n.d.), Áine Phillips (n.d.). The Artists' Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment was set up in 2015 by artists Cecily Brennan (b. 1955), Alice Maher, Eithne Jordan (b. 1954), and poet Paula Meehan (b. 1955). It began as an online campaign appealing to fellow artists, writers, musicians, and actors to put their names to a statement calling for a repeal of the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland, Article 40.3.3, that equated the life of a pregnant woman with that of the foetus. The aim of the campaign group was to promote national and international awareness of the restrictive reproductive laws of Ireland and

[57] "NO MORE FUN AND GAMES – a Feminist Parasite Institution", https://www.hughlane.ie/phocadownload/pdf/JESSE_JONES/act1lr.pdf, accessed: April 4, 2019.

to encourage and inspire other groups and activists to use cultural means to promote social change.[58]

From the point of view of critically analyzing international all-female exhibitions, Maura Reilly in her essay "What is curatorial activism", identifies two different corrective strategies adopted by all-female exhibitions: revisionism, and "area studies" or art historical reconfiguration.[59]

According to Reilly, one of the most cited counter-hegemonic strategies excluded from the canon is revisionism, whereby women artists are reclaimed from history and the canon itself is re-written, the principal aim being to include those who had hitherto been refused, forgotten or hidden. Reilly suggests that a revisionist approach to the canon typically ask questions such as: who were the women artists from the Renaissance-Baroque period?; who were the women painters in Abstract Expressionism? In the 1970s, when many revisionist projects began, it was argued that the resurrection of otherness from history should be undertaken before analysis and deconstruction of the canon could begin.[60] Quoting Adrienne Rich, Reilly suggests that: "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women far more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival". A revisionist approach, then, rediscovers what the canon conceals and suppresses; it questions the adequacy of accepted conceptual structures, and looks for the "sins and errors of the past".[61]

Revisionist strategies enable exhibition makers to present a more inclusive and integrated selection of works and artists in relation to a particular subject: as was the case, for example, of the exhibition *Women Artists: 1550-1950*. The central aim of the show was the reclamation of women artists and their insertion into the traditional canon of art history from which they have been lost, or forgotten, or simply dismissed as insignificant. According to Reilly, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*: "was an inherently feminist project that challenged not only the masculinist canon of art history, but also the history of museum exhibition practices, which had helped to sustain the canon institutionally for centuries".[62] Furthermore, the canon against and within which the curators of the exhibition chose to work, and within which they were trained as art historians, was the prevailing Western one. At the time, the fact that the exhibition focused solely on artists from the USA and Western Europe, or that it included one woman of colour, Frida Kahlo, was not questioned.[63]

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[58] "Artists' Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment", 38th EVA International Exhibition Catalogue, https://www.eva.ie/artist/artists-campaign-to-repeal-the-eighth-amendment/, accessed: May 20, 2018.
[59] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 6), 23.
[60] Ibid, 22.
[61] Ibid, 23.
[62] Ibid, 24.
[63] Ibid, 24.

While revisionism is an important curatorial approach, it nonetheless assumes the white, masculinist, Western canon as its centre and accepts its hierarchy as a natural given. Thus, within the revisionist approach, a fundamental binary opposition is retained, which supports the idea that the 'other' will always necessarily remain as a subsidiary. However, as feminist theorist Elaine Showalter cautions, "the feminist obsession with correcting, modifying, supplementing, revising, humanizing, or even attacking male critical theory keeps us dependent upon it and retards our progress in solving our own theoretical problems".[64] Showalter cautions against a revisionism that becomes a kind of homage. As Susan Hardy Aiken also warns: "One might, by attacking, reify the power one opposes".[65] Revising the canon to address the neglect of women is a fundamentally impossible project because, as Griselda Pollock suggests: "such a revision does not grapple with the terms that created that neglect". Thus, after decades of feminist and postcolonial critical analysis that attempts to rectify gaps in the archive, Pollock questions: "How can we make the cultural work of women an effective presence in cultural discourse which changes both the order of the discourse and the hierarchy of gender in one and the same deconstructive move?". According to Pollock the canon is "politically[22] 'in the masculine' as well as culturally 'of the masculine'," just as it is politically and culturally "in/of the white" and "in/of the west".[66] Despite these shortcomings, Reilly suggest that the benefits of the revisionist approach are significant. Not only do they address critical omissions, but they can also provide a deeper, more contextual understanding of key issues by creating a space within white male institutions and mainstream narratives that help museum audiences understand visual culture from a different perspective: "In revising the art historical canon to include Other artists … on an equal footing with their white and/or male counterparts, curators have succeeded in integrating them into the Western canon, thereby offering a broader, more comprehensive view of art history".[67]

According to Reilly, while revisionism involves an integrative strategy, "area studies" produces new canons and supplements traditional narratives by concentrating on work that is based on either gendered, geographical, racial, or sexual orientation. This strategy encourages exhibitions that spotlight otherness outside the white, Western male and is designated as a separate "area".[68] While such projects could be considered inherently revisionist, an "area studies" approach could be seen as an effective way to diversify the historical canon and/or contemporary discourse. These exhibitions are viewed as entirely separate from the canon. However, some postcolonial and feminist theorists have argued against them, suggesting that they segregate and ghettoize, as they isolate artists on the basis of their otherness and create

[64] E. Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8., No. 2, 1970, 183.
[65] S. H. Aiken, "Women and the Question of Canonicity", *College English*, Vol. 48, No. 3, March 1986, 298.
[66] G. Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 24.
[67] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 6), 25.
[68] Ibid, 25.

specialized, separatist museums and exhibition spaces such as the National Museum of Women in the Arts (Washington DC), the Leslie Lohman Gay and Lesbian Museum (New York), or the National Museum of African American History and Culture (Washington DC).[69]

"Area studies" exhibitions are not always looked upon favourably. For example, in 2004, curator Christian Rattemeyer rejected exhibition proposals of African and LGBTQ art because according to him: "it is no longer the time to make such limiting judgements for selection" and "we should shy away from exhibitions of works by Women artists, Black artists, or, as in the most recent example, African artists, selected solely on the basis of gender, ethnicity or nationality". His justification for such a statement was that there is no longer the need for exhibitions on marginalized groups because they have now been included in contemporary art shows. Cited by Reilly, the Guerrilla Girls issued the following statement in response to Rattemeyer:

"We were privileged recently to see a letter that you sent to Harmony Hammond and Ernesto Pujol declining an exhibition proposal they had submitted to your institution.

We are writing to say that we couldn't agree more with the views you expressed in your letter!!!!! You are right that in this post-ethnic era there should no longer be exhibitions of works by "Women artists", "Black artists", "African artists", or, as in the co-curator's proposal, "Queer Artists", or any shows selected solely on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or nationality.

But we feel you didn't go far enough. Let's get real, here! In this post-studio era, how can you justify shows of "video artists", "painters", "sculptors" or "photographers?"

In fact, since, any curatorial intervention limits the reading of artists' work, by pushing it into some thesis or other, we propose there should be no more exhibitions at all!"[70]

Reflecting on the Guerrilla Girls' statement, Reilly poses two important question: "Is there no longer a need for exhibitions of work by queer artists, African artists, women artists, or any other groups?" and "are we really living in a post-black, post-feminist, post-queer world?"[71] In thinking about these issues, Reilly notes that some curatorial positions universalize artistic production. For instance, curators should not assume that women's rights achieved in the Western world are replicated in other countries. Curators cannot claim to live in a post-feminist world when in some countries women have no access to basic human rights such as education and birth control. Furthermore, within the Western world, it is inaccurate not to acknowledge the differences between the issues faced by women within the rural and urban centres. There is, then, still a need for exhibitions that explore what it means to be a woman on a global scale.[72] According to Lippard: "The restriction to women's art has its obvious polemic source, but as a

[69] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 6), 26.
[70] Ibid, 27.
[71] Ibid, 28.
[72] Ibid, 28.

framework within which to exhibit good art it is no more restrictive than, say, exhibitions on German, Cubist, Black and white, soft, young or new art".[73]

Another aspect of "area studies" exhibitions is that they function as curatorial correctives. While the ideal case scenario would be a time when there will no longer be a need for shows exclusively on gender, race, or sexuality, there are still fundamental gaps within the Western canon. Without specialist or "area studies" exhibitions, 'other' artists will continue to be marginalized and made invisible. The key concept here is visibility which is crucial in terms of prominence in the marketplace and art history. For instance, the curator of the permanent exhibition project, 2009 – 2011, *Elles@centerpompidou*, Camille Morineau, laid out a programme to revisit works by women artists from the Pompidou Centre collections. *Elles@centerpompidou* was a rotating exhibition of the Pompidou permanent collection with only women artists presenting an alternative history of modern and contemporary art. The exhibition was hung in chronological order by subthemes such as: 'A room of One's Own', 'Body Slogan', 'Eccentric Abstraction', 'Free Fire', 'Immaterials', 'Pioneer', 'The Activist Body' and 'Wordworks'. According to Morineau, these subthemes were broad enough that they could accommodate both non- and pro-feminist, as well as explicitly feminist work. Cited by Phoebe Hoban, Morineau suggested that: "By putting women at the center, the question of marginalization disappears; you can rewrite history in the way you present the show".[74] Cited by Germaine Greer, Morineau also indicates that working with the permanent collection would bring another axis to the exhibition: the history of taste within collecting. It would address fifty years of collecting but not just a particular curator's point of view. The exhibition was a long process. From inception to opening, it took over six years, including the expansion of the Pompidou's holdings of women artists. As such, forty percent of the works included in the exhibition were acquired in the five years preceding the exhibition.[75] According to Reilly, *Elles@centerpompidou* rescued previously forgotten women artists by making them visible, and foresees its future impact as similar to the influence of the exhibition *Women Artists: 1550-1950*. Referring to the impact of *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, Reilly claims that: "Previously obliterated from history, these artists are now highly visible – they are taught in schools, colleges, and universities, and feature in academic dissertations as well as in the major textbooks of art history. In short, women-only exhibitions have had a transformative impact on the art world"[76].

[73] L. R. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's* Art (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1976), 38.
[74] P. Hoban, "The Feminist Evolution", *Artnews*, December 2009, 87.
[75] G. Greer, "Why the world doesn't need an Annie Warhol or a Frances Bacon", *The Guardian*, January 27, 2010.
[76] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 6), 88.

8.2 Access and Opportunity

Held every three years, the aim of the International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women is to bring together scholars and practitioners from a range of disciplines and areas of expertise, to share insights, experiences and research, and to explore issues of importance to women throughout the world. In 1987 the congress was held in Dublin. Hosted by Trinity College Dublin between 6th and 10th of July, the congress brought together an estimated 3,000 participants from over fifty countries to address a broad agenda of issues within feminism and women's studies.[77]

The congress began with a symposium on women in antiquity, and ended with a study of domestic violence against women in the Republic of Ireland.[78] In between there were twenty-three subject categories. The theme of the congress, "Women's Worlds: Visions and Revisions", was expressed in both its content and process. The papers for the congress were organised in three broad categories in line with the congress theme. The first section, 'Revisions', reappraised conventional or traditional images of Irish women: mothers in folklore, the 'caoineadh' and the grieving process, attitudes to women and childbirth, charitable organisations and emigration. The second section, 'Realities', comprised of papers on what were contemporary issues at the time: political identity; the women's movement; lesbian feminism; legal change; the divorce referendum; poverty; and childbirth. Overall the congress combined academic research with reports from women involved in the community (a total of some 1,000 papers). These contributions were organized as panels, discussions, seminars, and workshops, and presented over the course of the week. In addition to the academic programme there were several other events running concurrently: a Festival of Irish Women's Art and Culture (*Women's worlds festival: an artistic celebration*), an international book-fair of feminist and women's studies publications, where the academic and creative were confronted. This section of the congress came under the thematic umbrella of 'Visions', which included studies of women's poetry, women's prose and reproductions of works by women artists.[79] According to A. Ryan, the relationship between academic and creative or political work appeared not to have been an easy one, but at least the two aspects were confronted, a phenomenon not always to be observed at academic conferences.[80]

The *Women's worlds festival: an artistic celebration* was an independent adventure by a group of artists, art administrators and activists. The festival organisers' main focus was to use the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women "as a means of highlighting and

[77] C. S. Rupprecht, "Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women". *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988), 235.
[78] Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women Secretariat, *Women's worlds: visions and revisions: Third International Interdiscipinary Congress on Women, Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland, July 6-10 1987 = Tríú Comhthionól Idirnáisiúnta faoi Mhná, Final programme*, (Dublin: Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, 1987), 3-154.
[79] A. Ryan, "The Irish Feminist Experience". *The Irish Review* 6 (1989), 131.
[80] Ibid, 132.

momentarily capturing the explosion of women's creativity which has enveloped Ireland over the past five years. We saw an opportunity to share, with our international sisters, this unique phenomenon and from that very worthy stance we set about building the structures".[81] According to Mary P. Keane and Róisín Conroy this idea was firmly rooted in their belief that culture, art, and women's creativity, must be an integral part of any international gathering of women, which expounds the notion of women's worlds. However, according to Keane and Conroy, when the festival approached the congress organizing committee, wishing to share funding, resources and skills, there was an implicit attitude, which viewed the festival as a peripheral and incidental activity.[82] It was this attitude and the lack of funding support, which set the tone for the uneasy relationship which was to exist between Congress and Festival for the duration of the planning period. There were two sharply polarised political positions: on the one hand there were those who resisted the integration of the intellectual, the creative, and the political; on the other were those who believed in total integration as a prerequisite for a truly feminist event, and this political reality ensured an independent, innovative, and creative celebration: "The women involved in organising and participating in both the Women's Worlds Festival and Congress were made to feel that academic work was of more value than creative or political work. This interaction, in a very poignant way, reinforced the gap between so called intellectuals [sic] and the rest of us".[83]

Conversely to this opinion, the congress organising committee seemed to value the creative work of artists. As part of the official programming of the congress, they approached the art gallery associated with Trinity College Dublin where the conference was taking place, the Douglas Hyde Gallery, and its then director Patrick T. Murphy with the proposal of organising an exhibition that would highlight "how women artists working in Ireland have consistently made important contributions to the development of the visual arts in Ireland".[84] It was Murphy who saw the necessity of expanding the project to include other institutions and after initial contacts, the National Gallery of Ireland came on board for the project. After the first meeting between Murphy and the then Director of the National Gallery of Ireland, Homan Potterton, the parameters of the exhibition were already shifting. Murphy's original idea of addressing the contribution of Irish "women artists in the 20th century, with a small introduction of work of the lady painters of the 19th century",[85] was tempered by Homan Potterton's own vision of an anthology addressing the work of 'all' the Irish Women Artists.

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[81] M.P. Keane and R. Conroy, "Women's Worlds Festival: An Artistic Celebration", *Women's Studies International Forum* 11, no. 4 (1989), 397.
[82] Ibid, 397.
[83] M.P. Keane and R. Conroy, Op. Cit. (note 81), 399.
[84] Third Interdisciplinary congress on women congress secretariat to Patrick T. Murphy, 9 April 1985, Box 1, Folder 3, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.
[85] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to Homan Potterton", March 7,1986, Box 2, Folder 5, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.

As highlighted by Murphy, what is significant in Ireland is the strength and quality of the work of so many women artists, and their leading role in art practice.[86] The characterization of art in the late 1980s in Ireland, especially abroad, as being dominated by neo-expressionist painting in which women artists were presented as marginal (even though present) would appear to have been eclipsed by the emergence of sculpture, installation and video in the 1990s, drawing on more conceptual approaches or the legacy of surrealism, in which women have emerged as a leading force.[87] In America and the UK, this shift was identified by several feminist critics as being part of women artists' rejection of traditional form, where they appeared to be excluded.[88] It was also considered as central to women artists' renegotiation of the legacy of modernism, and the starting point of feminist art practice in the 1970s. Although these trends, noted in art criticism, indicate a dramatic shift in women artists' work exhibited in Ireland towards mixed media, installation, video, photography, sculpture and performance, this shift is part of a larger structural change in the international art world generally.[89] Katy Deepwell suggests that whether or not this indicates that an increase in feminist ideas or approaches in contemporary art practice has also occurred in Ireland remains an open question. She also mentions that it is clear that feminist analysis of the representation of women and forms of femininity and masculinity has been an important starting point for many women artists in building their practice.[90]

Art history, which provides the model for an understanding of 20th century art, its traditions, avant-garde movement and tendencies, continues to perpetuate a remarkably male-centred account of the processes of change in both modernism and postmodernism. Accounts of art history in Ireland in the 20th century, and histories of Irish art continue to marginalize Irish women artists – a pattern common to most accounts of European art histories. The majority of art criticism which frequently draws on art history implicitly perpetuates the idea that the only significant artists are male, through the citing of only male artists as a point of reference in the placing, naming and positioning of one artist in relation to other artists. While feminist art history/criticism has identified that it has been 'typical' historically to regard the woman artist as a rare and exceptional being or as a separate category, the gradual recovery of the knowledge and information about the practice of women artists in the 20th century has started to alter this picture and reassess the contribution of women artists through rewriting histories, but also by presenting their work within revised exhibition narratives.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, there were several significant group exhibitions of contemporary women artists from Ireland, which marked a collective and more feminist push for increased

[86] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to Homan Potterton", Op. Cit. (note 85).
[87] M. Ruane, "Redressing Cathleen: A Local Perspective", in *Re-dressing Cathleen – Contemporary works from Irish Women Artists*, ed. J. Grinnell and A. Conley (McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 1997), 9.
[88] K. Deepwell, *Dialogues: Women Artists from Ireland* (London: IB Tauris, 2005), 3-5.
[89] Ibid, 4.
[90] Ibid, 5.

recognition and visibility. These exhibitions include *Irish Women Artists: Eye to Eye* (Women Artists' Slide Library, Battersea Arts Centre, London, 1986); *Off the Ma*p (Chisenhale, 1987); WAAG conferences and events (1987-1992) and the WAAG exhibition *Irish Art: Slides, Sound, Video* (Project Arts Centre, Dublin, 1987); *Issues: Four Artists* (ACNI touring show, 1989-1990); *Irish Art of the Eighties: Sexuality and Gender* (Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 1990); *Relocating History* (Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast, 1993); *Irish Women Artists* (Festival Interceltique, Brittany, 1994); *Showing off* (Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast, and Zone Gallery Newcastle upon Tyne, 1996); *Re/Dressing Cathleen* (McMullen Museum, Boston, 1997). While all of these exhibitions attempted to challenge cultural stereotypes or caricatures of the problematic relationship of 'Irish/Woman/Artwork',[91] the exhibition *Irish Women Artists: from the 18th century to the present day* at the Douglas Hyde, Hugh Lane Dublin Municipal Gallery and National Gallery of Ireland is considered one of the first attempts to provide an understanding of the history of women artists in Ireland.[92]

In 1987, the Douglas Hyde Gallery was in the third year of a new management structure following the collapse of the previous arrangements. This collapse was the result of an alleged failure of Trinity College Dublin and the Arts Council of Ireland to pursue a set of clearly defined terms of reference for the role of the gallery and its exhibitions policy.[93] Central to this failure was the tension that developed because of the differing opinions in the perceived role of the Gallery held by its co-sponsors, Trinity College (as represented by the Exhibitions Committee) and the Arts Council. It was felt in some quarters that the Arts Council, in 'buying into' a major, custom-built gallery in the city centre, saw the opportunity to develop a quasi-Arts Council gallery 'on the cheap'; while the Exhibitions Committee, from what was perceived as a more conservative and academic point of view, regarded the gallery as a logical extension of the policy of developing the profile of the visual arts in the college. According to Kieran Walsh, aside from this difference of emphasis there was a further source of concern; the management of the gallery and, in particular, the control of creative policy by a committee of academic staff and students. Walsh suggests that there was a widely held view that the management of the gallery and its artistic policy rested in the hands of amateurs, lacking in arts administration expertise and out of step with current developments in the art world.[94] Similarly, Walsh suggests that the situation came to a head in 1982 when a massive deficit incurred by the *Edward Kienholz* exhibition (1981), gave the Arts Council the opportunity to reappraise what had, to this point, been a fairly informal arrangement. Arts Council funding was withdrawn and from 1982 to 1984, the Exhibitions Committee ran the Gallery, while Trinity and the Arts Council negotiated the restructuring of the Gallery's management. As a result of

[91] H. Robison, "Irish/Women/Artwork; selective readings", *Feminist Review* 5 (London, 1995) 89.
[92] K. Deepwell, Op. Cit. (note 88), 3; Y. Scott, Op. Cit. (note 28), 5; C. Marshall, Op. Cit. (note 50), 492.
[93] K. Walsh, "The Douglas Hyde...a Short History", *Circa*, no. 58 (1991), 21-23.
[94] Ibid, 24.

these negotiations, the Gallery was established as a limited company, with a Board of Directors comprised of four representatives each from Trinity and the Arts Council. The position of Exhibitions Officer was replaced by that of the Director, and the relationship between Board and Director was significantly adjusted. As before, the Board retained overall control of policy but the Director was given greater control over the selection of exhibitions (the selection process agreed was basically one in which the Director recommended and the Board decided). Nick Serota, director of the Whitechapel Gallery London at the time, was brought in as external advisor on the appointment of a Director and, after difficulties in recruiting someone for what was widely seen as a problematic post, a headhunt came up with Patrick T. Murphy (then The Arts Council's Visual Arts Officer) and he took up the position in 1984.[95] The immediate effect of these changes was described by George Dawson, former Douglas Hyde Board Member as: "tighter financial control and administration... a stronger focus on individual contemporary Irish and European artists at the expense of a wide diversity of exhibitions".[96] In effect, a professionally administered gallery that was contemporary in its outlook. According to Walsh and Dawson, the overall success of the policy is undisputed, in so far as it established the Douglas Hyde Gallery's reputation as the foremost gallery of contemporary art in the country. That success was largely due to improved funding by The Arts Council; the continued support of Trinity College (rates, security, heat, light, maintenance etc); improved management; and Murphy's increased independence as Director of the Gallery.[97] The last was perhaps the most significant change in terms of the improvement in the exhibition programme.

This new understanding of the more visible role of the director/curator at the Douglas Hyde Gallery coincided with international changes of curatorial practices. The late 1980s was a moment of conjuncture in extending the boundaries of what constituted the role of the curator, the connection of curatorial praxis, and the field in which they operated. Curatorship emerged as a creative, semi-autonomous, and individual authored form of mediation (and production), which structured the experience of the work of art and affected the ways in which art was communicated to the audience. What this made visible was the idea of a curatorial remit, operating above the interest of the artist or artwork, which opened up the space of critical contestation. The idea of the curated exhibition had been established as an entity of critical reflection in its own right, with the figure of the individual curator at the centre of debates as the sole author of the exhibition form.[98] 1987 was the year that the arts centre Le Magasin in Grenoble, France, launched the first postgraduate curatorial training programme in Europe, called l'École du Magasin. Similarly, it was in 1987 that the Art History/Museum Studies element of the Whitney Independent Study Programme was renamed Curatorial and Critical

[95] K. Walsh, Op. Cit. (note 93), 25.
[96] G. Dawson, "The Douglas Hyde Gallery", *Irish Arts Review (1984-1987)* 4, no. 4 (1987), 40.
[97] Ibid, 42; K. Walsh, Op. Cit. (note 93), 27.
[98] P. O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, (London: The MIT Press, 2016), 4.

Studies, on the basis that "exhibitions should embody theoretical and critical arguments", thus framing the Independent Study Programme "as a chance to experiment and see if it was possible to develop alternative curatorial forms, to challenge the established conventions".[99] Furthermore, certain museums and exhibitions organizers demonstrated the need to advance the writing of history, proposing appraisals, which would redistribute works and events.[100] According to Paul O'Neill, in this way, 1987 represents a significant departure in the understanding of curatorship, from vocational work with collections in institutional context to a potentially independent, critically engaged and experimental form of exhibition-making practice. The practice of curating became a possible area of academic study as much as a professional career choice. [101]

1987 was also the year in which Homan Potterton, then Director of the National Gallery of Ireland, resigned from his post after almost eight years of tenure. In a statement at the time Potterton said: "Under existing circumstances, I feel that I have contributed all that I can to the National Gallery of Ireland and that, after eight years, I should make way for new blood".[102] Potterton's appointment in 1980 coincided with a deep economic recession and his directorship was marked by a lack of resources. One of the major focuses of his tenure was to address this issue. Admission to the gallery was free and Potterton placed donation boxes in the entrance hall. He also introduced a sponsorship programme, which would form part of the National Gallery's resourcing henceforth. His initiative in publishing calendars, prints and postcards from the collection proved successful, aided by developing the gallery bookshop. Beyond the pursuit of capital resources, Potterton's directorship focused on the issue of creating awareness of the National Gallery, leading him to draw on the skills of the staff in developing new areas in press, exhibitions, rights and reproductions, as well as expanding curatorial experience.[103]

What Potterton refers to as "under existing circumstances" in his resignation statement is unclear. Controversy had arisen shortly after the new director Raymond Keaveney was appointed in a series of interviews he gave to journalists. In one particular interview, Keaveney is quoted considering the possibility of seeking private funding to make up the considerable shortfall in the funding of the National Gallery by the Government. Regardless of the attempt made by the Government through the *Access and Opportunities* White Paper on cultural

[99] R. Clark cited by S. Gutterman, "A brief History of the ISP", in Gutterman, ed., *Independent Study Programme: 25 Years* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), 25.
[100] J. Poinsot, "Large exhibitions: a sketch of a typology", in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds. R. Greenberg, B. Ferguson and S. Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 40.
[101] P. O'Neill, Op. Cit. (note 98), 2.
[102] "National Gallery director resigns", *The Irish Times,* Dec. 12, 1987.
[103] M. Bourke, *The story of Irish Museums 1790-2000: Culture, Identity and Education* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 378-380.

policy, Keaveney is also quoted as stating that "there is a possible attitude in some areas of Government that money spent on the gallery or on other cultural areas is money wasted".[104]

It was during the 1980s that the responsibility for the cultural institutions was transferred from the Department of Education to the Department of the Taoiseach, where, in 1982, it came under the wing of the newly created minister of state for arts and culture. In early 1987, the Fine Gael Government and the Department of the Taoiseach launched the white paper on cultural policy: *Access and Opportunity*. There were two clear messages in the document: firstly, that the position of the Arts Council of Ireland should be protected rather than undermined, and secondly, that the lack of available funding should be addressed. "It would be essential, that the most influential body in the arts should continue to be the Arts Council", as well as clearly stating the fact that the Government hoped to achieve this at no direct financial cost: "resource constraints are now so severe – and likely to remain so for some years ahead – that continued funding at even existing levels for many areas of the Government expenditure, including arts and culture, can no longer be guaranteed… resources for future expansion and development in this area will have to come from non-Exchequer sources, principally from the National Lottery, but also from sponsorship and admission charges".[105] This declaration of a lack of funding and resources contradicts what for Ted Nealon, Minister of State for Arts and Culture considered the key themes of the document: "The major themes in this document, … are extending cultural opportunities, improving access to culture and increasing participation in cultural activity. Implicit, … is that this programme for expansion will seek not simply to spread accepted cultural values to a wider community but also to place new emphasis on cultural elements for the community which are currently neglected or undervalued".[106]

According to Brian P. Kennedy, the white paper echoed many of the Arts Council's concerns since it was restructured in 1973. The document's major themes – "extending cultural opportunities, improving access to culture and increasing participation in cultural activity" – and indeed its title, *Access and Opportunity*, represented an official acceptance of the Arts Council's policies.[107] In 1987, the Arts Council altered its principal standing order, which had remained unchanged since 1960. The original standing order devised by Seán Ó Faoláin's Council in 1957 had read: "Future policy, while not failing to encourage local enterprise, would insist on high standards". In 1960, this had been altered by Fr O'Sullivan's Council to read: "The Council's main function is to maintain and encourage high standards in the arts". In 1987, the position reverted to that formulated thirty years earlier: "While recognizing local enterprise and community activity, the Council's main function is to maintain and encourage

[104] M. M. Tyran, "National Gallery to seek private funding", *The Irish Times,* Dec. 30, 1988, 8.
[105] Office of the Minister of State for Arts and Culture, *Access and Opportunity: a white paper on cultural policy*, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1987), 24.
[106] Ibid, 13.
[107] B. Kennedy, *Dreams and Responsibilities: the state and the arts in Independent Ireland*, (Dublin: Criterion Press for the Arts Council of Ireland, 1990), 134.

high standards in the arts".[108] The Council's policies had, in a sense, come full circle. It was now recognized that the Arts Council's primary duty was to spend taxpayer's money on "artistic excellence" but, at the same time, every effort had to be made to increase audiences and participation in artistic activities.

In November 1987, the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, whose Fianna Fáil party had returned to power earlier in the year, announced that £8 million from the estimated £45 million profits from the National Lottery in 1987 would be spent on arts and culture projects. One art critic considered that the announcement marked "the launch of a cultural revolution".[109] But other critics have cautioned that the reliance on discretionary spending on lottery tickets by the general public to support the activities of official agencies such as the Arts Council is an undesirable development. From a pessimistic viewpoint, it means that once again the arts are being regarded as a marginal area.[110] Regardless of these daunting institutional conditions, at the time, the visitors' and audiences' attitudes to arts and its importance in the economic, social, cultural and educational life of Irish society revealed a strong level of support for the arts among the general public.[111] A survey conducted by the Arts Council in 1994, *The Public and the Arts: A Survey of Behaviour and Attitudes in Ireland*, revealed that there was also a strong agreement by the respondents to the survey (84%) with the statement that the arts had become more accessible in the previous ten years (1983-1993). Sixty percent of the respondents to the survey believed that expenditure at the time on the arts should be maintained at its current level even in times of economic recession.[112] In addition, the survey indicated that there had been a considerable increase in attendance at art events of 18% between 1981 and 1994. This increase was found for all art forms, and is more pronounced in the case of exhibitions of paintings/sculpture, with an increase in attendance of 15% between 1981 and 1994. This was particularly noticeable at the National Gallery of Ireland, records suggesting an increase of attendance from 426,000 people in 1980 to 506,000 people in 1988.

Museums have different and often multiple mandates, and complex and contradictory goals. They experience conflicting demands made on them from a range of interested parties, including sponsors, audiences, government officials, and people who are represented in the museum displays. In addition, whatever their specific histories, museums are defined – and define themselves – in relation to other cultural, civic, community organisations, events or circumstances. These events or circumstances shape and regulate who and what might be included or excluded from consuming or operating the encoded meanings to construct identity.

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[108] B. Kennedy, Op. Cit. (note 107), 136.
[109] C. Carty, "The Arts Strike Out Alone", *Sunday Tribune*, Sept. 20, 1987. 20.
[110] B. Kennedy, Op. Cit. (note 107), 135.
[111] P. Clancy et al., *The Public and the Arts: A Survey of Behaviour and Attitudes in Ireland*, (Dublin: Criterion Press for the Arts Council of Ireland, 1994), 3.
[112] Ibid, 4.

This process works through the actions of government, curators and to a lesser extent, participants in the project. Understanding the context in which the exhibition *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present* day was created will aid the analysis of how the exhibition is regulated and will show how the contexts for identity construction are formed.

8.3. Exhibited Culture: The exhibition, the catalogue and choices of display: a scholarly and ideological approach from the curators

Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day was a jointly organised project by the Douglas Hyde Gallery, National Gallery of Ireland, and the Municipal Gallery to coincide with the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in 1987. The exhibition opened on 9th July and ran until 15th August. 230 artworks by 121 artists were exhibited over the three venues. The National Gallery arranged the section dealing with artists from the 18th century to 1943. The Douglas Hyde Gallery co-ordinated and prepared the section from 1943 to present day. With the inclusion of the Municipal Gallery as an exhibiting venue, the 1943 to present day period was subdivided in two sections: 1943 to 1975, displayed at the Municipal Gallery, and 1975 to present day at the Douglas Hyde Gallery. While exact attendance numbers were not recorded, in a letter to Sylvia Meehan, Chairperson at Employment Equality Agency at the time, Patrick T. Murphy noted the increased visitor numbers at the Douglas Hyde Gallery: "You'll be glad to learn that we broke a record here yesterday with over a thousand visitors in one day".[113]

In their "Explanation of the Catalogue" Patrick T. Murphy and Homan Potterton established the chronological parameters of the exhibitions:

"The National Gallery has arranged the section dealing with artists from the 18th century to 1943, (a watershed year when the first Irish Living Art Exhibition was held); and the Douglas Hyde Gallery has co-ordinated and prepared the section from 1943 to present day. Because of the nature of the work described and exhibited, the approach to each section is slightly different: for example, all the works of art exhibited in the earlier section are fully described and illustrated in the catalogue, but this format has not been followed in the later section".[114]

The two distinctive sections were also differentiated by their conceptual approach to exhibition making:

"The brief for the Exhibition and Catalogue was that up to 1943 we should attempt to be as comprehensive as possible, and after that date, because of the great range of artists, it should be selective. Inevitably some artists will have been overlooked where we have attempted to be

[113] "Letter from P.T. Murphy to S. Meehan", July 10, 1987, Box 5, Folder 2, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.
[114] P.T. Murphy and H. Potterton, "Foreword", in *Irish Women Artists form the 18th Century to the Present Day*, ed. W. Ryan-Smolin, E. Mayes and J. Rogers (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland and Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1987), ix.

comprehensive; and when we have been selective, we recognise that there may not be universal agreement with our selection".[115]

This statement also establishes two distinctive approaches to each of the chronological sections of the exhibitions: the earlier section as a revisionist exercise and the later section as a separate area of study.

In their "Foreword" to the exhibition's catalogue Patrick T. Murphy and Homan Potterton establish the historical and ideological parameters of exhibitions:

"The Exhibition, Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day and this catalogue which accompanies it, survey a wide territory and presents to the public, in many cases for the first time, the work of a great number of artists who worked in Ireland over the past two and half centuries. What they all have in common is the fact that they are women.

While, of course we would make no claim that the paintings and sculptures in the Exhibition are in any way different to those produced by men (apart obviously from differences of artistic style), the circumstances under which women artists worked, certainly in centuries earlier than our own, were different; and often very different… Yet the pictures in the exhibition prove that these artists had indisputable talent".[116]

This statement situates Irish women artists in the context of Irish society, arguing that changes in cultural, social and political spheres of Irish life are matched by corresponding changes in the visual arts. In this way, Irish art is conceptualized as dynamic, and Irish women artists as part of a group engaged in similar task; reflecting on the changes around them like the feminist revolution and the development of the Irish economy, as well as dealing with conceptual issues.

This statement also echoes Nochlin's theories on limitations by gender. In her essay "Why have there been no great women artists?", she also denounces the inability of the institution of Art History to free itself from a Western, white, male-centred gaze which fails to take the whole spectrum of creation into account, and to understand the special conditions under which female artists had to create. Not only does she demonstrate that women had major hardships to overcome, peculiar to their gender, in order to become artists, but she also shows how those barriers modelled female artistic practice by limiting them to certain minor genres, techniques or types of composition. By not being able to undergo the same education, more especially being forbidden to attend life-drawing classes for "modesty" reasons, or having to fit in the traditional role of women inside the family unit, which prevented them travelling, or to prioritize their careers over motherhood, prevented most female artists excelling in the most praised genre of History Painting, which also prevented them receiving major commissions and

[115] P.T. Murphy and H. Potterton, Op. Cit. (note 114), x.
[116] Ibid.

attaining the same recognition as their male counterparts. Those realities confined them to the cliché of the "dilettante" female artists.[117]

Those arguments are showcased throughout the curatorial choices within the National Gallery's exhibition, where those characteristics, like the domination of "secondary" genres like still life and intimate scenes, are shown in contrast to rare historical exceptions such as Eileen Reid's (1894-1981), *A young black boy in boxer shorts* (n.d.). Reid's artwork was described in the catalogue as: "This somewhat unusual and risqué subject must owe a great deal to her tutor's [Sir William Orpen (1878 – 1931)] cosmopolitan influence".[118] This standpoint is also greatly elaborated inside the catalogue, which plays an important role in the legacy the curators want for the show. Both Patrick T. Murphy and Homan Potterton in the exhibition catalogue foreword insist on the importance they give to the potential heritage of the exhibition where they state their intention to change the way women are perceived:

"Our aspiration for the Exhibition is that it will act as a catalyst for further investigation and explorations. We also hope, that in the case of women artists of an earlier age, it will lead to new artists being discovered and their talent being recognised".[119]

This statement also establishes two aspects to the exhibition. First, that the show was definitely meant to be a scholarly work, backed by the ideological stance of the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women. Secondly, as already mentioned, the two distinctive approaches to each of the chronological sections of the exhibitions, the earlier section as a revisionist exercise and the later section as separate area of study.

Also in "Explanation of the Catalogue", the catalogue institutes the formal selection criteria:

"In preparing the Exhibition the first decision to be made was the nature of work which would be shown. It was obvious that the Exhibition should include painting (in all media) and sculptures; but throughout the centuries, and not least the present time, Irish women have created objects which might easily be categorised as either art or crafts; and in this area some difficult decisions had to be made as to what would be included. As a general rule only painting and sculptures are included (although there are, for example, some designs for stained glass and some prints); but the essays in the Catalogue do describe the contribution made by Irish women to crafts when that contribution is significant in a wider context".[120]

In order to select the artworks at the National Gallery of Ireland, Homan Potterton invited contributors who had specialist knowledge in the field to recommend artists and their artworks to be included in the exhibition and to compile a dictionary of artists within the catalogue.[121]

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[117] L. Nochlin, Op. Cit. (note 34), 22 – 39.

[118] W. Ryan-Smolin, E. Mayes and J. Rogers, eds., *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland & Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1987), 123.

[119] P.T. Murphy and H. Potterton, Op. Cit. (note 114), ix.

[120] W. Ryan-Smolin, E; Mayes and J. Rogers, eds., Op. Cit. (note 118), xi.

[121] "Letter from H. Potterton to J. Meagher", November 11, 1986, Box 1, Folder 5, Irish Women Artists Exhibition Papers, National Gallery of Ireland Archives and Library, National Gallery of Ireland.

After this first compilation of possible entries to the show and catalogue, the final selection of artists for the exhibition was designated by a steering committee, which included Homan Potterton and Patrick Murphy, as well as Anne O. Crookshank, Jeanne Sheehy, Julian Campbell, Nicola Gordon Bowe, Bruce Arnold, Brian Kennedy, and Dorothy Walker. The steering committee members also contributed to the catalogue with individual essays and various biographical entries.[122] As well as identifying possible artists for inclusion, the availability of artworks was also important to this selection process. Contributors and the steering committee had to identify private and corporate collections that included works from the selected artists.[123] Out of the 137 artworks exhibited, eighty-two were from private collections, twenty-five from the National Gallery of Ireland collection, fifteen from the Ulster Museum collection, and the other fifteen were borrowed from national and international, governmental and private institutions. The large number of artworks borrowed from private and institutional collections reflects the extensive involvement of the curatorial team at the National Gallery of Ireland in the exhibition making process. While borrowing from sister or similar institutions can be the result of pre-established relationships, arranging loans from private collections requires the establishment of new relationships, from the identification of artworks within collections, to the practicalities of exhibition making such as transport and displaying the artworks according to lender specifications. This necessity to borrow from private collections also reflects on the lack of representation of female artists within the National Gallery of Ireland and other Irish cultural institutions at the time. As already mentioned, according to the Guerrilla Girls interventions in Ireland, in 2008, just five percent of the artists represented in the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland were women.[124]

The National Gallery of Ireland selected pieces were exhibited at the Portrait Gallery within the Dargan wing. The Portrait Gallery at the time was a large rectangular space with three three-quarter length half-partition walls on each sidewall within the first two-thirds of the exhibition space. This architectural division created a total of ten sub-exhibition spaces: eight alcoves, four on each side of the room, the central corridor and a back room at the end of the exhibition space. In the Portrait Gallery the alcoves were not directly connected, so viewers had only one point of access to each of them through the central corridor where sculpture artworks by women artists selected for the show were also displayed. The walls were wallpapered with embossed green wallpaper, the ceiling, coving, dado rail and wall partitioning columns were painted white. Each group of artworks was lighted with ceiling overhead lights and a security cord throughout the exhibition protected the artworks.

[122] "Preliminary list of artists", Box 3, Folder 4, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.
[123] "Letter from H. Potterton to J. Meagher", Op. Cit. (note 121).
[124] Guerrilla Girls, Op. Cit. (note 31).

When approaching the exhibition, at the anteroom, visitors were required to enter the show through the left side of the exhibition space. The entrance room included a wall text written by the gallery director, Homan Potterton, following the ideas of chronology, ideology and selection criteria presented in the catalogue's foreword and explanation of the exhibition. As already mentioned, texts at exhibitions are important analytical tools: they link the written message with the visual arrangement of the works. The text in this exhibition exemplifies a didactic approach to thinking about art. It helps the viewers learn, not only about the formal characteristics of the artworks, the materials used, or the process of their making, but about the context of production. There were only four free-standing sculptures exhibited in the show: Gwendolen Herbert's (1878 – 1966) *An old Irish Women* (c.1907), Kathleen Cox's (1904 – 1972) *Crouching girl with a tray* (c. 1929), Rosamond Praeger's (1867 – 1954) *Portrait bust of Miss E. M. McCormick* (n.d.), and Angela Antrim's (1911 – 1984) *Samson* (c.1934/35), and they were displayed on plinths at different points of the central corridor. The wall pieces were hung above eye level, on a mixture of single and double linear hanging with limited wall space between each piece. Identity labels were used for each individual piece giving basic information about the artworks: name of the artist, title, year, materials and provenance of the work. Hence their role here is not didactic, as in the case of the wall text referred to above, but simply referential. Most of the artworks were displayed by artist, with chronology as a main guide of curatorial choices and sequence of display with genre as secondary guide. However, there were divergences from these rules. For instance, Sarah Purser's (1848 – 1943), *Summer Flowers* (n.d.) was exhibited separated from the rest of her work, between Rose Barton's (1856 – 1929), *Hop pickers in Kent returning home* (1894) and *Going to the Levée at Dublin Castle* (1897). While there was a chronological overlap in Purser's and Barton's career, and perhaps impressionistic technical elements and tonality to each of their works, thematically Barton's city and rural landscapes diverge from Purser's still-life (Fig. 3).



Figure 1: Installation view, Irish Women Artists from 18th Century to 1940 at National Gallery of Ireland. Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTÉ Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTÉ Archive.



Figure 2: Anteroom *Irish Women Artists from 18th Century to 1940* at National Gallery of Ireland. Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTE Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTE Archive.



Figure 3: Installation view, *Irish Women Artists from 18th Century to 1940* at National Gallery of Ireland. From left to right: Rose Barton, *Hop pickers in Kent returning home* (1894); Sarah Pusher, *Summer Flowers* (n.d.); Rose Barton, *Going to the Levée at Dublin Castle* (1897). Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTÉ Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTÉ Archive.



Figure 4: Installation view, *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to 1940* at National Gallery of Ireland. From left to right clockwise: Henrietta Dering, *Portrait of a Gentleman* (n.d.); Susanna Drury, *The East Prospect of the Giant's Causeway* (n.d.); Henrietta Dering, *Portrait of a Lady* (1704); Caroline Hamilton, *'Mal de Mer' on the Irish sea* (n.d.); Lady Florence Cole, *Crom Castle* (n.d.); Caroline Hamilton, *The Kingstown to Holyhead Packet* (n.d.). Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTÉ Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTÉ Archive.

Another divergence from the general sequence of display was the first set of works encountered by the audience visiting the show (Fig. 4). Perhaps to trace the origins of Irish women artists, the works of Henrietta Dering (fl. 1694 – 1728/29), *Portrait of a Lady* (1704) and *Portrait of a Gentleman* (n.d.); Susanna Drury (1733 – 1770), *The East Prospect of the Giant's Causeway* (n.d.); Lady Florence Cole (1778/9 – 1862), *Crom Castle* (n.d.); and Caroline Hamilton (1771 – 1861), *'Mal de Mer' on the Irish sea* (n.d.) and *The Kingstown to Holyhead Packet* (n.d.), were displayed together.

In his review of the show, Brian Fallon compared the historic and sober display as a "curtsy to historicism".[125] Through this metaphor, the didactic and teaching goals of the shows become obvious, born from the will of the curators to give the general public as well as art historians a unique gathering of materials and knowledge about all those women artists. As can be seen in the photographs and art critical descriptions, such an approach is embodied in classic display aesthetics with dark green walls, white plaster work within a historical institution and historical building, paired with a chronological organisation of the exhibition. However, the chronological organisation of the exhibition did not match the chronological order of the catalogue entries making the connection between the display and the catalogue less accessible. However, the chronological order combined with the subthemes also provided interesting curatorial moments such as the transition from the work of Hilda Roberts (1901 – 1982) to the work of Mary Swanzy (Fig. 5). While their style could be considered at different ends of the representational spectrum, the use of portraiture and self-portraiture, Mary Swanzy's *Young woman with flowers* (n.d.) is considered to be a self-portrait, as subthemes provided a subtle visual connection as well as juxtaposition of their works resulting in flawless transition. There is an element of humour to this transition also. George Russell (Æ) (1867 – 1935) was not particularly supportive of non-representational art and he was very vocal about it, most famously in his review of two of Mainie Jellett's paintings at the Dublin Painters Exhibition. Cited by Bruce Arnold, in his review of the paintings in *The Irish Statesman*, the otherwise relatively progressive Russell described Jellett as "a late victim to cubism in some subsection of this artistic malaria" and as the creator of a "subhuman art".[126]

[125] B. Fallon, "Irish Women Artists at National Gallery", *The Irish Times,* July 4, 1987.
[126] B. Arnold, *Mainie Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 25.



Figure 5: Installation view, *Irish Women Artists from 18th Century to 1940* at National Gallery of Ireland. From left to right: Hilda Roberts, *Self-Portrait in red cardigan* (n.d.), *Portrait of George Russell (Æ)* (1929) and *Achill boy* (n.d.); Mary Swanzy, *Young woman with flowers* (n.d.). Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTÉ Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTÉ Archive.

As already mentioned, the historical progression of the show was also subdivided in thematic associations aimed at backing the different entries within the catalogue that analyse the characteristics of female artists' production. For instance, Eileen Reid's, *A young black boy in boxer shorts* (n.d.) and Wilhelmina M. Geddes' (1887 – 1955) four art works within the exhibition: *Portrait of Ethel Geddes* (c.1910), *Cinderella dressing her ugly sister for the ball* (1910), *Cinderella's ugly sisters trying the glass slipper for size* (1910), and *A dream* (c.1923) were shown together (Fig. 6).



Figure 6: National Gallery of Ireland exhibition coordinator, Kim-Mai Mooney during press preview. Artworks: left, Eileen Reid, *A young black boy in boxer shorts* (n.d.). Right from top clockwise, Wilhelmina M. Geddes, *A dream* (c.1923), *Cinderella dressing her ugly sister for the ball* (1910), and *Cinderella's ugly sisters trying the glass slipper for size* (1910). Source: M. Kavanagh, "Photo Standalone 2 – no Title". The Irish Times, July 4, 1987.

The only apparent connection between the artists is the influence of William Orpen. Both artists studied under Orpen; Reid at the Royal Academy in London in 1919, and Geddes at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin, in 1910. This juxtaposition relates to one of the topics largely addressed within the catalogue: the access to training by women artists. While two essays are dedicated to the subject within the catalogue: Jeanne Sheehy's "Training and professional life of Irish women artists before the twentieth century" and Julian Campbell's "Art students and lady travellers: Irish women artists in France, 1870-1930", access to training by women artists is a point of reference to all the others. However, using Orpen as a point of juxtaposition reverts to the genius-male-artist canonical approach that the exhibition and the catalogue try to correct. While it is inevitable that a revisionist approach refers to the vision that they are questioning, the exhibition and the catalogue sections at the National Gallery of Ireland seem to strive to re-place women in an Art History through a visual and descriptive narration that is structurally hostile to them. In her essay "Lhote's wives – scapegoating women artists, 1962-1984", Roisin Kennedy refers to this descriptive systemic art historical hostility to the group of artists, as previously mentioned, that have largely been attributed with the introduction of modernist art in Ireland: Maine Jellett, Evie Hone, and Norah McGuinness. According to Kennedy the term "Lhote's wives", utilised by Julian Campbell in the exhibition's catalogue essay as "Lhote's daughters", suggested the subservient relationship to their mentor, the French cubist artist André Lhote (1885 – 1962). The term "Lhote's wives": "also evoked an amateur engagement with their practice as artists, as well as making a negative

comment on their lack of a 'normal' domestic life as these artists had chosen to be neither wives nor mothers in a society which privileged the role of women within the home above all else".[127] Beyond gender, Kennedy also suggests other cultural indicators such as religion, non-Catholic in this case, and nationality, Anglo-Irish, as markers of antagonism towards this particular group of artists. This subservient descriptive narration was presented throughout the exhibition from the initial exhibition proposal using the term "ladies who paint" to the different essays dealing with the earlier period of the exhibition up to 1975.[128] The curators and scholars contributing to the earlier part of the catalogue try to justify the legitimacy and worthiness of those artists to be studied by art historians to the point where it almost seems paradoxical, rather than challenging the ideological core of the exclusion of those very female artists. By trying to make the works fit within traditional criteria, the curators only reinforce those artificial norms and the historical constructions that enabled women not to be featured in general Art History discourses. They isolate the artists within a widely masculine Art History, rather than objecting to this vision of Art History. For instance the already quoted description of Eileen Reid's artwork, *A young black boy in boxer shorts* (n.d.): "This somewhat unusual and risqué subject must owe a great deal to her tutor's cosmopolitan influence".[129] They apply this criticism to the presentation in the exhibition and the catalogue of works from artists whose production fits Nochlin's perspective on what a "typically female" work is, like small intimate quotidian scenes or delicate bucolic landscapes.[130] Nevertheless, when dealing with more "individual artists" such as Mary Swanzy and Mainie Jellett, whether due to the style of their already established art historical notoriety, the curators also revert to the canonical treatment by creating spaces within the visual and chronological narratives to reiterate that canon. Mary Swanzy and Mainie Jellett had visual priority within the exhibition but also within other materials that accompanied the exhibition such as promotional material and commercial items. This approach raises questions about curating shows featuring under-represented groups: how to denounce the mechanisms of an oppressive system inside an exhibition and gain visibility inside the art institution, without contributing to the very arguments that built the exclusion of certain groups?

This was reiterated at the Municipal Gallery section of the exhibition as the works of Mainie Jellett and Mary Swanzy were also at the centre of the chronological narrative. The section at the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery included fifty nine artworks by thirty one artists, selected by Patrick T. Murphy and the same advisory panel at the National Gallery of Ireland, working in different media: painting, prints and drawings, and sculpture. A maximum of six artworks per

[127] R. Kennedy, "Lhote's wives – scapegoating women artists, 1962-1984," in *Irish Women Artists 1800-2009: Familiar but Unknown*, ed. E. O'Connor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 168-169.
[128] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to H. Potterton", Op. Cit. (note 85).
[129] W. Ryan-Smolin, E; Mayes and J. Rogers, eds., Op. Cit. (note 118), 123.
[130] L. Nochlin, Op. Cit. (note 34), 24.

artist were included, as with Nano Reid. In the majority of other cases there was only one. As already mentioned Mainie Jellett and Mary Swanzy were already represented at the National Gallery of Ireland exhibition, as well as May Guinness (1863 – 1955), Letitia Hamilton (1878 – 1964), Evie Hone (1894 – 1955, Frances Kelly (1908 – 2002), Harriet Kirkwood (1880 – 1953) and Estella F. Solomons (1882 – 1968). Most works in the exhibition were loaned by private collectors – twenty-seven, with nineteen lent from museums, galleries and corporate collections, and the rest were lent directly by the artists. The works displayed were created between 1922, Mainie Jellett's: *Abstract* and 1986, Mary Farl Powers' (1948 – 1992): *Species 1*, with a substantial number of works, sixteen, created after the end of the time frame of the exhibition of 1975. In the case of Imogen Stuart (b. 1927), both of her works were created between 1981 and 1983. The selected artworks at the Municipal Gallery were exhibited at what is today known as Gallery 1. Gallery 1 was a large rectangular room with embossed white wallpaper and natural-light lighting from a set of ceiling skylights – perhaps echoing impressionist exhibition making techniques, as the core of the Municipal Gallery's early permanent collection was Hugh Lane's (1875 – 1915) gathering of impressionist artworks. Entry to the exhibition was fixed by the architecture of the building through what is today known as the Sculpture Hall, a highly ornate oval room that reflects the neo-classical features of the rest of the building, creating one route of access to the exhibition through a colonnaded entry of a set of two double Doric columns. The ornate nature of the access point of the exhibition highly contrasted with the minimal architectural detail of Gallery 1, with the coffered ceiling as its sole decorative feature, and the modernist approach of white walls and natural lighting to exhibition spaces. This contrast supported the narrative and content of the exhibition: the historical contextualisation of a group of modernist artworks. The entrance room's signage included the title of the period covered by the exhibition but unlike the catalogue and all the rest of the literature which suggested that the period covered at the Municipal Gallery was 1943 to 1975, the signage indicated: Irish Women Artists 1940-1975 (Fig.7).



Figure 7: Installation view, *Irish Women Artists 1940-1975* at the Municipal Gallery. Family day activity. Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTÉ Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTÉ Archive.

While three years here and there might seems insignificant within an exhibition that covered two and a half centuries, it is relevant: firstly, because of the confused message that it portrays on the description and hence the narrative of the show; and secondly, because it eliminates one of the key moments in the art historical narrative of Irish women artists that the catalogue entries regularly reiterate, the Irish Exhibition of Living Art. As the "Explanation of the Catalogue" indicates: "… 1943, a watershed year when the first Irish Living Art Exhibition was held".[131]

The entrance room's signage included a wall text written following the ideas of chronology, ideology and selection criteria presented in the catalogue's explanation of the exhibition. The chronological narrative of the exhibition was set from left at entry and moving clockwise around the room. All the free-standing sculpture was displayed on white plinths in the centre of the room, except Deborah Brown's (b. 1927), *Glassfibre Form* (1974), which was displayed as floor piece, and Sonja Landweer's (b. 1933), *Bowl I* (1973/1976), *Bowl II* (1974/1976) and *Lidded Pot* (1981), which were displayed in a display case. The wall pieces were displayed at eye level, on a mixture of linear single and linear double hanging with minimum space between each wall piece. Identity labels were used for each individual piece giving basic information about the artworks: name of the artist, title, year, materials, and provenance of the work. Due to the open nature of the gallery, viewers could decide whether to look at the works following the sequence presented by the curator, chronological clockwise from the sculpture room's left access wall, or to go in the opposite direction. A copy of the exhibition catalogue was also

[131] W. Ryan-Smolin, E; Mayes and J. Rogers, eds., Op. Cit. (note 116), xi.

made available to the audiences for consultation. This is significant as it allows the viewer to learn about each artist from the biographical entries, emphasizing the didactic ethos of the exhibition, managing their own learning experience.



Figure 8: Installation view. Irish Women Artists 1940-1975 at the Municipal Gallery. Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTÉ Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTÉ Archive.

The artworks were displayed by individual artists, with chronology as a main guide of curatorial choices and sequence of display and aesthetics and style as a secondary sequence. In the leaflet that accompanied the exhibition the parameters for the selection of artists is established:

"In selecting this section of the exhibition, the organisers attempt to reflect the importance of certain artists as it emerged from the critical discussion in the catalogue. In some cases, artists were offered the opportunity to include a current work in order to show the development of their style".[132]

This statement transformed chronological narrative into a narrative of evolution through time, particularly the evolution of style focusing on form rather than context. This statement also establishes a hybrid between revisionism and "area study." Similarly, the heading of the leaflet

[132] "Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day: Dublin Municipal Gallery Exhibition leaflet", Box 3, Folder 2, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.

moved away from the overall title of the exhibition. Instead, of *Irish Women Artists*, this section of the exhibition was titled *Women Artists in Ireland 1943-1975*. The adjustment of title belies more than a mere semantic difference. According to Hilary Robinson: "to write… about Irish women artists begs a number of questions. Not the least of these are: 'what is Irishness?', 'is there a commonality of women?', and 'how do you define artist?'. In turn, combinations of these categories could be questioned ('what is so particular about being an Irish artist? - or an Irish woman? - or a woman artist?')."[133] The Exhibition did not set out to establish a singular, coherent set of identities or categories for the artists presented in the show.[134] Patrick T. Murphy and Homan Potterton consciously set a concise parameter of what Irish women artists entails within the Exhibition in its catalogue "Foreword": "The Exhibition,… surveys…, the work of a great number of artists who worked in Ireland over the past two and a half centuries".[135]

Here the key words are: "artists who worked in Ireland" presenting Ireland as a circumstantial spatial environment rather than a place of birth or identity. Katy Deepwell suggests that Irishness is a socio-political construct that is historically produced and as such the curators were correct in adjusting the title of the section at the Municipal Gallery.[136] Trying to construct a singular, coherent set of identities for the artists presented in the show would have been difficult: who should decide what Irish means within an exhibition that covers two and a half centuries of the history of Ireland as a nation, when Ireland as a nation has gone from colonialism to post-colonialism to the resurgence of global interconnectedness in the late 1980s? To address this, the curators created a set of organisational and display categories that juxtaposed the different venues within the exhibition.

According to Claude Cernuschi, categories often give the mistaken impression of cohesion within, or exaggerate the differences across, their pre-established borders. According to him, by the same token, without categories of any kind, no form of interpretation could be conceivable: "It is not as if imposing categories upon objects of culture in order to make sense of them, or in order to enforce a particular reading: it is, rather, that without categories, the making of sense and the possibility of reading would not occur".[137] If categories can function as prescriptive rather than descriptive tools, it is because all interpretation is prescriptive as well as descriptive. According to Cernuschi, categories may only have provisional rather than universal validity, but to categorise is an inevitable, inescapable aspect of the interpretative act. Since, categories cannot be "lived with" or "lived without", a way to counterbalance their

[133] H. Robinson, "Irish/Woman/Artwork: Selective Readings", *Feminist Review*, no. 50 (1995): 89-110.
[134] P.T. Murphy, interview by the author. Dublin, 6th February, 2019.
[135] P.T. Murphy and H. Potterton, Op. Cit. (note 108), ix.
[136] K. Deepwell, Op. Cit. (note 88), 3.
[137] C. Cernuschi, "Visual and Ideological Pluralism in Practice: Contemporary Irish Women Artists in Context", in *Re-dressing Cathleen – Contemporary works from Irish Women Artists*, ed. J. Grinnell and A. Conley (McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 1997), 19-35.

prescriptive nature is to place an object of inequity into as many categories as possible. In this way, their potentially limiting or totalizing effect could be juxtaposed to, and forced to compete with, other categories, but whose cumulative impact may allow an object of investigation to be constructed against a multiplicity of perspectives.[138] This, in many ways, was the organizational and display rationale underlining the Exhibition *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day*, not only to expose the public to a rarely shown body of work but also to allow the category "Irish women artists" or "Women Artists in Ireland" to be constructed against a variety of interpretive backgrounds of other categories whether aesthetic, historical, social, political and art historical.

Approaching the exhibition, the visitor's first and only visual encounter with the show through the colonnaded entry was Hilary Heron's (1923–1976) *Crazy Jane* (1958). In her essay in the exhibition catalogue, "Irish women artists, 1960-1975", Dorothy Walker describes Heron's work as "innovative, humorous and whimsical".[139] *Crazy Jane* forms part of a series of works of semi-abstract interpretations of W.B. Yeats' (1865 – 1939) poems on the character of the same name. According to C. L. Innes, Yeats, in his poems, portrays Jane as a mad, provocative and ferocious woman prone to obscenity. Innes also suggests that: "Crazy Jane belongs to a long tradition of writing in which women question male authority. She speaks from her body. She speaks from desire. And she is defiant".[140] According to Elizabeth Cullingford in Yeats' *Crazy Jane and the Bishops*, Jane speaks with authority as she curses the oak, the symbol of the state. Cullingford also presents the clergy, represented by the Bishop, as the persecutors of witches. Therefore the Bishop: "represents the forces of organized society and culture arrayed against the marginal female figure".[141] Positioned at the centre of the room the large artwork dominated the physical and the visual spaces. With these literary interpretations in mind, we can consider Hilary Heron's *Jane* as defiant rather than crazy. Defiant, perhaps, of the male dominated, male centered art and art historical establishments. According to Brian Fallon, writing in the exhibition catalogue, Hilary Heron and some of her generational peers, those addressed in this section of the Exhibition, "are fading into little more than historical footnotes".[142] Here is where the impact of this section of the Exhibition could be questioned, as most of the artists in the Municipal Gallery show are still unseen beyond art historical footnotes. For instance, with the exception of Gerda Frömel (1931–1975), Imogen Stuart (b.

[138] C. Cernuschi, Op. Cit. (note 135, 20.
[139] D. Walker, "Irish women artists, 1960-1975", in *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day*, ed. W. Ryan-Smolin, E. Mayes and J. Rogers (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland and Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1987), 54.
[140] C. L. Innes, *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 100.
[141] E. B. Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 234-236.
[142] B. Fallon, "Irish women artists in the nineteen-fifties", in *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day*, ed. W. Ryan-Smolin, E. Mayes and J. Rogers (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland and Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1987), 48.

1927), and Anne Madden (b. 1932), whose first major retrospectives only took place in 2015 at IMMA, 2002 at the Royal Hibernian Academy, and 2007 at IMMA respectively, and the already established artists within the Irish art historical canon: Evie Hone, Mainie Jellett, Norah McGuinness, Nano Reid, and Mary Swanzy, none of the other artists have received further particular institutional attention.

The section of the exhibition at the Douglas Hyde Gallery included thirty-four artworks by thirteen artists, selected by Aidan Dunne, Joan Fowler, and Patrick T. Murphy, working in different media: painting, photography, sculpture, video, mixed media, performance and installation. As in the other two venues, only a small number of works per artist were included in order to portray the artistic practice of a group, as opposed to an in-depth focus on works by individual artists. A maximum of six works per artist were included, as with Eilis McCarrick's (b.1958) *Portrait Series* (1985-1986); in some cases there was only one, as with Maggie Magee's (b.1958), video installation *Dis Continent* (1986). Most of the works selected were loaned by the artists directly rather than by their associated commercial galleries, with the exception of six works that were borrowed from corporate and private collections. The majority of the works were created between 1985 and 1987 with the exception of Mary Fitzgerald's *Dark Drawing* from 1982.

In the leaflet that accompanied the exhibition, the parameters for the selection of these artists was established:

"This section deals with artists who have emerged in the last twelve years, generally an age range between mid-twenties and mid-thirties. There are so many women artists within this bracket the organisers were left with two options for selection, to adopt the anthology approach and try to include as many as possible, or alternatively, to select the most interesting exponents of the different forms of art-making in current use. It was felt that the former would never achieve comprehensiveness and that the latter would offer the best opportunity for cogent effective exhibition".[143]

The recent nature of the production of the artworks and the generational nature of the Douglas Hyde exhibition distances itself from the chronological narrative of the two other venues. The recent nature and the precedence of the artworks also reflects on the close artist-curator relationships established for the show focusing on current practices by exhibiting artist rather than on canonical artworks. This departure also presents the show as "area study". In her review of the exhibition *Champagne Life* (Saatchi Gallery, London, 2016), Hannah Rubin suggests another axis for the analysis of all-female artists exhibitions that could be applied to

[143] "Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day: Douglas Hyde Gallery Exhibition leaflet", Box 3, Folder 2, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.

the *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day* show at the Douglas Hyde Gallery:

"The folks over at Saatchi were clear to distinguish "Champagne Life" as an exhibit of art made by women, rather than as a 'women's art exhibition' ... The grouping in the former case occurs along an axis of space creation: making room in a male-dominated art world for individual voices who have experienced similar marginalization and lack of access. It stakes no claim to the universality of the woman's voice nor does it bear any claim on what kinds of art will be produced or why".[144]

The leaflet that accompanied the exhibition also included a brief explanation of the context of the show following the ideas presented in the exhibition's catalogue as well as formal details of each artwork by artist in alphabetical order rather than by order of display. As with the Municipal Gallery exhibition, the brief description of the show also includes a note of reference to the exhibition catalogue: "For a greater context we would refer you to the final two catalogue essays and for further research to the bibliography supplied in the publication".[145]

By omitting detailed contextualization, contextual description of the individual artworks and by directing the viewers to the catalogue, viewers are given an active role in the creation of meaning and their learning experience. The accompanying literature of the exhibition also included a pamphlet with the description of the overall exhibition at the three different venues by Patrick. T. Murphy explaining the context of the show following the ideas presented in the exhibition's catalogue. The pamphlet mentions the curator's name and position, curator and director, as a way of legitimating the contents of the interpretations it offers.[146] As with the Municipal Gallery, a copy of the exhibition catalogue was also made available to the audiences for consultation. This is significant as it allows the viewer to learn about each artist from the biographical entries, emphasizing the didactic ethos of the exhibition, and as previously mentioned, managing their own learning experience.

The exhibiting space at the Douglas Hyde Gallery in 1987 was divided into four different spaces over two floor levels: the lobby area and corridor in the ground floor, and main exhibition space and two adjacent rooms in the lower floor. A substantial void in the ground level connects both exhibiting floors presenting a birds-eye view of most of the exhibition on entering the show. The entry to the exhibition was fixed by the architecture of the building, creating one route of access to the exhibition through the ground floor lobby and corridor. The lower level main space and adjacent small rooms were connected, so viewers could decide

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[144] H. Rubin, "The Problem Isn't All-female Art Shows", *The Sisterhood*, February 8, 2016, https://forward.com/sisterhood/333082/the-problem-isnt-all-female-art-shows/, accessed: January 23, 2019.

[145] "Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day: Douglas Hyde Gallery Exhibition leaflet", Op. Cit. (note 141).

[146] "Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day: Douglas Hyde Gallery Exhibition leaflet 2", Box 3, Folder 2, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.

whether to look at the works following the main space's sequence, or to go from the adjacent rooms to the main space and vice versa. Accessing the main exhibiting space through lobby and corridor by the only staircase leads the viewers to main floor space that was taken by the majority of free-standing sculpture pieces. The artworks were displayed, well spaced, by individual artists, with aesthetics as a guide of curatorial choices and sequence of display. The exposed brick walls were painted white and each group of artworks was lighted with ceiling overhead lights, where the electrical and other gallery operating infrastructures are exposed against a coffered grey concrete ceiling. Other architectural features such as staircase and side columns are also made of concrete. This architectural presentation, according to Brian Fallon, enhanced the post-modernist aspects of the exhibition.[147] Identity labels were used for each individual piece giving basic information about the artworks: name of the artist, title, year, materials, and provenance of the work. Most of the artworks were labelled in groups at the beginning of each wall display, again, emphasising the aesthetic nature of the show by engaging directly with the artworks without any form of mediation. Regardless of the substantial height of the walls in the main space, the majority of wall pieces were hung below eye level. This is a practice recurrent in the curator's, Patrick T. Murphy's career, particularly when dealing with large artworks, and can be considered as a tool to create a more direct and immersive engagement with the artwork. Mary Anne Staniszewski and Kristina Wilson in their respective books, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* and *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the Art of the Exhibition 1925-1934*, trace the origin of this aesthetic approach to present works in a way which highlighted their aesthetic dimension, and that became the norm for twentieth century modern museum practices, to MoMA and its first director Alfred Barr (1902–1981). [148] According to Staniszewski, Barr's approach was to present artworks in a way which highlighted their aesthetic dimension by giving prominence to the works of art over architectural and site-specific association. Barr and his curatorial team achieved this by placing art works on neutral coloured or white walls, positioning them at just below eye level, and keeping them well spaced. The spaces described by Staniszewski are not restricted to MoMA; they are typical of a more generalized form of exhibition design and gallery space, what Brian O'Doherty calls "the white cube".[149] According to O'Doherty the white cube is a metaphor for a space disconnected from the outside world: "windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light".[150] In *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*,

[147] B. Fallon, "Women Artists at the Municipal and Douglas Hyde", *The Irish Times,* July 10, 1987.
[148] M. A. Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 25; K. Wilson, *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the art of the exhibition, 1925-1934* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 42.
[149] B. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (London: University of California Press, 1999), 15.
[150] Ibid, 15.

O'Doherty also launches a critique against the view that any gallery space is implicitly neutral. He acknowledges the relationship between gallery design and the projection of a particular view of art history: "the history of modern art can be correlated with changes in that space and the way we see it". For him, the white cube is the ideal context for the "aestheticization of art". "The ideal gallery", O'Doherty insists, subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is art: "The artwork is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself".[151] A similar concern with the presentation of artworks also informs Nicholas Serota's book, *Experience or Interpretation: The Dilemma of Museums of Modern Art*. His discussion of the history of exhibition techniques follows the same line of argument made so far, although he gives a more precise definition of exhibition practices. He differentiates between a "curatorial interpretation of the works", and a contemporary role where the curator is "a maker of mise-en-scène".[152] Curatorial interpretation refers to the display of artworks by chronology, national school, art movement or genre, for example as in the National Gallery and the Municipal Gallery sections of the show, so that artworks by different artists are combined to "give selective readings, both of art and of the history of art".[153] According to Serota, this curatorial role has been superseded by that of curators as makers of mise-en-scène, or aestheticized settings, for the contemplation of artworks. In the aesthetic exhibition, viewers can take a more active role in appreciating and understanding artworks, because it offers "an absolute concentration of focus on the work of single artists", thus forcing viewers to develop their own readings of the work "rather than relying on a curatorial interpretation of history".[154] However, in saying that modern and neutral presentations undermine the former priority of curators, Serota and O'Doherty seem to be moving away from the principle of presentation itself. While there may have been a change in the conventions for the display of artworks, the judgement, intervention and interpretation of curators still underlines the practice of creating an aestheticized exhibition.

Regardless of the aesthetic approach as a priority to the exhibition at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, thematic connections could also be distilled from the way in which artworks were displayed and juxtaposed.[155] This presentation of artworks created two types of spaces: firstly, a use of space encouraging the aestheticization of art, as already discussed, allowing viewers to focus solely on the artworks; and, secondly, a more analytical approach, encouraging multiple readings and interpretations of the artworks on display. While viewers are encouraged to seek relationships between the various artworks on display, the question is: what sort of links can be established between them? Although, according to the catalogue essays on contemporary art,

[151] B. O'Doherty, Op. Cit. (note 149), 14.
[152] N. Serota, *Experience or Interpretation: The Dilemma of Museums of Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 8-10.
[153] Ibid, 9.
[154] Ibid, 15.
[155] P.T. Murphy, interview with author, Op. Cit. (note 132).

all works share an engagement with politics and gender, these connections may not be obvious to viewers.[156] When looking at the juxtaposition of artworks denoted by their spatial distribution, formal aspects and aesthetic values, several themes of the female experience emerge such as sexuality, identity and domesticity.



Figure 9: Installation view. *Irish women artists from 1965 to the present day* at Douglas Hyde Gallery. Front: Louise Walsh, *Avenging Epona* (1987). Floor: Louise Walsh, *Harvest Queen* (1986), Dorothy Cross, *Bath* (1987). Source: *Eyewitness*. "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day" Directed by Norris Davidson. Written by Norris Davidson. RTÉ Ireland National Television and Radio Broadcaster, January 12, 1988. RTÉ Archive.

For instance, Louise Walsh's *Harvest Queen* (1986) and Dorothy Cross's *Bath* (1987) next to each other in the central floor space, and Louise Walsh's ceiling piece *Avenging Epona* (1987), are making allusions to sexuality, identity and domesticity, formally and conceptually. While formally at opposite spectrums of representation, Walsh's crude finishes as opposed to Cross's refined appearances, both in their use of domestic objects, colander and baby's bottle in the case of Walsh, and bathtub in the case of Cross, and in their use of zoomorphism, avian and four extremity mammal in the case of Walsh, and the shark fin in the case of Cross, create visual references of sexuality and its relationship to domesticity and the nature of identity. Aidan Dunne in his essay from the exhibition catalogue describes the zoomorphic form of *Harvest Queen* as a being that is recognisably human and female, presenting woman as a "beast of burden":

[156] A. Dunne, "Contemporary women artists", in *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day*, ed. W. Ryan-Smolin, E. Mayes and J. Rogers (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland and Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1987), 61-70; J. Fowler, "Contemporary women artists: practices and issues into the future", in *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day*, ed. W. Ryan-Smolin, E. Mayes and J. Rogers (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland and Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1987), 71-78.

"The violence of her technique and the often pointed cruelty of her choice of materials… demonstrate and indict women's social position and give her sculptures an abrasive edge. Often they seem to castigate the passivity of their subjects as well as pointing out the injustice of their position".[157]

In Dorothy Cross's *Bath* an abstract genderless human figure can be distinguished, only the bronze nipples are seen, encased within the bath and a canoe-shaped box. A bronze shark fin is slicing through the water like a buzz saw and making its way between the figure's legs. Referring to the feminist misinterpretation of her work as castration, Dorothy Cross indicates that she does not see it quite that way. According to her, for men and women the piece is certainly about sexuality, but more about fear, unease and containment in relation to sexuality.[158]

8.4. Exhibition cultures: Curating the artistic production of peripheral groups

Dorothy Cross's argument about the feminist misinterpretation of her artwork challenges the possible contextual identity parameters set by the exhibition. The Third International Interdisciplinary Congress of Women, a primarily feminist academic symposium, its attendees predominantly international and female, took place at Trinity College Dublin, also the location of the Douglas Hyde Gallery. However, a 'special' blockbuster-type of exhibition on Irish women artists and their contexts brought in additional museum visitor audiences who were predominantly Irish. Therefore, it could be considered that the bulk of the audience for the exhibition was Irish with a large increment of non-Irish and female visitors, and with no specialist visual arts experience. Consequently, the likelihood of Dorothy Cross's artwork to be read as a feminist artwork is relatively objective. The identities constructed by individual participants expressed through the representation in the Exhibition are a specific response to context and are an attempt to deal with challenges associated with that context. These individual identities were created by participants and visitors focused on their links with groups, with which they have (or imagine they have) shared experiences or histories providing the building blocks for social identities. As previously mentioned, there was at least one instance where a member of the public expressed their disapproval of the exhibition. The respondent as a female artist, living outside Dublin, reinforced her opinion about the exhibition through her links with groups presented or misrepresented at the exhibition with which she had shared experiences; artists, provincial and struggling artists.[159]

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[157] A. Dunne, Op. Cit. (note 156), 62-63.
[158] D. Cross, interview with author, Op. Cit. (note 33).
[159] "Letter from I. Plazewska to P. T. Murphy", August 8, 1987, Box 4, Folder 4, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.

The results of the analysis of visitors to the Irish Women Artists exhibition survey demonstrates that visitors give complex, often contradictory, meanings to exhibitions and museum objects, meanings that are representative of their personal perceptions of identity. The galleries were places where people actively made and remade their identities. They selected, rejected and manipulated the identities found, in a way that was guided by their needs at that particular time. Such a view is supported by M. J. Lee, who states that "people invest a certain amount of their self in material objects as a way of managing their sense of place, social position and identity",[160] and by J. Fiske, who suggests, "commodities can be used by the consumer to construct meanings of self".[161]

This process can be seen in the construction of the representation of the history of Irish women artists by respondents who attended the exhibition and the congress. For instance, one of the respondents to the survey while praising the aims of the exhibition also questioned the necessity of all-female art exhibitions: "Great attempt to rediscover female artists but are women art exhibitions necessary?".[162] The themes that were chosen privileged a particular canonical representation of Irish art history and created a representation of Irish women artists that provided visitors and women, and women artists in particular, with a positive community identity that they could be proud of. For instance, another respondent to the survey: "Great set of exhibitions. It was great to see women artists being discovered and rediscovered. Something that it was greatly needed at the time. It made me feel empowered".[163] By rescuing and examining the intriguing life of Irish women artists from historical oblivion, the show presented a partial solution to the social ills of Irish women artists. This was achieved by resurrecting a sense of community or group, based upon a shared identity reinforced by the evolutionary historical narrative presented at the exhibition. By revising the past and creating a sense of mourning for what might have been, it leads, in comparison, to a joyful present which preambles to the vision of a bright future. The representation was one of community, expressed through an idea of time existing in the present, but validated by a constructed past. According to Catherine Marshall, the exhibition directly led to the formation of two related groups, the Women Artists Action Group in the south, and its Northern counterpart NIWAAG.[164] However, Fionna Barber, while also associating the creation of the group with the exhibition, attributes its creation as a reactionary measure by the group's founders to the lack of inclusion of artists in the exhibition planning and selection.[165] Whether as reactionary measure or as by-product of the Exhibition, the links between identity and community are described by

[160] M. J. Lee, *Consumer Culture Reborn: The Cultural Politics of Consumption*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 26.
[161] J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989), 11.
[162] F. Sanchez-Migallon Cano, "The Power of Display: Exhibition Cultures and Exhibited Culture in Ireland 1973-1991 – Online Questionnaire", entry no. 5, June 5, 2019.
[163] F. Sanchez-Migallon Cano, "The Power of Display: Exhibition Cultures and Exhibited Culture in Ireland 1973-1991 – Online Questionnaire", entry no. 2, June 4, 2019.
[164] C. Marshall, Op. Cit. (note 50), 492.
[165] F. Barber, *Art in Ireland since 1910* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2013), 204.

Baudrillard, as the creation of an imaginary collectivity. Imagined communities or collectivities are an integral aspect of identity formation for the visitors and participants and were used as a way of managing aspects of their response to context.[166] This also allowed them to obtain what has been described as identity capital based upon memberships of groups.[167]

Meanings were constructed through the exhibitions by the already discussed representational strategies and classification systems that were adopted. As described above, the nature of the regulation applied resulted in preferred meanings being expressed through the exhibitions:

"…rather the artworks will be installed to create their own juxtapositions and dialogues. If the public wish to critically pursue the matter they can do so through essays in the catalogue".[168]

This intention not to drain art of its vitality under the pretext of explaining it, frames the exhibition within academia and it limits its access amongst groups who would not traditionally visit museums and galleries or are familiar with the history of Irish women artists.

At the National Gallery of Ireland and the Municipal Gallery, the works exhibited were arranged based on a temporal classification system of the three separate shows that were part of the exhibition, the exhibitions can be seen as straightforward narratives of time. These again were driven by the regulatory forces and related discursive formations. However, the exhibition strategy at the Municipal Gallery of offering exhibiting living artists the opportunity to include a current work in order to show the development of their style transformed the narrative of time into the narrative of evolution through time.

As already mentioned, in their "Foreword" to the exhibition's catalogue Patrick T. Murphy and Homan Potterton establish the historical and ideological parameters of exhibitions.[169] The culture of production identified in the organisations responsible for the exhibition was similar in many ways. Both the National Gallery of Ireland and the Douglas Hyde Gallery prided themselves on their ability to contribute to national and local agendas that required them to become socially relevant, and this guided many of their activities.[170] They also felt it was important that their organisational identities were controlled, so that they were perceived externally in the most positive way possible. This was achieved through a careful policy of advocacy aimed at various stakeholders, from visitors, to government departments and project sponsors,[171] but also by setting the parameters of what each gallery will be showing around their pre-existing remits and time periods covered by their collections or mission.

For instance, in 1987, the Douglas Hyde Gallery was under direct gender bias scrutiny. Its twelve-man exhibition *Directions Out*, which responded to the Troubles, crucially failed to

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[166] J. Baudrillard, "The System of Objects", in *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings,* ed. M. Poster. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 40.
[167] Ibid, 41.
[168] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to A. Carlisle", April 5, 1987, Box 2, Folder 2, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.
[169] P.T. Murphy and H. Potterton, Op. Cit. (note 108), ix.
[170] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to H. Potterton", Op. Cit. (note 85).
[171] Ibid.

feature a single work by a woman. As cited by Michelle Boyle, the exhibition's curator Brian McAvera, attempted to defend his selection by writing:

"I was very conscious of the need for a woman artist. Women occupy an increasingly important position in the map of Northern Ireland and it seemed natural that a number [of women] would be included. However, I refuse to bow to totemism just to satisfy some numerical notion of representation. The blunt fact is that women do not seem to be working in the areas considered by this show".[172]

However, the exhibition's primary themes, which were war and violence, were clearly being explored by women at that time as seen in the work of Rita Duffy or Alice Maher.[173]

The nature of the exhibition was influenced by particular agents acting as "cultural intermediaries".[174] These agents were for the most part those with curatorial responsibility, but also included participants within the Irish art historical community and academics. While the theme of the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, "Women's Worlds: Visions and Revisions", marked the fundamental parameters of the exhibition, the selection of works exhibited around that theme was a complex and innovative process. It was a process whereby Irish art historians and academics were invited to provide a list of possible artists and art works to be included in the exhibition as well as the biographical contribution of the exhibition catalogue,[175] while inclusive and sensitive, proved to be challenging, and created discord between Homan Potterton and Patrick T. Murphy particularly in relation to the catalogue production.[176]

The production of the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition also proved to be central to the development of the project, shifting from a companion piece to an encyclopaedic work dictating the boundaries of the exhibition.

The original exhibition proposal by Patrick T. Murphy indicated that the exhibition would address women artists in the 20th century, with a small introduction of work of the "lady" painters of the 19th century.[177] However, once the National Gallery of Ireland was involved in the project, the parameters of the exhibition changed from a very focused show to an anthological interpretation due to Homan Potterton's wish to extend the exhibition period to the 18th century. This was due to his desire to gather and revise the history of as many Irish women artists as possible.[178] While the original proposal was addressing only the already established canon of Irish female artists, Homan Potterton's vision was to extend that canon by

[172] M. Boyle, "Is it even "worst" in Ireland?", in *Royal Hibernian Academy One Hundred and Eighty Eighth Exhibition* (Dublin: Royal Hibernian Academy, 2017), 53-59.
[173] Ibid, 54.
[174] M. J. Lee, Op. Cit. (note 158), 28.
[175] "Letter from H. Potterton to P. Lamb", August 8, 1986, Box 2, Folder 7, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library
[176] Ibid.
[177] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to H. Potterton", Op. Cit. (note 85).
[178] Ibid.

rescuing as many as possible of the female artists who had fallen through the gaps of art history. Potterton considered that a thorough selection was of more worth than the exhibition discourse, making the artists the only true point of reference. While he "hoped that the catalogue will thus serve as a useful source of reference for the future",[179] the catalogue itself also proved to be a tool of legitimization of the project as the selection and staging of exhibits had to be legitimated in academic terms, precisely because it was a matter of contemporary art and art that was not known to the public for which other strategies of legitimization were not available.

It was clear that despite the recognition that there was a need for other voices to be heard, the representation presented in terms of theme, style and content was one dominated by the curatorial process, influenced by various discourses, and which was encoding the meanings that were being presented and therefore controlling the nature of the product.

For instance, within the three participating venues there were distinctive encoded messages in the basic format of the exhibition. As mentioned, Potterton preferred the anthology format and the National Gallery of Ireland section of the exhibition took that form. This decision of framing the exhibition as an anthology encodes a message of totality, a message that sets itself up for failure from the beginning due to its own framework, as no anthological exhibition will ever be completed. This sense of totality and the consequent lack of it were highlighted by different art critics.[180]

On the other hand, Patrick T. Murphy with the exhibition at the Douglas Hyde Gallery had a different understanding of what the aims of the particular section of the show were:

"There are so many women artists within this bracket the organizers were left with two options for selection, to adopt the anthology approach and try to include as many as possible, or alternatively, to select the most interesting exponents of the different forms of art-making in current use. It was felt that the former would never achieve comprehensiveness and that the latter would offer the best opportunity for a cogent effective exhibition".[181]

While this message could be read as the curatorship process fully managing the message and content of the exhibition, it also sets a very clear parameter for the viewers' understanding of what they are about to experience. This was noted by art critics in a positive way.[182]

Also embedded in the original exhibition proposal and other correspondence was the idea of the past underpinning or validating the present:

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[179] "Letter from H. Potterton to P. Lamb", Op. Cit. (note 175).

[180] W. Feaver, "Goddess on an off day", *The Observer*, Aug. 2, 1987, 20; W. Januszczak, "Women framed in gentility", *The Guardian,* Jul. 30, 1987:10; C. MacGonigal, "Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day", *Irish Arts Review* 4, no. 3 (1987), 67-68; H. Pyle, "Review: Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day", *Woman's Art Journal* 11, no. 1 (1990), 45-49.

[181] "Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day: Douglas Hyde Gallery Exhibition leaflet", Op. Cit. (note 141).

[182] W. W. Feaver; W. Januszczak; C. MacGonigal; H. Pyle, Op, Cit. (note 180).

"The exhibition will display as a background the 'gentle' lady painters of the end of the nineteenth century. Then it will concentrate on the work of Mainie Jellett, Evie Hone and Mary Swanzy, three artists who went to Paris in the 1920s and studied and assimilated the new movements of abstraction, cubism and futurism. They returned to Ireland to find that the reactionary RHA would not accept their work. In 1943, Hone, Jellett and Norah McGuinness were among the organisers of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art – which provided the only forum for 20th century art".[183]

"Women continued to play a central role in the fifties and sixties with artists such as Nano Reid, Hilary Heron, Gerda Frömel, Anne Madden and Camille Souter. Today, women play an equal role throughout the diversity of the visual arts, and the exhibition will finish with a survey of artists in their thirties, reflecting the range of material and subject matter that they deal with".[184]

"…this provides the historical underpinning to the immense amount of artistic activity generated by women in contemporary art in Ireland, which is unique in comparison to other countries in the west…".[185]

This reading of contemporary Irish women artists' work close to established art historical movements and art historical narrative arcs can be interpreted not so much as an exclusive interest in history, but more as a wish to achieve an immediate confrontation with a moment in time, a re-entry into vanished circumstances in which realities of a distant 'then' become a present and convincing 'now'.[186]

Once the parameters of the project were extended, the lack of space became central to the production process. Originally the project was to be housed at the National Gallery of Ireland and the Douglas Hyde Gallery, however, because of the vast amount of material involved, the project's committee agreed that the Municipal Gallery should be invited to show a section of the exhibition;[187] this would also have the unique effect of having the three professional public galleries in the city working together for the first time. It would also encourage attendances to circulate between the spaces sending a message of cohesion and unity. This addition transformed the structure and the timeline division of the project and it also gave it a cohesive structure in line with the individual remits of the three galleries. However, it also presented some challenges. As late as April 1987, Dublin City Council, the Municipal Gallery's governing body, had yet to officially confirm their participation in the project or what spaces

[183] "Letter from P.T. Murphy to H. Potterton", Op. Cit. (note 85).
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid
[186] D. Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 14.
[187] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to J. Wright", March 25,1987, Box 4, Folder 1, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.

were going to be available for the show.[188] It is also important to note that the Municipal Gallery was undergoing major building renovations between 1985 and 1991, *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day* being the only exhibition, temporary or otherwise that took place in 1987.[189] Therefore when arranging the loans for the exhibition and hanging the show, Patrick T. Murphy did not know the full extent of the space for the show beforehand, which affected the overall content and narrative of the show. This was also reflected in the literature accompanying the exhibition at the Municipal Gallery which included a note stating: "Because of the limitation of available space we were unable to include all of the artists mentioned, however, we are hopeful that what is on display offers the essence of the periods addressed".[190] This affected the message that was to be presented by staging a show with a lack of cohesion and spatial sensibility which critics and participating artists deemed unnecessary: "Yet the show in the Municipal, of Women Artists in Ireland 1940-1975, does a disservice to the artists. It's better it wasn't shown at all than to show bad work. There's an underlying reason for the serious deficiencies in that exhibition, and for the lack of proper historical documentation of the period".[191]

The overall response to the exhibition by art critics was negative, in particular to the section of the exhibitions at the National Gallery of Ireland and the Municipal Gallery, and to a lesser degree the exhibition at the Douglas Hyde Gallery. Yet, the majority of the critics that reviewed the exhibition were directly involved with the project at some point whether as part of the steering committee, contributing to the catalogue, or both. The overall consensus was that the exhibitions at the National Gallery and the Municipal Gallery, while conscientious and inclusive, lacked inspiration, and in the spirit of inclusion too many works by what were characterised as irrelevant artists were exhibited. A major problem was that selection was undertaken by a large panel of scholars, so that, although the standard of work was generally high, the exhibition itself was uneven in its emphasis. There was also a lack of cohesion in the visual whole, which proved a drawback to the viewer. As Brian Fallon, critic of the *Irish Times* mentioned at the time:

"I have an uneasy feeling that it is the product of research rather than dealing or flair aimed more at the catalogue than at the viewing public. Or in plainer terms, it has been chosen by people who are scholars first and art-lovers second".[192]

Waldemar Januszczak in one of the two international reviews of the exhibition also points out

[188] "Letter from P. T. Murphy to M. Byrne", April 13, 1987, Box 4, Folder 3, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.
[189] "Exhibitions at the Hugh Lane, 1933 to Today", https://www.hughlane.ie/phocadownload/exhibitions/hugh%20lane%20exhibitions%20history%20web%2020.3.2018.pdf, accessed: May 23, 2017.
[190] "Irish Women Artist from the 18th century to the present day: Dublin Municipal Gallery Exhibition leaflet", Op. Cit. (note 130).
[191] C. Brennan quoted by K. Holmquist, "An Irishwoman's Diary", *The Irish Times*, Jul. 27, 1987.
[192] B. Fallon, Op. Cit. (note 123).

the same issue:

"The problem with Irish Women Artists, the largest survey of the subject ever mounted, is that it lives in the catalogue as a set of elegant and complete arguments about the role of women artists in Irish cultural history but dies in the flesh as an exhibition". [193]

Art critics on the other hand were also disapproving of the selective nature of the show at the Douglas Hyde, doubting some of the choices and questioning some of the omissions from the show. Nevertheless, according to the critics this classification system resulted in a more compact, fluid and vital exhibition.

An individual from the public seems to agree in relation to the selective/exclusive nature of the show at the Douglas Hyde Gallery. In a letter to the Director this member of the public voices this view:

"Shocked and appalled by this show! The selection is strange and the presentation is shoddy! The atmosphere of the gallery is one of total indifference. I've seen better in the provinces and at the student shows. This certainly strikes me as being highly unrepresentative of the contemporary women artists who work and struggle to live in Ireland".[194]

This consumer's or visitor's experience of exclusion was expressed through the imagined response of others. While she felt she could decode the art present, the visit left her frustrated. This may have been because her cultural capital, as a fellow artist, needed to be sure that her social responses were appropriate to the context of the art gallery, and she imagined others were judging this and finding it wanting.

This was an opinion and not the case in all instances. Another viewer had difficulties in decoding some of the messages present in art galleries that were part of the exhibition. However, they welcomed the nature and accessibility of the shows within the context of the International Women's Congress. [195]

The context of the International Women's Congress formed part of the background and environment that contributed to create or influence the viewers' habitus or cultural capital. Through Irish Media, the Congress was characterized as a "bizarre jamboree",[196] weighted by the historical information and academic discourse and therefore inaccessible. Generating a great deal of attention and controversy, the consumer accessing the conference and any activity associated with it could consequently commence their journey with a presupposition of what they were going to experience.

Regardless of this imposed collective cultural capital, it is also apparent that visitors were using

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[193] W. Januszczak, Op. Cit. (note 180).

[194] "Letter from I. Plazewska to P. T. Murphy", Op. Cit. (note 159).

[195] M. Casey, "Women's Worlds Conference", *The Irish Times,* Jul. 31, 1987; R. Cullen, "Women's Worlds Conference", *The Irish Times,* Jul. 31, 1987; A. T. McKenna, "Women's Worlds Conference", *The Irish Times,* Jul. 31, 1987

[196] M. Pollard, "Women's Worlds: The Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 34 (1988): 100-02.

the displays to create personal meanings often related to their own histories and identities. While some of those meanings would have been represented in collective reminiscence in common with others, many were more personally focused. An example of this was one of the *Irish Times*' readers:

"It was a delight I found I could stroll into Trinity where all the workshop, art exhibition and paper sessions were being held. I met and spoke with an extremely friendly administrative staff, met women from all walks of national and international life, attended workshop sessions and took part in discussions. Despite Ms Holmquist's report this was the atmosphere I found and have returned to the west of Ireland with renewed vigour to insist on a good, whole life for myself and other women".[197]

It was clear from this example that personal histories and memories were a critical aspect of consumption, or meaning making for the exhibition and congress overall for this respondent. The institutions and cultural property held within them were acting as the basis around which memories were constructed as reminiscence. It was also evident that the participant was 'active' in framing her experience by using her experience to make meaning.[198]

The exhibitions examined tend to 'prefer' a particular kind of reading, which clearly has an impact on the 'preferred' model of identity, which may be constructed. This reading originates from forms of regulation and factors controlling representation and production described elsewhere in this paper. In a study of encoding/decoding, using the Rhondda Heritage Park in Wales as a case study, B. Dicks was able to identify a preferred reading but concluded that visitors responded in an extremely variable way and that many 'drew on frameworks of knowledge that brought the "people then" into relations of equivalence and compatibility with their own lives'. The extent to which this preferred reading is reproduced depends on the visitor's "cultural map" and the nature of their cultural capital.[199] For instance, another group of *Irish Times* readers exemplifies this:

"As a community woman attending the congress I can assure her [Holmquist] we were not excluded from 'main business' nor did I find it exclusively academic, or hijacked by militant feminists ... However, as she properly indicates in the same article, this was mainly a congress challenging established learning, creating knowledge and passing it on to future generations… We are now more keenly aware of a vibrant national Irish dimension to this movement, which thanks to the "Women in Ireland" session offers a number of disparate and equally emancipating models of being Irish and a woman in 1987 … To organise something on the scale of this congress took a lot of time and energy. There were excellent facilities without which many of us would have been unable to attend, the book fair, art exhibition, etc. … To

[197] J. McBreen, "Women's Worlds Conference", *The Irish Times,* Jul. 27, 1987.
[198] B. Dicks, *Heritage, Place and Community* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 41.
[199] Ibid, 42.

everyone involved I say a heartfelt thank you for an exciting and stimulating week that we will remember for a long time".[200]

It is clear that the consumer understood the preferred reading, which was to provide the historical underpinning to the immense amount of activity generated by women in contemporary art in Ireland, and reacted in a way that allowed them to make sense of what they experienced. The meanings made were related to their personal experiences and helped them to negotiate a sense of self through identifying with the representation of the history of Irish Women and Irish Women Artists in the conference and the exhibitions.

The launch of the *Access and Opportunity: White Paper for Cultural Policy* by the government had a particular impact on both involved institutions – the Douglas Hyde Gallery as receiver of funding from the Arts Council of Ireland, the governmental body that managed the arts, and the National Gallery of Ireland as an institution directly managed by the government. The white paper underlined the necessity to concentrate on developing greater access to, and participation in, the arts.[201] This is apparent in the change of language in the internal correspondence of the project: references to audiences and visitors and their experiences, circulation and access were included only at the later stages of the project after the publication of the cultural policy document.[202] While this can be interpreted as one of the natural stages of the exhibition making processes, the language used directly echoes that on the *Access and Opportunity* report. Furthermore, it was intended at the beginning of the project to have an admission fee to the different shows. However, this was discarded at the later stages of the project in favour of accessibility.[203] This instrumental approach taken by government has resulted in museums, as with other cultural organisations, having to justify public expenditure on the grounds of the advantages that they bring to society and while both institutions benefited from increased attendance figures, Patrick T. Murphy at the Douglas Hyde, in particular celebrates the record attendance figures at the end of the project.[204]

Regulation of the exhibition also occurred through a range of internal forces within museums and galleries. These interact with external forces, at times guiding or being guided by them. This form of regulation is provided by a body of 'professional knowledge', which has been developed over a period of time and influences the environment, through exhibitions, within which meaning and identity is constructed by visitors and participants. This form of internal regulation, like the external, is not consistent over time and is subject to change in professional practice. This can be seen in the shift to 'new museology' where the needs of the audience have

[200] R. Cullen, Op. Cit. (note 195).
[201] Office of the Minister of State for Arts and Culture, Op. Cit. (note 105), 15.
[202] "Letter from E. Waldron to P. T. Murphy", May 22, 1986, Box 2, Folder 3, Douglas Hyde Papers 1987, Trinity College Dublin Archives and Special Collection Centre, Trinity College Dublin Library.
[203] Ibid.
[204] "Letter from P.T. Murphy to S. Meehan", Op. Cit. (note 113).

been given greater importance.[205] It is also possible to identify tensions in the ways in which this form of regulation functions within and across organisations, especially when wishing to change existing curatorial approaches and attitudes. The politics of regulation determines the meanings that are being encoded into displays and therefore the nature of the dominant form of regulation applied.

As previously mentioned, the *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day* exhibition emerged from the collaboration between the organisers of the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women. The conference theme "Women's Worlds: Visions and Revisions" called out for reconsideration of the plurality of feminisms and academic women's studies. This created regulatory impositions to the exhibition makers. While focusing upon a perceived specific community's needs by framing the exhibition within academia, it narrows its access amongst groups who would not traditionally visit museums and galleries or are familiar with the history of Irish women artists. For instance, while the curators implicitly did not wish to frame the Exhibition under a feminist authority, the educational programme that accompanied the exhibitions at the Douglas Hyde Gallery took in hand those reconsiderations. The panel discussion entitled: "Exhibitions of Women's Art Do Not Further the Cause of Women in Art", with Fionna Barber, Joan Fowler, Alanna O'Kelly and Dorothy Walker, objected to the all-female art exhibition premise on the grounds of their tokenism but it also approved of the necessity of rescuing from history the story of women and art. In her essay, "Speaking of Gender: Expressionism, feminism and sexuality", Fowler reiterates some of the issues addressed at the panel. According to her, one of the functions of women's exhibitions in the 1980s was to highlight women artists' representation: "This in itself however is but a small and quantifiable part of a much more complex set of issues surrounding gender. On the one hand, the question of 'equality' has emerged on a number of levels, and on the other, a number of related and at times over-riding questions have arisen with regard to gender relationships. Just as the Women's Movement can no longer be seen as a unified pressure group so, in the visual arts, women's issues cannot be summarized within a single range of aims and practices. This is not to say that there is no distinct consciousness, it is simply to say that a consciousness of women's issues is manifested at different times, in different mediums, and often with different objectives."[206]

8.5. Conclusion: Are all-female artists exhibitions necessary? Visual and ideological pluralism in practice

[205] P. Vergo, "Introduction", in *The New Museology*, ed. P. Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 4.

[206] J. Fowler, Op. Cit. (note 35), 23.

The above analysis demonstrates how the participants made meaning from the exhibition *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day*. The exhibition acted as a system of representation as suggested by Lidchi,[207] producing meaning through the use of frameworks of knowledge and classification that were the result of regulatory forces which were imposed on and by the curators. This relates to the systems of representation, production and consumption articulated by the Circuit of Culturel model. It also shows how the politics of identity is played out within museums and galleries. Furthermore, contests of identity are engaged in by all involved, from those who directly or indirectly were responsible for the exhibition project, to the visitors who consumed them. Similarly, this was determined by the internal and external political environment within which museums and galleries operate, and by the participants who regulated aspects of the project in response to their need to communicate particular meanings. The results of this regulation are that certain meanings dominated, were encoded into the exhibition, and were present in the design and implementation of the project.

Cultural themes in exhibitions are common, bringing to light the art and lifestyle of cultures familiar and unfamiliar to viewers. Exhibitions that present 'marginal' art to 'main stream' audiences often demand more of a cultural and historical context in terms of display, which often offer a broader scope of educational opportunity. In the case of the *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day,* the exhibition could be described as representing co-existing sites or moments of inclusion and exclusion where the social practices of regulation, representation and production control the nature of consumption and influence the identities creating an unorthodox set of differing identities.

On one hand the focus on the academic justification of the project could be understood as a moment of exclusion. Consumers with access to the exhibition catalogue will be the only ones with access to the cultural and historical contexts of the exhibition as shaped by the curators and art historians involved. On the other hand, the narratives that were chosen privileged a particular representation of Irish art history and created a representation of Irish Women Artists that provided women, and women artists in particular, with a positive community identity that they could be proud of. These differing identities were the by-product of the curators' attempts to 'normalise' the work of Irish Women Artists. Exhibitions of 'mainstream' art often come with less context and explanation, using display techniques only to highlight the aesthetic significance of the works. The way culturally specific or 'marginal' art is presented and the dichotomy between providing context and providing little to none drastically affects the viewer's perception of the objects as art objects versus products of a particular culture or cultural moment. The cultural moments presented and the way in which identities were negotiated at the exhibition, were adjacent to established art historical movements and art

[207] H. Lidchi, "The Poetics and Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures", in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. S. Hall (London: Sage, 1997), 170.

historical narrative arcs. This can be interpreted as the attempt by the curators to 'normalise' culturally specific or marginal art. However, it can also be interpreted as the opposite of 'normalization': a wish to achieve an immediate confrontation with a moment in time, a re-entry into vanished circumstances in which realities of a distant 'then' become a present and convincing 'now'.

So, what constitutes proper museological response from a New Museology point of view? For some, including Molesworth, the mere addition of women artists into institutions that have "been structured by their very absence" is deeply problematic, because their work is often at odds with the main narrative unfolding in institutions' galleries and exhibitions, so that women's art is thus framed as a thing apart, something separate and distinct, and, inevitably, something less.[208] The ideal would be a restructuring of the narratives constructed by the Museum so that works by women would be included as a matter of course, as part of a process of already-begun but still much-needed historical revision, according to new, historically informed standards of quality and significance.

In her essay "The Grace of Time: narrativity, sexuality and a visual encounter in the Virtual Feminist Museum", Griselda Pollock addresses some of these issues: "If the model for modern art history is curatorial, shaped by categories of museal classification and conservation, it is here that we must intervene to elaborate other visualities and rhetorics".[209] More than a broad generality about the role of the Museum in the shaping of mentalities and representations, this sentence sums up one of the core beliefs of Pollock's work, which she applies to one particular fact: how the patriarchal nature of our societies is being mirrored in the discipline of Art History and the art world in general. In the essay from which this quotation is taken, she uses some postcards bought in the National Gallery of Scotland to point out two facets of the relationship of women to museums in general: first, the representation of women within artworks showcase an iconography that can be considered both as a symptom and as the foundation of the institutionalized difference in the vision of the female body. Then, the way curators choose to present those artworks, whether it is in the physical display choices inside the museum or in the framing of a commercial postcard, is also the consequence of a perception of those works through a patriarchal gaze, itself fostered by a male-centred art history.[210]

In her postcolonial analysis of college curricula, cultural studies scholar Ella Shohat proposes a "relational approach" as the most effective way to address Euro-US-centrism and sexism in the classroom. According to her, this approach raises questions such as: what if history was re-conceived as "diachronic instead of synchronic"? So, instead of thinking, for instance, of

[208] H. Molesworth, Op. Cit. (note 25), 499.
[209] G. Pollock, "The Grace of Time: narrativity, sexuality and a visual encounter in the Virtual Feminist Museum", *Art History*, Vol. 26 No. 2 (April 2003), 174-213.
[210] G. Pollock, Op. Cit. (note 207), 175.

Modernism and postmodernism as a series of intertwining, related, "-isms" organized along a linear historical line, they could possibly be re-considered as multivocal. Furthermore, what if time itself was implied to be broad or holistic as opposite to linear? What if works of art were presented ahistorically, disregarding genres, national schools, or periodic classifications? Or if curators were to eradicate historic canons, claiming that all art has significance (including cultural artefacts), western and non-western alike? Or again, if antagonisms and orders (high/low, West/East, white/black) were undone? "How would such radical redefinitions of the field and transformations in perception affect the contemporary global art world?". [211]

Quoted by Maura Reilly, Susan H. Aiken argues that by employing a relational approach curators can present multiplicity in terms of an ongoing dialogue or polylogue, a term that Aiken borrows from philosopher, psychoanalyst, and literary critic Julia Kristeva: "an interplay of many voices, a kind of creative 'barbarism' that would disrupt the monological, colonizing, centristic drives of 'civilization'."[212] A relational approach to curating, then, is focused not in a monologue of sameness, but in a multitude of voices speaking simultaneously such as Jesse Jones *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES – a Feminist Parasite Institution.* The result as Pollock explains is that: "the cultural field may be reimagined as a space for multiple occupancy where differencing creates a productive covenant opposing the phallic logic that offers us only the prospect of safety in sameness or danger in difference, of assimilation to or exclusion from canonized norm".[213]

This also relates to Michel Foucault's genealogies and archaeology of knowledge, particularly his theories of power and its relationship to the self which feminists have used to explain aspects of women's oppression. Foucault's idea that gender is not an innate or natural quality of the self, but rather the effect of historically specific power relations has provided feminists with a useful analytical framework to explain how women's experiences are impoverished and controlled by certain culturally determined images of the feminine. In his essay, "The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom", Foucault complements his earlier analysis of technologies of power or domination, with an analysis of technologies of subjectification. Foucault defines these technologies of the self as a certain number of practices and techniques through which individuals actively fashion their own identities. Such an idea permits Foucault to explain how individuals may avoid the homogenizing tendencies of power in modern society through the assertion of their autonomy. Individuals are no longer conceived as docile bodies

[211] E. Shohat, "Area Studies, Transnationalism and the Feminist Production of Knowledge", *SIGNS*, Vol/ 26, No. 4, summer 2001, 1269 – 1272.
[212] M. Reilly, Op. Cit. (note 6), 23.
[213] G. Pollock, Op. Cit. (note 66), 11.

in the grip of an inexorable disciplinary power, but as self-determining agents who are capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society.[214]

Referring to one of the survey entries museums could ask: Are all-female exhibitions necessary?

Using Foucault's genealogies of the self as a point of departure, Molesworth in her essay "How to install art as feminist", also advocates for a relational approach to curating art made by women. According to her, "genealogies for art made by women aren't so clear, largely because they are structured by a shadowy absence".[215] She also argues that historically women artists have sought attachment rather than separation, meaning that one of the effects of operating within a genealogy marked by absence and omission is that you try to seek out your predecessors rather than refute them. This is why art historians and curators have so often turned to the tasks of recovery and inclusion, such as in this case study: *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the Present Day*. Molesworth does not want ghettoized galleries or exhibitions dedicated to art made by women or even a room of "feminist art".[216] Instead, she promotes the idea of a model of interpretation at the museum whereby the new is not a form of triumph but a recalibration of alliances. In such a model, narratives of influence would be open to a chorus of voices, opening up single objects to multiple points of alliance. In such a model the seemingly ahistorical installation would allow us to register the affiliations among the artists, to see them as engaged in a common pursuit striated with differences. This model might be the beginning of a way of telling history beyond enumerating which women worked when. So, too, it might be a way of acknowledging the gaps and omission produced by vertical narratives of patriarchy. Such a museum instead suggests something about how women artists have often made connections over disjointed periods of space and time, about moving laterally in order to revolutionize the deepest aspects of our lives.[217]

[214] M. Foucault, "The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom", in *The Final Foucault*, ed. J. Bernhauer and D. Rasmussen (Cambridge: Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 18.
[215] H. Molesworth, Op. Cit. (note 25), 499.
[216] Ibid, 504
[217] Ibid, 512.

9. Creating new contexts and questioning consensual analysis, *Inheritance and Transformation* exhibition, 1991

This chapter will address the 1991 sequence of inaugural exhibitions *Inheritance and Transformation* held at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) during Dublin's tenure as the European City of Culture. With the designation of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham as the home for the new museum in 1987, there was a measure of relief that an Irish government had at long last taken firm action on the creation of the new art institution of modern art which had been advocated for during much of the twentieth century.[1] However, there was also an undercurrent of apprehension because the location was considered to be unsuitable due to the physical isolation from other cultural institutions, and the building's inappropriateness for art display. The unease over the designation of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham as a museum of modern art was tempered by the knowledge that the decision was final, by the fact that this decision was arrived at behind closed doors at the Department of the Taoiseach, and by the apparent lack of progress on the project between 1987 and 1990. When in 1990 further information about the new museum began to emerge, the timescale seemed unachievable; in the space of less than a year, a director was to be appointed, the Royal Hospital Kilmainham converted to its new function, and the art installed.[2]

The sequence of inaugural exhibitions emphasized the spatial variety and complexity of the spaces, a simultaneous artistic diversity, and "a commitment to addressing past, present and future in one institution".[3] The exhibitions also denoted what was to surface again and again as a fundamental tenet of the museum's programming: the presentation of unexpected juxtapositions of works, creating new contexts and questioning consensual analysis. It had been pointed out that a potential problem for any Irish museum of modern art was the fact that no collection of modern art then identified as world class existed in Ireland, and the cost of acquiring one, apart from the question of the availability of the appropriate works, was simply prohibitive. As already mentioned in the methodology section, the view of Declan McGonagle, IMMA Director from 1990 to 2001, was that the lack of such a canonical collection should be regarded as an advantage, allowing the museum a greater flexibility of approach in enabling the avoidance of tying it down to one dominant view of modern art history.[4]

This chapter will focus on two aspects: the role and limits of public leadership in the social construction of cultural needs as well as the challenge of the old, canonical idea of the museum, and the creation of a new museum where there was no longer a single governing narrative in art history or practice and where pre-determined art historical and institutional

[1] J. Fowler, "Inheritance and Transformation: Old Grounds, New Contexts?", *Circa* 59, no. 5 (1991), 32.
[2] Ibid, 33.
[3] A. Dunne, "The IMMA Decade", *World of Hibernia*, 7, no. 1 (2001), 155.
[4] Ibid, 156.

boundaries are not accepted. To achieve this the chapter, firstly, will focus on the conceptual and practical elements of the exhibition type that has had various nomenclatures: 'acontextual', 'atemporal', or 'ahistorical'. Secondly, it will explore the origins of museums of modern and contemporary art internationally and in Ireland in order to position *Inheritance and Transformation* and the creation of IMMA within international and local context. Furthermore, the chapter will also explore the context within which *Inheritance and Transformation* and the launch of IMMA were orchestrated to coincide with the European City or Capital of Culture Programme.

Finally, this chapter will contribute to the aims of the thesis by addressing the possibilities and limits of employing diverse curatorial approaches and how this predicament of diversity impacts on the work of the museum, but fundamentally the viewer. By challenging traditional narratives, by replacing the traditional chronological narrative with a thematically organized narrative based on the reality of the works themselves, the curators demystify rather than confer mystique upon their own curatorial process, thereby opening new avenues of understanding to the viewer.

9.1. Experimenting at the museum of modern art – Creating new museological models

The exhibition-making concept of abandoning traditional taxonomies or chronological narratives in order to reveal correspondences between artworks from conflicting ideologies or cultures, as discussed at the conclusion of the previous chapter, is not novel. This exhibition type has had various nomenclatures: 'acontextual', 'atemporal', or 'ahistorical'. While semantically different, what all the nomenclatures and the exhibition types that they represent have in common, is the drive against traditional chronological boundaries as well as conventional stylistic and formal categories implemented in art history. For the purpose of this case study, this exhibition type will be referred to as ahistorical due to this denomination being the more recurrent amongst art historians, museum practitioners, and art critics. Ahistorical is also the term used by Declan McGonagle, first director of IMMA and chief curator of *Inheritance and Transformation*, to describe the exhibition addressed in this case study.[5]

Ahistorical exhibitions break down the traditional approaches to art to transcend the borders of genres, eras, and distinct cultures creating heterogeneous exhibitions where art and objects of all sorts are linked together by visual association, torn free from any coherent category or logical chronology. The works are arranged in a continuous sequence in a progression of visual, semantic thinking. Ahistorical exhibitions reject chronology in favour of curatorial intuitions or affinities amongst artworks.

[5] D. McGonagle, "New Negotiations: A role for Art and Institutions Within Society", in *Myth, Memories and Futures: The National Library and National Museum in the Story of Wales*, ed. J. Osmond (Cardiff: Institute of Wales Affairs, 2007), 39.

Pavel Pyś, in his essay "On Intuition and Affinity: Timeless Aspects of Modern Art and the "Ahistorical" Exhibition",[6] highlights the exhibition *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* (MoMA, New York, 1948) as a forerunner of the ahistorical exhibition as it is understood today. Curated by René d'Harnoncourt, *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art,* stemmed from research that first led to *Arts of the South Seas* (MoMA, New York, 1946), a survey he curated of artefacts from Australia, New Guinea, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, with regions mapped and grouped into areas of stylistic affinity: "natural forms simplified", "natural forms geometricized", and "natural forms exaggerated and distorted".[7] *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* marked MoMA's twentieth anniversary and was intended by its curator to "answer the accusation that modern art is created in a historic vacuum; that it has no links to the past except in the imitation and distortion of certain details and that it, therefore, has lost its human and social content".[8] Grouped into four themes: "structure and abstraction", "stylization and emotional content", "volume and form", and "fantastic and mysterious", the exhibition's selection called upon modes such as "rhythmic movement" and "mathematical order", and on the artist's or maker's presumed emotional desires.[9] Its temporal scope, reaching from *Venus of Lespugue* (75,000 B.C.) to Joan Miró's (1893 – 1983) *Woman in the Night* (1945), was indebted to Alfred Barr's extensive *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (MoMA, New York, 1936), which encompassed objects created between 1450 and 1936, and included artworks as well as comics, folk art, and art by children.

According to Pyś, this was not the first time MoMA presented non-Western artefacts alongside contemporary artworks. A decade prior, Barr created similar juxtapositions in *American Sources of Modern Art* (MoMA, New York, 1933) and *Cubism and Abstract Art* (MoMA, New York, 1936), among other exhibitions.[10] According to Mary Anne Staniszewski, d'Harnoncourt was also indebted to his predecessor in terms of display methods, as Barr's exhibitions shifted audience expectations from traditional salon-style staggered arrangements, to simple and sparse groupings.[11] The theatricality of *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art*, however, departed from Barr's examples. According to Pyś, with its carefully composed scenes and dramatic lighting that isolated individual objects against brightly coloured walls and flowing fabrics, *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* was unprecedented at MoMA. Although it recalled the innovative exhibition designs of Frederick Kiesler (1890 – 1965) for the opening of the Art of

[6] P. S. Pyś, "On Intuition and Affinity: Timeless Aspects of Modern Art and the "Ahistorical" Exhibition", *The Exhibitionist Journal*, 2017.
[7] M. A. Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 111.
[8] "Timeless Aspects of Modern Art Exhibition Catalogue". MoMA Exhibitions Archive, https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2845, accessed: May 21, 2018.
[9] Ibid.
[10] P. S. Pyś, Op. Cit. (note 6).
[11] M. A. Staniszewski, Op. Cit. (note 7), 62.

This Century Gallery (New York, 1942), and the exhibition *First Papers of Surrealism* (Whitelaw Reid Mansion, New York, 1942) curated by Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1968), *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* likewise stood in stark contrast to MoMA's overtly pedagogical displays for *We Like Modern Art* (1940) and *Understanding Modern Art* (1941). While d'Harnoncourt fully acknowledged the subjective nature of *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art*: "We fully realize that this exhibition is based in part on personal interpretation and do not present it as a dogmatic statement but as an invitation to the visitor to undertake his own explorations".[12] As his underpinning theoretical framework, according to Staniszewski, he most likely borrowed the notion of empathy and affinity from Robert Goldwater's *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (1938), a book that proposed "affinity" as a means to "align cultural objects that look somewhat familiar but are wholly unrelated in indigenous function and meaning".[13]

In her essay, "The Museum and the 'Ahistorical' Exhibition", Deborah J. Meijers analyses more recent prototypical ahistorical exhibitions by curators Harald Szeeman (*A-Historische Klanken*, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1988) and Rudi Fuchs (*documenta 7*, 1982; *Summer Display of the Museum's Collection*, van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1983) as well as a guest-curated show (also at the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen) by the filmmaker Peter Greenaway (*The Physical Self*, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1991-92), in order to understand ahistorical exhibitions as a cultural phenomenon.[14]

In discussing the aims and objectives of their ahistorical exhibitions, both Szeeman and Fuchs refer to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Academy and "mixed galleries" as models of display in which dissimilar styles of art were shown together without being distilled to one or another. These 'mixed' galleries stood for a type of art collection in which the works were not yet arranged chronologically or geographically. According to Foucault, these early exhibitions were usually arranged according to rational, "prescientific" systems of comparison and resemblance: "convenientia", "analogia", "sympathia", "imitation", and "aemulatio".[15] In juxtaposing these analogies, resemblances, and sympathies between various styles, Fuchs desired a confrontation between "different dialects" in art,[16] while, according to Meijers, Szeeman went further, expressing a strongly 'utopian' impulse to free art of any time from the construct of a linear narrative, foregrounding instead what he believed to be the "essence" of the work or "correspondences" between disparate works on display.[17] In *Summer Display,* Fuchs paired Marc Chagall's (1887 – 1985) *Homage to Apollinaire* (1912) with Luciano

[12] "Timeless Aspects of Modern Art Exhibition Catalogue", Op. Cit. (note 8).
[13] M. A. Staniszewski, Op. Cit. (note 7), 110.
[14] D.J. Meijers, "The Museum and the 'Ahistorical' Exhibition: The latest gimmick by the arbiters of taste, or an important cultural phenomenon?", in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson and S. Nairne (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.
[15] M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1991), 18-26.
[16] Cited by B. H. D. Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas", *October*, Vol. 22 (1982): 105-26.
[17] D. J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 12.

Fabro's (1936 – 2007) *The Judgement of Paris* (1979) in order to reveal formal and conceptual affinities between vastly different works. Fuchs sees the same fragility and vulnerability in the skin of the painting and the terracotta sculpture. Fuchs also detects a thematic affinity: "Fabro gives prominence to an item of Greek mythology which has continued to operate over the centuries. Chagall has a Russian background, but that is connected with a basic story too. They are both concerned with essential things in life, the charged nature of history".[18] According to Meijers, such "essential things" surpass art historical taxonomies in terms of chronology and form. At the same time, however, Fuchs believes it significant that works like those by Fabro and Chagall, with their considerable variances in terms of style, form and period, maintain their autonomy as artworks.[19]

Similarly, in *A-Historische Klanken*, Imi Knoebel's (b. 1940) *Buffet* (1985), and Geertgen tot Sint Jan's (1465 – 1495) *Adoration of Mary* (c.1490), one sculpture and a painting separated by significant distances in time and technique, in such a way as to give them each enough space to be considered on their own respective terms, yet clearly in direct visual relationship to each other so as to foment dialogue between them. Cited by Meijers, Szeeman detects a correspondence between the private portable altar piece and the modern buffet which could be considered a domestic altar.[20] Szeeman's aim on this and some of his other projects, such as *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk: Europäische Utopien seit 1800* (Kunsthaus, Zürich, 1983), was to present exhibitions as a quest for the total synthesis of the arts. This was, according to Hans Ulrich Obrist, due in part to Szeemann's notion of the exhibition as a toolbox, as an archaeology of knowledge in the spirit of Michel Foucault.[21]

However, Meijers argues that neither Fuch's nor Szeeman's goals were inherent outcomes of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century methods of display. According to her, the main purpose for those mixed galleries was much more practical, to enable artists to select from various techniques in their quest for perfection within a fixed canon of beauty.[22] As such, Fuch's and Szeeman's citations of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century precursors are nostalgic and selective; mere justification for their own interests in pursuing ahistorical methods of display.[23]

Rather than the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century influence preferred by Fuchs and Szeeman, Meijers traces the ahistorical exhibition to cite other examples of display methods which grew out of turn-of-the-century artistic interest in "primitive" art. In re-framing ethnographic artefacts as works of art on a par with modern painting and sculpture, mid-

[18] Cited by D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 13.
[19] Ibid, 13.
[20] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 14.
[21] H. Ulrich Obrist, "Harald Szeemann 1933 – 2005", *Frieze*, May 12, 2005, https://frieze.com/article/harald-szeemann-1933-2005, accessed: February 21, 2018.
[22] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 13.
[23] Ibid, 14.

century artists and art historians opened the door to increasingly widespread use of mixed displays – such as the already discussed, *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art*, with the stated intent of revealing formal affinities between objects that would prove the existence of a universal instinct for pure artistic expression. Objects from vastly disparate times and places were juxtaposed in exhibitions at the Folkwang Museum, Hagen and Essen, where private collector Karl Ernst Osthaus combined European and non-European art (1912), and where a painting by Emil Nolde, African masks and figures of ancestors from the South Sea Islands were put on display together (1929). Incidentally, Meijers also references the 1989 Paris exhibition, *Les Magiciens de la Terre* (Pompidou Centre, Paris, 1989) as another example of ahistorical exhibition in which formal differences rather than universal similarities were the focus.[24] While she states that there must be some kind of organizing principle that holds this kind of exhibition together, she does not further explore or investigate what this may be. *Les Magiciens de la Terre,* curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, has been considered pivotal within the evolution of museum practices and curatorship, due to its influence expanding the discourse and discussions around the presentation of artworks by artists operating outside Europe and the USA. According to Niru Ratnam, the *Les Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition was, in part, a reaction to a much-talked-about exhibition organised by William Rubin, *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (MoMA, New York, 1984). Rubin's exhibition focused on the visual similarities between tribal art and modernist works and was accompanied by the explicit acknowledgement by Rubin that he was not interested in the tribal works in themselves, but only in the way they acted as inspiration for the Western avant-garde. Rubin's approach was heavily criticised, most prominently by Thomas McEvilley in *Artforum*, who argued that the exhibition glossed over the appropriation of tribal art by Western modern artists by sheltering under the wishful idea of 'affinity'. Though one of the first exhibitions to juxtapose tribal and modern objects, it failed to explore the origins of the non-western art it included.

By contrast, *Les Magiciens de la Terre* was a globalizing show that moved away from conflicting enquiries of cultural identity and diverging critical systems, opting for a classic modernist thematic: the magician and spirituality. *Les Magiciens de la Terre* argued for the universality of the creative impulse and endeavoured to offer direct aesthetic experience of contemporary works of art made globally and presented on equal terms. While according to critics, in this show the non-European objects were mainly exploited as proof of the genius of privileged "Western" artists, with *Magiciens de la Terre*, Martin postulated unconditional equality of all artists in this world.[25] According to Julia Friedel, Martin's ambitious project not only brought him acclaim but was fiercely debated in two camps: "One side saw *Magiciens de*

[24] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 17.
[25] B. H.D. Buchloh, "The Whole Earth Show", *Art in America*, 77 (5), 1989: 150-159.

la Terre as a threat to their "Western" modernity, their Hegelian worldview, which needed to be defended".[26] The other criticised the way Martin approached religious or ceremonial artefacts, judging them through the lens of "Western" aesthetic standards. The curator classified them as works of art without taking a closer look at their function, thereby ignoring an essential part of their meaning.[27]

In his exhibition: *The Physical Self* (Boymans-Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam 1991-1992), according to Meijers, film-maker Peter Greenaway is said to sidestep the selective nostalgia and lofty goals of Szeeman, Fuchs, and Martin in favour of a more practical engagement with the materiality of the artworks themselves. Meijers observes that rather than seeking to reveal the "affinities" or "correspondences" between disparate objects, Greenaway chooses disparate objects with strong existing formal and conceptual connections to one another, replacing the traditional chronological narrative with a thematically organized narrative based on the reality of the works themselves.[28] And so two neo-classical nude sculptures, Man Ray's *Vénus Restaurée* (1936/1971), Salvador Dali's *Venus de Milo aux Tiroirs* (1936/1964) are juxtaposed with vitrines containing live nude models (Fig. 1), and arranged as landmarks which contextualize artworks and objects chosen for their relationship to the human body, including images of maleness and femaleness, stages of growth, and ergonomically designed objects such as bicycle saddles and cutlery. In so doing he demystifies rather than confers mystique upon his own curatorial process, thereby opening new avenues of understanding to the viewer. In contrast, Meijers argues that ahistorical exhibitions like Szeeman's and Fuch's, which foreground the intuition of the curator in seeking intangible relationships between objects, do little more than confer the status of artist upon the curator at the expense of the artworks being shown.[29] What all the above exhibitions had in common was that their exhibition design pursued a language of "neutrality" that nonetheless still communicates a curator's argument and aesthetic sensibility, prioritizing highly aestheticized, embodied engagements over a didactic or explanatory learning experience.

[26] J. Friedel, "Exhibition Histories: Magiciens de la Terre", *C&,* August 12, 2016, https://www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/magiciens-de-la-terre/, accessed: June 14 2019.
[27] Ibid.
[28] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 18.
[29] Ibid, 19.

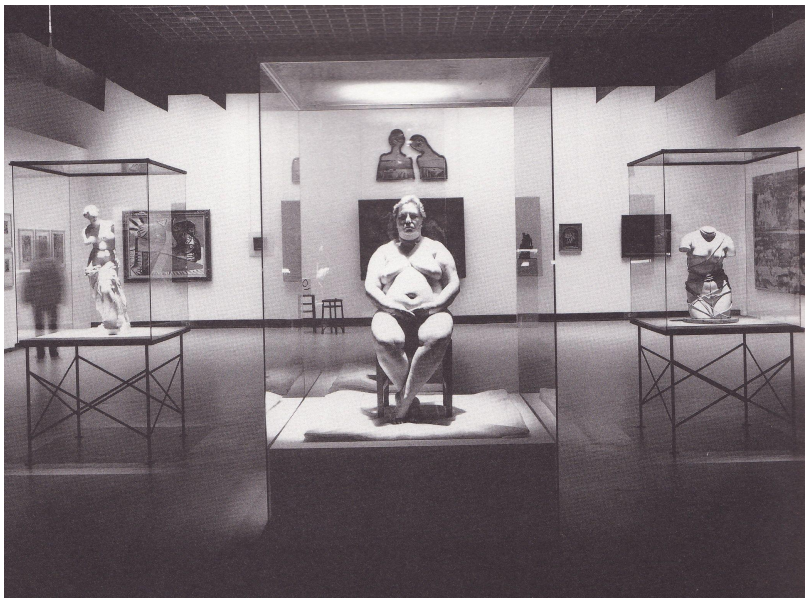


Figure 1: *The Physical Self*. From left to right: Salvador Dali, *Venus de Milo aux Tiroirs*; Peter Greenaway, *Life model*; Man Ray, *Vénus* Restaurée. Photo: Boymans-Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.

Pyś argues that this juxtaposing artworks and artefacts has become something of a "recurrent tendency [since the 1980s], even a trend". In 2013, for instance, the 55th Venice Biennale exhibition, curated by Massimiliano Gioni and titled *The Encyclopaedic Palace*, opened not with art but with an architectural model by Marino Auriti (1891–1980). Elsewhere visitors found the mineral collection of the French intellectual Roger Caillois (1913–1978) and Carl Jung's (1875–1961) *Liber Novus* (1913-30), which records his visionary experiences after his break with Sigmund Freud.[30] The exhibition accommodated the work of the highly trained and the self-taught, the academic and the hard-to-categorize. Cited by Andrew M. Goldstein, Gioni's aim within the exhibition was to present a collection of collections, the human "obsession with obtaining knowledge", and, echoing Foucault, "how we attempt to structure this knowledge through images and use images to help us understand and represent the world around us", and what Gioni has referred to in his recent exhibitions as "pedagogical universes in which stories can be told".[31] Gioni's exhibition received similar criticism as those by Fuchs and Szeeman: what does it mean for art objects to be divorced from their original social or cultural context and put on view, casting aside their original social, cultural, and political connotations? What formal or conceptual dimensions are heightened by this inclusion and juxtaposition, and at what cost?

This recent "recurrent curatorial tendency" or "even a trend", has also been part of curatorial practice in Ireland in recent years. For instance, artist Dorothy Cross' collaboration with the

[30] P. S. Pyś, Op. Cit. (note 6).
[31] A.M. Goldstein, Massimiliano Gioni on His Venice Biennale Show, and "Trying to See More". *Frieze*, May 28, 2013.

Irish Museum of Modern Art, National Museum of Ireland, National Gallery of Ireland, and Crawford Art Gallery exhibition project *Trove* (IMMA, 2014-2015). The curated juxtapositions in *Trove* can be considered extensions of Cross' artistic practices and her use of found objects. According to Niamh NicGhabhann, Cross' selection of objects from the national collections, and the abstraction of those objects from their museum-designated coded and organized meanings, render them as "found objects" within the context of *Trove*. Rather than relying on taxonomies of objects and contexts provided by museum structures, *Trove* required the visitor to construct meaning by using different criteria such as tone, shape, or allusion. This requirement is reinforced by the absence of labels on individual objects within the exhibition. While works such as *Teacup* (1997) reflect her use of Surrealist juxtaposing techniques to explore ideas of gender and experience, Cross uses time, or the depth of time associated with different objects, as her core material in *Trove*. In a more typical museum exhibition, the viewer might expect to find items from similar time periods grouped together. By flattening, or at least obscuring the position in time usually experienced in relation to the objects in the exhibition, Cross creates a distorted experience of time for the viewer.[32]

Trove also echoes Szeemann's and Foucault's notion of the exhibition as a toolbox, as an archaeology of knowledge. However, Dorothy Cross' curatorial moments are closer to Greenaway's *The Physical Self* as they demystify rather than confer mystique upon the curatorial process, thereby opening new avenues of understanding to the viewer. *Trove* also relates to *The Physical Self* in that the invitation to an individual artist creates a specific frame of reference, with Meijers' "criteria for choice of items" being understood as an extension of an individual artistic practice.

According to Catherine Marshall, until the opening of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1991, Irish museum curating remained locked into nineteenth-century hierarchical practices. "Solo exhibitions, or group survey shows, generally with no particular theme, were the norm".[33] Displays of work from a particular period, such as *The Irish Impressionists* (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, 1984), curated by Julian Campbell, were the exceptions that confirmed this rule. This and other landmark exhibitions from earlier in the century, such as Hugh Lane's Exhibition of the *Work of Irish Painters* in 1904 at the Guildhall in London, the displays of Irish art in Brussels in 1930 and at the Irish Pavilion at the 1939 World Fair in New York, were assembled without questioning cultures of display or authority. Referring to the first *Rosc* exhibition (Royal Dublin Society, Dublin, 1967), Catherine Marshall identifies the show as one of the first significant curatorial instances that proved to be as influential as the

[32] N. NicGhabhann, "Writing the Contemporary Encounter in the Museum: Dorothy Cross and Trove at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2014-15*", Project Muse, Éire-Ireland, Irish-American Cultural Institute, Volume 52, Numbers 1 & 2, Spring/Summer 2017, 244-268.

[33] C. Marshall, "Curating", in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, ed. C. Andrew, M. Catherine, P. Murray, P. Iremonger, Penny, J. Fitzgibbon and K. Milligan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 116.

artwork.[34] *Rosc '67* also proved to be one of the first instances in Ireland of early ahistorical exhibitions. The selection jury of *Rosc'67* decided to hold an exhibition of ancient Irish art as a supplement to the contemporary exhibition. Cited by Brenda Moore-McCann, this section, according to Dorothy Walker, aimed: "to demonstrate that the art of the past can share both the spirit and appearance with the art of the present". [35] Unusually for such international exhibitions, each subsequent *Rosc* exhibition presented an ancient section. These sections of ancient art included: *Celtic Art* (1967); *Viking Age Art* (1971); *Early Animal Art in Europe to ad 800* (1977); and an exhibition of *Chinese Painting* from the Sackler Collection at the Metropolitan Museum, New York (1980), curated by Marilyn and Shen Fu. Departing from the original *Rosc* criteria of 'ancient', in 1984 the nineteenth-century Guinness Hop Store, venue for the modern section, was itself cast as representative of the ancient section, while the older section of the 1988 *Rosc* comprised the Costakis Collection of the Russian Avant-Garde, displayed in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.[36] In the first two instances the ancient sections were embedded within the contemporary art show, in the other four the 'ancient' sections were presented as parallel exhibitions. After some heated controversy,[37] *Rosc'67* exhibited only five ancient pieces including: *Corleck Head* (c. 1,000–2,000 A.D), *Woodlands Three-faced Heads* (c. 3,000 B.C.), *Tanderagee Figure* (c. 1,000 B.C.) and two *Armagh Heads* (n.d.). The *Viking Age Art* exhibition at *Rosc'71*, according to Shortt, was the first of its kind in Ireland, and included about seventy-six small objects displayed in transparent Perspex cases, which were distributed throughout the contemporary art exhibition.[38] A pair of geometric *Scandinavian Brooches* (800 A.D.) was exhibited in juxtaposition to Frank Stella's (b. 1936) *Firuzabad* (1970). The formal resonances of the juxtaposition are obvious, and it achieved what the curators were aiming to do: a continuity of art expression.[39] This echoes d'Harnoncourt's *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* and other early displays of primitivism art alongside contemporary art such as Barr's *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.*

Mary Anne Staniszewski and Kristina Wilson, in their studies of early exhibitions at MoMA, attribute Barr's experimentation with exhibitions such as *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* with being one of the precursors of contemporary curatorship. They both take this statement further by adding that such experimentation was not only the product of flexible institutional

[34] C. Marshall, Op. Cit. (note 33), 116.
[35] B. Moore-McCann, "The Rosc Exhibitions", in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, ed. C. Andrew, M. Catherine, P. Murray, P. Iremonger, Penny, J. Fitzgibbon and K. Milligan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 420.
[36] Ibid, 420.
[37] Ibid, 419; P. Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision: The ROSC Art Exhibitions 1967-1988,* (Newbridge: Irish Academy Press, 2016), 83.
[38] P. Shortt, Ibid, 33.
[39] B. Moore-McCann, Op. Cit. (note 35), 420; P. Shortt, Op. Cit. (note 37), 64.

boundaries at MoMA but the conceptual exploration towards innovation at MoMA trying to define what a museum of modern art was or was supposed to be.[40]

According to Glenn Lowry and J. Pedro Lorente, museums of modern art, as they are understood today, owe their origins to the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris. Chosen by Louis XVIII (ruled 1814-1824) in 1818 as a site for the collection and exhibition of the work of living artists, the Musée du Luxembourg acted as a testing ground for recent art, to consider its value for inclusion to the permanent collection of the state. Works acquired by the state were held there for a number of years after the death of the artist, at which moment those works whose "glory had been confirmed by universal opinion" and that were considered of national consequence were relocated to the Louvre, while the rest were distributed to provincial museums.[41]

Similar institutions and arrangements were established in Britain and Germany, amongst other places. In Munich, for example, the Pinakothek, later renamed the Alte Pinakothek, established by Ludwig I of Bavaria (ruled 1825-48) in 1826, was designed to exhibit the Old Masters collection owned by the house of Wittelsbach, while the Neue Pinakothek, inaugurated in 1853, housed the collection of "modern", nineteenth-century paintings, that Ludwig had begun forming in 1809. In Britain the Tate Gallery, now the Tate Britain, founded in 1897 as the National Gallery of British Art, was in 1917 assigned with collecting British historical art and creating a national collection of international modern art, while the National Gallery focused on art prior to 1900.[42]

The idea of a museum dedicated to modern art was given fresh stimulus early in the 20th century by several pioneering directors, including Alexander Dorner in Germany and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., in the United States. Dorner, Director (1925-37) of the Landesmuseum in Hanover, was interested in the work of contemporary artists such as Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), and Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) and pursued to incorporate their ideas into the Landesmuseum by inviting some of them to design displays for modern art that would consider the museum's sequence of historical galleries. Dorner saw the museum not simply as an tool of the Enlightenment that was designed to classify and order works of art of the past, but as an "educational facility whose purpose is first to develop a taste for the subject—and secondly, and more importantly, to illustrate the developments of the human spirit in its most independent and liveliest object—in art".[43] It was this concept of the museum as an educational institution and a place for interpretation and discovery of the work of

[40] M. A. Staniszewski, Op. Cit. (note 7), 101; K. Wilson, *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the Art of the Exhibition*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 126.
[41] G. Lowry, *The Museum of Modern Art in this Century* (New York: MoMA Publications, 2009), 18; J.P. Lorente, *The Museums of Contemporary Art: Notion and Development* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 15.
[42] J.P. Lorente, Op. Cit. (note 41), 75-81.
[43] Cited by Lowry, Op. Cit. (note 41), 19.

contemporary artists that so influenced Barr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City.[44]

Barr travelled to Europe in 1927 to gather material for his intended thesis on the machine in modern art and to study contemporary European culture and. Much of his rational about modern art, and therefore about MoMA, was formulated during this trip. He visited London, and other cities around Europe, but he was particularly impressed by Dessau, Germany, which at that time was the home of the Bauhaus. Founded in 1919 by architect Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus was a radical school that attempted to teach the interdisciplinarity of the arts and crafts, including photography, painting, architecture and textile design. According to Lowry, Gropius gathered together some of the most enterprising and radical artists and architects of the time, such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), Marianne Brandt (1893–1983), and Paul Klee (1879–1940). Their works would ultimately be collected by MoMA.[45]

Barr was predisposed to the Bauhaus approach, having previously taught a course on modern art at Wellesley College that also focused on the interdisciplinarity of art and crafts, saw in it a model for approaching art by medium and discipline rather than by geography or time period. The most significant idea Barr took from Dorner was that of the museum as a place of learning and discovery, committed to living artists. These perceptions merged in the Museum of Modern Art, the first museum in North America to declare itself "modern". It identified itself with the most radical tendencies in art, which meant, work that was daring and innovative daring, and confronted established or traditional canons. The museum, as Barr understood it, was to be a laboratory in which the audience was asked to participate, and it was organized in its early years by medium and discipline departments.[46]

According to Lowry and Lorente, by focusing on innovation, MoMA was capable of rapidly form exceptional collections and imaginative programmes that attracted an audience that had not been served by pre-existing institutions, which paid very little consideration to modern art. The vehicle for this was the moral and financial backing the museum received in 1929 from its founding trustees, especially Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie P. Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan who were decided to form a museum dedicated singularly to the most radical tendencies in modern art. According to Lowry: "the museum's success was based on its willingness to take a great deal of risk in the selection of art, as well as how that art was displayed and interpreted".[47]

According to Lorente, the recognition that MoMA attained for the artists it supported, combined with the influence of its exhibitions and publications, made it a model for other

[44] C. Lowry, Op. Cit. (note 41), 19.
[45] Ibid, 20
[46] J.P. Lorente, Op. Cit. (note 41), 21.
[47] C. Lowry, Op. Cit. (note 41), 22; Ibid, 123.

institutions around the world.[48] In some cases, such as those of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1935); the Musée National d'Art Moderne (1947, which succeeded the Musée du Luxembourg) in Paris; the São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro museums of modern art (which opened within nine months of each other in 1948) in Brazil; and the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura (1951) in Japan; entirely new museums were created. At other institutions, such as the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, new departments of modern art were formed in the 1960s.[49]

Many smaller museums of modern art were also established around this time, often based on private collections. These include the Museum Folkwang in Hagen, Germany, founded in 1902 by Karl Ernst Osthaus and moved to Essen in 1922; the Kröller-Müller State Museum in Otterlo, Netherlands, (1938), the result of a large donation from Helene Kröller-Müller; the Barnes Foundation Galleries in Merion, Pennsylvania, which housed Albert C. Barnes' extensive collection of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and early Modernist masterworks and which opened to the public by appointment in 1925; the Ōhara Museum of Art in Kurashiki, outside Ōsaka, Japan, which opened to the public in 1930 and was based on Ōhara Magosaburō's collection of 19th- and 20th-century French paintings and sculptures; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (1959), to house Guggenheim's collection of non-objective art.[50]

Lorente also suggests that by the 1970s, MoMA's model of the museum of modern art was seriously questioned, both by scholars and by artists of the counter-cultural revolution. Lorente presents the Pompidou Centre in Paris as an alternative, although unsuccessful, model that emerged in that period: "[The Pompidou Centre] was the first project to be steered by a fully formed post-modern cultural policy, alongside the regeneration of historical quarters and the search for a greater involvement on the part of the audience".[51] Central to the creation of the Pompidou Centre was the reconceptualization of both the intellectual and the physical space of a museum. While the Pompidou Centre was successful in reimagining the physical space of the museum as multifaceted environment, addressing urban regeneration and audience accessibility, its aim to transform the intellectual space of the museum did not turn out as anticipated. The original proposals for the centre advocated for a centre half-way between the production and the contemplation of art, a meeting point between artists and the public, where the latter could switch from curiosity to creation. This led to the establishment of laboratories for visual experiments, using sound, writing, and art, alongside workshops for children and art initiation classes. As Pontus Hultén, founding director of the Pompidou Centre stated:

[48] J.P. Lorente, Op. Cit. (note 41), 199.
[49] Ibid, 200-210.
[50] Ibid, 211.
[51] Ibid, 212.

"While waiting for art to become integrated into life and penetrate all levels of society, valuable exchanges can take place in 'museums' conceived in novel ways. These museums are not simply for the care of works which have lost their individual or social function, religious or political – church, residence or palace – but places where artists meet the public and where the public themselves can become creative".[52]

Hultén even insisted that the Musée National d'Art Moderne within the Pompidou, unlike other museums, did not recruit guides trained in art history but instead employed artists or art students, able to communicate personal responses to the works on display.[53] According to this original concept by Hultén there would not be a separation between everyday life and artistic experimentation, since street creativity needed to find a way into the museum and vice-versa: the art of the museum needed to find a way into the street. As part of this ideal, Hultén wished to structure the exhibition space to meet visitors' different levels of interest, curiosity, and previous knowledge. Every visitor was free to move along the main exhibition spaces reserved to important works, but some might wish to spend time in adjacent rooms to discover or survey in greater depth a specific art historical moment or a specific theme. At the Musée National d'Art Moderne the public even explored the reserve collections, which were accessible to the public by asking a gallery host to lower screens from the ceiling where the works were hung.[54] Furthermore, in order to adhere to a strict chronological order, all the works were hung in production date order, meaning that works by the same artists or within the same national school could be dispersed or that widely different works were hung side by side creating juxtapositions which only appealed to the specialist.[55] Furthermore, explanatory panels were rare, in line with André Malraux's philosophy that written documentation should not interfere with the contemplation of art.[56] According to Lorente, the growing audience and the passage of time gradually weakened these Utopian gestures which attempted to reduce the gap between 'making' and 'seeing' art.[57] Consequently the three concepts which had driven the creation of the Pompidou Centre gradually lost their relevance: interdisciplinarity, promoting creativity, and ensuring the widest access to the general public. Apart from a handful of very specific collaborative projects with artists, creative experimentation as a whole ended under the weight of the administrative process and other priorities. As for public access and making use of the building's flexibility, which was a central prerequisite for the final architectural design by Piano and Rogers, it was soon realized that free circulation or particular forms of display, and frequent changes in layout were good operating principles.

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[52] Cited by J.P. Améline, "Le Musée National d'Art Moderne au Centre George Pompidou: Premier bilan à l'usage," in *El arquitecto y el museo*, ed. L. López Moreno, J. López Rodriguez, R.F. Mendoza Castells (Jerez and Sevilla: COAAO-Junta de Andalucía, 1990), 364-366.
[53] J.P. Lorente, Op. Cit. (note 41), 250.
[54] Ibid, 252.
[55] H. Lasalle, "Le view et le nouveau Beaubourg", *Museum*, 154, (1987), 61-67.
[56] Ibid, 61-67.
[57] J. P. Lorente, Op. Cit. (note 41), 250.

From the Irish perspective the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art opened in 1908. The original idea of a Municipal Gallery of Modern Art for Dublin has been attributed to Hugh Lane. As far back as 1903, he had been working to that end when he started to form the collection. Lane persuaded leading artists of the day to donate a representative work to form the nucleus of the collection, as well as personally financing many acquisitions including a number of major Impressionist masterpieces, and the gallery was officially opened in 1908 in temporary premises at No. 17 Harcourt Street. The aim of the original concept for the Municipal Gallery was to create a permanent collection, which would be a referential anthology of the development of art of the nineteenth century onwards. This aim resonates the museological model of sister institutions around Europe such as the Musée du Luxemburg under the directorship of Léonce Bénédite (1892 – 1906), when after a long controversy Impressionist art was accepted at the Musée. The controversy was centred on Gustave Caillebotte's (1849 – 1894) bequest of seventy-nine artworks to the French State on condition that they were all displayed, and not stored, at either the Musée Luxembourg or the Louvre.[58] Many of the paintings were by Impressionist artists conflicting with the dominant Academic tradition of the time. The French Academy of Fine Arts, backed by a large portion of public opinion, lobbied to prevent this from happening. As a result, the Caillebotte bequest was compromised and only twenty-nine artworks were accepted by the State in 1896. Jeanne Laurent, in her book on the impact of the French Academy of Fine Arts cites a speech by Henry Roujon, head of the Directorate of Fine Arts and Ministry of Public Instruction, as a key moment in the transformation of the relationship between the Academic tradition and eventual acceptance of Impressionist art as part of the collection at the Musée. Roujon's speech managed to reconcile the enemies of Impressionism without alienating the supporters of the art movement. He said that whereas many, including himself, believed that Impressionism was not the final word in art, he considered that such a word had the right to be uttered at the Luxembourg, for it was a chapter of the contemporary history of art, a chapter that needed to be registered on the walls of museums.[59]

According to Lorente, Roujon's speech could serve as an illustration of another historical dispute: the struggle to shape museums of art based on the course of the history of art. Lorente suggests that key to the speech was Roujon's reference to the history of contemporary art, which justified including the Impressionist and other avant-garde movements into the national museum of living artists, leaving aside pressure from the Academy tradition, despite the museum's traditional regulations, and at the same time advocating for a change in the

[58] P. Vaisse, *La Troisième République et les peintres* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 160-165.
[59] J. Laurent, *Arts et pouvoirs en France de 1793 à 1981. Historie d'une mode demission artistique* (St-Ėtienne: C.I.E.R.E.C., 1982), 95.

management of the arts: the museums of art ought to show all the artistic trends throughout history.[60]

Bénédite was in favour of introducing these criteria at Musée du Luxembourg. This can be interpreted as French museum policy permanently abandoning the clear-cut choice between academic and avant-garde artists and between different styles, because all trends throughout history ought to be represented. According to Lorente, the precedent set by the Impressionists at the Musée Luxembourg, "role model to so many other museums", was the most significant breakthrough by which avant-garde art started to make its way into French museums and their imitators.[61] From this point of view the precedent set by the Musée Luxembourg can be also seen as a case of the early prevalence of the choice to reflect the history of art over conflicting attitudes guiding the development of the arts.[62]

In many ways the Caillebotte bequest controversy echoes the controversy surrounding the establishment of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art as a representation of conflicting attitudes guiding the development of arts. Although modern art had been exhibited in Dublin by then, the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art was the first institution responsible for its collection and display in Ireland. Opinions in the Irish press over the role of the Municipal Gallery and the type of art suitable for its collection were part of a broader debate about the benefits that modern art might bring to a national art school, and the specific artistic influences that could help that development. According to Fintan Cullen, the Municipal Gallery courted controversy because of the way in which Lane envisioned Irish art and Irish identity beyond the boundaries of the British Empire, alongside other cultural forces within Ireland that reimagined the nation through cosmopolitanism.[63] Discussion of the Municipal Gallery and its collection took place alongside a process of nation-building which had its origin in the eighteenth century – a reaction to British colonial power. As already discussed in chapter three, the search for alternative models for Ireland's national economic, social and political development was articulated, according to John Hutchinson, in two ways: political and cultural.[64] Political nationalism campaigned for political autonomy from Britain, and saw self-government as the only means to achieve this end; but it was cultural nationalism, and its attempt to preserve a distinctive Irish culture, which helped inspire a public controversy over the benefits of developing a modern art collection. The Celtic Revival which emerged around the 1880s represented a third stage in cultural nationalism.[65] This was a process which sought to regenerate the Irish nation through the return to its creative source: Gaelic civilization.

[60] J.P. Lorente, Op. Cit. (note 41), 107.
[61] Ibid, 107.
[62] Ibid, 108.
[63] F. Cullen, "The Lane Bequest: Giving Art to Dublin", *Field Day Review*, 4 (2008), 187-201.
[64] J. Hutchison, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation-State* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 5.
[65] Ibid, 6.

Various groups including Anglo-Irish, Irish nationalists, and others, turned to the arts as an expression of national Irish identity. Hugh Lane's gallery project was to add another, more outward-looking dimension to this search for national self-awareness.[66] Critics of Lane's gallery project referred to the Municipal Gallery as a collection of "foreign" art, as his choice of modern French art controverted these notions of Irish art as a uniquely national form of expression. Other critics suggested that Ireland was not prepared culturally or socially for modern art and that public money was better spent addressing issues of sanitation or public housing.[67] Also central to controversy was the finalisation of a permanent building for the collection, which reached a deadlock in 1913 when the Dublin Corporation (as it then was, now Council) refused to bankroll a permanent gallery. Lane did not live to see his scheme fully developed as it was only in 1933 that Charlemont House was designated as the permanent location of the Municipal Gallery.

Regardless of the emphasis given by critics, French Impressionists were a minority within the original Municipal Gallery collection, where the highest numbers of works were by Irish and British painters. The term Irish was used to encompass both artists born in Ireland and those of Irish descent. Regardless, of the numerous critics, Lane's project received fervent support in the local press. Amongst others, the *Sinn Féin Magazine* stated:

"The opening of the Municipal Art Gallery on Monday was the opening of an art epoch in Ireland. It is a noble thing for the capital of Ireland to possess the finest modern Art Gallery in Europe, but it is a greater thing for Ireland that she has now within herself the power to evolve a school in Art which will enable her to rank amongst the distinctive nations".[68]

Another publication that supported the opening of the Municipal Gallery was *The Irish Times*. In its editorial, international status was evoked once again. To have such a collection housed in Dublin had important consequences: it would help Ireland in re-positioning itself; a colonized country, the "Cinderella of the nations", might aspire to become a wealthy art capital, with a collection that was one of a kind.[69] Lane's statement in the exhibition's catalogue was equally specific about his vision for the Municipal Gallery:

"Till to-day Ireland was the only country in Europe that had no Gallery of Modern Art. There is not even a single accessible private collection of Modern Pictures in this country. That reproach is now removed".[70]

According to Marta Herrero, the Municipal Gallery was ahead of its time, because the inclusion of French Impressionist works differed from the European trend of setting up galleries to display works by only national, living artists,[71] such as the Musée Luxembourg.

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[66] M. Herrero, *Irish Intellectuals and Aesthetics, The Making of a Modern Art Collection; 1893-1915*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 72.
[67] M. O'Neill, *Hugh Lane: The Art Market and the Art Museum* (New Haven and London, 218), 20.
[68] *Sinn Féin Magazine*, January 25, 1908.
[69] *The Irish Times*, January 21, 1908.
[70] *Illustrated Catalogue*, Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, 1908.

Together with the argument over which kind of art would best inspire an Irish art school, was the debate about the kind of nation a national art would help determine.[72] The attitudes towards the opening of the Municipal Gallery suggested that art would give Ireland an opportunity to articulate its own identity, one which would no longer see it defined as a colonized nation. The gallery projected Dublin as an outward-looking European capital, ready to engage with foreign art, both in formation of an artistic tradition and in helping Irish people open up their prospects to stylistic inclinations from abroad, which was the central and ultimate goal of Lane's scheme. The rhetoric of international prestige, and the belief that foreign art would facilitate the development of a national art, does not concur with the Revivalist emphasis on reconnecting the country to its Celtic past, drawing on its language, mythology and visual culture. According to Herrero, these are, although much opposed in their means, two sides of the same debate. The need to revive the arts by looking back on Ireland's Celtic past co-existed with the wish to have an Irish school of art which would be outward looking and inspired by the example of foreign artists with well-established traditions.[73]

After the establishment of the Municipal Gallery at Charlemont House is 1933, it would take nearly fifty years for another major public art institution, the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), to materialize in Dublin. However IMMA arrived in very different political circumstances, with a very different relationship to both Irish Nationalism, and the culture of contemporary Europe and the rest of the world. According to Fionna Barber, the revision of the nationalist agenda during the 1990s affected not only Ireland's projected future, but also its rehabilitation of the past.[74]

9.2. Context: Forming a new museum of modern art in Ireland – Reconceptualising the intellectual and physical space of the museum

The materialization of IMMA in 1991 took place in the midst of a series of transformations. While the 1980s in Ireland were characterised by economic recession, unemployment, and emigration, the 1990s saw the arrival of the Celtic Tiger, which made Ireland the fastest growing economy in the world in the last years of the twentieth century. As a result, Ireland became, primarily, an urban society with just ten percent of its work force employed in the agricultural sector. Parallel to this, the country started to reflect European demographic norms, alongside changing attitudes towards family, birth control, and sexual identity, with the

[71] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66, 54.
[72] N. Sharp, "The wrong Twigs for an Eagle's Nest? Architecture, Nationalism and Sir Hugh Lane's Scheme for a Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1904-13", in *The Architecture of the Museum: Symbolic Structures, Urban Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 32-53.
[73] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66, 55.
[74] F. Barber, *Art in Ireland since 1910* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 239.

availability of contraception, legislation for divorce, and the decriminalisation of homosexuality.[75]

During the 1990s, particularly under the leadership of Charles Haughey, Ireland benefited from government involvement in the arts. For the first time, the arts were included as part of governmental policy supporting and sustaining individual creativity. In 1981, the Arts Council established Aosdána, an affiliation of artists that recognised the role of those artists who had made a significant contribution to the arts in Ireland. Another aspect of the government's policy, such as the already discussed *Access and Opportunity* white paper, was to encourage public access to the arts.[76] According to Patrick Cooke this artist-centred and citizen-centred dual approach to art policy would become a major issue at the heart of Irish arts policy in the coming years, and was at the centre of the creation of the new museum of modern art.[77]

On October 5th, 1987, Taoiseach Charles Haughey announced the establishment of a gallery of modern art in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham – a former retirement home for the British Army built in 1686, situated about two miles from Dublin's city centre. The announcement marked the end of a long struggle to designate a function for the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. The origin of this struggle goes back to August 1978 when the Department of the Taoiseach issued a press release announcing the Taoiseach's approval of a plan to proceed with the restoration of the building. The idea was to utilize it as a conference centre for Ireland's Presidency of the European Council of Ministers in 1984. Beyond that, the building was to be given a public use and "should be available to as a wide a sector of the public as possible". A committee was set up to report on its possible uses, but even after its £25 million restoration in 1987, the future of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, widely regarded as Ireland's finest seventeenth-century building, was still not secure. Some of the suggestions were: exhibition of documentation pertaining to Irish writers, poets, and playwrights; a postal museum of items catalogued by the General Post Office; an exhibition of Irish cartography; display of modern Irish crafts; display of paintings from the National Gallery of Ireland, and display of objects from the National Museum of Ireland. The proposal to use it as a conference centre was dismissed when Dublin Castle was found to be a more appropriate location.

The announcement that the Royal Hospital Kilmainham would become the long-awaited institution of modern art created controversy from the beginning. Every single aspect – its location, funding, function, and collection – stirred public opinion. It also meant that a proposal to have the gallery at Stack A, an 1820s building in Dublin's docklands, was dismissed. Renovating Stack A would have required major financial expenditure by the government, while the Royal Hospital Kilmainham seemed a better choice because it needed only minor

[75] D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1700-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004), 666.
[76] V. Ryan, *Movers & Shapers: Irish Art since 1960* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2003), 90.
[77] P. Cooke, "Cultural Policy in Ireland", in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, ed. C. Andrew, M. Catherine, P. Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 113.

alterations to be converted into a museum. It also pre-empted the possibility of housing part of the National Museum collection in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. The two possible venues also echo international trends of what Lorente has defined as "the postmodern dilemma between reusing historical buildings and newly built museums".[78] According to Lorente, that postmodern dilemma had existed in France since the Enlightenment. While the French Revolution placed museums in palaces, castles, hospitals, and other buildings from the former regime, which were therefore made available to all citizens, in contrast post-industrial France saw a proliferation of museums and centres of contemporary art located in former factories, silos, and warehouses. Both the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and Stack A represent this trend: the Royal Hospital Kilmainham as a former hospital, and Stack A as a former docklands warehouse. Furthermore, the consideration of both venues as possible museums of contemporary art also reflects another international trend of the period: museums ought to have an urban impact. Both the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and Stack A were both located in urban districts in need of regeneration. This urban regeneration was also central to the aims of the project of European Cities of Culture of Programme.

On November 17th, 1989, the Taoiseach announced that Ireland's gallery of modern art would be opened in 1991 as part of Dublin's City of Culture Programme. The European City or Capital of Culture (ECOC) programme,[79] was among the first set of schemes in the area of culture launched by the European Community. According to its official mission, it endeavours to "highlight the richness and diversity of European culture and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European Citizens".[80] From 1985, the year when the ECOC programme was launched, to 2018, the title has been bestowed upon a total of fifty-eight cities. The programme awards an annual title to one or several cities for the period of one year, which then host cultural events of various kinds. The list of awarded cities includes European capital cities as well as less well-known places. With the number of visitors to the festivities often going into the millions, Commission President José Barroso has recently called the ECOC programme "a flagship cultural initiative of the European Union, possibly the best known and most appreciated by European citizens".[81] The concept of ECOC is open to a number of interpretations and the main motivations behind the nomination for the ECOC title, the key mission, and major objectives have varied from city to city. Most cities had multiple objectives, most often referring to the need to raise the international profile of the city and its region, to run a programme of cultural activities and arts events, to attract visitors, and to enhance pride and self-confidence. Other objectives for some cities included expanding the

[78] J.P. Lorente, Op. Cit. (note 41), 260.
[79] The name of the programme changed from European City of Culture to European Capital of Culture in 1999.
[80] *European Official Journal L 166, 01/07/1999 P. 0001 – 0005. Page 2.*
[81] J. M. Barroso, "Foreword", in *European capitals of Culture: The Road to Success: From 1985 to 2010*, eds. European Communities (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009), 1.

local audience for culture, making improvements to cultural infrastructure, developing relationships with other European cities and regions, promoting creativity and innovation, and developing the careers/talents of local artists.[82]

According to Kiran K. Patel, the ECOC programme and related initiatives of European cultural policy thus established more variegated, visible, and potentially also more revered links among European citizens than many other European policies in such fields as foreign affairs and security, or the economy and finance. Patel also suggests that the awarded cities turn into laboratories where European cultural policy meets local, regional, national, and global needs.[83]

In October 1988 the then Minister of State for European Affairs, Mrs. Maire Geoghegan Quinn announced that the government had submitted Dublin's candidacy as European City of Culture for 1991.[84] Shortly after, the choice of Dublin as the sixth European City of Culture was agreed by the European Council Ministers for Cultural Affairs when they met in Athens in December 1988.[85] Addressing the Seanad in 1991, the then Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Noel Treacy, indicated the aim of the event and how the Irish government perceived the event:

"It is highly appropriate that this House should address this motion and in doing so, acknowledge the importance of this year not just to Dublin, but to the country at large. It is right for all of us in Ireland to take pride in our European cultural heritage. It is our duty to promote a greater awareness and appreciation of contemporary European culture, not just as a valid end in itself, but as a means of improving communications and better understanding among the peoples of the European Community".[86]

In order to achieve these aims, and with a budget of £2.75 million, the government subcontracted the services of Dublin Promotions Organisation Limited (DPOL) to design and organise a suitable cultural programme for Dublin during 1991.[87] A sum of £1.25 million had been allocated from the National Lottery. Other public bodies also had a important contribution into the cultural capital activities. Those bodies included Dublin Corporation, Dublin County Council, the Office of Public Works, Bord Fáilte, and the Department of the Environment. An allocation from the European Community was arranged and over £1 million in sponsorship was pledged from private sources.

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[82] Palmer/Rae Associates. European Cities of Culture and Cultural Months 1995-2004. Report prepared for the European Commission and the Network of Cultural Cities of Europe, 2004.

[83] K. K. Patel, "Introduction", in *The cultural politics of Europe: European capitals of culture and European Union since the 1980s*, ed. Kiran Klaus Patel (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2.

[84] Dublin nominated as cultural capital. (1988, Oct 06). The Irish Times (1921-Current File) Retrieved from http://elib.tcd.ie/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/531169372?accountid=14404

[85] "European City of Culture Motion (Resumed)", Oireachtas Business, House of Oireachtas, last modified April 21st, 2015, http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/seanad1991042400010#

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

Also central to the ECOC programme was the idea of capital and local urban regeneration.[88] In the case of Dublin, one of the main objectives for the year, as defined by the then Taoiseach Charles Haughey,[89] was the development of the Temple Bar area of the city as a cultural tourism centre and as a Government flagship project for Dublin's year as European City of Culture. This project attracted funding of up to £3.6 million from the European Regional Development Fund. It also obtained a loan of £5 million from the European Investment Bank, for the acquisition of properties owned by CIE and Dublin Corporation; and other key properties for the development of an east-west walkway in Temple Bar; for putting in place pedestrianisation, street furniture and lighting; for the redevelopment of the Irish Film Centre; and for the development of three new public squares in the area.[90]

Up to 200 cultural events were lined up for the Dublin celebration. According to Treacy, the objective of the programme was to reflect each aspect of the cultural and artistic life of the city.[91] The many activities included: the unveiling of the restored Custom House; the Dublin Literary Festival, incorporating Bloomsday; the Dublin International Writers' Conference; Mozart 200, an extensive concert and recital programme commemorating the 200th anniversary of the death of Mozart, and the inauguration of a world-class concert organ at the National Concert Hall. A special spring season of international theatre complemented the Dublin Theatre Festival, as well as fresh additions to regular events on Dublin's festivity calendar such as the St. Patrick's Day celebrations, the Dublin Street Carnival, the Dublin Film Festival, and the music programme at the National Concert Hall. Many anniversaries with a cultural dimension were also celebrated during 1991. These included the 50th anniversary of the death of James Joyce; the 800th anniversary of St. Patrick's Cathedral; the 100th anniversary of the death of Parnell; and the 75th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising.

From the museological perspective, there were very many events planned and organised, including a series of major new exhibitions in the National Museum, the National Gallery, and the re-opening of the newly refurbished Dublin Municipal Gallery. To coincide with Dublin's tenure as ECOC, there were two new museums opened: the Dublin Writers' Museum, dedicated to Dublin's literary heritage was the first of these. The second museum was also considered one of the flagship projects of the event: the new Irish Museum of Modern Art at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham.

When evaluating the legacy of Dublin City of Culture 1991, Robert Palmer et al highlight the limited advance planning, 14 months, and the small budget when compared to ECOC in that period, as a factor for the limited long-term impact that the Dublin City of Culture 1991 had. In

[88] P. Papanikolaou, "The European Capital of Culture: The Challenge for Urban Regeneration and Its Impact on the Cities", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 2 No. 17 (September 2012): 268.
[89] Palmer/Rae Associates, Op. Cit. (note 82).
[90] Ibid
[91] Ibid.

terms of negative aspects of the legacy of Dublin 1991, Palmer et al mention the negative media coverage and absence of ownership by the local population that influenced a feeling of failure. Similarly, some of the successful initiatives of Dublin 1991 in community programming were not followed through.[92]

However, according to Palmer et al, there were also some long-term legacies. Amongst others, one of the fundamental impacts was the increased role of culture: "Dublin 1991 was one among many initiatives that have assisted the process of placing culture higher on the political agenda locally and nationally, and developing the argument of the importance of culture to the life of the city and its economy".[93]

As part of their report on Dublin City of Culture 1991, Palmer et al also suggest that: "It should be noted that the 1990s was a period when the Irish economy developed on an unprecedented scale, resulting in, amongst other things, the development of the arts and culture sector across a range of fronts".[94] For them, it would be difficult to prove that the Dublin 1991 experience was a primary agent for such developments. For instance, the development of the Temple Bar area has been considered as a long-term legacy of the project. The consideration of the Temple Bar seed grant from the European Commission was said to be linked to the ECOC designation as a pilot project for using culture and the environment as engines of economic and social rejuvenation in peripheral cities of Europe. Several respondents to Palmer et al's report disagreed with this, suggesting that this development would most certainly have happened anyway, and that the project was driven by the national government and involved organisations, policies, funding, and personalities that were not related in any way to Dublin 1991. Similarly, for Palmer et al, it can be contested that other developments such as the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Dublin Writers' Museum etc. were a direct or indirect result of Dublin 1991. Perhaps it can be argued that Dublin 1991 accelerated the prospectus for Temple Bar and the same could be said about the Irish Museum of Modern Art. However, the opening of the museum to coincide with Dublin 1991 had its practical and ideological implications, which in turn proved significant in placing culture higher on the political agenda locally and nationally, highlighting the role and limits of public leadership in the social construction of cultural needs.

IMMA was opened on the 25th of May 1991. To commemorate the occasion, Taoiseach Charles Haughey gave a speech, which can be understood as an attempt to settle some of the controversies surrounding the museum. He referred to the country's vitality and creativity in the visual arts, a movement that had started in the nineteenth century, continued after

[92] Palmer/Rae Associates, Op. Cit. (note 82).
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

Independence, and was still in place. The museum, "a cultural priority of high order", was to give Irish art its proper place, both in its national and international contexts:

"Outside the creativity of the individual artists themselves, I am convinced that nothing could have a more profound effect on the general level of artistic achievement in our country than the establishment of this Museum. By means of it, Irish art will not only take its place internationally but will also go one step nearer to taking the place it should undoubtedly have in the life of Ireland itself".[95]

The rest of the speech responded to some of the criticism launched against the museum. It emphasized that the Royal Hospital Kilmainham was the right location for the museum because it situated Ireland in line with other European countries, like Italy, France, and Spain, where historic buildings had been turned into art museums. The museum was not to be a neutral white space for the exhibition of art because in a historic building "art is not robbed of its place in the historical continuum in which we all live". Moreover, IMMA was to give Irish art the prestige it deserved by placing it alongside foreign works and thus making it known worldwide. This opening speech is an example of how IMMA's identity was being constituted, as some of the issues raised by Haughey acquired a new significance in the *Inheritance and Transformation* exhibition framework, as well as being incorporated into IMMA's initial aims and objectives, particularly the idea of an historic building as a setting for the display of art. Echoing McGonagle's early rhetorics of challenging the old, canonical idea of the museum, and the creation of a new museum where there was no longer a single governing narrative in art history or practice, and where pre-determined art historical and institutional boundaries were not accepted.[96]

It was also suggested at the time that without tens of millions of pounds to 'buy in collections', it could not be successful. To Declan McGonagle, first director of IMMA, these arguments revealed major limiting presumptions about the form, content, and purpose of a Museum of Modern Art: "Facing into a new century we should seize the opportunity of following on from a period when the exclusivity of the Modernist monolith had been successfully challenged".

Although presented as a serious disadvantage, McGonagle saw these issues as advantages. They provided an opportunity not to replicate models from elsewhere, but to do something which was particular to our place and time: "We could put in place another set of relations between art and artists, the institution and community". For McGonagle the name of the institution itself – the Irish Museum of Modern Art – announced the museum's agenda of connecting with lived experiences, and it allowed questions to be asked of a new national cultural institution opening at the end of the 20th century, in a rapidly changing Ireland. What

[95] C. Haughey, "Opening Speech". Box 7, Folder 1, Inheritance and Transformation Papers 1991, IMMA Archives, IMMA, Dublin.
[96] Ibid.

was it to be Irish? What was a museum? What was modern art and what could it be? What did it need to be, in the future?

According to McGonagle, "at times some people reacted to the institution's work as if its name had been the Museum of Irish Modern Art rather than simply a Museum of Modern Art in Ireland, or if this national cultural institution was supposed to be a Museum of Modernist Art".[97] For McGonagle, the term national describes the responsibilities of the institution not its contents. "In this case we had the 'figure' of the institution and its relationship with the 'ground' of a changing Irish society".[98] This is what sociologists Carmen Kuhling and Kieran Keohane have identified as a 'collision' culture.[99] According to them, these cultural collisions in Irish life during the 1990s occur between the local and global, between traditional and modern, between Catholic and secular, and between rural and urban.[100] McGonagle also indicates that certainly it is impossible for a public institution to ignore the collision of old and new stories of the nation and state, old and new communities, of extreme wealth and on-going poverty. According to McGonagle, *Inheritance and Transformation* reflected that sense of collision, and of fault lines which had to be negotiated in Irish society. There was obvious reference to the historical identity of the Royal Hospital and its transformation into a contemporary art space. But there was also reference to the transformation of inherited ideas about the nature and purpose of art and its relationship to its recent past, a metaphor for forces at work in Irish society.[101] According to McGonagle:

"The 20th century had seen Ireland recover and build an independent identity and set about dismantling a colonial characterization of the country as a site of retarded modernism and modernity, with unresolved issues of identity and recurring political violence. IMMA did not see itself as an antidote to reality but as part of a wider process of comprehending and transforming it".[102]

9.3. Exhibited cultures: Semantic thinking through juxtaposition

The exhibition space at IMMA consists of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham building, the National Galleries built onto the gardens surrounding the Royal Hospital Kilmainham building, as well as the gardens and courtyard. The building renovation in preparation for IMMA was designed by Shay Cleary Architects. The new design divided the Royal Hospital Kilmainham building into east and west wings, and has two floors. The ground floor holds the wing

[97] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 5), 44.
[98] Ibid, 45.
[99] C. Kuhling and K. Keohane, *Collision Culture: Transformations in Everyday Life in Ireland* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2004), 4.
[100] Ibid, 5.
[101] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 5), 45.
[102] D. McGonagle, "For Them, Not Us: "Turning" the Museum in an Anxious World", *Éire-Ireland*, Volume 52, Numbers 3 & 4, Fall/Winter 2017, 75.

galleries in the east wing and the Gordon Lambert Galleries in the west wing. The landing next to the reception area offers some exhibition space, which is used for both temporary exhibitions and exhibitions of the permanent collection. Exhibitions of the permanent collection are usually located in the west wing on the first floor. The east wing on the first floor is used by temporary exhibitions; however, at times permanent collection shows can also occupy the space. According to McGonagle, the architecture of the building contributed to a different approach to exhibition making; the layout of long, wide corridors and the run of five-meter-square rooms with tall windows facilitated an approach to programming involving the juxtaposition or collision of individual works or bodies of work, or whole exhibitions and installations, which invited the public to participate in a dialectical experience.[103]

As already mentioned, *Inheritance and Transformation* opened on the 25th of May 1991, and ran for four months until the 29th of September 1991. A total of one hundred and forty-nine artworks were exhibited from ninety-seven artists.[104] Within the Royal Hospital Kilmainham,[105] the exhibition was subdivided into seven different schemes distributed in twenty-six different spaces, including the courtyard and adjacent grounds. Irish Pavilion: Brian Maguire and O'Donnell and Tuomey Architects Collaboration; Active Age Group and Tony Murray Collaboration; Gordon Lambert Collection; Media Works; Selected Works (Main Exhibition); Beuys in Ireland; and Artists in Residency. The works selected within those schemes, included commissioned and selected works by contemporary artists, as well as first acquisitions to the collection and loans from the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, The Netherlands), the Gemeentemuseum (The Hague, The Netherlands) of mid-twentieth-century modernist works. It also involved a long-term loan from the Klauz Lafrenz Collection (Hamburg, Germany) of late-twentieth-century Minimalist works, and major donations from Irish collectors, the Gordon Lambert Collection, and the Hooker O'Malley Collection. All the artists exhibited only one work with the exception of Joseph Beuys (1921 – 1986), Jean Dubuffet (1901 -1985), Donald Judd (1928 – 1994) and Jack B. Yeats (1871 – 1957), with two works each. The selection of works was the sole responsibility of the curatorial team at IMMA under the supervision of McGonagle.

In the exhibition catalogue, McGonagle set the tone and aims of not only the set of exhibitions but also of the new museum:

"*Inheritance and Transformation* is the overall title for the inaugural exhibitions and projects at the Irish Museum of Modern Art. It signals a series of diverse programmes and programming

[103] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 102), 76.

[104] For the purpose of this study the total number of artworks has been determined by body of work rather than by individual piece, such as in the case amongst other of: Jiri Georg Dokoupil's *Enemigos de Los Derechos Humanos* (1989), which consisted of sixteen panels, or Willie Doherty's *Imagined Truths* (1990), which consisted of four panels.

[105] There was a further scheme, the display of Ulrich Rückriem's donation *Sculpture Shed* in Clonegal, Co. Wexford.

attitudes, at once reflecting the potential of the Royal Hospital building, its architectural and historical meanings and a wider agenda where cultural and social systems and identities are being questioned…

The task will involve re-defining existing language and creating new structures which will serve this inclusive rather than exclusive approach. To engage with this reservoir of meaning is to engage with artist and non-artists as equal participants in an on-going cultural process, not as producer and consumer.

A museum cannot anymore be seen as an innocent bystander in this relationship but has to be understood as a function as well as a building where explorations of the making and mediation of art in place are necessary components of the institution's work".[106]

This statement referred directly to the inheritance of the Royal Hospital building and its historical socio-political narratives, and also the inheritance of the concept of museum and the associated expectations of a Museum of Modern Art, which IMMA was setting out to transform. In order to convey this message, the curatorial team rejected chronology in favour of a set of curatorial intuitions and affinities among artworks in a progression of visual, semantic thinking through juxtaposition.

The *Irish Pavilion* was located in the right corner of the central courtyard (Figs. 2 & 3). As described by Shay Cleary architects in their general description of the renovation of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, the courtyard was changed from grass to rolled gravel surface with some flat stone markings indicating the access to the main exhibition spaces. On the description of the project, Cleary also stated: "It will be the first 'room' of the gallery to be used for sculpture or installations or special events. This precise and urbane treatment of the space now properly contrasts with the landscaped nature of the overall site. It further shows the powerful and historic colonnaded perimeter to best advantage and has the potential intensity of an urban space".[107] McGonagle has also referred to the courtyard as the first room of the museum,[108] and as such it could be considered that the *Irish Pavilion* was the first juxtaposition or collision in *Inheritance and Transformation*.

The *Irish Pavilion* was the artist/architect collaboration of Brian Maguire (b. 1951) and architects O'Donnell and Tuomey. This collaboration represented Ireland at the *11 Cities / 11 Nations Exhibition of Contemporary Northern European Art and Architecture* (Leeuwarden, Netherlands, 1990), and it was re-erected for the inaugural exhibition in the courtyard of the Irish Museum of Modern Art. O'Donnell and Tuomey's architectural design responded to the content of Maguire's body of work which dealt principally with closed institutions; prison, and

[106] D. McGonagle, "Foreword", in *Inheritance and Transformation* (Dublin: IMMA, 1991), 5.
[107] S. Cleary, "Concept and general description of the Scheme", Box 3, Folder 2, Inheritance and Transformation Papers 1991, IMMA Archives, IMMA, Dublin.
[108] D. McGonagle, "Letter to the editor", *Irish Times*, June 27, 1991.

personal relationships; love.[109] The architectural design and materials were conceived to intensify the experience of viewing each of the fifteen artworks displayed by Maguire (Figs. 2 & 3). This was a contemplative space made with timber and corrugated iron, containing elements such as ladders and catwalks. Here the juxtaposition negotiates two different spaces linked semantically by their purpose to display art. It contrasts the old and new, the permanent and the ephemeral, and interrogates the historical identity of the Royal Hospital and its transformation into a contemporary art space.





Figures 2 & 3: *Irish Pavilion*. Painting: Brian Maguire, *Portrait of T. McMahon*, 1991, oil on paper, 50 x 45 cm. Photos: O'Donnell and Tuomey Architects.

The *Main Exhibition* took place in the first floor of the museum, consisting of four long corridors, two on each wing with twelve adjacent small rooms in the East wing and eight in the West wing. The presentation of artworks created two types of spaces: firstly, a use of space encouraging the aestheticization of art, allowing visitors to focus solely on the artworks; and secondly a more analytical approach, encouraging multiple readings and interpretations of the artworks on display.

[109] "Irish Pavilion", Box 2, Folder 1, Inheritance and Transformation Papers 1991, IMMA Archives, IMMA, Dublin

Identity labels were used to give basic information about the works: name of the artist, title, year, materials, and provenance. This was the only textual mediation, which also included a pamphlet with a brief introduction by McGonagle, contextualising the set of exhibitions as described in his foreword to the exhibition catalogue. The pamphlet also included a map with the location of the artworks by artists and space, and biographical listing of the artists exhibiting. According to Herrero, biographies are important for what they say about the artists and their work, and also, they establish the artists as individual figures, even memorable characters whose lives are worth recording.[110] The biographical texts within the pamphlet offered two types of information: didactic, personal details, and an aesthetic appreciation of the artworks. For instance, Richard Long's (b. 1945) biographical entry in the pamphlet:

"Born in 1945 in Bristol. He lives and works in London. Studied in the College of Art, Bristol and St. Martin's School of Art. His attitude to sculpture has remained consistent in his instinctive emotional and physical evocation of the natural wood. He is fascinated with the identification and interaction of man with his environment. He uses natural materials (wood and stones) and his work can be seen as landscape rather than sculpture".[111]

The exhibition spaces at IMMA resembled the white cube referred to in chapter four, with white walls, high ceilings, grey floor, and lack of ornamentation accentuating the intrinsic value of the art of display, but the museum is an historic seventeenth-century building, which ensures that the display of art is not devoid of context:

"We do show work within the building in something that approaches the white cube, we have lovely clean modernist spaces, but those modernist spaces exist within, very much within the framework of a historic building".[112]

As part of the installation process, artists were consulted to decide how the work was to be displayed. For instance, artist Magdalena Jetelová (b. 1946) requested that her piece *Domestication of a Pyramid* (1991) be exhibited in a specific space due to the problematic nature of the architecture in the space originally allocated (Fig. 4).[113] In an interview with Herrero, Marshall, first head of collections at IMMA in 1995, highlights the importance of this process:

"IMMA is really excited about working with living artists, so that carries with it a responsibility to always try to show their work in a way that the artist is comfortable with. We would always consult artists before we install their work… to work out even what rooms in the building are suitable for their work, and so on… I think the artist made the work with a

[110] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 200.
[111] "Inheritance and Transformation Leaflet", Box 6, Folder 5, Inheritance and Transformation Papers 1991, IMMA Archives, IMMA, Dublin.
[112] C. Marshall, interview with M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 150.
[113] "Letter from M. Jetelová to S. Barry", 23 February 1991, Box 4, Folder 2, Inheritance and Transformation Papers 1991, IMMA Archives, IMMA, Dublin.

particular set of ideas in his or her head and we [curators] would, of course, want to tap into those".[114]

The museum's choice to implicate the artists in the presentation of their works does not seem to restrain the role of the curators in the design of exhibitions. This becomes collaboration between curators and artists to ensure artworks are presented in the best possible way, echoing the Pompidou Centre's original scheme for the Centre to be halfway between the production and the contemplation of art, a meeting point between artists and the public. While McGonagle intended to separate IMMA from previous museological models,[115] the establishment of IMMA resonates with the model set by the Pompidou Centre in other ways, with the principle of inclusion in mind, a particular mediation structure was created at IMMA. The internal staffing structure in relation to the titling, status, and parity of the roles of curators matched with those of the staff responsible for education and community access. Such an approach also shaped the reconfigured role of mediator, a term then new to the institutional structure of public service in Ireland within which IMMA worked.[116] This redefined role of mediator was a move away from the accepted definitions of "attendant" and "guardian" in other national collecting institutions. Mediators were recruited for public engagement and communication roles, with engagement at the centre, rather than simply for standard security functions.[117] In perhaps a humorous presentation, Duane Hanson's (1925 – 1996) *Security Guard* (1990) challenges the traditional principle of the "guardian" in a literal way but it also challenges inherited ideas about the nature and purpose of art and the museum (Fig. 4).

[114] C. Marshall, Op. Cit. (note 112), 151.
[115] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note (note 102), 75.
[116] D. McGonagle, interview by author. Dublin, 5th of May 2019.
[117] Ibid.

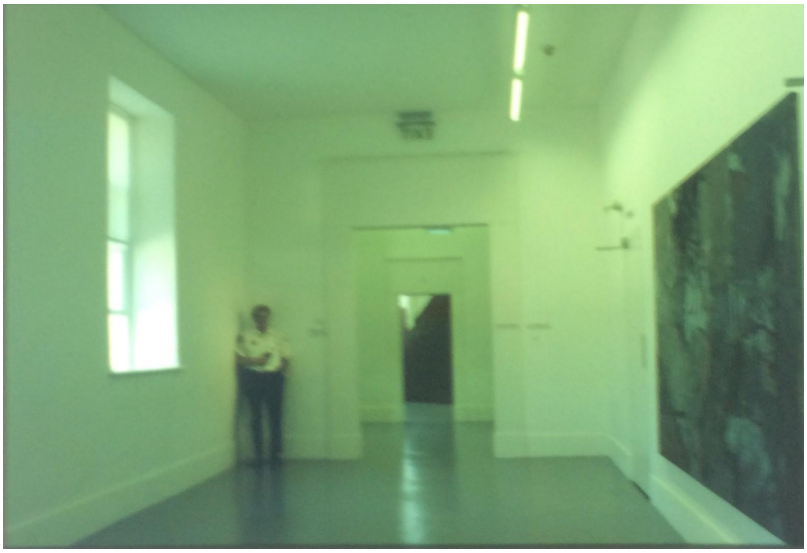


Figure 4: *Inheritance and Transformation West Wing Installation.* Left wall: Duane Hanson, *Security Guard*, 1990, painted bronze and cloth, n.d. Adjacent room: Magdalena Jetelová, *Domestication of a Pyramid*, 1991, sand and wood installation, n.d. Right wall: Richard Gorman, *Jonjemsusms*, 1990, oil on canvas, 185 x 300 cm. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art.

In the *Main Exhibition* all the adjacent rooms within each corridor are connected, so viewers can decide whether to look at the artworks following the rooms' sequence, or to go from rooms to the corridor and vice-versa. The adjacent rooms are small spaces, with relatively low ceilings, particularly in relation to the long corridors. This type of space favours an intimate encounter between viewers and the works on display. The majority of the rooms include works by various artists, excluding the large installation or sculptural pieces of the already mentioned Magdalena Jetelová; Antony Gormley (b. 1950) *Still Falling* (1990); James Coleman (b. 1941) *Strongbow* (1978); Hans Haacke (b. 1936) *The Freedom Fighters were here* (1988); Joseph Beuys (1921 – 1986) *Bits and Pieces* (c. 1970 – 1986); and Richard Deacon (b. 1949) *Kiss and Tell* (n.d.), which were exhibited individually. The long corridors, however, create another type of viewing space. The corridors are a long wide exhibition space with a high ceiling and windows looking into the museum courtyard. The intimate encounters created in the adjacent rooms is not possible here. Most large works were located in the corridor and as such dimension dictated the narrative within the space. Although this is not an imperative, as already mentioned other larger installation works were shown individually in the adjacent rooms. As such the exhibition was not only intended to enable viewers to create particular links between the works displayed together but also between each exhibition space, again, creating a progression of visual, semantic thinking through juxtaposition, which invited the public to participate in a dialectical experience. According to McGonagle: "An acknowledgment of this demand became a conscious framing tactic in developing IMMA and of creating future programming for the public".[118]

[118] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 102), 76.

According to the opening day schedule, the curators' preferred route was to commence the visit to *Inheritance and Transformation* by the *Main Exhibition*. Once within the museum building, the first two artworks displayed together that the visitors encountered were Paul Henry's (1877 – 1958) *Turf stack in the bog* (1927) and Richard Long's (b. 1945) *Kilkenny Limestone* (1991).[119] McGonagle has referred often to this juxtaposition as a key moment not only in encompassing the overall curatorial message of *Inheritance and Transformation* but also of IMMA as a new institution of modern art (Fig. 5):[120]

"This juxtaposition was the first experience offered to visitors to the museum before they proceeded to other parts of the exhibition. The encounter was intended to set the scene for a process of dialogue rather than presentation of a fixed view, thus serving as a marker for the core purpose of the museum. The two works were of course linked by landscape as subject. For Richard Long, however, landscape provides both subject and material, and his art is made as a result of experience, whereas Paul Henry made art to describe experience. These concepts of embodiment or representation are distinct but related narratives of art in the twentieth century. In this dialectic, exhibited in this first gallery space of IMMA's first exhibition, the viewer was explicitly invited to become more of a participant than a consumer in the negotiation of meaning in art".[121]

This particular juxtaposition goes beyond the formal relationship, landscape, and notions of Irish and other identities, Henry a 'quintessential' Irish painter contrasted with Long, a 'quintessential' British artist. It also embodied the argument that *Inheritance and Transformation* and the institution would then set out to explore more fully: between past and present, tradition and innovation, and artwork and viewer..[122]

[119] In all the various articles already cited here by McGonagle, he refers to Paul Henry's painting as *Connemara Landscape*. However, the labeling for the exhibition refers to it as *Turf stack in the bog*.
[120] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 5), 40; D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 102), 78: D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 116).
[121] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 102), 78.
[122] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 5), 41.

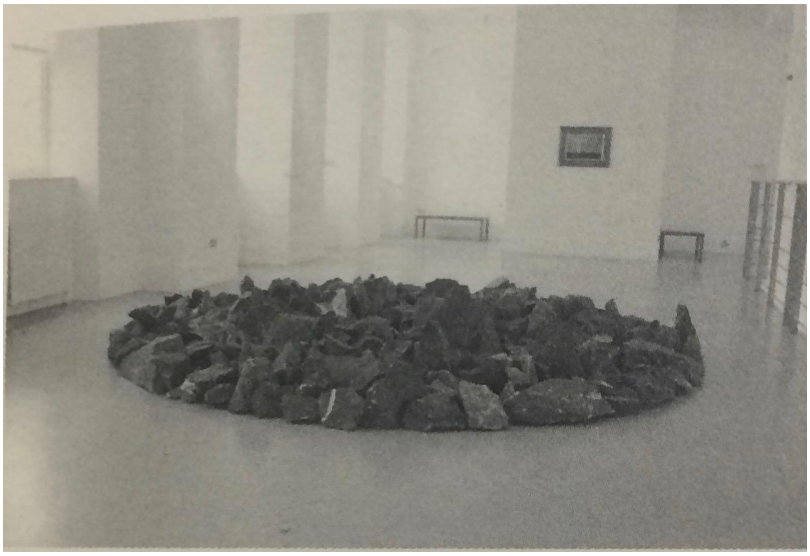


Figure 5: *Inheritance and Transformation*. From back to front: Paul Henry, *Turf stack on the bog*, 1927, oil on canvas, 73 x 57 cm; Richard Long, *Kilkenny Limestone Circle*, 1991, Kilkenny limestone, 400 cm diameter. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Another juxtaposition within the *Main Exhibition* often cited by McGonagle were the works of Donald Judd, *89-28AD* (1988), and Hans Haacke, *The Freedom Fighters Were Here* (1984).[123] These works were not shown in proximity but as curatorial moments in different wings of the museum (Figs. 6 & 7). The Judd piece was shown as part of a curatorial essay on Minimalism, using a series of late 20th century minimalist works from the Klaus Lafrenz collection and was shown in the East Wing of the Museum. The Haacke piece was in the West Wing galleries of the museum. The Haacke piece was based on published news footage of a family burying a child in Central America in the early 1980s, following a raid by the U.S.-backed Contra guerrillas on their village. The image was presented as part of a life size cinema frontage, complete with flashing lights, as a reference to U.S. President Ronald Reagan's support for the Contras. According to McGonagle:

"While meeting the pragmatic need to demonstrate credentials for borrowing works from collections and profile artists, the exhibition of works, and bodies of works, in juxtaposition, was an important part of fulfilling IMMA's ambition to open up the relational dialectic, which exists between individual works and between narratives in art. Judd's practice was informed by his cogent argument that artworks can only be deemed significant in as much as they adhere to a set of asocial aesthetic absolutes whereas Haacke's practice represents the idea that it is the artist's responsibility – as a citizen – to be social, to be concerned with social and political space, and to develop a language which can speak and be heard in that space. In exhibiting these specific works and the polar positions the artists held on the purpose of art and engagement, it was not for the museum to approve of one practice over the other but to offer

[123] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 102), 79; D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 116).

both positions, as in their separate practices and distinct works, alongside other equivalent juxtapositions across the museum, to create a cat's cradle of meanings to which a visitor/viewer could connect their own expectations, points of view and understandings, of art and the world".[124]

McGonagle continues: "Of course, it cannot be claimed that every visitor/viewer exercised this right [of connecting their own expectations, points of view and understandings, of art and the world], but the point is that IMMA was fulfilling what is a responsibility for a publicly funded institution – as the British artist, Antony Gormley has put it – to return agency to the viewer and to provide opportunities for the viewer to become a co-producer of meaning".[125]

Again, echoing the Pompidou Centre's advocacy for a museum half way between the production and the contemplation of art, a meeting point between artists and the public, where the latter could switch from curiosity to creation, *Inheritance and Transformation* included works by members of an Active Age Retirement Association, an inclusiveness NGO located in the Royal Hospital's neighbouring area, who had been involved in a series of workshops prior to the opening of the museum. The *Active Age Group and Tony Murray Collaboration* consisted of a number of paintings by the members of the group, mostly small-scale traditional landscapes, installed on a larger photo panel of each artist with quotes about why they were painting and the value of the process. According to McGonagle:

"It was critical that the paintings, made by the retirees, were presented in a way that reflected their intentions in making the works, as distinct from the intentions of the profile artists in the exhibition. The retirees' purpose, in rediscovering their own creativity, which was the basis of the advance engagement activities, was the subject of their inclusion and not a claim of equivalence. Again, this moved away from the assumption that meaning and value lay in the art object, to propose that meaning and value lay in the set of relations which were now in dialogue with the canon in art, across this body of work and all the forms of work in the exhibition. This included, of course, the expectations and responses of the public in the construction of that meaning and value".[126]

[124] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 102), 80
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.





Figures 6 & 7: Donald Judd, *89-28AD* (1988), corten steel and plexiglass, 25 x 275 x 25 cm; Hans Haacke, *The Freedom Fighters Were Here* (1984), lightbox and mixed media, 304 x 301 x 35 cm. Photos: Klaus Lafrenz Collection and National Gallery of Australia.

McGonagle continues: "IMMA's opening season of exhibitions and integrated activities, including the Education and Community programmes, of which the Active Age project was the foundation, set out a clear agenda for the museum – that, while fulfilling the expected responsibilities of a new national cultural institution, IMMA would also research, interrogate and add to, existing narratives of art and institutional practice. IMMA also had a responsibility to examine historical narratives in retrospective exhibitions and to create, and not simply repeat, narratives around the practice of Irish and non-Irish artists".[127]

This responsibility to examine historical narratives was also part of the *Main Exhibition* and as such the artworks from the Van Abbemuseum, the Gemeentemuseum of mid-twentieth-century modernist works, such as Pablo Picasso's *Buste de Femme* (1909); the artworks from the Klaus Lafrenz Collection, such as Donald Judd's *Sculpture* (1986); and the artworks from the Hooker O'Malley Collection, such as Paul Henry's *Connemara Landscape* (1927) were included in the exhibition. While the Van Abbemuseum and the Gemeentemuseum loans were exhibited together within the same adjacent room, the works from the Klaus Lafrenz and the Hooker O'Malley Collections were integrated with the rest of the exhibition. Perhaps with the concept of interrogating existing narratives of history in mind, one of On Kawara's (1932 – 2014) *Date*

[127] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 102), 81.

Paintings: *Nov.18, 1982* (1982) from the Lafrenz collection was exhibited in the East Wing long corridor alongside Jiri Georg Dokoupil's (b. 1954), *Enemigos de Los Derechos Humanos* (1989) (Fig. 8). While Kawara's *Date Paintings* addressed each day as its own entity within the larger context of the regularized passage of time; the series speaks to the idea that the calendar is a human construct, and that quantifications of time are shaped by cultural contexts and personal experiences, Dokoupil's series of portraits of historical figures, dictators, addressed the "futility of humanity" and "history's long shadows". Dokoupil's conception of history is an inherent and continuous process in chronological, or secular, time.[128]

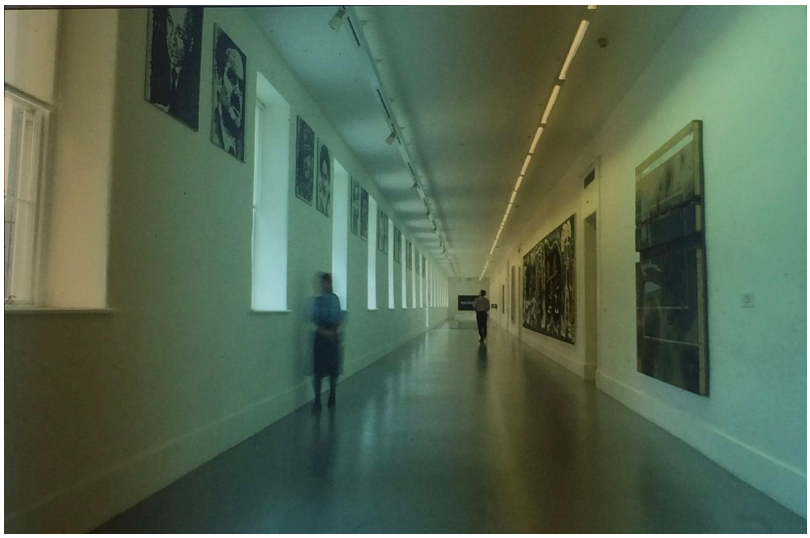


Figure 8: *Inheritance and Transformation* East Wing Installation. Left wall: Jiri Georg Dokoupil, *Enemigos de los Derechos Humanos*, 1989, shoot on canvas, 16 panels 100 x 81 cm. Right wall from top to bottom: A.R. Penck, *Derry (Northern Darkness I)*, 1987, dispersion on canvas, 244 x 1095 cm. Courtesy of Michael and Terry Atkinson, *Warhol Greaser*, 1987, Sorø Kunstmuseum, Sorø. Photograph: Unknown.

9.4. Exhibition culture: Social construction of cultural needs

This inclusion and juxtaposition of the different donated and loaned collections within the *Main Exhibition* addressed another of the controversies surrounding the opening: the lack of a permanent collection. Again, McGonagle saw this as an opportunity rather than a hindrance. It would give IMMA the opportunity to explore the boundaries of the institution, the museum, and the notions of art collections:

"It was said in the media at the time that unless there is a budget of twenty million pounds to buy a collection, it will never be able to work as a museum, properly. That was based in the idea that you can go shopping for art. Again, for me, I will argue, that while this still is the dominant model out there, I argue that is a redundant model. My argument was always, and while we were given some donations to begin with, fairly modest, but they were the basis of a collection, we were going to grow the collection paralleling the growth of the institution and

[128] M. Falconer, "Jiri Georg Dokoupil", *Frieze*, November 11, 2002.

the growth of the idea of a museum as a process of discovery and investigation presenting the museum as a site of interrogation rather than a site of confirmation. It is not simply about passing truths, it is about investigating whose truth is it?"[129]

Central to its production and regulation, *Inheritance and Transformation* was addressing this controversy and the debate surrounding the feasibility of the Royal Hospital as a venue for the new museum of modern art. The controversies also informed how those outside the museum or gallery, such as members of the public and government agencies, perceived it and ascribed various identities to it. Furthermore, the controversy also informed McGonagle's assumptions about the way that it was going to be consumed and the meanings that visitors will take away. This is apparent in the rhetoric utilised not only by McGonagle, but also the launching speech by Charles Haughey, and John Hutchison's essay within the exhibition catalogue. This rhetoric was also to set IMMA's mission statement, and future activities whether exhibiting or collecting. In an interview in *Artscribe* shortly after his appointment as new director, McGonagle referred to the opposition between process and product, use and ownership, and the need for art to address its context.[130] This need to redefine the physical and conceptual space at the museum moving away from "treasure houses of art" is a constant in McGonagle's thinking. According to McGonagle, the 'treasure house' type museum is concerned with fixing values through collection, classification, and display of objects. For McGonagle, this model was redundant, rather, "the function of museums at the end of the twentieth century has to be to test and unfix values".[131] This view was also echoed in another interview before the opening of *Inheritance and Transformation*, when he addressed the need to rethink previous definitions of museums, art and buildings:

"One of our tasks in the long term will be to redefine what a museum can be, first of all here in Dublin and Ireland, but then in Europe and the future. There are lots of definitions around art, about museums, about buildings. We have to keep what's of value but reject what's redundant".[132]

The idea of rethinking definitions of art and of museums based on testing and unfixing values is characteristic of a postmodern critique of modern art, and echoes Foucault's assertion that definitions are not fixed in a traditional sense but mediated by the many rich, dialogical discourses we encounter.[133] In modernity, modern art was something that could be deciphered, understood, analysed by aestheticians and art critics,[134] where *Inheritance and Transformation* articulated a distinctively postmodern stance, which goes against any attempt to fix any definitions of art and of museums. Therefore, how can the difference between the 'treasure

[129] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 116).
[130] D. McGonagle, "A New Necessity: The Importance of Art Outside the Gallery", *Artscribe*, Summer '90, 63-66.
[131] Ibid.
[132] *Sunday Tribune*, May 19, 1991.
[133] M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publication, 1974), 52.
[134] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 111.

house' museum and new museological models be articulated? An answer to this question can be found in McGonagle's foreword to the exhibition catalogue. He referred to the inheritance of a "modernist, hierarchical, centralist world", in which Ireland was beyond the Pale; this modernist world had been transformed into a "problematic, millennial world" and in this new context "the Pale cannot exist".[135] According to Herrero, this reference to a conversion from a hierarchical to a problematic world is connected in McGonagle's statement to Ireland's status as a British colony, when it was "beyond the Pale". She continues, in the new post-colonial situation, the hierarchies which predominated during modernity are to be surpassed, and problematized.[136] As part of this task, McGonagle aims to define IMMA's function in Irish society:

"In Ireland, at the end of the twentieth century the Museum of Modern Art must acquit its public responsibilities by making a conscious contribution to the process of transformation of our social and cultural inheritance which is already under way. The task will involve re-defining existing language and creating new structures which will serve this inclusive rather than exclusive approach. To engage with this reservoir of meaning is to engage with artists and non-artists as equal participants in an on-going cultural process, not as producer and consumer".[137]

This statement raises a number of arguments, which can help understand the main points of view behind *Inheritance and Transformation* and its regulation. Firstly, the point of view that museums can contribute to a process of transformation of existing social and cultural values. Secondly, in order to be part of this transformation, museums need to develop new agendas in two ways: redefining the conceptual and physical space of the museum by challenging existing museological language and creating new structures. For McGonagle, central to redefining existing language at the museum is the promotion of alternative ways of thinking about art:

"Since the concept of art cannot be separated from its experience—and in my view the art process cannot be separated from social process—it is time to reassert that the principle of empathy is at the centre of society and at the centre of art. Around this principle new forms of art production and of distribution have begun to emerge in recent years".[138]

According to Herrero, in this context, the museum's precise duty must be to renegotiate prevailing forms of knowledge about art and its value, and the art world in general.[139] McGonagle explains how the museum was to take on this task of redefining art:

"What we have to do is to understand that art in particular is contested rather than consensual. Our job is to exhibit that contest. Sometimes we do that within exhibitions… Sometimes we do

[135] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 105), 5.
[136] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 112.
[137] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 105), 5.
[138] Ibid.
[139] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 112.

it between exhibitions… And sometimes we do it between individual works, like the collection shows different approaches to a theme. The idea is that we always have four or five shows running, a multiple experience rather than a singular experience; a contested experience rather than a consensual experience".[140]

The production of *Inheritance and Transformation* was also controlled by assumptions about the way that it would be consumed and the meanings that visitors would take away. The above statement from McGonagle took place some time after *Inheritance and Transformation* in 1997, but it reflects the set of principles set out by the inaugural set exhibitions: the notion of a shift from art as consensus. to art as a source of contest. *Inheritance and Transformation's* aim to create a multiple, contested experience for viewers or consumers, was facilitated by the museum's location in an historic building.

According to McGonagle, locating contemporary art at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham was another way to redefine the experience of looking at art:

"At the end of the twentieth century, the new agenda, far from finding a white cube somewhere, is to locate art in a place that is highly charged politically and socially in ways that everyone can understand. The clean white box came from an attitude that disconnects art from life. That's not what we want here".[141]

However, the schema of locating art in a classical architectural environment was not just a way of contesting the white box space of exhibition making. It was an attempt to redefine ways of seeing or experiencing art; according to McGonagle, IMMA's location in a seventeenth century building, a former retirement home for British soldiers, is what made it a crucial player in the transformation of social structures and identity:

"[The Royal Hospital] places us in a European context. You can't walk in here and not think of other European references. What we've to do is not pretend that we're living without a past but to acknowledge it and explore it and use it in some way in the transformation process that's at work in society. That's the task".[142]

According to Herrero, this statement was a crucial example in situating Ireland as part of a wider European contextual identity, because as already discussed, the building is suggestive of similar museological contexts on the continent.[143] The Royal Hospital also helped to question how the function of a museum was to explore the past. Through this exploration IMMA was participating in a wider transformation process. It positions IMMA as a key institution involved in helping redefine Ireland's colonial history of which the Royal Hospital is part.

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[140] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 5), 40.
[141] *New York Times*, August 18, 1991.
[142] *Sunday Tribune*, Op. Cit. (note 132).
[143] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 113.

According to Herrero this proposal for "a new museological agenda is in this way linked to a conceptualization of a millennial, post-colonial world".[144]

Art critical responses to the exhibition also echoed this contextual European sense set by the building. In her review of the exhibitions, Joan Fowler states that: "the building itself is represented as an embodiment of Ireland's historical connection with Europe or, more precisely, with Europe's grand traditions in architecture".[145] This reference to Europe was further highlighted by the context of the opening of IMMA within the European City of Culture narrative. Whether the museum was a capital project that was destined to happen regardless of the European City of Culture initiative or not, as previously discussed, it is significant that governmental bodies accelerated the process of the finalisation of IMMA to coincide with the event. Fowler, suggests this decision-making process as a hindrance to the project: "The break-neck speed with which IMMA was launched was not a fault of the staff but the familiar story of government delays in giving the go ahead for a project they wanted as a highlight of the city of culture year".[146] To that instance, it is important to highlight the timeline of the project. While appointed in April of 1990, McGonagle took his position as new director only in October of the same year.

External regulatory forces are ultimately generated in Ireland by central and local government. They are expressed through bodies such as the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and the Arts Council. In the case of *Inheritance and Transformation* as inaugural exhibition of IMMA, these external regulatory forces were particularly poignant. As already mentioned, when the decision about the creation of IMMA was announced by the government, a heated public debate arose about the suitability of the R Royal Hospital Kilmainham as the place to house a museum of modern art. This controversy included a strong media reaction to proposals of changes to parts of the listed building, changes needed to create public access, and enhance public experience. According to McGonagle: "It was as if the narrative of the building itself was fixed and untouchable when in fact over two centuries the building and site had been regularly modified internally and externally by the military governors".[147] Responding to the debate on these terms was central to IMMA's informing vision: to challenge the model of fixed meanings in art, a reconceptualization of both the intellectual and the physical space of a museum. McGonagle declared this intention well in advance of IMMA's opening, and the early controversy was set as a point of departure to the new terms of engagement for a new museum of modern art. According to McGonagle, the purpose of IMMA "had to be a museum for the future, not a replica of the past".[148]

[144] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 113.
[145] J. Fowler, Op. Cit. (note 1), 34.
[146] Ibid, 35.
[147] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 5), 40.
[148] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 116).

McGonagle also suggested that IMMA was ideally physically placed for that role: "because of, not in spite of, its context in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham building; thus, its location in an economically marginalized part of Dublin city was also key to achieving its goals".[149] The heated public debate also meant that the opening exhibitions and the early period of IMMA's life were crucial in establishing the museum's credentials and signalling strategic intentions about collecting, programming, and achieving the principle of inclusion.

In her review, Fowler also questioned the impact of the ahistorical exhibition format and these principles of inclusion:

"Within the first-floor exhibits there is a curatorial imprint where twentieth century art is mixed and matched that in one sense makes for exciting presentation but, in another equally real sense, lends itself to arbitrariness and transience. One of the most blatant signs of curatorial juxtaposition is in the room with the Juan Gris and two female heads by Picasso. One of the Picasso paintings is in the early cubist vein, while the other is in his so-called neo-classical style. Seen in the isolation of the small room, the juxtaposition could hardly be more 'postmodern' for those who are well accustomed to contemporary debates on the concept of the linear development of the artist's style and the artist's allocated position in the history of art, but one wonders what other interpretations might be placed on these apparently contradictory Picassos by those who have not been inducted into these debates… but somewhere between the Joseph Beuys at one end of the exhibition and a dozen Minimalist works at the other end there needs to be a core statement which gives a sense of direction".[150]

This art critical response also echoes one of the visitor survey responses: "I found the set of exhibitions exciting and confusing in equal measures. I believe that this kind of idea-based exhibition requires a theoretical discussion in the exhibition catalogue or elsewhere". [151] Fowler's statement also raises questions about the process of bringing artworks of all sorts together for their capacity of aesthetic evocation, freed from art history and its chronology. Is this type of slick, ahistorical, and a-contextual exhibition truly a-contextual when they are still referencing established art historical canons and narratives, and historical buildings as part of their interpretation? Is this exhibition-making process part of personal curatorial interpretations presenting a dogmatic statement? Or are they truly an invitation to the visitors to undertake their own explorations? An important aspect of consumption is the ability of the viewers to decode the messages present in ways that enable them to make sense of a particular experience. In order to do this, visitors need the correct form of cultural capital, a concept associated mainly with Bourdieu, and defined by J. Gershuny as "knowledge related to the participation

[149] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 105), 102.
[150] J. Fowler, Op. Cit. (note 1), 35.
[151] F. Sanchez-Migallon Cano, "The Power of Display: Exhibition Cultures and Exhibited Cultures in Ireland 1973-1991 – Online Questionnaire", entry no 10, July 12, 2019.

in, and enjoyment of, the various forms of consumption in society".[152] The direct responses by audiences to *Inheritance and Transformation* were diverse. At the beginning of the show the viewer's commentary focused on the inadequate use of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham as gallery space, changing later to other aspects of the day to day running of the gallery, in some instances the lack of security, and in others the excessive security team and their behaviour affecting the appreciation of art. For instance, one of the more unenthusiastic perceptions of the exhibition addressed the artworks directly:

"Expensively redecorated rooms light and airy, showing exhibits which are ugly, peculiar and trivial. I know that modern Art has that trend, but I had hoped that Ireland, with its romantic vision, use of vibrant colour and imagination would find something of beauty and still modern. Who really wants to see something resembling a huge hanging potato in bronze [Anthony Gormley's: *Still Falling*], a black dark room with a TV set showing clapping hands [Pauline Cummins': *Unearthed*], an old woollen washing up stand with a leaking enamel bowl [Dorothy Cross': *Kitchen Table*], a domesticated pyramid of sand and others [Magdalena Jetelova's: *Domestication of a Pyramid*]. The heap of stones was visually one of the best [Richard Long's: *Kilkenny Circle*]. Where will they end up? Who pays? And who wants these monstrosities? The public are not interested. The coffee shop contained 15 customers and four servers. The coffee was excellent. How long must the art experts go on conning the public? I do protest."[153]

As already mentioned, Marshall suggests that with some exceptions until the opening of IMMA, Irish museum curating remained locked into the 19th century hierarchical practices. Solo exhibitions, or group survey shows, generally with no particular theme were the norm. One of the exceptions to this norm was EV+A international where shortly after its foundation in 1977 it was decided that inviting international curators would bring greater objectivity and a discursive model of curating. Therefore, most of the audiences at *Inheritance and Transformation* were encountering this format of exhibition and representation for the first time. Helen O'Donoghue, Head of Education at IMMA at the time, comments on the way in which the set of exhibitions were received by the audience:

"The feedback was really positive. Because, I think, IMMA was breaking ground, … I think it was exciting that there was a very charismatic selling of the museum and its concepts by Declan [McGonagle]. And there was for the first time a director that was talking about an inclusive policy. It was about an invitation to come and to dispel any fear of not having knowledge [when visiting the museum]".[154]

As such this 'unknown' approach to exhibition-making at *Inheritance and Transformation* was addressed by the Education Department at IMMA:

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[152] J. Gershuny, "A new measure of social position: social mobility and human capital in Britain", in *Working Papers of the Institute for Social and Economic Research* (Colchester: University of Essex, 2002), 8.
[153] Anonymous, "Letter to the editor", *Irish Times*, 23 of September 1991.
[154] H. O'Donoghue, interview by author. Dublin, February 10, 2019.

"You know it was the concept of transforming not just this museum and its historical framework, but for me as somebody who is coming in to test out new ways of engaging and creating participation, it was about transforming old ways, I suppose, or as yet untested ways that museums engage with their public. So, for me, while I was here sitting alongside Declan [McGonagle] and Siobhan Barry selecting works for the show, listening to Declan's exciting ideas, I was thinking more and more about how the museum could connect to its locality, connect to schools, beginning the seed bed of thinking about the type of engagement programme that subsequently developed."

The impact of this representational model was evaluated through a visitor's survey at IMMA in 1995. According to McGonagle, the survey results reflected that this approach, while not unwelcomed, was challenging to visitors.[155] Perhaps coincidentally, Catherine Marshall, as already mentioned, was appointed the first head of collections in 1995. Marshall notes a change in exhibition-making strategies at the time of her appointment: "But from the very first day that I came to work here [IMMA], and I think that might have to do with my background as a teacher and lecturer in the history of art, I said that from the beginning we would offer extended captions. And that is a postmodern idea, I think, not a modernist one. It's completely against the white cube aesthetic".[156]

The already quoted unenthusiastic visitor perceptions of *Inheritance and Transformation* also raised questions of identity particularly of "Ireland's romantic vision". *Inheritance and Transformation* helped McGonagle to blur concepts such as core and periphery, and to address questions of identity:

"What does it mean to be Irish, for example? This debate has been going on in theatre and literature far longer than in the visual arts. I think that being able to engage with that debate and being able to contribute to it could put us culturally in the centre rather than on the margins. What in the '70s used to make Ireland marginal, that is, the unsettled nature of the identity issue, when everything seemed settled in Europe, all of that has changed, so the very thing that used to make us marginal can now make us central".[157]

Similarly, as already mentioned, central to this debate around Irish identity was the categorization of this new museum. For McGonagle the name of the institution itself – The Irish Museum of Modern Art – announced the museum's agenda of connecting with lived experiences, and it allowed questions to be asked of a new national cultural institution opening at the end of the 20th century in a rapidly changing Ireland. What was it to be Irish? What was a museum? What was modern art and what could it be? What did it need to be in the future?

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[155] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 116).
[156] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 152.
[157] F.T. Castle, "Irish Museum of Modern Art", *Art Magazine*, 55 (2), 1991, 107-110.

As already quoted, according to McGonagle, "at times some people reacted to the institution's work as if its name had been the Museum of Irish Modern Art rather than simply a Museum of Modern Art in Ireland, or as if this national cultural institution was supposed to be a Museum of Modernist Art".[158] For McGonagle, the term national describes the responsibilities of the institution not its contents. "In this case we had the 'figure' of the institution and its relationship with the 'ground' of a changing Irish society".[159]

9.5. Conclusion: Diverse curatorial approaches and the predicaments of diverse art history

McGonagle's questions are pertinent when thinking, from the New Museology point of view, of the de-historicization of museum displays in favour of a purely aesthetic approach. According to Beth Lord, this appears to be based on the dual aims of reducing didactic content and returning power to the objects.[160] Such displays fit in with the need to soften the overbearing voice of the curatorial authority and to make the interpretive process more open to the visitor. The object alone is believed to be sufficiently powerful to engage the visitors and to prompt them to make connections with concepts and with the past. On this basis, objects are increasingly being displayed in a way that is aesthetic, decontextualized, and ahistorical.

But stripping art objects of interpretation and removing their historical context runs up against the problem of communicating art history. Communicating art history at the museum seems to require more than just an aesthetic arrangement of objects. Some explanatory material, it seems, must be provided to fit the objects to art historical and historical events and eras, and to explain the art historical circumstances around the production and use of art objects. However open-ended and plural the museum's presentation of art history may be, it appears it cannot avoid including certain 'closed' and fixed facts of time and place. It seems that museums of modern and contemporary art, and the origins of IMMA in particular, need to take up the aesthetic approach that minimises authoritative interpretation instead of needing to tell an objective art historical story. According to Lord, this points to a tension between returning power to objects, "risking aestheticism", and communicating art history, "risking didacticism".[161] In her essay: "From the Document to the Monument: Museums and the philosophy of history", Lord poses questions about this tension: How can objects be used to communicate art history without presenting history didactically? How can museums return power to objects without making the experience merely aesthetic? In the case of IMMA, the impact of this aesthetic approach to exhibition-making, as discussed throughout this chapter,

[158] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 5), 44.
[159] Ibid, 45.
[160] B. Lord, "From the Document to the Monument: Museums and the philosophy of history", in *Museum Revolutions: How museums change and are changed*, eds. S.J. Knell, S. MacLeod and S. Watson (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), 355.
[161] Ibid, 356.

was evaluated through a visitor's survey in 1995. According to McGonagle, the survey results reflected that this approach, while not unwelcomed, was challenging to visitors.[162] Perhaps coincidentally, Catherine Marshall, as already mentioned, was appointed the first head of collections in 1995. As already quoted, Marshall notes a change in exhibition-making strategies at the time of her appointment: "But from the very first day that I came to work here [IMMA], and I think that might have to do with my background as a teacher and lecturer in history of art, I said that from the beginning we would offer extended captions. And that is a postmodern idea, I think, not a modernist one. It's completely against the white cube aesthetic".[163] Lord's questions and IMMA's changing exhibition-making strategies present a dichotomy between 'objective' and 'subjective' modes of presentation issues around art object display. This might seem as a polarizing dichotomy, and of course matters are not as straightforward as that. According to Lord: "The complexity of the situation is evident when we see that the mode of presentation supposedly open to greater 'subjectivity' in interpretation – the aesthetic approach – is also the most object-centred. Similarly, the mode of presentation that appears to offer an 'objective' interpretation – the didactic approach – is actually built on a particular subject-position with respect to history".[164] Yet despite these complexities, it is often in terms of a one-dimensional subjective-objective dichotomy that the question of object display is discussed.[165] According to M. O'Neill, whether the dichotomy is cast in terms of "subjective vs. objective", "visitor-centred vs. collection-centred", or "experience-driven vs. object-driven", museum thinkers take the view that if museums do not fall in with one side of it, they must fall in with the other.[166] According to Lord, such dichotomies then become too easily conflated with 'political' alignments, as if liberal or conservative political positions could be directly inferred from epistemological positions on object knowledge. The fact that the debate around object display is trapped in this dichotomy, and the fact that art history at the museum demands a model that is neither 'objective' didacticism nor 'subjective' aestheticism, suggests that curators need a new way to think about the object in the twenty-first century museum. Curators and art historians need a way to think about how the object is related to concepts, a new way of thinking about how objects are related to history, and a new way to think about the power that objects have to engage the observer.[167]

Curators and art historians need a way around this dichotomy, a mode of display and interpretation that enables museums to communicate without doing so exclusively didactically, and that enables them to promote plural interpretations without falling into exclusively

[162] D. McGonagle, Op. Cit. (note 116).
[163] M. Herrero, Op. Cit. (note 66), 152.
[164] B. Lord, Op. Cit. (note 160), 356.
[165] H.S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2000), 5.
[166] M. O'Neill, "Essentialism, Adaption and Justice: Towards a New Epistemology of Museums", *Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, 21 (2), 2006, 95-166.
[167] B. Lord, Op. Cit. (note 160), 356.

aestheticism. This requires a shift in the philosophical understanding of how the present object relates to the past. According to Lord, in thinking about this relationship, museums in the twentieth century have been dominated by two philosophical models: a Platonic model that characterises the relation of the particular to the universal in terms of recognition, and a hermeneutic model that characterises the relation of past to present in terms of replay. The Platonic and hermeneutic models are fused in their reliance on memory as the cognitive means by which the visitor moves from encountering the object to recognising a fixed true idea. It is this move that is implicitly at work in both the didactic and aesthetic approaches.[168] The Platonic model presents two figures of thought: first, that objects are particular instances of universal concepts, and, second, that we recognise the universal through our encounters with the particular. For Plato, specific objects, such as a spear, helps recognise a universal concept of spears; tools of war or of warfare generally, which, consciously or not, are already known. According to Lord, this broadly rationalist notion that universal concepts are already known is an implicit assumption of modern museum practice: the tendency to display selected exemplary objects of a type or era assumes the viewer's ability to connect it to universal concepts.[169] On the Platonic model, understanding a particular object involves the recognition in it of an already known universal. In this sense, all understanding is recollection of something already known. Understanding involves a transition from present particular experience to knowledge of universals acquired in the past; involves the transition of memory. To understand an object or a curatorial moment is to have it prompt the 'memory' of the universal in the particular: the viewer instantly recognises the object as a spear, as a weapon, as an implement of ancient warfare. Understanding and memory are a single action from the present particular encounter to the fixed universal concept acquired in the past.

Hermeneutics, the second model governing twentieth century museum display, urges the same transition of memory, not in the senses of recollecting something already known, but in the sense of making something from the past 'replay' through the present. Early hermeneutics theory argued that the meaning of historical texts and objects could be accessed only by the historians bracketing off their present circumstances and trying to immerse themselves fully and scientifically in the circumstances of the past. Understanding objects, on this account, is an imaginative projection into the past that requires the viewers to negate their present. However, later hermeneutics theory argues that our situatedness in the present is fundamentally not separable from our ability to understand the past. Rather, the viewer's present situation is always constitutively involved in any process of understanding, which promotes multiple subjective interpretations. While this might seem at odds with the Platonic model which relies on fixed universals to give meaning to particulars, the possibility of plural meaning presented

[168] B. Lord, Op. Cit. (note 160), 357.
[169] Ibid, 358.

by the hermeneutics model does not mean that there are no fixed values about the object. According to Gadamer, on the contrary, it is precisely these values that prevent objects' multiple interpretations from being fully arbitrary.[170] The object has a certain fixed identity that is present in each of its interpretations, the spear as an illustration of blacksmithing maintains its value as an object of war. Although this fixed identity or value is realised only through its multiple interpretations and might not appear as itself, it survives and transcends its interpretations as the criterion of their validity. For the hermeneutics model there are certain fixed values that are instantiated only in particular interpretations, just as, for the Platonic model, there are fixed universals that are instantiated only in particular objects. For both models to make a particular interpretation is to draw out the value of the object, to replay that fixed value in a particular way. That particular way will depend on the present circumstances, attitudes, and knowledge of the particular viewer, but it will be tied to the fixed value of the object. According to Lord, understanding and interpreting the museum object, from the Platonism and hermeneutics model point of view and didactic and aesthetic modes of display, involves recognising its concept, replaying its fixed values, and rediscovering the self through empathetic connection with the object. The present viewer "remembers" the object by "replaying" in the present the value of the object that was fixed in the past.[171] For instance, in the Paul Henry and Richard Long juxtaposition at *Inheritance and Transformation*, regardless of the claims of ahistoricity or decontextualization, the curators rely on knowledge of universals acquired in the past in order to communicate the curatorial message: landscape, form, national identity, traditional, contemporary, and museological space, in order to create new values that challenge the intellectual and physical spaces at the museum. However, according to Lord, the combination of Platonism and hermeneutics has placed limits on the way that objects are used in the museum to present philosophies, in the way the visitor is expected to relate to fixed values, and in the thinking about objects' relationship to already established fixed values and their relationship to 'now'. For the visitor, the art museum object is a tool of memory, and art history is a closed box which the object mediates to open. The visitors are asked to transport themselves back through recognition and empathy and to remember fixed values, to replay it as the fixed whole of the exhibition. The Platonic-hermeneutic model at the art museum rests on the notion of fixed values that cannot be changed but can only be repeated.

Using Foucault's theory of the archaeology of knowledge, it could be argued that there are different ways in which curators and art historians might think about the relations between objects, people, and the past and the 'now'; ways that do not close the 'now' influenced by fixed values of the past; ways that do not cast object-encounters as repetitions of fixed values

[170] H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), 117.
[171] B. Lord, Op. Cit. (note 160), 358.

of the past, but as starting points for constructing fixed values anew; ways that do not use objects as tools of memory, but as tools of productive thinking; ideas of universal values or single fixed art histories that IMMA and other contemporary art museums tried and are trying to challenge. If art museum objects are to be genuinely open, they cannot be anchored in fixed concepts; the concepts themselves must be broken open. In response to this debate, Lord poses a set of fundamental questions: "But how could history ever be presented without reference to a fixed past or to universal concepts? Can we do away with the didactic presentation of historical fact, while still communicating history? Can visitors make connections between present and past without reliance on Platonic-hermeneutic memory?".[172] According to Lord, the answer to these questions can be found in the post-structuralist philosophy of Foucault that seeks to "reverse Platonism".[173] This philosophy as discussed in Section 6, gives us a new way of thinking about historical objects and their experiences without relating them to fixed values. The shift that Foucault advocates in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, moves from 'total history' to 'general history' in order to show that objects communicate philosophies without a return to either didacticism or to aestheticism: "history that serves its connection to memory".[174] When put into practice at the museum, this means that objects will not be used as evidence for a single historical trajectory, nor as illustration of universal concepts. Rather, objects will be understood as particulars, as fundamentally puzzling things to be opened, developed, and connected with other things into series. They will be interpreted in terms of their changing relations to other particulars, not in terms of how they fit into unchanging total concepts. In this way, history becomes genealogy. Curators and art historians no longer treat the past as a total object that is contained in multiple, changing ways. Through historical perspectives or genealogies curators and art historians reveal the contingent series and accidental events that are the condition of possibility of the now. Foucault believes genealogy to have a progressive purpose: not teleological progress towards a goal, but rather progress as the development of capacities to necessary and unchangeable. According to Lord, Foucault's genealogy aims to simultaneously identify the contingent historical conditions of the self and to liberate the self from those contingencies.[175]

This means that by opening up objects and relating them into new different series, ahistorical or acontextual exhibitions like *Inheritance and Transformation*, visitors perform their own genealogy, and understand their 'now' in new ways. Visitors are able to consider their 'now' both as an effect of multiple different relations of the past, liberating the belief that particular concepts, interpretations, and ways of thinking and understanding are hypothetically necessary

[172] B. Lord, Op. Cit. (note 160), 359.
[173] M. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 93.
[174] Ibid, 93.
[175] B. Lord, Op. Cit. (note 160), 365.

or essential. According to Lord, the twenty-first century museum could give power to both the objects and visitors, by avoiding the heavily didactic displays of the past. She also suggests that a reasonable museological response could be moving away from the practice of matching objects to assumed historical continuities or universal concepts. Instead, visitors start with the object as a point of departure and build up historical discontinuities and dispersed groupings. However, in presenting history without narrative, without memory, and without empathy, does Lord's twenty-first century museum sanitise history by refusing to tell conflicted histories such as colonialism, gender equality, or sexual identity?

What all the exhibitions mentioned above, including *Inheritance and Transformation*, have in common is that all of them included artworks from different times, places, and cultures, and that were selected on the basis of their formal, thematic, or contextual relationships echoing Foucault's genealogical thinking. However, what all the exhibitions also have in common was the grouping together of diverse artworks, presented as in mutual dialogue with one another and mediated as a personal narrative proffered by a single author-curator. This status is what Paul O'Neill identifies as the curator as author.[176] Classification systems, linked to museum displays, were substituted with subjective forms of taxonomic "essentialism", mainly predicated on the curator's taste, style, and the affinities established between the exhibited artworks.[177] Meijers argues that, in ahistorical exhibitions: "the works of art are arranged on the basis of new truths which are presented as universals, despite their strong personal colouring".[178] According to O'Neill, the increased presence of the curatorial hand within such exhibitions, paralleled by an equal level of critical scrutiny towards what was considered an overriding curatorial bias, operated at the expense of the aesthetic autonomy of the artworks on display. It also subjected art to a reconditioning of its meaningfulness within the exhibition context.[179] The distinctiveness of the individual artwork was recoded into an international language of art, with the collective group exhibition form and the art world providing its new context. In this way, individual artworks acquired a role in the communication of a message, while at the centre of everything was a kind of exhibition designer turned meta-artist.[180] This notion of the curator as a constructor of what Meijers called "new unities" and "new truths" has received considerable criticism.[181] What these statements make apparent is the discursive provision for the activity of curating as subjective model of narrative production. As Meijers continues; "An exhibition designer who regards his activity as art is not essentially different

[176] P. O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and Curating of Culture(s)* (London: MIT University Press, 2016), 30.
[177] Ibid, 30.
[178] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 19.
[179] P. O'Neill, Op. Cit. (note 177), 30.
[180] Ibid, 31.
[181] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 18.

from the historian who becomes increasingly aware of the literary dimension of his historical account".[182]

As this type of slick, ahistorical, and acontextual show becomes ever more common, one wonders what kind of criticality could possibly overthrow their smooth denial of context. The fruits of strange synchronicity seem here to stay, so we may as well enjoy them for what they are: "the free associative pleasures of globalizing spectacle".[183]

For Meijers, it is exactly these ill-defined and personal notions of intuition and affinity that led to the so-called position of the "curator as auteur", an arbiter of taste whose vision need not be fully explicated. This point cuts directly to the fundamental differences between artistic and curatorial practices, namely agency and authorship. Artists are afforded the license to pursue intuitive and poetic combinations of materials and objects, often with a looser degree of accountability toward history or discipline, as seen in the proliferation and rapturous reception of artist-curated exhibitions. Curators, on the other hand, are seen as gatekeepers of art history, whose exhibitions (however intuitive and exhilarating), should nonetheless conform to established modes of storytelling and display.

How will museums of modern art think about the association between objects, concepts, and art history in the twenty-first century? According to Lowry, growing together with the increased interest in and increasing number of museums of contemporary and modern art is the number of challenges confronting these institutions. He questions to what degree is it practical or even suitable to present a coherent overview of a tradition or an era whose history is not yet fully developed or understood? How will museums of modern art think about the relationship between objects, concepts, and art history in the twenty-first century? Is it conceivable to relate the most recently made art to works now more than a hundred years old? Does it still make sense to divide an institution's collections by medium? How should Western museums deal with art from elsewhere, where terms such as avant-garde, progressive or radical may have very dissimilar meanings? Is there something different and distinctive about the impact of globalization and the flare-up of interest in contemporary art that transform what a museum of modern art should be?[184]

According to Lowry, there are no easy answers to these questions, and museums of modern art must continuously struggle with how to continue to be "disruptive" and new while becoming progressively part of a traditional order or accepted canon. How can museums of modern art balance, for example, their obligation to new and innovative art, while concurrently collecting and displaying works by such artists as Vincent van Gogh, whose popular works were radical, progressive and innovative when they were made, but are now well over a hundred years old?

[182] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14), 20.
[183] Ibid, 20.
[184] G. D. Lowry, Op. Cit. (note 41), 23.

Some institutions, like IMMA, have attempted to connect with this challenge by envisioning the collection as "metabolic" (to use Barr's word) and continuously developing, however, it has proved challenging, and at times contentious, to discard works of art that have become renowned masterworks in favour of the new and not yet fully appreciated artworks. More effectively, many museums are experimenting with different methods of exhibiting their collections, whether within reconsidered historical narratives, via new thematic examinations, or by recurrent rehanging designed to investigate modern and contemporary art from specific perspectives. To the point that a museum of modern art denotes a commitment to art whose history is not yet permanent, or fully fixed, any endeavour to articulate a cohesive and succinct narrative about such work is more likely to be temporary than absolute.[185]

According to Lowry, one of the most urgent challenges for museums of modern art is how to cope with the growth in, and changing nature of, their audiences. Of special consideration is the impact of the Internet, given its ability to involve large numbers of viewers who may never physically visit a museum. This situation requires a rethinking of both the concpetual and the physical spaces of a museum. While museums of modern art are dedicated to the artists and works of art they collect and exhibit, their necessity to connect with the public has become an progressively significant feature of their work. According to Lowry: "Museum space in this context is not simply artistic or intellectual but also social". It incorporates a complex relationship of associations between art objects and audiences, and between viewers and other viewers. What once was an intimate encounter shared by a comparatively small number of people from similar intellectual and social backgrounds has become a significantly popular experience shared by people from far more diverse backgrounds. Some detractors have seen this increase of attendance as a detriment to the audiences' ability to engage directly with objects, therefore challenging the importance of the institution; others have seen this as a fulfilment of modern art's democratic and populist impulses.[186]

[185] G. D. Lowry, Op. Cit. (note 41), 23
[186] D.J. Meijers, Op. Cit. (note 14).

10. Conclusion: Negotiating Narratives – Museums as Temples or Forums

Over the past nine sections, informed by New Museology as the theoretical framework, this research project has presented examples of the multiple ways in which the norms of museological practices interweaved, problematised and essentially conflicted with the cultural and political functions of representation within the exhibition making processes at time of transformation, as discussed throughout this thesis, of museological practices within the Irish museological context.

In section seven, this research project, through the case study of the set of exhibitions *Treasures of Early Irish Art*, explored a museological attempt to democratise and popularise the museum through the establishment of blockbuster exhbitions as a new museological approach. This approach in itself raises fundamental questions which revolve around elite versus accessible culture, permanent collections versus temporary exhibitions, and aesthetic contemplation versus popular entertainment. Furthermore, section seven also explored the function of art and exhibitions as an instrument of cultural diplomacy by the state and by non-governmental actors, as well as the degree to which the arts contributed to intercultural dialogue in a political context. This section highlighted how certain historically charged curatorial discourses and representations of the past has been used as validation of an imagined present.

Likewise, section eight also examined how certain representations of the past has been used as validation of the present through the analysis of the exhibition *Irish Women Artists from the 18th Century to the present day* and the exploration of all female exhibitions as a new museological attempt to pluralise the museum. This section also explored the possibilities and limits of employing cultural diversity and how this predicament of diversity impacts on the work of the museum by addressing questions such as how the selection, staging, historicizing and reviewing the canon influence the production of art history, and by addressing questions concerned with the role of institutions and curators with respect to the artistic production of marginal or peripheral groups and the negotiation of multiple identities.

Using the exhibition *Inheritance and Transformation* as a point of departure, section nine explored the role and limits of public leadership in the social construction of cultural needs. Furthermore, it also explored how over the years within the establishment of new museological models, museums have experimented with countless forms of authorship and narratives. From an intangible, omniscient curatorial voice of authority and meditation in exhibitions that shifted towards the interpretative and engagement agency of the viewer. In the case of *Inheritance and Transformation* and the creation of IMMA this was tried by challenging the old, canonical idea of the museum, and the creation of a new museum where there was no longer a single

governing narrative in art history or practice and where pre-determined art historical and institutional boundaries were not accepted.

These debates between undermining the importance of the institution of the museum versus the fulfilment of the museum's democratic and populist impulses are not new or only related to the 21st century museum. As such, over the years, as already mentioned, museums have experimented with countless forms of authorship and narratives, from an intangible, omniscient voice of authority in exhibitions such as *Treasures of Early Irish Art* to an increasingly composite, collective, sometimes conflict-ridden polyphony in exhibitions such as *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day* or *Inheritance and Transformation*. Exhibition making has become a peculiar form of storytelling, calling upon a variety of media, and harnessing the voices and skills of many people. Informed by the analysis of curatorial narratives along the epistemological lines suggested by Foucault, the analysis created by this dissertation proposes that the essence of the contemporary exhibition narrative can be found in negotiation. There are many rounds at the centre of these negotiations that culminate in the exhibition narrative and discourses.

However, they can be distilled into two fundamental, antagonistic forms of cultural configurations. Firstly, the popularization round, or the popularization of content in order to popularize access, as exemplified by *Treasures of Early Irish Art*, commonly taking place between the 'expert' and the 'non-expert'. In this round, scientific aspirations for accuracy and exhaustiveness come up against the harsh realities of two factors in short supply: exhibition space, and visitor attention span. Secondly, the plurality round, putting on the table 'us, the museum' and 'them, society' for compromise building negotiations. That 'people from the outside world' should contribute to exhibition development is becoming widely accepted, especially when dealing with social or topical 'issues', such as equality in *Irish Women Artists from the 18th century to the present day*. However, what share of authority/authorship the museum is willing to relinquish poses both ethical and practical dilemmas as suggested during the analysis of *Inheritance and Transformation.* Back in 1971, as a forerunner of *New Museology*, Duncan F. Cameron presented this polarization in terms of the museum as an identity crisis. In his essay, "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum?", Cameron argued that museums were in the throes of an identity crisis back then, unable to figure out who or what they were, and that this identity crisis was leading to widespread confusion about the appropriate role of museums in society. Should they strive to maintain their identity as "temples of the muses" focusing on the collection, preservation, interpretation, and display of artefacts and natural objects? Or should they move away from the traditional emphasis on things and instead become "museums of ideas" – forums for public debate around the pressing

social, political, and moral issues of the day?[1] Furthermore, for Cameron, as temple, the museum operates as a space where: "those segments of society with the power to do so… enshrined those things they held to be significant and valuable". Associating this form of the museum to a type of church, Cameron continues: "The museum provides opportunity for reaffirmation of the faith; it is a place for private and intimate experience… it is, in concept, the temple of the muses where today's personal experience of life can be viewed in the context of 'The Works of God Through All the Ages; the Arts of Man Through All the Years'".[2] According to Henry L. Harrison, in Cameron's argument, the museum as a temple is culture at its highest, an altar where audiences come to worship timeless treasures of enduring value.[3] This idea is also highlighted by Carol Duncan in her depiction of museums as "ritual sites". Purposefully intended to emulate older ceremonial monuments such as palaces or temples, "the museum stands as a symbol of the state, and those who pass through its door enact a ritual that equates state authority with the idea of civilization".[4] Beyond the objects and artefacts it preserves, what the temple both projects and protects are the dominant values of society. The temple is the site of official, as opposed to popular, culture. To counter the effects of cultural hegemony exerted by the temple, Cameron proposes not museum reform but the reestablishment of a collateral institution, the forum: "While our bona fide museums seek to become relevant, maintaining their role as temples, there must be concurrent creation of forums for confrontation, experimentation, and debate".[5] As such, the forum opposes the hegemonic influence of the temple through the provision of an open, alternative cultural site, a site where the values of the temple might be questioned or even contested. What the forum both designs and safeguards is diversity, as opposed to the dominant values of society.

While this identity crisis has not been resolved, almost fifty years after Cameron's essay and thirty years after Vergo's *New Museology*, there has definitely been a tipping of the scales in institutions toward the idea of museums as forums aiming to represent plural values of contemporary society. Institutions such as the National Museum of Ireland, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Rijksmuseum, whose status lies in the strength of their collections, are now willing to transform their exhibitions to become more plural. However, the biases inherent in the operations at the museum, especially its non-negotiable reliance on a Western concept of art, are at the heart of the predicament of diversity for art museum practice. According to I. Ang, a key element of social and cultural transformation in the past few decades is captured by the term diversity: "Indeed, diversity has now become a common-place characteristic of

[1] D. Cameron, "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum?", in *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2004).
[2] D. Cameron, Op. Cit. (note 1), 17.
[3] H. L. Harrison, *The Temple and the Forum: The American Museum and Cultural Authority in Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe, and Whitman* (Tuscaloosa, Ala: Univ. of Alabama Press, 2007), xiii.
[4] C. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2-4.
[5] D. Cameron, Op. Cit. (note 1), 17.

contemporary societies: it is no longer possible to describe them in the modernist terms of one people, one culture, and one language. The homogeneous nation state, both as myth and as reality, is a thing of the past".[6] Most societies now feel the impact of increased global migrations, and that impact is experienced most directly in the proliferation of cultural differences across society. When governments debate about overseeing diversity, they commonly refer to the necessity to somehow acknowledge and accommodate these differences within the oversight of public administration. According to Ang: "Articulated in policy terms in that controversial word, multiculturalism, it has now become commonly accepted within liberal democracies, at least at the level of official discourse, that the diverse needs and interests of ethnic minorities – those who are (seen as) culturally different – must be recognized and catered for".[7] This new emphasis on cultural diversity has significant connotations for the operation of national cultural institutions, including museums and galleries. As such, museums and other public and governmental institutions are under intense pressure to prove their relevance for multicultural constituencies. For example, in Ireland the development of the Culture 2025 policy will provide a generational opportunity to create the first cultural policy for the Irish State: "A healthy cultural life is important for both the individual and society. It helps the individual achieve a more meaningful and happy life. Culture also has an important role to play in promoting tolerance, inclusivity and social cohesion in our increasingly diverse society. It should be accessible to everyone, irrespective of origin, place of residence, religious beliefs, or economic or social background. Culture also has an important role in social integration. It must reflect Ireland's shift to a multicultural society and recognise the value of diverse cultural influences. Interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding, respect and integration all contribute to the enrichment of our culture".[8]

This shift in the expectations and demands made of the cultural sector is an international tendency. As Richard Sandell has remarked in relation to the situation in the U.K., "museums are being asked to assume new roles and develop new ways of working – in general, to clarify and demonstrate their social purpose and more specifically to reinvent themselves as agents of social inclusion".[9] Mainstream cultural institutions can no longer remain indifferent; in principle at least, they have to engage with diverse communities who have so far been excluded from their space, outreach to them, and bring them in. Museums are now required to actively

[6] I. Ang, "The Predicament of Diversity: Multiculturalism in Practice at the Art Museum", *Ethnicities*, 5(3), 2005:306.
[7] Ibid, 310.
[8] "Culture 2025 – Éire Ildánach: A Framework Policy", Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2016/07/culture_2025_framework_policy_document.pdf, accessed: June 21, 2018.
[9] R. Sandell, "Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 17(4): 409.

work to eradicate "the barriers which impede all citizens from having equal rights of access to [their] cultural resources".[10]

According to Ang, the social and political relevance vested in cultural diversity today is deeply antithetical to what museums stand for, especially art museums.[11] After all, since their establishment in the nineteenth century, art museums have developed a long-standing history and reputation as cultural palaces for the white, (upper) middle-class elites.[12] In his sociological study of what he calls "the aesthetic disposition", Pierre Bourdieu has argued that the art museum's main function is that of maintaining class hierarchies.[13] The true function of these, echoing Cameron's temple, "sacred palaces of art", Bourdieu says, is "to reinforce for some the feeling of belonging and for others the feeling of exclusion".[14] Museums, then, according to Bourdieu have traditionally been, and perhaps cannot escape from being, elite institutions. Their purpose was the institutionalization and dissemination of a single high culture, which would confirm the lowliness of the cultures of others – the working classes, immigrants, and so on. Indeed, writing about the history of the American public art museum, Duncan makes the point that the new art museums of the 19th-century were an element of a larger agenda to make American cities more civilized, sanitary, moral, and peaceful in the face of the perceived threat of the ever-growing waves of culturally alien immigrants.[15] In other words, art museums were envisaged as instruments for cultural assimilation. But are art museums condemned to forever reproduce class and cultural hierarchies? Or are they capable of change, of adjusting to the more inclusionary and egalitarian requirements of today's society? Bourdieu's and Duncan's statements are at opposite ends of the spectrum of the many attempts by museums to popularise or democratize the institution, such as the case studies addressed in this dissertation. While Bourdieu's and Duncan's ideas might seem updated, however, the museum as institution also seems to still be struggling to identify its purpose within society, and how to articulate that position. Recognizing and respecting cultural diversity is a crucial element of the museum's public service role in officially multicultural democracies such as Ireland. How such a general principle can be translated into museum practice, however, poses some difficulties, not least because cultural diversity itself brings about a range of complex and contradictory problems and dilemmas, which are not always reconcilable.

In *Exhibiting Cultures*, Karp and Lavine argued that to serve the needs of multicultural audiences, museums, especially art museums, must abandon their image as temple and adopt Cameron's notion of the museum as forum, a place where visitors have the opportunity to learn

[10] T. Bennett, "Museums and the Citizen", in *Museums and Citizenship: A Resource Book*, 39(1) of Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1996.
[11] I. Ang, Op. Cit. (note 6), 312.
[12] Ibid, 315.
[13] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* (London: Routledge, 1984), 15.
[14] P. Bourdieu, and A. Darbel*, The Love of Art. European Art Museums and their Public* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991) 27.
[15] C. Duncan, Op. Cit. (note 4), 6.

about different cultural traditions and perspectives. The art museum, then, would no longer operate as the arbiter of "good taste", but as a facilitator in the communication of different forms of cultural expression which reflect the values, interests and experiences of particular communities. This is the notion of the museum as a cross-cultural "contact zone".[16]

This formulation requires a huge transformation in the (self-) definition of the art museum. According to Bennett, while museums were, in their 19th-century conception, intended for the people, they were certainly not of the people in the sense of displaying any interest in their lives, habits, and interests.[17] He continues, when entering the museum, people were supposed to leave their lives, habits, and interests – that is to say, their own cultures and identities – behind, outside the refined and civilizing space of the museum.[18] In the notion of a museum as a cross-cultural 'contact zone' or forum, however, people are supposed to bring their cultures and identities with them into the museum, and those cultures and identities should actively be considered in all levels of museum practice: from the selection and design of displays, the interpretations of objects, to the public programmes. In Philip Wright's vision, echoing Foucault, the aim is "to bring about a diffusion of power and privilege from the specialist to the non-specialist".[19] In short, the museum must become a permanent champion of inclusive cultural and identity democracy.

[16] J. Clifford, *Routes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 189.
[17] T. Bennett, "Museums and "The People", in *The Museum Time Machine*, ed. Robert Lumley (London and New York: Routledge/Comedia, 1988), 64.
[18] Ibid, 65.
[19] P. Wright, "The Quality of Visitors' Experiences in Art Museums", in The New Museology, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 120.

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National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.
National Irish Visual Arts Library, Dublin, Ireland
Noord-Holland Archief, Haarlem, The Netherlands.
Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, Ireland.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Trinity College Dublin Archive, Dublin, Ireland.

List of Interviews

D. Cross, interview by the author. Dublin, 10th of April 2019.
D. McGonagle, interview by author. Dublin, 5th of May 2019.

[1] Note to the reader: At the date of submission of this thesis, 6th of January 2020, IMMA does not have a formally established institutional archive or archival system. As such, within the main all the archival material under Inheritance and Transformation Papers 1991 has been recorded based on the order of access.

P.T. Murphy, interview by the author. Dublin, 6th February 2019.

H. O'Donoghue, interview by author. Dublin, 10th February 2019.

R. Ó Floinn, interview by the author. Dublin, 6th of June 2019.