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Towards a Sociology of Art Collections: The Making of an Art Collection for the Irish Museum of Modern Art

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Declaration

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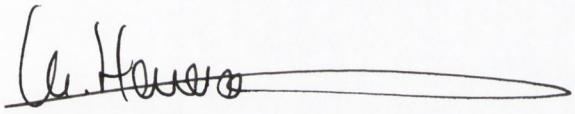

Marta Herrero

October 2002

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Summary

This thesis offers an exploration into the making of an art collection for the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin. Its aim is to set out a distinct methodology for a sociological approach to the study of art collecting. The theoretical framework selected for this purpose is a sociology of intellectuals, addressed through a theory of intellectual practices. It is based on Zymunt Bauman's and Pierre Bourdieu's writings on intellectuals and intellectual practices. Its main premise is that collecting is a form of intellectual practice, which takes place in a cultural field, that is, the field of contemporary art in Ireland. It seeks to answer whether intellectual practices legislate and/or translate. In addition, the thesis investigates the possibility that intellectual practices can contribute to cultural transformation.

The thesis contains four empirical chapters. Firstly, it situates contemporary art collecting practices in relation to the emergence of modern art collecting in Ireland by exploring the foundation of Dublin's Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (1908). It then focuses on Dublin's art world to position the role and function of the Irish Museum of Modern Art and its collection with regard to commercial galleries, and public galleries in the field of contemporary art. An investigation into the practices of collecting is directed in two chapters focusing on collecting and display practices respectively. The thesis concludes by saying that the intellectual practices of collecting can have a leading role in facilitating cultural change.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1 Ireland, the visual arts, and a sociology of art collections

This thesis offers an exploration into the intellectual practices involved in making an art collection for the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin. In so doing, it attempts to open a new area of enquiry, the sociology of art collections, based on an existing line of theorising, a sociology of intellectuals, focused on the study of practices. The main aim of this introduction is to situate this sociological study of art collections within existing lines of thinking within the sociology of the arts and of museums. Chapter 2 will explore the sociology of intellectuals as I intend to pursue it in this thesis. However, it is relevant to introduce now the type of contribution this investigation aims to make in the Irish context. It must be pointed out that sociological approaches to the arts are virtually non-existent in Ireland. From this point of view, this thesis enjoys a pioneering status. Nonetheless, explorations into the Irish visual arts, and Irish intellectuals have their predecessors. The collection at the Irish Museum of Modern Art is no exception. It has already been object of academic study, (Kelly, 1999), although not from a sociological perspective.

The visual arts in Ireland have a paradoxical status. It is possible to say that they are the poor relations in a generation of Irish literary geniuses such as James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, and more recently, Nobel Prize winner poet Seamus Heaney. As Brian Fallon puts it, even for "culturally well-informed people, Irish art got no further than the *Book of Kells* more than a millennium ago. It is something which never happened, a historico-cultural non-event" (Fallon, 1994: 11). Fallon's claim is that only a minority knows about Irish painting and sculpture, while their literary counterparts enjoy possibly worldwide renown. Despite this, the visual arts have been subject of a number of studies (McConkey, 1990; Crookshank, 1994, Kennedy, 1991; Cullen, 1997; Walker, 1997), alongside the publication of artists' biographies such as Paul Henry (Kennedy, 2000) and Louis Le Brocquy (Walker, 1981). In addition, this thesis investigates, mainly, the contemporary Dublin art world, which is characterised by an abundance of cultural institutions. The Irish Museum of Modern Art, opened in 1991, is the last newcomer in a capital well provided with a variety of public art museums and galleries. The National Gallery of Ireland (1854), the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (1908), the Royal Hibernian Academy (1823), the Douglas Hyde

Gallery (1978) are all public institutions concerned with the display and/or collection of various types of art.

Investigations of Irish intellectuals seem to be shaped by similar ways of thinking as those we find in the visual arts. As Liam O'Dowd points out: "One of the most cherished tenets in the conventional wisdom of Irish intellectuals is that Irish society is fundamentally anti-intellectual in nature" (1985: 6). His edited volume *On Intellectuals and Intellectual Life in Ireland* (1996) is a clear attempt to redress this view of Irish society. Nonetheless, there is still an emphasis on explorations into the lives and roles of nationalist, clerical and literary intellectuals (O'Dowd, 1988: 8; see also Goldring, 1993). Overall, this thesis wants to acknowledge that Irish society offers a rich source of research possibilities into the study of the visual arts, cultural institutions, and that, after all, it is not as 'anti-intellectual' as some may have been led to think.

2 The sociology of art

Investigations into the relationship between the arts and society are not a new concern of sociologists. The founding fathers of sociology, Karl Marx, George Simmel, Max Weber provide various attempts at understanding the role of arts in society. For example, Marx's writings offer a social, historical, and political basis for theorising the internal economy of the sphere of artistic practices and their ideological articulations. In fact, some authors have found inspiration in Marx's ideas to theorise a particular approach to aesthetics (Sánchez, 1973). Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power and violence (see chapter 2), which is crucial to his understanding of cultural production and consumption stems from the writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber (Brubaker, 1985). Similarly, Di Maggio (1987), a proponent of the 'production of culture' approach, which I examine in this chapter, draws on Durkheim's and Weber's views of societal cultures as totalities to establish a system of art classification in which cultural systems are seen as totalities. The sociologists' interest in the arts still continues at present and has provided various line of enquiry, which I want to explore here.

The following account is strategic in helping to situate the distinct line of theory which this thesis seeks to pursue: a study of art collecting based on a sociology of intellectual practices. Chapter 2 presents a framework for the stance of this thesis in the sociology of intellectuals. My concern in this chapter is to shed some light on the traditions on which this thesis draws in its approach to the study of art collections. A main ethos in this literature is

to explore the various factors involved in the production of aesthetic value. As I will show, sociologists have focused on this topic from many different perspectives and with various theoretical and empirical purposes. One can distinguish at least two ways of thinking sociologically about the arts: a *sociological aesthetics*, or the sociological study of aesthetics, and an *aesthetic sociology,* which has been developing for the last ten years. In broad terms, the latter can be summarised in the claim that aestheticisation is becoming the most important organising principle of contemporary societies (de la Fuente, 2000: 235).[1] My review, however, will only refer to contributions to a sociological aesthetics, which is characterised by an interest in the "socially constructed nature" of art (Zolberg, 1990: 9), as the area in which this thesis intends to make a contribution. A useful starting point here is the production of culture approach, which emerged in the U.S. around the 1970s and set up a distinct methodology for the study of culture and the arts.

2.1 The Production of Culture approach

In the 1970s we find various attempts to define the boundaries of a sociology of art in the compilation of texts by M.C. Albrecht and J.H. Barnett with the same name *Sociology of Art and Literature: A Reader* (1970). Of particular interest is Barnett's essay 'The Sociology of Art' where he provides a background for the discipline and offers some guidelines for future research.[2] He suggests conceiving art as a process; rather than focusing on works of art alone, sociologists need to extend their interest to examining the interaction between artworks, artists and public (1970: 629). The initial recruitment of the artist, his training, his career, his creations or performances and the public response to them are some of the processes sociologists need to look at. In addition, they must assign an important place to studying the content of artworks. To do so, sociologists rely on the expertise of those who have technical knowledge about the arts; namely, art historians or philosophers. As he puts it:

> Without assistance from those who have technical knowledge of the arts, the sociologist will usually be unable to discriminate between matters of style, imagery, subject matter and the like that reflect important social and cultural influences and those that express merely the dominant aesthetic conventions of an art at a specific time. (Barnett, 1970: 631)

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[1] See for example Featherstone (1992).

[2] The need to set up a distinct methodology for a sociology of art goes back to 1959, the year when Barnett's essay was originally published in Merton, R.K. *et al* (ed.) *Sociology Today.* New York: Basic Books.

Barnett raises an interesting point, which becomes a bone of contention for later generations of sociologists. To what extent should sociologists studying the arts should draw in their approaches on knowledge from other disciplines – e.g. art history? Or, instead, should they develop their own sociological understandings of the content of artworks? These questions also inform the 'production of culture approach,' which emerged around the 1970s, and can be seen as an attempt by American sociologists to theorise the role of culture and the arts in society.

In a volume titled *The Production of Culture* Peterson outlines the main premises of this type of approach. It aims to build a general sociology upon empirical studies of culture, which seeks to demonstrate "the conceptual and substantive communalities shared by the diverse substantive specialities" (1976: 7). With this aim in mind, the emphasis is to explore how culture is produced (ibid: 8) - as opposed to what is culture – by focusing on the processes by which elements of culture are fabricated. The production perspective draws its inspiration from the sociology of science, which focuses on the contexts in which science is made (ibid: 11). The premise is that in looking at the social context of production – e.g. who produces art, how it is selected, what factors influence the context of cultural products and audiences to which they are directed – we can learn something about society. More specifically, a sociological approach to the art is presented as a study of organisations in which the arts are produced. As Di Maggio and Hirsch (ibid: 85) put it in their contribution to the book: "Many of the major issues in the sociology of art can be rephrased profitably in organizational terms." Nonetheless, an organisational approach to the arts is a tool to explore wider sociological issues; for example, how the distribution of consumption of culture reinforces the stratification system in any society. It can also help shed light on the debate about whether art shapes or reflects society (ibid: 85). Although the production of art collections has not been a focus of this line of enquiry, an introduction to some of the accounts in this line of theorising can help us to illustrate the ways in which they address the production of other art forms.

In answering the question 'how is culture produced' several authors look at the role of organisations responsible for the production of value in art such as art galleries. Bystryn (1978) explains the success of artistic styles – e.g. abstract expressionism – through the activities of art galleries, the gatekeepers of the market. Similarly, in *The Transformation of the Avant-Garde* (1987) Crane suggests that art styles – e.g. expressionism – are a social phenomenon, which can be analysed as the "social organisation of a style" (ibid: 20). This

entails focusing on how organisations or support structures – e.g. galleries, museums – and individual sponsors – e.g. collectors – are responsible for evaluating and disseminating styles so-called avant-garde. The relevance of an organisational sociology lies in explaining changes in artistic styles in relation to the organisations that promote them which, Crane argues, are responsible for the kinds of styles that come to be perceived as characteristic of a particular period (ibid: 16). For example, galleries may facilitate or resist aesthetic innovation. The investigation of artistic genres is also a concern of Di Maggio (1987) who strives for a sociological way of thinking about 'genre'. He argues against the efforts of humanists: "to define genre in terms of form or content similarities represents an attempt to impose normative order on systems of classification that are socially constructed" (ibid: 441). Instead, he suggests that genre distinctions are generated by social structures (ritual classifications) but mediated by characteristics of the production systems within which art is produced and distributed (ibid: 449). An important contribution to this line of theorising is Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982).

Becker presents his book as a reaction against a dominant tradition in the sociology of art, which sees art as "something more special, in which creativity comes to the surface and the essential character of the society expresses itself, especially in great works of genius" (Becker, 1982: xi). His way of resolving this way of thinking about art is to situate art production in the context of *Art Worlds*, which he describes as a network of people, or patterns of collective activity, which help constitute art works (ibid: 1). His angle on the sociology of art is, as in the previous examples, built upon a sociology of organisations, which explores how people organise themselves and the resources they use to assign value to particular works and create reputations for their producers. As he puts it: the principle of analysis is "social organizational, not aesthetic" (ibid: xi). The book takes the reader through the various steps in the production of artworks such as the type of resources mobilised, the distribution of artworks, and the role of the state, for example. Two issues are worth mentioning here: Becker's definition of a hierarchy of cultural producers in art worlds, and his argument that aesthetic value is linked to consensus among participants in art worlds.

In his chapter 'Aesthetics, Aestheticians, and Critics', Becker refers to the role of cultural producers in creating 'aesthetic value', which emerges out of a hierarchy of practices. At the top of this hierarchy stand the aestheticians. Through the study of "the premises and arguments people use to justify classifying things and activities" as 'art' or 'non-art', they are able to construct aesthetic systems. These are explanations that justify the classifications

they make and the instances of their application (ibid: 131). Subsequently, critics apply these aesthetic systems to specific artworks and thus arrive at judgements concerning their worth. It is those judgements which create reputations for both works and artists. Audiences and distributors take into account these value judgements in order to support a particular art form. Added to this typology of practitioners is a typology of practices, which highlights how aesthetic value is sustained: consensus of the participants in an art world is what makes aesthetic value possible (ibid: 134). The importance of consensus is that it provides a basis for collective activity. The organisation of these practices in a hierarchy becomes clear when he mentions that in art worlds styles and schools compete for attention; competition arises from the fact that art worlds only possess a finite capacity of producing legitimation e.g. rewards. However, the key ingredient here is the work of aestheticians, who:

> [p]rovide that element of the battle for recognition of particular styles and schools which consists of making the arguments which convince other participants in an art world that the work deserves, logically, to be included within whatever categories concern that world. (Becker, 1982: 135)

Once the main element in a battle for recognition is in place, aestheticians and critics alike revise and adapt the value-creating theory first proposed to the works artists produce. But artists do not only draw on the guidelines of aestheticians, they also respond to other traditions of the art worlds; the influence of African art on Western painting is one such example (ibid: 138). In defining art, he says, we can minimise the inconsistencies and bring 'theory' (aesthetics) and 'practice' (art works) together, or rather, insist on the anomalies between them. What is interesting is how he links the aesthetic value of a work to the degree of consensus it achieves, seen in the number of attributes given to it by participants in art worlds. For a work to have aesthetic value means that it is "justified by a coherent and defensible aesthetic" or "displayed in the appropriate places" i.e. a museum (ibid: 138). In the end, the amount of aesthetic value enjoyed by a particular work goes back to the amount of consensus it embodies. As he puts it:

> Since the degree of consensus about who can decide what art is varies greatly from one situation to another, a realistic view reflects that by allowing art-ness, whether or not an object is art, to be a continuous variable rather than an all-or-nothing dichotomy. (Becker, 1982: 153)

Given the importance of the role of cultural producers in the making of aesthetic value it is no surprise that Becker's idea of change in art worlds is not related to the emergence of innovating formal conventions. While art worlds develop around innovations – technical, conceptual, organisational – they are not responsible for changes in art worlds (ibid: 310). Rather, the emergence of an art world requires "the process of mobilizing people to join in a cooperative activity on a regular basis" (ibid: 311). This line of thinking follows his initial emphasis on "the sociology of occupations applied to artistic work" (ibid: xi). We can only talk about change in art worlds when the innovators achieve the cooperation of those occupations needed for the activities the innovation requires. There are various reasons why new art worlds emerge: taking over existing institutions, replacing the people who formerly made use of them, sharing the use of those facilities, or the creation of an entirely new network (ibid: 309).

Becker's approach is helpful in providing a way of thinking about the activities of cultural producers. In fact, it is addressing a crucial concern in the 'production of culture approach', which is that all forms of culture are subject to social determinants – in this case the activities of participants in art worlds. Nonetheless, his account suffers from an under theorisation at the level of practices of those professionals operating in art worlds. A strong assumption in Becker's account is that through the interactions between participants in art worlds – from artists to supporting personnel - social meanings arise (Zolberg, 1990: 155). This is particularly the case of new art worlds, which are not made possible without the existence of a new network of interactions between participants. This can lead to problems such as the lack of clarification between the role of audiences for whom works are intended and that of artists (ibid: 156). What is lacking here is specificity in theorising what distinguishes the practices of producers in art world from that of audiences or artists, for example. In addition, we need to understand what causes prompt some participants to operate within a particular art world and not in others. Finally, we need to account for how communication between art worlds occurs. As Zolberg notes, for Becker, art worlds are "relatively self-contained units, in some ways extremely segregated from, or at most, tenuously connected to others" (ibid: 125). This is particularly important if we think about the increasing internationalisation of the art world around particular centres i.e. London, Paris and New York, which in turn influence more local art worlds, Dublin is a case in point (see chapter 4). But a more important critique is the claim that he leaves the macro-sociological level of society inadequately theorised (ibid: 125). While Becker asserts that the art world model can by applied to any kind of social world (Becker, 1982: 369), what seems

to be needed instead is a link between art worlds' activities and wider sociological concerns. For example, whether they can contribute to create cultural change. This thesis goes some way towards resolving this issue by using an approach to the study of art collections as a springboard to evaluate whether intellectual practices can contribute to cultural change. In what follows I explore various accounts of sociological aesthetics. In moving away from the study of organisations, they introduce alternative ways of thinking about sociology and the arts.

2.2 Sociological aesthetics

My aim here is to use this review as a starting point to situate various ways of thinking about what will be three key themes in this thesis: *cultural producers, the making of aesthetic value,* and *aesthetic experience.* It must be pointed out that my primary emphasis is on generic theoretical approaches to the arts, and specific empirical studies of the visual arts.[3] The study of the relation between the arts and the social is not exclusive to sociologists. Some pioneering studies in the discipline of art history are: Hauser (1951) *The Social History of Art*, Haskell (1976) *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*. What distinguishes the sociology of art, however, is its attempt to justify a distinct sociological approach to the study of the arts. We have seen how the key issue in the 'production of culture' approach was to establish how culture is produced. The writings of Janet Wolff provide a useful counterpoint to this line of enquiry by focusing on the question 'what is art?' (1975a, 1975b, 1981).

Underlying Wolff's work is an attempt to resolve the tension between aesthetics, the philosophical study of art, and sociology. In an essay titled 'The Sociology of Art versus Aesthetics' (1975b), she discusses this relationship in order to make a case for a sociology of art. The key of the matter is the paradoxical position of definitions of art between the disciplines of sociology and philosophy. On the one hand, art is a social product in that its production and consumption is socially, culturally and historically context-bound. Hence the aesthetic cannot be analysed apart from references to socio-cultural factors (1975b: 11). On the other hand, the aesthetic is still experienced "as something unique and independent of everyday life and activity" (ibid: 11). She concludes by saying that while we can look at something in the aesthetic mode, deriving aesthetic pleasure from something, its practice is not separable from its content or context. As she says: "The faculty may be pure, but that does not mean its exercise in any particular instance is pure" (ibid: 16).

[3] Although I will not be dealing with it in this thesis, another line of theorising that must be acknowledged is the Frankfurt School. Of particular relevance are the critiques on mass and popular culture by writers such as Walter Benjamin.

In *Hermeneutic Philosophy and the Sociology of Art* (1975a) Wolff offers an expanded version of her previous argument. Conceived as a theoretical foundation of the sociology of art and literature, she claims that the only way to eliminate any deficiencies in any sociological study of art is by giving "a proper attention to the *art* itself" (ibid: 1). Wolff is here contributing to a key debate in the sociology of art, that is, what aspects are important to consider in sociological analysis of art. This is how she presents her stance:

> The sociology of art, that is, necessarily includes aesthetics. The constant dilemma of sociologists of art, in the face of the multiplicity of possible levels of analysis and types of data, will only be resolved by the development of a more general theory of art and society, which itself can serve as a guide to the researcher confronted by the twin problems of which aspects of social structure and social life he is to take as significant, and which aspects of the works of art in question – their documentary content, their style, their technical qualities, their art-historical features, or their formal attributes. (Wolff, 1975a: 1)

The answer for Wolff, as this quote indicates, does not lie in what particular aspects of art need to become the focus of a sociological enquiry. Rather, she argues that we can comprehend better the nature of art and society through "a better understanding of the social nature and genesis of *all* knowledge" (ibid: 2). Nonetheless, her claim for a sociology of art at the level of meaning is clearly orientated towards studying the content of works of art, that is, the more general question of 'what is a work of art?' One issue here, which echoes an idea I introduced earlier, is that sociology has to take as given those objects defined by others – e.g. philosophers, art historians - as art, while acknowledging that definitions of what counts as art are not unanimous (ibid: 4). However, a constant theme in this book is that a sociology of art follows the same line of enquiry as a phenomenological sociology which seeks to understand individuals in their social context. It must address the social origin of works of art and explore how their content can be said to relate to social life. As Wolff says:

> [M]y intention is to describe the origin and creation of cultural products in social life, from the methodological perspective of the social individual, and of the phenomenology of the social world. (Wolff, 1975a: 7)

Her emphasis on the social origins of works of art also informs her following book *The Social Production of Art* (1981). More specifically, she attempts to provide a sociological

understanding of conceptions of 'artistic creativity'. Her aim then is to find a middle ground between approaches that see aesthetic value as endowed with some transcendent quality, and those, which reduce it to political and social factors. In fact, in this book, her proposal for a sociology of art follows ideas already present in the 'production of culture' school. As she says, the role of a sociology of art is to make explicit the social production of art as the "study of those practices and institutions, which facilitate artistic production" (ibid: 139). However, on this occasion Wolff does not attempt to explore the content of works of art, as she makes clear: "Let me say at the beginning that this book will not attempt to deal with the question of aesthetic value" (ibid: 7). Two main arguments justify this sociological line of enquiry. The first is the issue of artists as 'genius', which ignores the nature of human subjects and work. Drawing on Marx's writings, she points out the universal characteristics of all types of work, and how human subjects are constituted in social and ideological processes. Secondly, individual artists are not the only producers of art works; rather, art is the outcome of a 'collective product: the result of "socially enabled and socially constructed events" (ibid: 40). These events include the use of technology, the intervention of social institutions, recruitment and training of artists, patronage systems, mediators (publishers, gallery owners, museum curators), and economic factors. As a result, works of art bear the traces of all those who participated in their production, that is, "the imprint of the ideas, values and conditions of existence of those groups" (ibid: 49). Wolff's account in its emphasis on the production of art echoes Becker's study of artistic production in art worlds. However, Wolff differs from Becker in her attempt to situate the social production of art within a wider sociological topic of enquiry - the relationship between action and structure. This theoretical orientation is not present in Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982). More specifically, Wolff envisions artists as cultural producers, whose actions can be studied sociologically with the help of a theoretical model which acknowledges a mutual interdependence between structure and agency – as opposed to defining artists and their practices as "an effect of structure". As she puts it: "insofar as sociology in general must accommodate the actor-subject, properly theorised, the sociology of art is also a theory of the artistic practice of particular subjects" (Wolff, 1981: 139).

So far I have presented various ways of thinking about the arts in society. In general, sociologists use various methods – organisational sociology, phenomenology – to justify their interest in studying the social aspects informing the creation of works of art. Interesting additions to this line of enquiry are Bourdieu's arguments on the social origins of taste, which shed new light on the contribution of a sociology of art.

Given that I will be dealing with Bourdieu's work on cultural producers in chapter 2, my purpose here is to mention briefly his main arguments in the sociology of cultural consumption. In his seminal work *Distinction* (1984) Bourdieu focuses on the production of taste through the consumption or experience of artworks. A key point in his theory of artistic perception is that taste in art is not an innate quality; rather, it functions as a marker of class distinctions (ibid: 4) because individuals from different backgrounds – e.g. educational, social and economic - have distinct tastes in art. Hence art and cultural consumption are predisposed to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences (ibid: 7). He uses the concept habitus to indicate that dispositions or ways of apprehending art works are individual, but also related to the social factors, which determine one's social position. The disposition we have towards the world is also reflected in how individuals experience art. For example, the legitimate taste, or pure aesthetic, articulates an aesthetic disposition, which is rooted in "an ethos of elective distance from the necessities of the natural and social world" (ibid: 5; 56). This pure gaze implies a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world. Conversely, popular taste applies schemes, which pertain in the ordinary circumstances of life to legitimate works of art. In so doing, it performs a "systematic reduction of the things of art to the things of life" (ibid: 5). The method used for this research on consumption was the survey by questionnaire, which sought to explore how cultural competence varies according to background and the artistic area in which it is applied. Some of its conclusions are that popular taste is represented by the choice of works of classical music devalued by popularisation, such as the *Blue Danube*. Similarly, middle-brow taste, that is, the appreciation of major works by minor arts such as Jacques Brel is more common in middle classes than in working classes.

Bourdieu's arguments on the production of taste are part of a sociological reaction to aesthetic thinking. Bourdieu rejects Kant's views on the 'disinterestedness' of aesthetic judgement as the sole guarantor of the aesthetic quality of contemplation (1984: 5). For him, the concept 'disinterestedness' embodies class specific social practices because it legitimates the taste of the upper class. If popular tastes are embodied and favour 'easy' listening, 'legitimate tastes' involve 'disinterest' and 'distance' from the object of contemplation. Although this thesis is not a contribution to the sociology of cultural consumption, but a study of the production of art collections, it is possible to say that it does not ignore completely the interest of sociologists in how art is apprehended by audiences. In fact, one of the premises informing this sociology of art collections is that display practices

induce particular ways of looking and thinking about art in visitors. Whereas Bourdieu offers a study of the relationship between individuals' social background and the ways in which they perceive art, my emphasis is on how what I call the intellectual practices of art exhibiting can shape the way museum visitors perceive art (see chapter 6).

However, Bourdieu's studies of cultural consumption have not always been well received. Amongst other things he has been accused of a reductionist stance on aesthetics. As Osborne notes, "it can be claimed that art is more than just the legitimation of a particular kind of cultural exclusion" (1997: 136). Nonetheless a criticism of Bourdieu's sociological thinking can be used to launch a generalised complaint about a sociological approach to the arts:

> It is an odd thing that a certain amount of contemporary social theory likes to parade its aesthetic credentials while being all but indifferent to consideration (unless it is in the interests of a sociological reduction) of so-called art *per se* as an object of analysis. One open oneself up to charges of the most hopeless vulgarity and delusions of grandeur by venturing to consider art as a non-ideological but still sociological problem. (Osborne, 1997: 143)

So far this review has identified various lines of research within the sociology of art in order to situate the specific type of enquiry this thesis seeks to address. My main aim in presenting these views has been to highlight sociological ways of thinking about the arts, but also illustrate the commonalities and differences this thesis shares with previous approaches. In the quote above, Osborne raises an interesting issue: how can sociology be indifferent to art as an object of analysis? Overall, the authors I have presented here have been more concerned with an externalist approach to the arts, that is, the study of the practices which contribute to assign value to artworks. From this point of view, it is possible to say that this thesis also offers an externalist perspective to the study of art collections – as opposed to an investigation into the content of the artworks included in the collection at the IMMA. We have also seen how some authors place more emphasis on engaging their study of the arts with wider sociological concerns – as was the case of Wolff's interest in illustrating the relationship between action and structure. This is an important point, which this thesis seeks to address. That is, it intends to show that studying the arts sociologically is a useful springboard to engage in wider sociological debates, such as the possibility of

cultural transformation. Let me refer next to more contemporary approaches to the sociology of art, which can help us shed new light on these issues.

2.3 Contemporary approaches to the sociology of art

It is possible to say that the lines of enquiry I have outlined so far have been a source of inspiration to contemporary sociologists. A number of studies take on existing analytical orientations or empirical findings to expand specific aspects of the artistic world. Peterson (1997) draws on existing models of the distribution of uncertainty in Parisian art galleries to investigate how galleries established between 1985 and 1990 manage the risks of running this kind of business. Apart from low uncertainty (galleries selling well known artists) and high uncertainty (galleries selling works by young artists), she suggests that galleries can also present middle-range uncertainty. This occurs when dealers are trying to sell works by mid-career or when they try to counterbalance high and low uncertainty. Other studies focus on the emergence of new art forms. Taking as its starting point Bourdieu's argument on the market of cultural goods as a field of cultural production, Ardery (1997) focuses on the emergence of a new field within the U.S. visual arts world: twentieth century folk and outsider art. Rawlings (2001), also informed by Bourdieu's ideas on fields of cultural production, refers to the role of symbolic producers in the creation of African art as a fine art genre. For example, they facilitate this transition by "creating audiences who can apprehend [African] objects as fine art" (2001: 26). Nonetheless, a clear attempt to set out a sociological study of an emergent art form, outsider art, is Zolberg and Cherbo's (1997) *Outsider Art: Contesting Boundaries in Contemporary Culture.* In what follows I would like to contrast their approach with another model of a sociology of art, Witkin's (1995) *Art & Social Structure.* My argument here is that they not only offer different ways of interpreting the arts, but also of using the arts as a springboard to engage in wider sociological concerns.

In their introduction Zolberg and Cherbo (1997) outline the main tenets of a sociology of outsider art. The name 'outsider art' comes from the notion that this is a type of art produced by individuals outside the mainstream or art market. Their argument is that outsider art has been constructed as an art genre through the practices of members operating within the U.S. art market. For example, in the 1960s and 1980s dealers and collectors began to search for promising new forms beyond established artistic institutions. In addition, the establishment and success of the annual Outsider Art Fair in the 1990s has raised the prices for outsider art considerably. As they say: "A 1992 piece by Wölfli was

marked at $40,000. Drawings by the Mexican painter, Martin Ramírez, who spent the last years of his life in a California asylum, were listed at $35,000." One important issue is that they envision the success and assimilation of outsider art into the mainstream market as a reflection of a postmodern context in which existing patterns of value in art are being overturned. As they explain:

> Commentators on the modern and post-modern condition note broad socio-cultural patterns and sensibilities wherein universal, fixed categories and hierarchical renderings inherited from the Enlightenment are being continually breached and reordered. The postmodern turn is characterized by a loss of certainty, a unifying center, agreed-upon standards of cultural excellence, morality, and types of knowledge ... Not surprisingly the arts reflect this condition. (Zolberg and Cherbo, 1997: 5).

The loss of standards of cultural excellence does not mean to say that artistic recognition is no longer possible. What has changed is how the arts are given value. If before, recognition was created within a single institution such as the Academy, in their postmodern context the arts are validated by a plurality of gatekeepers. The role of sociologists is to shed new light on this new context in which the arts are legitimated: "Reality has intruded on some of our governing concepts: they are ready to be revisited" (Zolberg and Cherbo, 1997: 5). A related assumption in this account is that by exploring the processes or contexts in which cultural products come into being we can learn about artistic change. As they say, sociologists of the arts do not conceive of change as occurring "through internalist processes alone" (ibid: 6). In other words, artistic change is not perceived exclusively as a change in the content of artworks - e.g. art style – but in the context in which art is produced and disseminated. This way of thinking about change echoes Becker's ideas of artistic change, which was only possible when changes in style were accompanied by the necessary tasks or activities which artistic innovations required.

Witkin (1995) provides a counterpoint to the contemporary approaches on the sociology of art presented here. Of particular interest is his way of interpreting works of art. What clearly differentiates Witkin's account is his approach to the sociology of artworks – as opposed to the social production of artworks. His main concern is to provide sociological ways for thinking about the content of artworks. Most importantly, he relates this content and meaning to wider sociological concerns such as social structure and social relationships. A key idea here is how social relations are inscribed in the content of

artworks. In fact, he refers to a homology between the way a work of art orders its relations and the manner in which a society orders its relations. As he explains:

> A work of art is not simply a picture simulating material life; it is, above all, a semiotic system, a means of symbolling significant values. An important part of its function is to incorporate the code, the principles governing the ordering of experience, which are at the heart of the social system in which it is grounded. That code is what is reproduced in the 'style' of a work of art and it is the style of the work that constrains, even 'polices', the depiction of relations of all kinds within the picture. (Witkin, 1995: 30)

The argument here is that the style or form of works of art articulate social relations. They do so by incorporating a code, which governs the ordering of experience in the society in which the work is produced. In addition, transformations in social structure and relations are reflected in artworks. An interesting point is how Witkin then conceptualises the ways individuals experience, view artworks. He identifies styles in art with their semiotic function, which addresses viewing subjects through invocation, evocation and provocation (ibid: 57). This argument places artists in an active role because through their works they convey to audiences an understanding of the social relations of their time. In addition, it also gives a central role to the experience of viewing art. That is, how subjects view or relate to artworks reflects the principles governing the organisation of social life in the society in which the work is produced. In so doing, he conceptualises the viewing of artworks as a particular social relationship, or interaction between viewers and the social relations inscribed in art.

Witkin's stance sheds new light on the ideas mentioned earlier, where art styles were conceptualised as the outcome of specific social contexts of production, such as a field of folk and outsider art (Ardery, 1997). In addition, art is not seen only as a reflection of a particular socio-historical context, as in the case of postmodernism (Zolberg and Cherbo, 1997). Rather, art styles are instrumental in provide changing contexts for the articulation of the experience of viewing subjects. In so doing, art is not merely a reflection of their own socio-cultural context, but a means for articulating how viewing subjects relate to the world around them.

Witkin's arguments open up a new way of thinking about the meaning of artworks. It is fitting at this point to recall the main arguments presented so far, and how they contribute to the sociology of art collections presented in this thesis. On the one hand, we find an

emphasis on an externalist approach to the study of value in art. In this case, the arts are treated as part of the social fabric of the art worlds or contexts of production in which they are embedded. On the other hand, we find approaches such as Witkin's which emphases on the sociology of the artwork. In other words, their enquiries are shaped by an interest in the arts but with different methodological questions. The former seeks to explore 'how art is produced' and the latter, 'what is the meaning and content of artworks'. Overall, the sociology of art as I present it here shows a stronger interest in an externalist perspective, as Eyerman and Ring point out (1998: 281), "the sociology of art has felt more comfortable analysing such [cultural] artifacts from the 'outside.'" This thesis is an example of an external approach to the arts given that it focuses on the practices of those individuals involved in art collecting. However, I do not see this as problematic as long as sociologists ensure that their study of the arts is contributing to existing debates in the discipline. For example, how is the production of artworks related to wider social processes and structures? Sociologists have situated the validation of arts within specific socio-cultural contexts – e.g. postmodernity. They have also shown how art consumption leads to the reproduction of class differences. In addition, they have paid tribute to the role cultural producers play in the assignation of value to art. All these insights are valuable and necessary to expand our knowledge of the arts in society. However, there is still a need to use these arguments to answer another set of questions: how can we theorise the practices of cultural producers sociologically? Can these practices contribute to any form of cultural change? This investigation into art collecting can be seen as an attempt to bridge what I think is a gap between social theory and empirical research in the arts. As we will see in chapter 2, my aim is to base an exploration into art collecting on a sociology of intellectuals, focusing on intellectual practices. The focus of my enquiry is the making of a collection for the Irish Museum of Modern Art. In the rest of this chapter, I review the contribution of sociologists to the study of museums.

3 Sociology and museums

The study of museums has not been the sole interest of sociologists, but of a number of disciplines or theoretical approaches such as museum studies, art historians, material culture, and cultural studies. Within this diversity, it is possible to discern some general lines of investigation. Firstly, the role of museums is studied as part of the broader socio-historical context in which they are found. Lorente (1998) reveals the instrumental role of museums of contemporary in the development of an urban modernity or the modern metropolis as a new kind of art capital. Bennett (1995) offers an account of the emergence

of the modern public museum in nineteenth-century Western culture, which he links to the development of other cultural institutions – e.g. international exhibitions and modern fairs. Similarly, Hooper-Greenhill (1989) examines the place and function of the museum in the disciplinary society as referred to by Foucault. An interesting addition to this line of enquiry is Negrin's (1993). He argues that despite the claims by the supporters of art movements such as Futurism who saw modernism "as an adversary culture, pitted against the established museum culture" (ibid: 97), we need to acknowledge the dependence of modern art on the museum. As he says: "it needs to be acknowledged that modern art is dependent on the very institution which it criticizes and that therefore, its 'museification' is not a sign of 'bad faith' on its part but is an inevitable outcome of its reliance on the museum" (ibid: 98).

A second line of enquiry examines the museum's role in representing material culture. That is, museums are seen as the principal medium through which the past is publicly presented (Pearce, 1989). Museum objects are seen as "evidence of people's history and cultural experience" (Kavanagh, 1989: 125). Out of this approach have emerged distinct areas of study: studies of collections, and of the interaction between curators and the public, are some examples (Pearce, 1989: 2). One repeated argument is the role of museums in representing the nature of the modern world. As Pearce points out:

> The unique museum mode, the ability to display, to demonstrate, to show the nature of the world and of man within it by arranging the collected material in particular patterns which reflect, confirm and project the contemporary world view. With this go the modes of curatorial care, study and interpretation which, in themselves, make up elements in the constituting modern discourses. (Pearce, 1992: 4)

This quote brings to the fore another area in museum research, which is the capacity of museums to fix or construct identities through the exhibition of artworks (Duncan and Wallach, 1980; Sherman, 1987; Duncan, 1995; Staniszewski, 1998). In this sense, Sherman and Rogoff (1994: 1) refer to museums as "exhibited culture, what museums and others put on display," as well as "exhibition culture, the ideas, values and symbols that pervade and shape the practice of exhibiting." An underlying concern in these accounts is the interrogation of museum practices, or "modes of cultural construction" (ibid: 1). Barker's *Contemporary Cultures of Display* is quite telling of how displays in museums are increasingly perceived not only as constructing certain understandings of culture, but as cultures. As she puts it:

> This is the fundamental point of this book: that museums and galleries are not neutral containers offering a transparent, unmediated experience of art. Rather, we need to consider them in terms of 'cultures of display', that is, with reference to the different ideas and values that can shape their formation and functioning. The central aim of this introduction, therefore, is to explore the problematic nature of display. (Barker, 1999: 8)

Although the accounts I have mentioned do not illustrate a sociological approach to museums, it must be acknowledged that they provide important material for sociologists. They constitute key sources that enable them to develop distinct ways of thinking about the relationship between museums and society. Despite the fact that the sociological study of museums is still under-developed (Macdonald, 1996: 3), it is possible to identify three modes of investigation.

One interest of sociologists has been to situate museums within existing models of thinking about the social world. Globalisation is a case in point. Macdonald refers to museums as global symbols with a paradoxical place in global culture. As she says: "Bound up with much that is heralded to be nearing its end stability and permanence, authenticity, grand narratives, the nation-state, and even history itself their numbers are growing at an unprecedented rate" (1996: 1). Apart from growing in numbers museums are diversifying their form and content. For example, they are tackling controversial subjects, some exhibitions consist only of interactive exhibits, and museum collections are increasingly being catalogued on the Internet (ibid: 1-2). Another proponent of the globalisation of museums is Prösler (1996). He disagrees with a view of museums as merely following world developments following globalisation; rather, he says, the history of museums shows their role "as an institution through the 'world' can be understood and ordered" (1996: 26). Proponents of postmodernity see the museum through a different perspective. Featherstone (1992) discusses the transformation of museums from sites for the display and preservation of art works to being part of a commodity culture. Following Roberts (1988) he says that museums are no longer restricted spaces for connoisseurs, but "sites for spectacles, sensation, illusion and montage; places where one has an experience, rather than where knowledge of the canon and established symbolic hierarchies are articulated" (1992: 273).

Organisational sociology provides a second approach to the study of museums. This is particularly found in the work of American sociologists such as Alexander (1996) and Zolberg (1981). Focusing on the impact of museums' funding on the art exhibited in museums, Alexander (1996) asks whether exhibitions changed during the era of corporate and government funding in the U.S. Underlying this approach is the premise that museums are organisations whose activities have an effect on the art they produce. In fact, her approach to museums is the same as those studies in the sociology of art informed by an organisational sociology. As she says: "In order to understand museum exhibitions, and indeed to understand art, we must understand organizational behavior" (1996: 122). She makes explicit how her theoretical framework is informed by production of culture theories and organisational sociology. As she says:

> Along with galleries and collectors, museums validate art. The artistic canon, by definition, includes only validated art. Thus, the canon is shaped by the actions of a system of artistic production, in which museums play a crucial role. If exhibitions are shaped by the tastes and concerns of funders, then changes in museum funding may have ramifications far beyond what is mounted on the museum wall today. (Alexander, 1996: 3)

From the point of view of an organisational sociology, she explores the museums' methods of choosing the number, content, and format of exhibitions, and the impact of the various museums' funding sources on these decisions. An important insight in her book is the notion of conflict. For example, she refers to how, in the process of awarding of exhibition grants, government panels made up of museum curators are caught between "their professional, curatorial tastes (often for challenging, esoteric art) and their public mission, which requires that they attend to project attendance figures" (ibid: 2). In addition, museum curators prefer to mount scholarly shows, which do not necessarily match the expectations of funders. Nonetheless, the book's main thrust is the wider perspective of a production of culture according to which: "Art is not produced in a vacuum. Along with aesthetic issues, social and production factors affect the content of art" (ibid: 3).

Another proponent of an organisational sociology of museums is Zolberg (1981). In her historical account of The Art Institute of Chicago, she points out that museums can be studied according to principles from organisational sociology. Consequently, her analysis is based on the assumption that museums are organisations whose implementation of general goals is influenced by operational goals. Her premise is that in looking at the

changing rationales underlying the activities of museums – e.g. pre-professional, professional, and managerial - we can learn about how these organisations operate to produce certain outcomes. An important idea here is that the museums' operational goals or rationales come into being "through processes of negotiation and bargaining amongst various set of actors, in or related to the organization" (ibid: 103). Hence museums are perceived as arenas for the articulation of conflict between actors working within museums – e.g. trustees and curators. In addition, external trends such as the scholarly and professional developments, art market activity, and the emergence of new funding sources determine the level of success attained by those working in museums (ibid: 120). Of particular interest here is her mention of the negotiations involved in collecting, and how this process has changed historically. For example, she refers to the enactment in 1936 of a federal tax deduction for donations of artworks, which, she says, allowed the director to bargain more effectively with prospective donors. This was an important advance in the light of the strong input early donors had, some of whom had even become curators at the institute because they brought a collection with them (ibid: 112).

Zolberg's account is relevant for its informative value as it reveals, for example, how collecting occurs through negotiation and sometimes conflict amongst participants. In fact, her discussion echoes some of the topics, which will emerge in my analysis of collecting. However, what remains unclear is how collecting, for example, is also informed by the negotiations occurring before artworks are included in the institute's collection. In addition, we need to know how changes in operational goals interact with external trends, and how this interaction can help us shed light into the institute's role in relation to existing models of thinking about the social world – e.g. modernity. In other words, how the macro and the micro are to be theorised as they intersect in the museum. This problem also applies to Alexander's account of changes in exhibition funding. A relevant question to ask of an organisational approach to museums is whether the focus on museums as organisations could be expanded to engage in wider sociological concerns such as the role of museums in social change. In fact, this is one issue which Fyfe (2000) raises in his analyses of museums.

Fyfe (2000) in a chapter titled 'Towards an historical typology of art museums' provides a sociological approach to the study of art museums. He starts by saying that museums are both part of a social context and also constitutive of a particular social order. This latter role occurs when the museum organises or projects identities in exhibitions, for example. His

main concern is to explore the social relations that create conflict in the museum's representation of the social order. As he says:

> How do conflicting visions of what a museum should be relate to the social order? How are conflicting visions of the social order represented in the discursive heterogeneity of the museum? To what extent is discursive conflict also social conflict? (Fyfe, 2000: 160)

The mention of conflicting visions of the social order echoes Zolberg (1981) and Alexander (1996) who also focus on the nature of conflict in museums. What varies here is Fyfe's analytical approach to the study of conflict. Drawing on Bernstein's theory of cultural codes, he argues that museum practices, e.g. those of curators, articulate cultural codes – classification and interaction or framing – that order the museum's discourse. Acquisitions and exhibitions are ways in which museums carry out classifications. For example, exhibitions are encodings of power in their classifications of artworks by nation or period; in so doing, they position viewers within co-ordinates of European time and space (2000: 164). His argument is that these classifications can contain contradictions, that is, they may be contested in terms of their ordering principles. This occurs when museums articulate conflicting visions in their classifications about what it means to be an artist (ibid: 163). The notion of framing is also aimed at highlighting possible conflicts. It points at the relationship visitor/curator or curator/artist. These relationships vary the rules for apprehending artworks. As he says: "the museum may determine the visitor's route through its displays or allow the visitor to make the determination" (ibid: 164). Classification and framing point at the principles underlying the museums' discourse; most importantly, they focus attention on the role of museum practices. Curation, for Fyfe, is based on a "social grammar" as it serves curators to acquire, select and display artworks, which are "encodings of the social order" (ibid: 181). The suggestion that museum practices help encode the social order echoes Witkin's idea that a given social structure is represented in artworks through the use of codes. Both authors create an explicit link between the practice of artists, or of curators, and the representation of a social order or structure.

In fact, this is what makes Fyfe's account particularly valuable. It envisions a relationship between the practices of museums and the articulation of a social order. This aspect was absent in previous sociological approaches to museums. It brings to the fore how museums are not only theorised as part of a specific social context, but also as active players in the reproduction of social values. A problem arises when he argues that change in museums

can occurs both as a corollary of a change in the social order, while change in the social order also affects the museum: "social change is change at the museum: change the social structure and you change the order of the museum; reorder the museum and you disrupt identities" (ibid: 181). Fyfe's argument, however, is reductive in that it suggests a continuity between social change and change at the museum. He does not account for the possibility that changes in the social structure may lead to a shift in nature of practices, for example, and then explore what type of transformation they create in the museum's discourse. This particular emphasis can only be accomplished through further theorisation at the level of practices. My aim in chapter 2 is to present a sociology of intellectuals built upon a theory of intellectual practices, that is, a framework establishing linking art collecting and intellectual practices.

CHAPTER 2

INTELLECTUALS AND INTELLECTUAL PRACTICES: OUTLINE OF A SOCIOLOGY OF ART COLLECTIONS

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework for a *sociology of art collections*. It offers the theoretical background, which informs the empirical chapters in this thesis. Its main argument is that the making of aesthetic value is a form of intellectual practice through which art collections are constructed. A related issue to take into account is whether the making of an art collection is a type of cultural practice, which can contribute to social and cultural change. The chapter is divided into three parts. Part I situates the topics 'art collecting' and 'intellectual practice' by reviewing the literature on intellectuals and collecting. It suggests the need for a theory of intellectual practices, which also addresses the issue of cultural change. It also indicates possible ways of thinking about collecting as an intellectual practice. Part I ends with an introduction to the two sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Pierre Bourdieu whose work on intellectuals is discussed in Part II and Part III. The main concern here is with providing a theory of intellectual practice, which can then be used to treat art collecting as one particular instance of it. The central topic of discussion is whether we should conceptualise intellectual activity as the performance of a specific role – for example, legislating or interpreting, (Bauman, 1987); or whether intellectuals practices can only be analysed in relation to a given 'field', (Bourdieu, 1993a). The discussion also develops their views of change in relation to intellectual practices. The chapter ends by comparing the main arguments raised by these two theorists, and raises a number of questions, which the sociology of art collections approach in this thesis attempts to answer in its empirical chapters (chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6).

1 Intellectuals

Approaches to the study of intellectuals have been concerned with defining the intellectuals' role and function. Eyerman (1990) offers us a useful review of the Marxist and liberal traditions of social thought on intellectuals. These approaches articulate different orientations to the idea of progress. Firstly, in the Marxist conceptualisation, intellectuals were members of the bourgeoisie who then went "to give intellectual guidance to working-class movements". Their aim was to act as "mediators of historical progress" by helping transform the consciousness of the working class through the articulation of universalistic

interests (ibid: 6). Secondly, in the liberal tradition intellectuals were members of the bourgeoisie whose aim was "to educate the public through the display of intellectual ability and moral example". This type of intellectual practice was linked to the idea that social progress could be achieved by "uplifting individuals through widening participation in the reflexive thinking of the public sphere" (ibid: 6).[1]

For Eyerman, there has been a shift from these two conceptualisations of intellectuals and social progress towards their role in the modernization of European society. This shift was due to the success of these intellectual traditions in incorporating the working classes "into the routinized democratic processes of the new ... European nation-states" (ibid: 8). The consequences for intellectuals were clear: they became intellectual labourers of the new state sector, professionals whose identity was defined by their occupation and social function. The importance of this change lies in the fact that intellectuals no longer had a distinct group identity or were led by any moral mission; instead, they became a "systemic function" of the new modern state (ibid: 8). As Eyerman says:

> The difference between the classical role and this transitionary intellectual role as rationalizer, is that the interests being articulated and the solutions proposed were not those of dynamic social classes in the formative stage, but those of rather passive prospective clients for an expanding and consolidating state. As professionals, intellectuals would become part of the new progressive authority; as rationalizing intellectuals, they were helping to consolidate the new legitimating political culture and their own place in it. Linking the notion of progress to the state was part of this process. (1990: 9)

Following Jacoby (1987), Eyerman says that the changes in the position of intellectuals, that is, their role in the articulation of social progress as part of a function of the modern state, led to the fall of the public intellectual as conceptualised in Marxist and liberal traditions. Moreover, he envisions a break in the institutionalised, modern, role of intellectuals, which began with the American student revolts of the early 1960s (1990: 10). He argues that the classical function of intellectuals – according to Marxist and liberal traditions – is re-emerging now in the context of new social movements. What is distinctive in this new function is the reaction of movement intellectuals against "the idea of progress associated with modernization", and their concern with the quality of life associated with it (ibid: 11). For Eyerman, the new social movements articulate a transition from modernity to

[1] For Eyerman, this idea of social progress has its origin in Habermas' concept of the 'bourgeois public sphere' (1990: 6).

postmodernity, nonetheless the question of "What will constitute 'progress' in the final decade of the twentieth century is an open matter" (ibid: 12) remains an open matter.

Eyerman provides us with a useful historical account of the changing positions and role of intellectuals. However, his argument is also important because it highlights a distinctive line of enquiry regarding contemporary intellectuals: the need to theorise their function in relation to a changing social world where intellectuals are no longer 'labourers' of the modern state. Bauman's and Bourdieu's investigations of intellectuals can be situated in this new theoretical context which is at pains to explain on whose behalf or in whose interest are intellectual practices articulated. Before moving into an analysis of their theories, I present a review of some of the arguments made on behalf of contemporary intellectuals.

The starting point here are Gouldner's ideas on intellectuals as a new class because they can be thought as a dividing line between arguments before and after the so-called 'crisis' of intellectuals that underlines a number of publications on the topic. For Gouldner intellectuals became a new class during the 20th century but he sets up this proposal in the context of his enquiry into the relationship between intellectuals and Marxism. He argued that, since the 19th century, intellectuals had been "seeking a historical agent to ally themselves with in order to realise their own goals" (Bassett, 1996: 509), which they found in the proletariat. In this way "Marxism was the ideology of the New Class" (Gouldner, 1985: 48 as quoted in Bassett, 1996: 509). Gouldner's view was that intellectuals occupied a special place in Marxism where the working class was no longer able to fulfil its role as a historical agent, while the new class of intellectuals took up the task of fulfilling this role itself. This leads Gouldner to say that "the new class is the most progressive force in modern society and is a centre of whatever human emancipation is possible in the foreseeable future" (Gouldner, 1979: 83 as quoted in Bassett, 1996: 509). The inclusion of this argument is relevant here because it provides a distinct viewpoint in which to situate ensuing debates on the crisis or fragmentation of intellectuals.

A number of commentators after Gouldner have posited a crisis in the intellectuals' role and position in society, which problematises Gouldner's vision of intellectuals as a class. Jacoby's (1987) book title *The Last Intellectuals* is quite telling of the sense of despair that informs debates on intellectuals, and has been followed by analyses of intellectuals in

different areas.[2] Overall, what prevails is the notion that intellectual roles have expanded leading to the fragmentation of this function. However, commentators have justified this argument in different ways. Michel Foucault (1980), for example, situates the division universal vs. specific intellectual in the context of changing relationships between 'truth' and 'power'. More specifically, for him the position of intellectuals is linked to changes in the functioning of the 'apparatus of truth'. He argues that the modernist regime sustained the role of the 'universal intellectual', but that the universal standpoint this type of intellectual provided is no longer possible due to the collapse of the modernist project. As a result, the 'universal intellectual' can no longer survey the totality – i.e. fight for the universality of justice - because modern societies do not provide a vantage point from which this intellectual position can be articulated.

Conversely, in contemporary society we find the 'specific intellectual' – represented in the figure of "the savant or the expert" (ibid: 128) – who no longer fights this kind of universal battle. Rather, this role refers to "the person occupying a specific position. Now the intellectual has a three-fold specificity: that of his class position...; that of his conditions of life and work, linked to his condition as an intellectual...; lastly, the specificity of the politics of truth in our societies" (ibid: 132). The important point here is that the function of intellectuals i.e. their specificity is linked in Foucault's argument to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth. That is, he sees the intellectual engaging in a struggle with the politics of truth: "The intellectual can operate and struggle at the general level of that regime of truth which is so essential to the structure and functioning of our society" (ibid: 132). While it is important to take into account the new viewpoints provided by Foucault - as opposed to other Marxist accounts, here intellectuals do not act on behalf of the proletariat but provide specific criticisms and struggles - there is a more general point to be made. Definitions of the role of intellectuals illustrate a more general theoretical position, for example, the changing status of regime of truth, as Foucault points out.

Debates on postmodernity offer another viewpoint on the role of intellectuals. Kellner (1995) disagrees with Foucault's distinction between universal and specific intellectuals, and sets out to develop a "normative concept of the *public intellectual*" (ibid: 431). His argument is that although critiques of the traditional, modern intellectual are a necessary component of postmodern theory, we cannot totally reject the existence of this role, but

[2] See for example Bassett (1996) on the fragmentation of the intellectuals' function in the university sector in Britain.

need to preserve some of its distinctive features i.e. his/her critical and oppositional role. In order to challenge Foucault's division of intellectuals he argues, following Sartre, that there is a tension – and not an opposition – between the universal and particular ambitions of intellectuals. As he says:

> [M]edicine, law, physics, philosophy, art and so on are to serve all the people; they are *universal* goods and values. But in a class society, knowledge and techniques are not used for the good of all. Only wealthy people in a certain class can afford adequate medical care, the best lawyers, exciting travel and so on. Only those with a certain level of education can read philosophy and appreciate modern art; only those with a certain amount of leisure can enjoy culture. Thus, certain groups and individuals monopolize the knowledge and techniques of the intellectual: they use the intellectual's production to increase and enhance ruling class domination and privileges. (Kellner, 1995: 434)

He adds that this tension is also felt by intellectuals themselves, those 'beings in contradiction' (ibid: 435) who are, on the one hand, independent in their possession of knowledge geared towards universal and human ends, while, on the other hand, dependent, "subservient to the ends of the state, ruling elites, corporations and other social forces" (ibid: 434). This contradictory stance results in intellectuals developing a position as critics, opposing the ideology of their own societies.

Kellner leaves Sartre here to theorise the changing role of intellectuals in contemporary high-tech societies. In this next context, he argues, intellectuals need to update their skills by keeping up with new technologies such as computers so that they can participate in debates and discussions "produced by broadcasting and computing technologies" (ibid: 438). Equally, intellectuals must keep some of their 'old', traditional skills, e.g. being critics of issues that have, traditionally, been the object of intellectuals' debates: "Questions concerning norms and principles of criticism and discussion, of balancing freedom and rights, of how to promote democracy – indeed, on what constitutes genuine democracy (ibid: 446).

Kellner's account posits an interesting example of how sociologists strive to define the functions of intellectuals in contemporary society. What this suggests to me is a model of theorising that is *static* in the sense that intellectuals are merely participants whose purposefulness to society has been rearranged according to new prevailing conditions. From this perspective, intellectuals do not participate in the creation of new values but

merely oppose them. Although there is room to say that intellectual critique can be a starting point for constituting cultural transformation, Kellner does not go as far as to suggest this. It is time now to turn our attention to Eyerman and Jamison (1995) for a *dynamic* perspective on intellectuals. The importance of their discussion here lies in highlighting a central concern of this thesis, which is the exploration of intellectual practices in the constitution of social worldviews or, as Eyerman and Jamison argue, in the transformation of cultural processes.

In their article 'Social movements and cultural transformation: popular music in the 1960s' Eyerman and Jamison (1995) explore the relationship between the social activity of movement intellectuals in the 1960s - that is, of "those individuals who through their activities articulate the knowledge interests and cognitive identity of social movements" (ibid: 450) – and their role in transforming popular culture. Their analytical framework is a cognitive approach that perceives social movements as:

> [K]nowledge producers, as social forces opening spaces for the production of new forms of knowledge. By focusing on the cognitive dimension, we attempt to make the content of social movement activity, rather than its form or organization, the central focus of analysis. (Eyerman and Jamison, 1995: 450)

Their premise is that social movements transcend their own particular situations of emergence and create new contexts where they articulate a cognitive identity or praxis. This is an important point in their argument because it shows that the focus of their study is on intellectual practice. As they put it, their approach:

> [C]alls attention to the creative role of consciousness and cognition in all human action, individual and collective ... [Movement intellectuals] may be recognized 'intellectuals' outside this movement context or they may not. What is important is the role played, and in that sense constituted, *within* a social movement. (Eyerman and Jamison, 1995: 450)

This investigation into the specificities of 'intellectual activity' as the focus of cultural change offers a novel perspective in relation to those accounts of intellectuals that theorise their role in relation to overarching changes i.e. high-tech societies (Kellner, 1995) or new regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980). Eyerman and Jamison's study offers a valuable reference point that illustrates the analytical approach to intellectuals pursued in this thesis. That is, a study of the specificities of practice that intends to engage with broader

sociological questions such as social and cultural change. This review has attempted to show how the concerns and questions that inform sociological studies of intellectuals are gradually shifting. Sociologists are attempting to come to terms with how social and cultural changes affect the roles and functions of intellectuals.[3] Eyerman and Jamison (1995) offer us a provocative approach, which suggests that intellectuals themselves can be not only determined by their own context, but also that their practices are instrumental tools for cultural change. This line of investigation sets up a useful model that this thesis wants to investigate in the context of a modern art collection: can we argue that the intellectual practice of making an art collection is a locus of cultural or social change? But before this question can be answered we need to explore the extent to which the literature on collecting allows us to theorise art collection making as an intellectual practice.

1.1 and collecting

This section provides a review of the literature on collecting. It explores the question: in what ways, if any, does the literature on collections allow us to think of collections as the outcome of intellectual practices? Studies on collecting and collections lie at the crossroads of a number of academic disciplines: museum studies, art history, archaeology, and psychology, to name a few. A main distinction in investigations across various disciplines is that between private and public collecting. An interesting argument suggested in explorations into private collecting is how this type of practice mediates individuals' relationship to the world. Elsner and Cardinal (1994: 3) refer to a taste in collecting as "a mirror of self." Stewart (1993: xii) argues that private collecting is a way of objectifying an individual's desire. Baudrillard (1994: 7) notes that all objects, which are owned, possessed, are divested of their function and made relative to a subject. The case of collecting objects constitutes a particular system in which "the subject seeks to piece together his world, his personal microcosm." As Baudrillard explains:

> In reciprocal fashion, the person of the collector is only constituted as such by dint of substituting itself for every successive term in the collecting process. We shall see that there is, at the sociological level, an exact congruity of structure with the system of the series or the paradigmatic chain. For we shall find that the collection or the series is what underpins the possession of the object, which is to say, the reciprocal integration of object with person. (Baudrillard, 1994: 12)

[3] My purpose in this thesis is not to intervene in the debate over what specific traits are to be assigned to the label 'intellectual'. Rather, I refer to intellectuals, following Bourdieu, in relation to their position in a given intellectual field in which they exercise a set of intellectual practices. See section 3.3 in this chapter.

In her book on the individual practices of collecting - *On Collecting. An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (1995) - Pearce suggests that collecting is a form of social practice that can offer us a crucial understanding of social life. This assertion is based on the premise, firstly, that through collecting we construct the way in which we relate to the material world and thus collections offer a fertile ground for investigating human experience (ibid: 4). Secondly, and most importantly, collecting for Pearce ranks high in a hierarchy of social practices given that collections are "one of our principal ways of structuring our relationships with the human world" (ibid: 234). For example, we can think of collections as extensions of the self because we not only relate to society through the practice of collecting, but we also construct our personality/ies in the process (ibid: 159). Nonetheless, this argument raises the question: is it possible to argue that collecting can be an intellectual practice?

Public collecting

If collections exemplify how individuals relate to the world, it is possible to say that the practices of art intellectuals involved in the making of public art collections embed particular views of the social world. In other words, these views provide grounds for the following hypothesis: collecting is a practice constitutive of a social worldview. This argument becomes relevant when we focus on the topic of public collecting, a practice that emerged with the foundation of public museums around the 18th century.

Investigations of art collections have explored their role and position in the social order of modernity. According to this line of thought, modernity brought a change in the nature of power, and art collections reflected this distinction between 'public' and 'princely' collections. In the 17th century, princely collections recreated a world vision around the central figure of the prince, a symbolic representation that stood for his dominion over reality, and justified his position as sovereign (Hooper-Greenhil, 1989: 64). Princely collections of pictures "were meant to celebrate the power and wisdom of the prince, and to dazzle courtiers and visitors with a tangible show of his splendour" (Pearce, 1992: 93). Around the 18th century formerly private or princely collections were transferred to state or public museums and although collections inherited the "universal or encyclopaedic idea of the world-in-microcosm" (ibid: 99), they began to be divided into different fields i.e. natural history, 'art' (high art and craftsmanship) and 'artificial' (or other human artefacts). The emergence of public museums meant that collections came to represent not the power of

the prince but the worldview of modernity;[4] an evolutionary narrative that validated the belief that modern man was the apex of Western civilisation (Bennett, 1995: 97). Anthropologists and art historians have provided some excellent studies on collecting, such as (Clifford, 1988) and (Coombes, 1994), for example. These views, however, suggest a tendency to analyse collections as mediators between their material form and the realm of significance that they represent. In this sense, as Pomian says, collections articulate "the opposition between the visible and the invisible" (1990: 24).

It is useful to refer in what follows to Pearce's (1992, 1995) studies on collections because they allow us, firstly, to make connections between art collections as the outcome of intellectual practices aimed at re-creating aesthetic value. Secondly, Pearce's arguments also provide a crucial understanding about the centrality of collecting in the creation of social worldviews. In her study *Museums, objects and collections* (1992) she emphasises the social character of both museums and art collections. As she says:

> [M]useums as institutions, and the collections which they hold, are one of the characteristic modern meta-narratives through which society, in its ideas about knowledge and reality, has been constituted since roughly the middle of the fifteenth century. (Pearce, 1992: 118)

More specifically, she asserts that the role of museums and collections consists not only in drawing on the history and philosophy of knowledge of their period to shape public perceptions of what is valuable and important, but also that "this history and philosophy is in part also created by them" (1992: 89). Pearce then situates the task of museums and collections as agents of this intellectual enterprise. Having said that, her focus is on the intellectual and aesthetic rationales informing collections, rather than on the *practices* that constitute the making of art collections. Hence, her investigation is an enquiry into the *intellectual rationale* expressed and created through collections – as opposed to my own approach on what the making of collections can help to explain about *intellectual practices*. Museum collections are, for Pearce, "the real objects" or material evidences that verify a modern narrative (ibid: 4). Nonetheless, she acknowledges the intellectual nature of those involved in the making of public collections, what she calls the "curatorial meta-narrative" (ibid: 119): "The people [who formed collections] did what they did because their activities seemed to them to reflect, in a satisfactory and prestigious way, the intellectual climate of

[4] I distinguish 'public collections' meaning collections accessible to the public from 'public collections' as those collections that were publicly owned. Usually the beginning of public displays in the 18th century did not immediately lead to a change in the ownership of collections from private to public hands (Lorente: 1998: 19).

their times, and ... helped to underwrite and stabilize the intellectual tradition to which they had committed an important part of themselves" (ibid: 116). Although Pearce is not offering a systematic study of the practice of making a single public collection, she illustrates how their intellectual rationale can be explored through an emphasis on the practice of collecting:

> It is an instructive exercise to take any collection or group of associated museum objects and ask, not 'What are they?' and 'What can this tell us?', which are the usual museum questions, but rather, 'When and how was the collection formed?', 'Who formed it?' and 'Why did this person/these people chose to assemble these objects?' The answers to the first question tell us about what collecting procedures were considered intellectually appropriate at the time. (Pearce, 1992: 116)

Another central point in Pearce's study is her view on the changing role of museums in the so-called postmodern period. As we approach the 21st century previous forms of knowledge and collecting are becoming inadequate. The visual classification of material into groupings "seemed to lack contact with the human communities from which the material had come, and real understanding remained elusive" (ibid: 109). This also applies to art displays, which "seemed to miss the heart of the aesthetic experience" (ibid: 109). She then elaborates her argument on the terrain of museum practice as follows:

> The upshot of this [attachment to local communities] was a growing desire to appreciate material and understanding in terms of relationships which drew different threads together rather than which selected out like with like; to look, in a word, in terms of context rather than classification, to see the world in terms of separate articulating communities rather than of overarching systems ... It was also ... admirably suited to a new kind of museum display which both demonstrated how the new thinking went, and reinforced it through the imaginative power of the exhibitions it could inspire. (Pearce, 1992: 110)

The above quote provides an interesting insight into how museum professionals have changed the ways in which they use collections. In the past, collections were deployed to classify the world according to overarching systems. At present, the emphasis is on a form of display that makes visible the division of the world into communities. The problem lies in the way Pearce articulates how the new rationale is adopted by a new type of museum displays – although Pearce does not mention them, it is possible to include collecting practices here. She uses the terms 'demonstrate' and 'reinforce' to characterise the link

between practice and a world now consisting of separate communities. As a result, the situation of museum practices changes from being a constitutive element in the creation of a worldview called modernity, to being disassociated from this task. If we extend this argument to the realm of the arts, we could say that art collections are now representations of the social world, but their role in constituting e.g. a worldview such as postmodernity has collapsed. As we will see, Bauman's arguments on postmodernity and intellectual practice show a similar theoretical gap because for him the task of intellectuals in postmodernity has been disassociated from its previous role in the making of a modern worldview.

An additional, but related problem in the theorising of collecting and postmodernity is the view that the practice of collecting has no standards to follow. Pearce makes this argument in referring to postmodern collecting as follows:

> At first sight, post-modern collecting, like the post-modern world, might appear to have abandoned the old cultural parameters of the long term in favour of eclectic freedom, both personal and material. Notions of classification and relationship, including those where value judgements are implicit, seem to have been subverted in favour of idiosyncratic assemblage which has no point of reference beyond individual quirks of partiality. The breakdown of traditional material structuring can be linked with the dissolution of other traditional social parameters – the family, authority, law and order and so on. This is accompanied by the now-inevitable agony on the part of the professionals involved, here museum curators, who embark on honest endeavours to come to terms with the new world. (Pearce, 1995: 149)

Added to the collapse of collections as constitutive elements in the creation of a worldview, is the lack of standards in collecting. A form of 'idiosyncratic assemblage', which follows no external point of reference, has replaced the possibility of value judgements in the selection of collections. Overall, the arguments presented here on the practice of collecting do not offer a very optimistic picture. Collections in modernity were constitutive of a worldview of the same name. This role has been lost in contemporary society where they are used to represent a world now divided into communities. Postmodern collecting does not follow the same parameters, or overarching systems, which had previously informed the display of collections. Value judgements behind collecting are now regarded as the idiosyncratic taste of those who collect. If intellectuals can no longer make value judgements, and the practice of collecting follows no classifications of relationships, how can we study the making of collections? It seems that we can use these debates as a theoretical ground to be tested

with the empirical study that this thesis offers, as opposed to seeing them as a sign of despair or impossibility of theorising the making of collections. What we need then is a theory of intellectual practices, which acknowledges the role of contemporary intellectuals in the making of aesthetic value. With this aim in mind, I introduce next the two theorists whose work I will be discussing in the rest of this chapter: Zygmunt Bauman and Pierre Bourdieu.

1.2 On Zygmunt Bauman and Pierre Bourdieu

Zygmunt Bauman started his academic career as a sociologist in Poland from where he was exiled in 1968 after being expelled along with other prominent university teachers (Kilminster and Varcoe, 1996: 6). After a brief period at the University of Tel Aviv, he went to Britain taking up the Chair of Sociology at the University of Leeds in 1971, which he held until his retirement in 1990. In 1989 he was reinstated in his Chair of Sociology at the University of Warsaw (ibid: 23-4). He started to publish his works in English at the end of the 1960s, but the most intensive period of his production started in the late 1980s and continues until the present times. Described as "a general sociologist ... who has resisted the pressure to specialize" (ibid: 215), Bauman's interests range from socialism, culture, intellectuals, ethics, to modernity and postmodernity, and globalisation. As opposed to Bourdieu, Bauman's position in the British academic system has not led him to base his writings on this particular geographical context.

Pierre Bourdieu started his academic career in France at the end of the 1950s. He was a prolific writer since then until his death in 2002. This circumstance is reflected in his choice of topics of investigation most of which – apart from his early work in Algeria (1977a) - are based in the French context: art museums, the creation of art taste, the academic world, and the journalistic field, are some examples of this tendency. One of Bourdieu's key developments of his intellectual career is his theory of practice and, more specifically, his vision of the social world as structured around fields where social actors interact. Bourdieu's studies of intellectuals and, particularly of the sociology of arts and culture have been the object of considerable analysis and criticism. However, the amount of interest in Bourdieu's work must not mislead us to think that 'everything has been said about Bourdieu'. As we will see, my interest is to open up an area of enquiry that, I think, has been obliterated by commentators of his oeuvre: the relationship between intellectual practice, aesthetic value and his theory of change.

2 Zygmunt Bauman's theory of intellectuals

In introducing Bauman's sociology of intellectuals, my aim is to explore the role of Bauman's intellectuals in the realm of the arts, while emphasising the changing nature of their position as participants in the making of the social order. This task is also filling a gap in reviews of Bauman's work. In fact, his overall oeuvre has yet to generate a sustained interest. The amount of criticism on Bauman's writings is relatively small in comparison to Bourdieu's, whose work I refer to later in this chapter. This is not to say that Bauman's contribution has not been acknowledged – as is shown by the publication of reviews and compilations of his views (Kilminster and Varcoe, 1996; Beilharz, 2000; Smith, 1999; Bauman and Tester, 2001). Hence it is not surprising to see Bauman praised as the "greatest sociologist writing in English" (Beilharz, 2001), and his writings on intellectuals as contributing more "to the sociology of intellectuals than any other writer in the twentieth century" (Beilharz, 2000: 87). However, this praise is not followed by significant responses to his works on intellectuals, which have been rather fragmented. Some relevant examples are Outhwaite (1999) who reacts against Bauman's argument for a legislative intellectual practice of modernity as paying little attention to differences in orientation between classical social theorists. For Frow (1995: 138) the problem lies in Bauman's model for the practices of postmodern intellectuals. While asserting the validity and specificity of intellectual practices, it also constitutes each domain as "hermetically sealed from each of the others".

Another line of criticism focuses on Bauman's theories on modernity and postmodernity in which he situates the changing role of intellectuals. Kellner, for example, sees Bauman's views on intellectuals as lacking since they do not "constitute a full analysis of postmodernity" (1998: 81-2). Seidman (1994: 339) accuses Bauman of not following his own preaching in his call for a sociology of postmodernity: "Does not Bauman's typology of societies in terms of premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity reflect the categorizing, ordering, legislative reasoning of the Enlightenment that he detects?". He notes that this problem could be addressed by submitting the social position of the sociologist to scrutiny. A similar argument can be found in Best (1998: 317) for whom Bauman's analyses of the postmodern are built upon "modernity conceptions of the 'social'". Although these comments do not help us to understand the complexity of Bauman's sociology of intellectuals, they provide us with a point of departure because they have not focused on the relevance of Bauman's views on intellectuals to the understanding of social and cultural change.

2.1 Modernity and legislators

In *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987) Bauman sets up a framework for his sociology of intellectuals. He uses the terms modernity and postmodernity to theorise a shift in the nature of intellectual practices. In modernity the ideal type of intellectual practice was that of legislators, whereas in postmodernity prevails the task of interpreters (ibid: 3). Bauman wants to move away from definitions based on a set of characteristics or professions whose members are intellectuals (ibid: 18). Instead, he proposes to explain the category in relation to the role intellectuals perform in the reproduction and development of the social order (ibid: 18). His project then from the outset has a twofold aim: to explain modernity and postmodernity as two different understandings of the social world and of intellectual practices. Initially, his theory seems particularly adequate for this purpose given the central role of intellectuals in the cultural sphere, although as I will argue, his notion of 'legislators' and 'modern art' is rather reductive.

Bauman situates the emergence of legislators in Western Europe during the Enlightenment era. Intellectuals are crucial participants in the making of a social order: their work is the implementation of modernity. The combination of two developments enables this association; a new type of state power geared towards setting up a "social system according to a preconceived model of order" and the establishment of a "relatively autonomous, self-managing discourse", that of intellectuals, "able to generate such a model" (ibid: 2). Knowledge is a key word here. It is the resource intellectuals use in their own practice, that is, "making authoritative statements which arbitrate in controversies of opinions" (ibid: 4). In addition, access to knowledge legitimates the authority of intellectuals, differentiating their task from "the non-intellectual part of society" (ibid: 4) that does not enjoy the same type of access to knowledge. More specifically, it legitimated their role "as spokesmen and guardians of society as a whole, as carriers/practitioners of society's supreme values and destiny" (1995: 227). With knowledge as their operative tool, intellectuals pronounced authoritative statements, ordered, segregated and classified, imposed binding definitions upon reality (1987: 133). The result of this knowledge-making enterprise was "the attainment of truth, the arrival at valid moral judgement, and the selection of proper artistic taste" (ibid: 4-5). But most importantly, it is the use of "procedural rules" in the formulation of knowledge, which characterises the intellectuals' practice. As Bauman explains:

> The employment of such procedural rules makes the intellectual professions (scientists, moral philosophers, aesthetes) collective owners of knowledge of direct and crucial relevance to the maintenance and perfection of the social order. The condition of this being so is the work of the 'intellectuals proper' – meta-professionals, so to speak – to be responsible for the formulation of procedural rules and to control their correct application. (Bauman, 1987: 5)

This view of intellectuals as mediating between the use and control of rules and the formulation of knowledge echoes Bourdieu's view of intellectual practice, which is also based on the use of particular tools – e.g. symbolic capital, symbolic power. However, the crucial difference between the two and what I think is a benefit in Bauman's contribution is that from the outset he situates intellectual practices at the core of social change. In fact, it is the end of the association between intellectuals and the state that precipitates the postmodern worldview and its associated intellectual practices. The problem of this view of change, as I will argue later, is that while it gives us a detailed account of a new context driven by market forces, he does not develop sufficiently the category 'interpreters' as an analytical tool for empirical analysis. However, in the case of legislators, Bauman is quite specific about the remit of this type of intellectual task. Let me illustrate this by looking at their role in the realm of aesthetics.

2.2 Legislating modern art

According to Bauman, intellectuals co-operated with the modern state to create a body of knowledge that would produce and support a theory of social order: culture. This theory of culture was based on the premise that men and women were unprepared to meet the demands of social life, and that these demands could only be met through education. We find legislators formulating conceptualisations of modernity in areas such as ethics, science, psychology, history, and the arts. Another objective informing their practices was a theory of history that projected Western Europe in opposition to the rest of the world. Legislators helped to implement modernity by providing it with its self-definition: it was the kingdom of Reason and rationality, according to which other forms of life were seen as wanting (1987: 111). Bauman takes us through a list of authors, such as Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, Elias, and Simmel who have created particular worldviews of modernity, and presents those attempts as examples of the cohesion in the practices of legislators. Their different perspectives are, for Bauman, "no more than family quarrels", while he emphasises their "close kinship bond between the apparently antagonistic views" (ibid: 115). However, this argument has

become a point of contention because, as Outhwaite (1999) points out, it is difficult to find representatives in the social sciences that fit into Bauman's notion of legislators:

> [I]t becomes difficult to find any who would count as modernists in Bauman's strong sense. Many prima facie modernists are as fallibilist, tentative, modest and even querulous as any postmodernist could wish; conversely, it is not difficult to find self-styled post-modernists pontificating as dogmatically as Durkheim at his worst. The point is, I think, that idealized logics of argumentation count for less than disciplinary and individual variation in intellectual style. (Outhwaite, 1999: 11)

This quote highlights, I think, the need to keep in mind not only differences in perspectives amongst legislators, but also how the boundaries between modern and postmodern intellectual practices are not as clear cut as Bauman's views suggest. If we look at the making of artistic judgement by legislators, we see a similar argument suggesting a form of intellectual practice, which was able to neutralise external threats, that is, alternative intellectual practices. In fact, for Bauman, aesthetics is the area in which the legislators' authority, power and control remained most ubiquitous and unchallenged, virtually monopolistic (1987: 134,140).

While legislators articulated their knowledge in a variety of fields, the realm of art was used to validate the idea that what was represented in modern/modernist art (Bauman uses these two terms interchangeably) was a reflection of the principles on which modernity was based. This sort of 'reflection' or, as Bauman puts it, "broadcasting on the same wavelength as their intellectual analysts and critics" (ibid: 133) took different forms. For example, artists learnt about the discourses of optics, science, psychoanalysis, which would then apply to their practice.[5] The implications are clear; legislators were then able to designate the art of their time as a reflection of the precepts of modernity. As Bauman says:

> [M]odern art seldom broke with the *Zeitgeist* of the modern era; it shared fully and wholeheartedly in this era's search for truth, its scientific methods of analysis, its conviction that reality can be – and should be – subjected to the control of Reason. The modernist artists broadcast on the same wavelength as their intellectual analysts and critics. They confronted their analysts and critics with tasks they could handle well, and were accustomed to handle by their professional training and inherited, institutionalised aesthetics. The analysts and the

[5] This is the case of Surrealists artists such as Salvador Dalí who attempted to represent in their work the world of the subconscious, which was a main tenet of psychoanalytic studies.

> critics could find many a development in modernist art a puzzle –but they knew that this puzzle had a solution, and they had the means to find it. (Bauman, 1987: 133-34)

The authority of legislators was sometimes questioned by what Bauman calls "the vulgar", or a "taste without legitimacy". However, in his argument, this non-legitimate taste ultimately served to reinforce the legitimacy of legislators' practices. It was the necessary opposite to validate the legitimacy of sanctioned art (ibid: 135). If legislators retained the autonomy of artistic judgement, the emergence of an expanding middle class with their aesthetic taste, or "alternative criteria", threatened not only the existing hierarchy of aesthetic judgement, but also the power of those who exercised this legislative authority (ibid: 135-6). In the end, however, this 'threat' is not sufficient to bring to a halt the monopolistic rule of legislators. As he says:

> [T]he general structure of modern society, with its in-built cult of education, truth, science and reason (and respect for the authority of those who embodied such values) guaranteed a mechanism through which the potential threats to elitist judgement could be absorbed and thus neutralized. For all practical intents and purposes, superiority of sophisticated aesthetic judgement was never truly put in question, however often it was resented or disregarded. (Bauman, 1987: 137)

Bauman offers us an interesting argument where the making of aesthetic judgement is linked, through the practice of legislators, to the articulation of the worldview of modernity. This, as I pointed out above, is an important strength of his model. However, there are a number of points to be raised about the practices of legislators and his notion of modern art.

As we have seen, Bauman mentions the existence of alternative tastes, which seem to pose a 'threat' to the ruling of legislators. However, in his argument this fact is used to highlight the monopolistic power of legislators, which was not challenged by these attempts. In so doing, Bauman does not give enough importance to the struggles between fractions of intellectuals, and their effects in promoting particular forms of aesthetic value. This, as we will see, is a key point in Bourdieu's theory of intellectual practices. However, he is not the only proponent of this view. Kellner (1995), for example, points out how the rise of modern societies led to the emergence of critical intellectuals who opposed the status quo. As he says:

> Thus, intellectuals were split into those critical and oppositional individuals who opposed injustice and oppression, as contrasted to those producers of ideology who legitimated the forms of class, race and gender domination and inequality in modern societies. (Kellner, 1995: 427)

For Bauman, the role of critical intellectuals is in the hands of "the 'intelligentsia' of the civilizational periphery" (1995: 228). Classifying countries according to an opposition around 'centre' and 'periphery' was one of the tasks of legislators. Peripheral countries were defined as 'uncivilised', and 'lagging behind', and thus needing to embrace foreign, civilising patterns. Their role was that of bringing modernity into the 'periphery'. As Bauman explains:

> They positioned themselves, at least mentally, outside the native reality, and that mental distance condensed both the 'reality' and their own condition into 'objective' entities sharply opposed to, and at war with, each other. In this opposition, native reality was constituted as an object of thorough and deliberate transformation, and/or as an obstacle to such a transformation which needs to be broken if the desired transformation is to take place. (Bauman, 1995: 229)

Here the term 'critical intellectuals' differs from Kellner's idea of 'oppositional individuals'. In this definition, intellectuals in the 'periphery' became critics who embraced the transformation of their own allegedly 'backward' society into a modern, civilised society. They were participants in their own domination. Hence, although Bauman acknowledges the existence of different types of intellectuals, his work does not provide us with a sense of struggle amongst various factions. The monopolistic role of legislators, for Bauman, remains unchallenged.

This argument is relevant because it highlights a lack of theorising of the different intellectual practices prevalent in the era of legislators. It is also particularly important because the present study is located in what used to be a 'peripheral country': Ireland. Although its focus is not on the practices of modernity's intellectuals, chapter 3 goes some way towards providing an alternative view to Bauman's notion of critical intellectuals in the periphery. It shows how intellectual practices in the realm of aesthetic judgement were not merely oriented towards transforming a 'native' type of painting. In fact, intellectuals struggled to legitimate two forms of aesthetic value: local and international (Herrero, 2002). My final point is that Bauman's notion of legislators only applies to intellectuals in

modernity's 'core' countries. This is an important issue because a key argument in this thesis is that contemporary intellectual practices share modern and postmodern traits. In the last part of this discussion I present Bauman's concept of postmodernity, and its associated intellectual practice, that of interpreters.

2.3 Postmodernity: a theory of change

Bauman's concept of interpreters brings to the fore the end of a relationship between intellectual practices and the making of modernity's social order. I would like to assess now his general model of contemporary intellectual practices in the postmodern setting, which constitutes the core of his theory of social change. Given that interpreters are no longer in charge of making aesthetic value, I do not focus in much detail on his ideas on postmodern art (1987; 1992a; 1997).[6]

Bauman situates the emergence of postmodernity as a distinct intellectual practice in the redundancy in the postmodern world of the practice of legislators. The loss of direction and feeling of anxiety of intellectuals is, for Bauman, the "true reference of the concept of 'postmodernity'" (1992a: 101). Intellectuals are experiencing then a sense of anxiety and loss of direction arising from the feeling that they can no longer provide their traditional services as legislators. Three factors have contributed to this situation. Firstly, the task of establishing universal standards of truth, morality, and taste has become irrelevant (ibid: 96-7). The lack of need for these standards is due to wider changes in the nature of power or structure of domination. In modernity, the reproduction of domination was carried by the state through intellectual (legitimating) practices. The change occurred when political power freed itself from its dependence on the legitimating discourse of intellectuals. Added to the redundancy of intellectuals' authority there is now no historical agent to which the knowledge of legislators could be addressed (ibid: 97). Bauman speaks of the "invisibility of intellectuals" to express the loss of interest in what intellectuals say or do (1992b: 97).

A second factor is the replacement of political domination carried out by the modern state and its allied intellectuals by two complementary means of social control, integration, and the reproduction of domination (1992a: 112): seduction and repression. Seduction stands for market-dependency. That is, the dependency of consumers on the market, and it is "the paramount tool of integration (of the reproduction of domination)" (ibid: 97-8). Repression stands for 'panoptical' power. It remains the paramount tool of subordination of non-

[6] I have dealt with the topic of modern and postmodern art in a conference paper (Herrero, 2001).

consumers, a "margin of society which cannot be absorbed by market dependency" (ibid: 98). Some of the techniques central to panoptic control are "surveillance, 'correction', welfare supervision, 'medicalization', or 'psychiatrization', as well as the servicing of the general legal/penal system" (ibid: 15).

A third factor undermining the status of legislators is the expropriation of culture, which was perceived as the private property of intellectuals. In the new culture of consumption intellectuals have no role to play. Instead, culture is controlled by gallery owners, publishers, and television managers (ibid: 100). Intellectuals must now play by the rules of the market, in which they need to find their own 'share'. As Bauman puts it:

> [I]ntellectual messages must vie for their "share of the market" (that is, the share of public attention) with other competitors, following common rules of the competitive game. Like other products, they need game experts (the specialists in advertising or "hard selling") to stand a chance of success. Like other commodities, they must pass the test of the market – demonstrate (win) their saleability. It is the passing of that test that weighs much heavier than any other conceivable trait on the destiny of the intellectual engagement with social reality. (Bauman, 1992b: 100)

The question is: in light of these changes, how does Bauman theorise the role of intellectuals in the artworld? The contemporary art market imposes its own criteria of judgement and its own sites of authority. In this context, the philosophers or aestheticians of modernity no longer legitimate art value. In fact, the loss of the intellectuals' position is what has made visible their former activity:

> [T]he role of the 'activity of art worlds' could remain invisible to the theorists as long as the art world which assigned reputations was confined, more or less strictly, to the theorists themselves. The role cannot remain invisible once the loss of control 'objectified, 'alienated' the products of the theorists activity and made them into a *Vorhanden*, an object for scrutiny and reflection. (Bauman, 1987: 138)

This quote suggests that in modernity the activity of art worlds was not visible to intellectuals when they used it as a platform to implement their theories. It is only now that intellectuals no longer play a part in theorising the aesthetic that their task has become an 'object for scrutiny.' However, Bauman also seems to suggest that the role of a modern

artworld was challenged by the advent of postmodern art. Its arrival has made the role of legislators redundant because they no longer can apply their modernist frameworks of knowledge to interpret its meaning. As he explains:

> The puzzle presented by post-modernist art, on the other hand, is one which truly baffles its analysts. The feeling of bewilderment and being lost in the maze of new developments results from the absence of the comfortable conviction that the new is just more of the same, an unfamiliar form of the familiar, that it is only a matter of time for it to lose its strangeness, to be intellectually tamed, that the tools sufficient for the job are available and one knows how to apply them. (Bauman, 1987: 134)

The suggestion here is that postmodern art cannot be legislated because its content is radically different from that of modern art; it is not "just more of the same". This adds a new dimension to Bauman's argument so far about how the change in the social conditions of their practice has brought the legislators' role to an end. It gives postmodern art a role to play as a factor that impedes the legislators' task. The notion of postmodern art in Bauman's theory of intellectual and social change is a very interesting topic of enquiry. However, interpreters are not in charge of defining this type of art, which means that it cannot help us shed some new light on Bauman's model of postmodern interpreters. In what follows I discuss his proposal for a contemporary intellectual practice. I illustrate this theory with the example of an interpreting sociology, as a possible role for interpreters.

2.4 Postmodern interpreters as a model of intellectual practice

Bauman deploys the term postmodern to theorise a new social context, and a change in intellectual practices. In modernity legislators were "meta-professionals" (Bauman, 1987: 5); they formulated procedural rules as well as controlling their application. Their practice was the ultimate source of validation for their own knowledge. In postmodernity, the global order of modernity is now split into many "local, partial, functionally specific and privately policed mini-orders" (1992a: 89). Individuals conduct their lives at the intersection of these partial orders.[7] Their validation is in the hands of the "relatively autonomous set of practices" of interpreters (Bauman, 1987: 4). Validation is facilitated by the criteria developed within particular traditions or communities: "upheld by the habits and beliefs of a 'community of meanings' [this criterion] ... admits of no other tests of legitimacy" (ibid: 4).

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[7] In several of his later works Bauman has explored how individuals manage their every day lives in this arena of freedom and uncertainty. Some relevant contributions are: *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (1992), *Postmodern Ethics* (1993), *Life in Fragments* (1995), and *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (1997).

Another role of interpreters is to become translators between statements made in different communities, with their different knowledge systems. Interpreters then are experts in "preventing the distortion of meaning in the process of communication" (ibid: 5).

There is an important distinction to be made between the role of interpreters and the validation of postmodern communities. For Bauman the interpreting strategy is aimed at validating each of the many models of order (ibid: 4). A key difference in his definition is that, as opposed to legislators, interpreting is not a strategy "orientated towards selecting the best social order" (ibid: 5). Instead, the knowledge interpreters produce is only valid within their own community. This point becomes clear if we compare it with the role of legislators. This was an extra-territorial practice, which was "not bound by localized, communal traditions" (ibid: 5). They created their own rules, which had universal validity. The employment of such rules was directed towards the selection of the best social order. This is why only legislators owned knowledge of crucial relevance to the maintenance of a social order called modernity.

In this new model of intellectual practices, Bauman is also making an argument for the co-existence of both the legislating and the interpretative practice. For him the intellectual type of modernity has not been "conclusively superseded by the advent of postmodernity" (ibid: 6). Instead, we have a situation in which two types of practice are possible. As he says:

> It is vitally important to note that the post-modern strategy does not imply the elimination of the modern one; on the contrary, it cannot be conceived without the continuation of the latter. While the post-modern strategy entails the abandonment of the universalistic ambitions of the intellectuals' own tradition, it does not abandon the universalistic ambitions of the intellectuals towards their own tradition; here, they retain their meta-professional authority, legislating about the procedural rules which allow them to arbitrate controversies of opinion and make statements intended as binding. (Bauman, 1987: 5)

The legislating authority or criteria of postmodern intellectuals take place within communities since "[s]ystems of knowledge may only be evaluated from 'inside' their respective traditions" (ibid: 4). Hence only inside their own community, are intellectuals able to "assure the survival of certainty, the dominion of reason" because their criteria depend on its validation by one such tradition. Within their communities intellectuals "supply their criteria for criticism"; they "spell out the rules which decide who are the rational discussants

and who are not" (ibid: 145). Outside postmodern communities there are no criteria, that is, external authorities, in charge of legitimating local practices. The survival of certainty is only validated "by the strength of [the intellectuals'] own work alone" (ibid: 145).

The new postmodern context has been seen as beneficial to intellectuals who now can 'speak without strings':

> Intellectuals, freed from their legislative role, unwanted by the contemporary state, have a chance – an opportunity – to develop their discourses unhindered by power considerations of the type that formerly held them in thrall. They can become interpreters. They can simply offer up their ideas to whoever will listen, so to speak, without strings. (Kilminster and Varcoe, 1996: 231)

However, underlying this argument is a homogeneous view of intellectuals in modernity as merely those who collaborated with the state to implement this worldview. As I said, it is possible to see a more critical role for intellectuals. If we allow for a view of modern intellectuals, which encompasses the possibility of speaking without strings, the new freedom of interpreters is not such a novelty. Frow (1995) praises Bauman's model of a "community of meanings" for its openness towards the structures of value of different social groups. Communities, as value systems, assert the "validity and the local specificity of a plurality of practices and codes of valuation." In so doing, he says, this model "refuses to maintain the privilege of any one culture over any other" (ibid: 138). I would disagree with Frow's suggestion that recognising the existence of intellectual communities entails a refusal to reproduce the privileged position of some cultures over others. There are other factors, such as economic capital, which continue to privilege some cultures – e.g. consumer culture – over others. In order to have a wider picture of the practice of interpreters I focus next on Bauman's views of sociologists as interpreters.

Sociology as the skill of interpretation

In *Intimations of Postmodernity* (1992a: 103-113) Bauman explores the consequences of the changing intellectual climate for sociologists. He re-asserts his argument on the co-existence of legislating and interpreting practices: "finding the firm and unshakeable standards of true knowledge, true interpretation, defensible morality, genuine art, etc. is still a valid one, and the major task" (ibid: 103). This is particularly the case in the discipline of philosophy, which for Bauman is less affected by external factors – e.g. the withdrawal of

social recognition – than sociology. Sociology is in a state of crisis because it originated in response to a demand of the modern state. The skills of sociologists were developed as a response to the needs of the modern state, and financed by it. In short, sociologists as legislators produced two types of knowledge aimed at rationalising: the state and individual conduct (ibid: 108). The problem arises when the services of legislators became redundant to the modern state, for the reasons I discussed earlier. Sociologists are now faced by two possible choices: "seeking a new social application of [sociological] skills or seeking new skills" (ibid: 105). As a discipline, sociology then must adjust to the new conditions in order to self-reproduce: it must be resonant with its own social context (ibid: 90).

As I pointed out above, contemporary society is now split into many local, and partial mini-orders whose validation is the task of interpreters. One possible role for sociologists is to adapt to this new setting. To do so, sociology must become a self-reflexive, self-monitoring practice. In such a world sociological interpretations do not stand in an exclusive relation to others. As Bauman explains:

> Self-reflexivity and the ensuing flexibility of sociological commentary itself facilitates the activity of self-monitoring – as it demonstrates in practice (even if not in theory) the *non-exclusiveness* of any of the competing interpretations, the absence of a single *authoritative* standpoint from which unambiguous and universally binding pronouncements can be made, and the mutual interpretation and inter-feeding of interpretations and their ostensible objects which they generate while pretending to reflect. (Bauman, 1992a: 90)

A reflexive sociology can put into practice what seems to be a distinct trait of knowledge in the postmodern world: the lack of a hierarchy in which some interpretations are more authoritative than others. The object of sociological study is now positioned within a pluralism of 'life worlds' or 'communal traditions'. Hence the aim of sociologists is not to ascertain the 'truth' of a particular type of experience, but the "correctness of interpretation" of this experience. Here correctness points at the key role of sociologists in rendering messages "mutually communicable" between a plurality of traditions (1992a: 105-6).

A second possibility is what Bauman calls "the sociological equivalent of *l'art pour l'art*" (ibid: 107) or the practice of sociology for its own sake. Those sociologists who are not interested in interpretation and translation can still immerse themselves in their own

specialised discourse. This argument is linked to Bauman's view of a continuation of a modern intellectual strategy in a postmodern context (1987: 5). This is how he sees the task of sociologists who want to preserve modern hopes and ambitions under the conditions of postmodernity:

> It is one's own community, tradition, form of life, etc. which commands first loyalty; however small, it provides the only site wherein the intrinsic value of the discourse can be tended to, cultivated – and enjoyed. After all, the recognition of futility of universal standards, brought along by postmodernity, allows that self-centred concerns treat lightly everything outside criticism. (Bauman, 1992a: 107)

Sociologists are free to put in place this type of practice. However, for Bauman, this is a form of freedom coupled with irrelevance, because intellectuals are paying a price for it. They are "resigning the freedom to influence their actions and their results" (1992a: 106).

A third possibility is what he calls a 'sociology of postmodernity' (ibid: 111), which would apply existing methods of research to a new object of investigation: postmodern phenomena. It would be relevant to explore, for example, the relationship between the two forms of social control and domination in contemporary society: seduction and repression. Specific questions to ask would be how they combine and support each other, and their effects on "the tendency of political power, democratic institutions and citizenship" (ibid: 112).

In looking at the role of sociologists as interpreters Bauman offers a more specific set of guidelines for the possible tasks facing the discipline. Overall, sociologists need to adapt to a postmodern context by rendering their interpretations communicable between traditions. They can also become legislators within their own tradition, as this is the only possible territory where they can preserve the universalistic ambition of their knowledge. Finally, they can orient their interest towards the study of distinct changes brought about by the postmodern. While these possibilities offer an interesting theoretical ground to explore in the empirical research in this thesis, we still need to find an initial conceptual framework to complement it. We need to be able to situate how interpreters validate the many models of order, or communities; how they carry their role as translators between communities, and finally, how, if this is the case, they carry out their legislating practices.

This is where Bourdieu's notion of *field* can help us complement some of Bauman's ideas on communities. While Bourdieu does not distinguish between modern and postmodern fields, he provides a conceptual apparatus to explore the nature of contemporary intellectual practices, which is lacking in Bauman. However, I agree with Frow (1995: 138) who notes the need to explore the existence of any links between intellectual communities, a point that Bauman does not envision. To examine how criteria developed within one community can be taken up and developed by another community would provide a more dynamic model of intellectual practices. Yet an important point in Bauman is the differentiation of intellectual practices, and the possibility that both modern and postmodern practices can still co-exist. In that sense, his model is not static, but develops historically, as well as taking into account how this history can influence contemporary intellectual practices. As I pointed out, he accepts the possibility of co-existing legislating and interpreting strategies. An important issue, which deserves investigation, is to establish what kinds of situations call for one or the other of the two roles (1987: 146). In fact, this is the benefit of Bauman's contribution, which is lacking in Bourdieu: a historical and contemporary conceptualisation of intellectual practices in line with their participation in the making of alternative models of social order.

3 Bourdieu's sociology of intellectuals

Bourdieu's sociology of intellectuals can be seen as a continuation as well as a departure from central themes in the study of intellectuals. For example, his concern with the location of intellectuals within the social-class structure is also found amongst Marxists who relate the intellectual's political orientation to their location in a class structure (Swartz, 1997: 233). He is also part of a tradition that seeks to move away from attempts to define intellectuals in terms of personal characteristics (Eyerman, 1994: 1). But the departure from conventional approaches is what mostly distinguishes Bourdieu's sociology of intellectuals from previous attempts: namely, his study of intellectuals as symbolic producers is situated in what he calls 'intellectual fields.' As he says, "This or that particular intellectual, this or that artist, exists *as such* only because there is an intellectual or an artistic field" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 107). A key consideration in his approach is how intellectual fields do not exist in isolation, but as part of cultural fields. In other words, cultural fields – literary, fashion, academic – mediate specifically intellectual struggles over the production of cultural legitimacy for cultural works. Hence we find struggles over "who is an intellectual and what are specifically intellectual traits" (Swartz, 1997: 221); and struggles over the definition of value. The location of intellectuals in cultural fields has led some to argue that "[f]or Bourdieu, the sociology of intellectuals is in reality a sociology of

cultural fields" (ibid: 221). Problems arise when investigations into Bourdieu's sociology of culture obliterate the intricate relationship between intellectual practice and cultural fields (Fowler, 1997; Robbins, 2000). Similarly, critiques of his sociology of art have overlooked this issue (Laermans, 1992; Loesberg, 1993; Dunn, 1998). Maybe this is a reason why, as Swartz points out, despite the increasing interest in Bourdieu's work, his approach to the analysis of intellectuals has gone largely unnoticed (1997: 218). This thesis is an attempt to redress this balance by focusing on a cultural practice, art collecting, as an intellectual practice. In order to situate Bourdieu's theory of intellectual practices I begin by observing how this intersects with his theory of symbolic power and symbolic violence.

3.1 A theory of practices

For Bourdieu, the task of sociology is to disclose the "buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social universe, as well as the 'mechanisms' which tend to ensure their reproduction or their transformation" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 7). In this enterprise the key source of investigation is knowledge, which he sees at the source of political struggle:

> Knowledge of the social world and, more precisely, the categories that make it possible, are the stakes, par excellence, of political struggle, the inextricably theoretical and practical struggle for the power to conserve or transform the social world by conserving or transforming the categories through which it is perceived. (Bourdieu, 1985: 729)

To understand the interrelationship between knowledge and social structures, he has devised a theory of practices, in which he situates his theory of intellectual practices. For him, this theory is an attempt to integrate the opposition objectivism/subjectivism as a suitable framework for understanding human action. He wants to escape "the objectivism of action understood as a mechanical reaction "without an agent" and the subjectivism which portrays action as the deliberate pursuit of a conscious intention" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 121). Alternatively, he advocates a "relational" or "structuralist" model of thinking in which individuals' practices and their legitimation are defined in relation to the other elements of the same system – i.e. to other practices (ibid: 63). In fact, binary distinctions – i.e. high/bourgeois art, or high/popular culture - structure all classification systems, which Bourdieu terms 'symbolic'. He wants to draw attention to how our mental structures (knowledge) are based on symbolic systems, which constitute the basis of the divisions we find in the social world. Hence a key theme in his work is his theory of symbolic power in

which he reconceptualises previous ways of thinking about power relationships in social life (Swartz, 1997: 65). Let me introduce first his theory of practices to situate in this context his theory of symbolic power.

For Bourdieu the social world is structured around *fields of forces*. Fields are spaces constituted by different kinds of capital. These are resources upon which individuals and groups draw to maintain their position in the social order, and can take various forms – i.e. economic (money and property), cultural (cultural goods and services including educational credentials), social (acquaintances and networks), and symbolic (prestige or renown). In addition, the possession of capital allows social actors to negotiate their position within the power relations in a given field. This is why capital becomes an object of field struggle. For example, intellectual practices are part of a struggle for recognition or the accumulation of symbolic capital. The power relations among the agents or institutions engaged in struggles structure fields. They result from the distribution of different types of capital "accumulated in the course of previous struggles, and which orients subsequent strategies" (1993a: 73). In order for a field to function, there have to be agents prepared to 'play the game.' Bourdieu has coined the terms *disposition* and *habitus* to account for two levels of perceiving or understanding the probabilities offered to agents by a given field. Dispositions stand for the agent's "subjective basis of the perception and appreciation of the objective changes" while habitus refers, generally, to interpretative frameworks or "schemes of perception and appreciation" (ibid: 64). An important point in Bourdieu's theory is that through the mediation of the habitus agents construct their views of the social world. Agents attain their positions in a field through the practice of making distinctions or classifications of the social world. Struggles within fields are about the imposition of a legitimate world-view (1985: 728); or the monopoly of legitimate violence (1993a: 73).

3.2 Symbolic power and symbolic violence

Having laid out some of the premises of Bourdieu's theory of practices I refer next to how his views of symbolic power inform his general theory. Despite the centrality Marxism gives to economic structures in social life, for Bourdieu practices are not only oriented towards the attainment of material profit, but also symbolic capital. His theory of symbolic power stresses the role played by taken-for-granted assumptions in the constitution and maintenance of power relations (Swartz, 1997: 43). The practices of agents in the cultural domain are a case in point. They are 'misrecognised' as representing disinterested forms of activities and resources –e.g. critiques of books or evaluation of paintings. Individuals or

groups obtain symbolic capital from the achievement of misrecognition of their practices; that is, from the belief that they are not aimed at attaining economic or political interest. This is why Bourdieu characterises symbolic capital as 'disavowed':

> 'Symbolic capital' is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees 'economic' profits. (Bourdieu, 1993a: 75)

If individuals obtain symbolic capital when their practices are recognised as disinterested, practices themselves gain in symbolic power or legitimacy when they become separated from material concerns. In fact, Bourdieu's thinking of symbolic power relates to how he conceptualises all symbolic systems. He sees the source of symbolic power in the relationship of symbolic systems to social structures rather than within symbolic systems (Swartz, 1997: 88).[8] He argues that symbolic power is a "misrecognizable, transformed and legitimated form of other kinds of power" (Bourdieu, 1977b: 117). It does not exist *per se*, not even in the ideas expressed by agents, but in the belief of the 'legitimacy of the words':

> This means that symbolic power does not reside in 'symbolic systems' in the form of an 'illocutionary force', but that it is defined in and by a determinate relationship between those who exercise this power and those who undergo it – that is to say, in the very structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced. What makes the power of works to command and to order the world, is the belief in the legitimacy of the words and of him who utters them, a belief which words themselves cannot produce. (Bourdieu, 1977b: 117)

Symbolic power is a key term for this study of intellectual practices because it involves the capacity to impose the "legitimate vision of the social world and its divisions". Bourdieu characterises those situations in which there is symbolic violence as the capacity to impose "the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing economic and political power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms" (Swartz, 1997: 89). As in the case of symbolic power, symbolic violence is misrecognisable. He stresses that it "is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 167). In fact, misrecognition is a trait of symbolic systems, since they owe "their particular force to the fact that the power relations which they express are only manifest in the misrecognisable form of relations of meaning (displacement)" (Bourdieu, 1977b: 117). This

[8] See (Bourdieu, 1977b) and (Swartz, 1997) for a detailed account of the intellectual influences and departures of his theory of symbolic power and symbolic violence.

is how the dominated accept as legitimate their own condition of domination. He situates the study of symbolic violence and operations of symbolic power and capital as a priority of a science of practices. Such a project must describe those factors that make possible the symbolic aspect of practices:

> Such a science must describe the laws of transformation which govern the transmutation of different kinds of capital into symbolic capital. In particular it must describe the work of dissimulation and transfiguration (in a word euphemization) which makes it possible to transmute power relations by bringing about the *misrecognition* (i.e. the nonrecognition which constitutes recognition of legitimacy) of the power relations which they contain. (Bourdieu, 1977b: 117-8)

I mentioned earlier that intellectuals are for Bourdieu symbolic producers in that their practices are geared towards the accumulation of symbolic capital –that is, prestige. This role of intellectuals positions their task at the core of his theory of symbolic power and violence.

3.3 A methodology for the study of intellectuals

Bourdieu's views on the intellectual field can be traced back to his article 'Intellectual field and creative project' (1969) where he situates the genesis of the intellectual field and outlines its main traits. He elaborates the relationship between cultural and intellectual field in subsequent studies such as the academic field (1988), the artistic field (1993a;1996), and the field of fashion (1993b). My particular interest is in his theory of intellectual practice in the field of cultural production (1993a), although I will draw on some other writings by Bourdieu to illustrate further the ideas presented. As we will see, for Bourdieu, his theory of intellectual practices is an attempt to resolve a question of aesthetics, or how "out of the undifferentiated and undefined mass of works which are produced and even published, there emerge works which are being loved, admired, preserved and consecrated"? (1969: 100).

Although no precise date is given, Bourdieu situates the emergence of the intellectual field towards the end of the 17th century when artists gradually liberated themselves from the patronage of the aristocracy and the Church. This was substituted by an intellectual order with specific authorities of selection and consecration governed not by external authorities, but by the competition for cultural legitimacy (ibid: 91). This order was characterised by the

proliferation and diversification of institutions of artistic and intellectual consecration such as academies and salons, "publishing houses, theatres, cultural and scientific associations and the simultaneous extension and diversification of the public" (ibid: 90). These new institutions act as agencies of consecration making possible the establishment of "a body of properly intellectual professions" through which "the *public meaning* of the work and of the author" comes into being (ibid: 100). As Bourdieu explains:

> [T]he relationship the creator has with his work is always mediated by the relationship he has with the public meaning of his works, a meaning which is concretely recalled to him with regard to all the relationships he has with all the other members of the intellectual world and which is the product of the infinitely complex interactions between intellectual acts seen as judgments which are both determined and determining of the truth and value of works and of authors. (Bourdieu, 1969: 104)

We find a more developed account of how intellectual fields participate in cultural fields in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993a). Bourdieu theorises the field of cultural production (the literary field) as a space of positions and position-takings. The artistic positions correspond to the various literary genres e.g. the novel. They are defined in relation to other positions, genres, in the field, and by the possession of a specific capital. The object of field analysis is to describe the relations between the space of positions, which constitutes the field, and the struggles aiming to maintain or subvert this structure. In addition, intellectuals occupy particular positions in relation to their amount of capital and their use of it. As Bourdieu puts it:

> [*S]ocial agents are not "particles"* that are mechanically pushed and pulled about by external forces. They are, rather, bearers of capital and, depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of this distribution. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 108-9)

The link between the FCP and the intellectual field becomes explicit if we think about intellectuals as those occupying particular positions in the field as cultural or symbolic producers. For Bourdieu, intellectual practices are crucial to the creation of symbolic capital for cultural goods. As he says, intellectual practices are "intellectual acts seen as judgments which are both determined and determining of the truth and value of works and of authors"

(1969: 104). The cultural goods produced within the FCP are 'symbolic' in that their aesthetic value is defined by the accumulation of symbolic capital or prestige rather than in economic terms (1969: 93; 1993a: 79). This is what characterises those who enter the literary and artistic world as having "an interest in disinterestedness" (1993a: 40). A key issue in his model is that in the cultural field, alongside the pursuit of economic profit, there is also the possibility of accumulating symbolic capital (ibid: 75). That is, the "belief in the value of the work" (ibid: 73), or the production of cultural legitimacy, which is the result of intellectual struggles within the field. In other words, what is at stake in the FCP is the authority of intellectuals to determine the legitimate definition of the literary work. For Bourdieu a key element in understanding the FCP is to treat it as a space of "competition for the monopoly of the legitimate exercise of *symbolic violence*" (ibid: 121). This form of violence is symbolic because it "gains legitimacy by misrecognizing the underlying power relations" guaranteeing the production of legitimacy (Johnson, 1993: 20).

Another form of competition prevalent in the field is for intellectual recognition. In fact, the struggle over the imposition of the legitimate mode of cultural production is inseparable from a competition amongst intellectuals to maintain or enhance their position in the field. Even the label 'intellectual' is itself a form of symbolic capital whose value and possession are objects of struggle (Swartz, 1997: 222). A crucial factor in determining who can be an intellectual, or who can play the intellectual game, is the possession of certain types of capital. As Swartz puts it, it entails two conditions: it requires an intellectual disposition or habitus, "that is able to bracket off from immediate concern the needs of everyday existence in order to work with ideas"; and the possession of cultural capital to engage in the struggles in the intellectual field (ibid: 233). Intellectuals' most vital interest is an 'interest in disinterestedness' (ibid: 73).

Amongst the agents who compose the intellectual field Bourdieu mentions artists, critics, intermediaries between the artist and the public such as publishers, art dealers, and journalists. For him the focus of sociological enquiry into the meaning of a work is not the work itself, but the intellectual struggle involved in the making of this meaning. Most importantly, through participation in the struggle over the legitimate definition of art value, agents take part in the making of a worldview. This is how he refers to the work of agents in the FCP:

> Among these are the producers of works classified as artistic (great or minor, famous or unknown), critics of all persuasions (who themselves are established within the field), collectors, middlemen, curators, etc., in short, all who have ties with art, who live for art and, to varying degrees, from it, and who confront each other in struggles where the imposition of not only a world view but also a vision of the artworld is at stake, and who, through these struggles, participate in the production of the value of the artist and of art. (Bourdieu, 1993a: 261)

Their position in the FCP classifies intellectuals in various ways. Bourdieu refers to intellectuals as pertaining to the dominated fraction of the dominant class in light of the position of the FCP within the field of power (Johnson, 1993: 15). The FCP is situated within the field of power because of its possession of various symbolic forms of capital, such as cultural or academic. However, it is in a dominated position because of its low amount of economic capital. More specifically, within the FCP intellectuals are stratified by the cultural markets in which they invest their capital. One can differentiate those intellectuals who pursue conservation strategies and tend to defend orthodoxy, from those who are inclined towards strategies of subversion, of heresy (Bourdieu, 1993a: 73). These strategies, which create a source of differentiation amongst intellectuals, correspond to two different sub-fields of cultural production: the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production.[9]

The autonomous pole, or the *field of restricted production* (FRP) has a dominating position in the FCP; it is aimed at what is termed 'high art' (classical music, the visual arts, 'serious' literature) and "develops its own criteria for the evaluation of its products" (ibid: 115). In the FRP economic profit is normally disavowed. The stakes for competition between agents are geared towards obtaining symbolic profit. As in a "game of 'loser wins'" (ibid: 39) what prevails is "a profit of disinterestedness, or the profit one has on seeing oneself (or being seen) as one who is not searching for profit" (Johnson, 1993: 15). This disavowal of economic profit does not occur in the heteronomous pole of the field of cultural production, what Bourdieu calls the *field of large-scale cultural production* (FLSP). This field represents the dominated position in the FCP; it involves 'mass' or 'popular' culture (ibid: 16), and produces cultural goods for the public at large. As opposed to the FRP, it follows "the laws of competition for the conquest of the largest possible market" (Bourdieu, 1993a: 115), and it is subordinated to the demands of economic capital.

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[9] In *Homo Academicus* (1988) he sees this opposition between 'curators of culture' and 'creators of culture', between those who reproduce existing bodies of knowledge, and those who pose a challenge to it.

3.4 Thinking about change

Bourdieu situates the possibility of change in his concept of 'field'. The aim here is to assess its usefulness for understanding the change or evolution of those intellectual practices involved in the making of aesthetic value. In his chapter 'Manet and the insitutionalization of anomie' Bourdieu used the term *symbolic revolution* to theorise change within the FCP (1993a). It refers to a shift in the mode of aesthetic production, perception and judgement: from academic art and an academic gaze, to impressionist art and a pure gaze. This shift also points at the change in the field's structure. In the case of academic art, the field was ruled by the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence, that is, the power of the French 'École des Beaux-Art' to define who is a painter and what is a painting (ibid: 250). This monopoly no longer exists in the new autonomous field of competition, which is characterised by the 'institutionalisation of anomie'. That is, no one can claim to be an absolute holder of the "nomos" (ibid: 250) that rules the production of legitimate images. The French École was responsible for creating a particular type of career for painters who became known as the 'masters' of academic art (ibid: 241). This institution was dominated by the existence of a series of competitions and awards. The Ecole gave them the necessary honours and training to legitimate their profession; but it also required the painters' submission to the aesthetic principles promulgated by the École. Academic painting gave primacy to content and to the display of a literary culture. The emphasis is on making 'readerly' paintings, which are intended to be 'read' rather than 'seen' (ibid: 245). For Bourdieu change in a field occurs with the emergence of a new movement in painting. This in turn, stems from the social construction of an autonomous field of production, which legitimates this new movement. As he puts it:

> The social construction of an autonomous field of production, that is, a social universe able to define and impose the specific principles of perception and judgement of the natural and social world as well as of literary and artistic representations of this world, goes hand in hand with the construction of a properly aesthetic mode of perception, which places the source of artistic 'creation' in the representation and not in the thing represented. (Bourdieu, 1993a: 239)

'Academic painting' was not simply a reflection of an external 'reality' but was also related to an 'academic order' it sought to maintain (ibid: 246). This is why when Bourdieu says that the field went through a symbolic revolution, it means a rupture with academic style and the lifestyle that it transmits. The role of intellectuals comes into the equation when we see that

the constitution of a new field is precipitated by the incomprehension of previous 'academic intellectuals' towards Manet's work. His was a style consisting in 'impressions', which is attentive to forms, whereas "the academic eye" is attentive to meanings (ibid: 249). As Bourdieu explains:

> By imposing on his work a construction whose intention is not to help in the reading of a meaning, Manet dooms the academic eye, used to seeing a painting as a narrative, as a dramatic representation of a 'story', to a second, undoubtedly more fundamental, disappointment. (Bourdieu, 1993a: 248)

The break with the École's monopoly of symbolic violence was gradual. It started with the collapse of the network of beliefs it sustained: the painters' belief in the legitimacy of the jury and its verdicts, the state's belief in the jury's efficacy, and the public's belief in the value of the academic recognition (ibid: 251-2). As a result, they dragged down the symbolic capital underpinning these beliefs. At the same time, those other 'superfluous producers', who were excluded from the status of producer as designed by the École, gradually succeeded in producing their own market, and mechanism of consecration. As Bourdieu says:

> This is a truly far-reaching revolution which, at least in the realm of the new art in the making, abolishes all references to an ultimate authority capable of acting as a court of appeal: the monotheism of the central *nomothete* gives way to a plurality of competing cults with multiple uncertain gods. (Bourdieu, 1993a: 253)

Bourdieu's argument is useful because it shows the emergence of a new aesthetic genre, impressionism, as the overthrow of an academic order, or system of mechanisms, which legitimated 'academic painting'. The emergence of a new autonomous field also entails a certain change in intellectual practices. Academic intellectuals were unable to legitimate the value of Manet's work, while a new set of intellectuals supported this new aesthetic. However, the problem here is that we still do not know whether this new field led to a change in the way in which intellectuals created aesthetic value, that is, in the nature of intellectual practices *per se*. If we look at Bourdieu's views in relation to Bauman's argument on the legislating practices of modernity, we can see that this symbolic revolution did not lead to a new type of intellectual practice. Historically, legislators were very much in control of the definition of modern art, of which impressionism is one example. However, I have already pointed out that Bauman's concept of legislators was rather reductionist. We can then see how Bourdieu's account sheds new light on the role of legislators because the

art of Manet and his followers was legitimated by a field of competition: a field in which intellectuals struggled over the production of aesthetic value for the new art. I would like to situate the notion of 'symbolic revolution' in Bourdieu's generic theory of change in fields, to expand further the type of change proposed by his arguments.

For Bourdieu fields are structured along the field of opinion and the field of doxa. In fact, the field of opinion is situated within the field of doxa, or that, which is beyond questioning (1977a: 168). This is how he sees these two fields:

> In class societies, in which the definition of the social world is at stake in overt or latent class struggle, the drawing of the line between the field of opinion, of that which is explicitly questioned, and the field of *doxa*, of that which is beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord with social convention, is itself a fundamental objective at stake in that form of class struggle which is the struggle for the imposition of the dominant systems of classification. (Bourdieu, 1977a: 169)

The problem arises when Bourdieu theorises the field of doxa as not being susceptible to change. This is what he calls a "complicity between antagonisms" (1993b: 73). Intellectual struggles within fields are excluded from causing any change in the state of the doxa. Hence participating in field struggles means helping to reproduce the stakes of the game:

> It tends to be forgotten that a fight presupposes agreement between the antagonists about what it is that is worth fighting about; those points of agreement are held at the level of what 'goes without saying', they are left in the state of doxa, in other words everything that makes the field itself, the game, the stakes, all the presuppositions that one tacitly and even unwittingly accepts by the mere fact of playing, of entering the game. (Bourdieu, 1993b: 73-4)

For those participating in field struggles, their strategies must remain within the limits of the doxa if they are not to be excluded from the game (ibid: 74). These types of changes are partial because "they do not call into question the very foundations of the game, its fundamental axioms, the bedrock of ultimate beliefs on which the whole game is based" (ibid: 74). The symbolic revolution I referred to earlier is an example of partial change. It does explain how aesthetic change is also a change in the symbolic structures and producers that legitimate aesthetic value. Yet for Bourdieu, total revolutions are not

possible because they destroy the dominant agents and their domination, as well as the game itself. In the end, we are left with the hypothesis that:

> Like the ordeals in rites of passage, this investment helps to make the pure and simple destruction of the game *unthinkable* in practical terms. Thus whole sectors of culture ... are saved by the cost entailed in acquiring the knowledge needed even to destroy them with due form. (Bourdieu, 1993b:74)

This sheds new light on the presupposition that in order for a field to function there have to be agents prepared to play the game. Bourdieu's value lies in his theory of practices, in how agents operate within the field, and how they use their resources to legitimate or challenge specific worldviews. However, this argument becomes limited if we are trying to explore the possibility of a change in the nature of intellectual practices. The argument that 'the destruction of the game', that is the field's logic or law, is 'unthinkable' seems to suggest that intellectual practices can only be conceptualised along the theoretical lines provided by Bourdieu: stratified along the quest for recognition between newcomers and conservatives, and the cultural markets in which intellectuals articulate their practices. While this reveals the intricacies of the position of intellectuals in structures it also points out the static nature of intellectual practices. The emphasis of his analysis is on the outcome of intellectual practices, but we are left with the question: is a change of outcome enough to theorise a change in the nature of intellectual practices? The idea that the destruction of the game is unthinkable seems to suggest that it is not enough.

4 Outline of a sociology of art collections

The rest of this chapter compares the main arguments raised by the above discussion on Bauman and Bourdieu. The aim is to use their work to raise a number of questions, which a sociology of art collections intends to investigate.

4.1 Bauman and Bourdieu: Towards a theory of intellectual practices

My exploration of Bauman's and Bourdieu's views on intellectuals has been informed by two aims. Firstly, to indicate the possibilities they offer to think about the role of intellectual practices in the making of aesthetic value. Secondly, whether it is possible to argue that intellectual practices can contribute to socio-cultural transformation. This is part of an overall interest in finding a way of theorising art collecting as an instance of intellectual practice. My review of the literature on collecting has suggested little theoretical room for

this argument. Collections seem to be used to represent a worldview characterised by its division into communities, while museum professionals have no points of reference for the making of value judgements through collecting. However, the writings by Bauman and Bourdieu have introduced a more positive picture. Bauman and Bourdieu provide alternative ways of thinking about how intellectuals perform their role. For Bauman intellectual activity is applied to the performance of a specific role – e.g. legislating and/or interpreting. For Bourdieu intellectuals operate within fields, and thus their practices can only be analysed in relation to a given field of cultural production. Let me refer next to the specific criticism raised by these arguments, and also point at how I intend to use their views.

The main weakness in Bourdieu's account is precisely one of Bauman's strongest points: his way of thinking about change. For Bourdieu, change takes place within fields. While some commentators have suggested that Bourdieu's theories allow us to think about change (Lash, 1993; Swartz, 1997), others have argued that Bourdieu's theory of practice emphasises the reproduction of the social-class structure (Jenkins, 1982). This second line of argument is based on two factors. Firstly, intellectual practices require the possession of a particular habitus or intellectual disposition, which enables intellectuals to distance themselves from their practical daily needs. Secondly, intellectual labour requires a cultural capital to then be able to engage in the struggles within the intellectual field. The point is that these requirements function as mechanisms of exclusion – and thus reproduce the social order. They exclude intellectuals from non-intellectuals as "those unable to make the substantial investments of time, effort, and resources required to compete" (Swartz, 1997: 233).

These arguments, however, have not addressed the issue of change in relation to intellectual practices, as I see it here. My view is that Bourdieu's definition of field does not provide a sound analytical foundation to explore the argument that change in fields can lead to a change in the nature of intellectual practices. I used the example of Manet's symbolic revolution to illustrate how Bourdieu refers to change as the emergence of an autonomous field of production. Ultimately, the problem is that any change in fields is only partial; there can be a change in aesthetic perception; more specifically, a new aesthetic entails a new set of cultural practices that legitimate it. However, this form of change is only possible at the level of a field of opinion. Change in the field of doxa, which contains the field of opinion, would entail the complete destruction of the field. This theory is only partially helpful. It helps us envision how a new set of intellectual practices is responsible for creating

transformation at the level of culture – e.g. a new artistic movement. We are still left wondering whether it is possible to think that a change at the level of aesthetics is followed by a similar shift in the nature of intellectual practices. Arguably, it is only with the destruction of the field that a new model of intellectual practice would emerge.

It is at this point when Bauman's theory of change is most useful. He situates intellectual practices at the root of a social change: from modernity to postmodernity. The end of the practice of legislators has given way to a new social order, postmodernity, and a new intellectual practice, interpreting. The problem lies in the way Bauman dis-associates interpreters from making a crucial contribution to the selection of the best social order. This was indeed the power of legislators. The benefit of this argument is that it linked three key ideas: intellectual practice, aesthetic value and the contribution of intellectuals to the making of a social order. However, in theorising a change of intellectual practices Bauman also got rid of two things: the possibility of interpreters attributing or constituting aesthetic value for works of art, and their role in the selection of the best social order.

In Bauman's thesis, modern intellectuals were instrumental to the reproduction of modernity's worldview. From the beginning, he establishes that the creation of knowledge, such as the making of aesthetic value, is an intellectual practice of crucial relevance in the maintenance of the existing social order. I have pointed out two issues in relation to Bauman's notion of legislators. Firstly, that it does not allow for the possibility of other intellectual practices taking place, or even struggling against, those of legislators. Even his use of the concept 'critical intellectuals' suggests a role of co-operation between intellectuals in 'core' countries and those in the 'periphery'. Apart from rendering too much homogeneity to the practices of legislators, my analysis in chapter 3 shows how this indeed not always the case. Intellectuals in the 'periphery' do not necessarily comply with the views of legislators. Secondly, modern art becomes an uncontested category; because even when new tastes –e.g. bourgeois – come to the fore, it is the practice of legislators that ultimately imposes their own view of aesthetic value.

The notion of interpreters brings with it another set of issues. One problem is that interpretative intellectual practices are not able to create aesthetic value. This is an important point. Bauman's theory of social change is built upon the premise that contemporary intellectuals have lost their primary position in the legislation of matters such as truth, morality and aesthetic taste. The question arises: what sort of authority or

judgement is possible to intellectuals working in areas such as the arts? Another concern is the role of interpreters in the making of a worldview. As I mentioned earlier, there is a crucial difference between legislators and interpreters. Postmodernity is constituted by a plurality of social orders, or communities. Interpreters are able to validate criteria within their own communities, or social order. In this sense, their role is limited. Their practice is not of crucial relevance to the maintenance of a universal worldview called postmodernity. Another line of argument is that the advent of postmodernity has not eliminated the possibility of a legislating practice. While interpreters are experts in communication skills (they translate statements from one community to another), legislators are able to keep the universalistic ambitions of the modern era and impose their views, but these are only binding within their own community. This thesis seeks to explore whether those engaged in the practice of art collection making have to, at least, play a legislating role, or whether it is only interpreting that prevails.

However, in order to explore these two models of practice, we need to go back to Bourdieu's sociology of intellectuals, which allows a view of intellectuals as participants in the making of aesthetic value. Although his theory on intellectuals as symbolic producers is a very valuable methodological tool, it must be pointed out that Bourdieu's approach seems to leave behind some of the contemporary concerns informing Bauman's views on intellectuals in the so-called postmodern world. That is, the emergence of the consumer as the consecrator of aesthetic value. However, this theorisation is rather reductive in that culture stands for something else than consumer culture. There is another ambit to culture, which is high culture, of which museums, and opera are clear examples. This thesis seeks to address the making of aesthetic value in a realm that has not been theorised by Bauman: public museums and their collections. Let me focus now on the question of intellectual practices and aesthetic value.

The main benefit of Bourdieu's account of intellectual practices is its attention to detail and the provision of a conceptual apparatus to understand how intellectuals carry out their practices. Another related benefit is that he locates intellectuals as operating in fields of cultural production. Hence from the beginning we have a possible way of thinking about how contemporary intellectuals engage in the making of aesthetic value. It has been argued that Bourdieu's approach to intellectuals provides a "strongly *normative* vision of what intellectuals should be" (Swartz, 1997: 222-3). This is, however, only one possible interpretation of his theory of practices. This normative dimension can be avoided by

engaging critically with his concepts for thinking about intellectual practices – e.g. symbolic capital, symbolic power, and symbolic struggle. I think that Bourdieu presents a useful model of intellectual practice. In emphasising the struggles of agents within the intellectual field he characterises this practice in terms of its *contested nature*. Hence value judgements do not emerge from an ideal type of intellectual – as would be the case of legislators, for example. Rather, they are the result of a number of factors, the amount of capital of the agents in the field, the positions they inhabit and the struggles within these positions to obtain intellectual renown or cultural legitimacy. In this way, we have a number of authorities who compete for the definition of art. For example, he draws the distinction between dominant and newcomers as two types of intellectual practice which, according to where they draw their legitimacy from – within or outside the field – contribute to creating different forms of cultural products. An aspect that this thesis seeks to question is whether Bourdieu's emphasis on the struggle amongst intellectuals is indeed a characteristic of the field under study in this thesis. Finally, I would like to outline the set of questions that I want to address with the proposed framework of a sociology of art collections.

Chapter outline

The rest of this thesis is aimed at exploring the questions raised in the theory of intellectual practices outlined in this chapter. One idea in this chapter is that art collection making is articulated by a set of practices situated, primarily, within a given field. The making of the collection for the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) is situated in the Dublin field of contemporary art (FCA). Chapters 3 and 4 provide a historical and contemporary account of the FCA. The emphasis in chapter 3 is to trace the origins of modern art collecting in Ireland by focusing on the foundation of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (MGMA) in 1908. Apart from providing a historical context the chapter is aimed as an initial investigation into the making of aesthetic value, a line of enquiry which runs through all the chapters. In looking at the emergence of modern art more generally, the chapter focuses on the impact this new aesthetics and the MGMA had in the field. It argues that the MGMA was part of an ongoing transformation in the FCA at two levels: aesthetics and patronage. While the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) was loosing its position as the main institution for cultural consecration, the field was embracing new forms of aesthetics i.e. foreign, modern art, which challenged the academic type of art promoted by the RHA. Changes in aesthetics occurred alongside new ways of supporting art, i.e. the organisation of exhibitions outside the Academy by artists and public figures, and finally the MGMA. The

chapter reflects on whether these transformations can be characterised as a form of symbolic revolution (Bourdieu, 1993a) - see 3.1 in this chapter.

Chapter 4 offers a contemporary approach to the FCA in which the IMMA occupies its position as Ireland's national museum of modern art. It explores the practices of commercial and public galleries designated in the promotion of contemporary art. The chapter offers a useful introduction to collecting by making explicit the various processes needed for artworks to obtain recognition and prestige – e.g. symbolic capital – in the FCA, which will enable them to become part of a public art collection such as IMMA's.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with two aspects of IMMA's collection: collecting and exhibition practices. The thrust of these two chapters is to explore the kind of intellectual practices involved in art collection making. The division between collecting and exhibiting highlights how both practices contribute to create symbolic capital for IMMA's collection. Chapter 5 conceptualises IMMA as a sub-field and explores collecting in relation to Bauman's arguments on the contemporary practices of interpreting. In particular it asks whether interpreting articulates a form of legislation or translation. To answer this question the chapter presents, first, IMMA's worldview and collecting policy to explore the relationship between collecting and these knowledge systems. It then focuses on the various practices of collecting, which are divided into acquisitions, loans and donations. The chapter argues that collecting is a form of translation that occurs within IMMA's sub-field and between this sub-field and surrounding fields. Nonetheless, it occurs in relation to a legislative framework which informs, to a large extent, collecting practices.

Chapter 6 explores another aspect of collecting by focusing on the practices behind the making of exhibitions of the collection. It argues that exhibition making constitutes a particular field of vision within IMMA's sub-field. Drawing on historical developments on exhibition design, the chapter situates the conventions used in exhibitions of the collection as part of wider international field of vision. It then explores the ways in which exhibition practices create particular ways of thinking and looking at artworks from the collection by looking at three exhibitions: *Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political, Art Unsolved,* and *Art Without Precedent.* The chapter argues that the exhibitions articulate a form of struggle between a didactic approach to art and an impulse to 'aestheticise' art. It argues that exhibiting and collecting are part of the same process; they support a particular form of aesthetics which put into work some of IMMA's founding principles.

Chapter 7 concludes this thesis by looking at how the empirical chapters have shed some light on the nature of intellectual practices. It then brings together two key topics in this thesis, the making of aesthetic value and intellectual practices to reflect on whether intellectual practices can contribute to cultural transformation. This topic is explored, more specifically, in relation to the foundation of the MGMA and the symbolic revolution it brought to the FCA, and in regard to IMMA's own role as an agent of cultural transformation.

CHAPTER 3

A GENESIS OF THE FIELD OF CONTEMPORARY ART: THE MAKING OF A MODERN ART COLLECTION (1908)

Introduction

The present chapter offers a study of the historical genesis of the field of contemporary art (FCA). Its purpose in this thesis is strategic in various ways. It constitutes a background to situate more specifically the emergence of Ireland's first modern art collection for the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (MGMA) in 1908. In so doing, the chapter focuses on a key topic of this thesis: the making of aesthetic value through art collection making. This line of investigation is important for two reasons. It provides a historical context for chapter 4, which deals with the FCA in its contemporary form, and to chapters 5 and 6, which explore the making of an art collection for IMMA.

It must be pointed out that the chapter does not intend to provide an analysis into the nature of intellectual practices of collecting, which is the topic of chapters 5 and 6. However, the chapter can be seen as an initial empirical exploration into some of the analytical concepts outlined in chapter 2, which will continue to surface in the rest of this thesis. With regard to Bourdieu, it illustrates how various forms of capital – symbolic, cultural and social – are put into practice in the making of aesthetic value. It also investigates the possibility of change in fields; what he calls a 'symbolic revolution' (see chapter 2, section 3.4) caused by the emergence of 'modern art' as a new aesthetic in the FCA. The chapter then opens up a second line of enquiry. This is the issue of whether the making of a modern art collection is a type of cultural practice, which can contribute to cultural change.

This study also sheds light on Bauman's notion of 'modern art'. One of my arguments in chapter 2 is that the concept does not account for struggle amongst symbolic producers – i.e. legislators – over the assignation of value to this type of art. In focusing my account in one of the 'peripheries' of modernity, we will see the complex set of forces underlying the practices of symbolic producers: while using 'modern art' as a means to follow the step of leading countries such as France, it was also a means to produce a distinct Irish aesthetics.

The chapter is divided into three parts. Part I provides a brief introduction to the period in question and situates *modern art* within other contemporary traditions in the visual arts in Ireland. It then presents Bourdieu's concept of 'field' and 'symbolic revolution' as a useful theoretical tool to explore the emergence of modern art in Ireland. Finally, it situates the Royal Hibernian Academy's position (RHA) as the main institution for cultural consecration in the FCA. Part II offers a study of a debate over the definition of an aesthetics for contemporary and modern art. It focuses on three exhibitions that took place before the arrival of Hugh Lane, the Irish art dealer and founder of the MGMA. It explores the attempts of a number of exhibitions and the ensuing various struggles around the assignation of value to contemporary and modern art. Part III is concerned with the arrival of Hugh Lane and the foundation of the MGMA in 1908. It focuses on the exhibitions he organised before the gallery's opening with an emphasis on his position as a newcomer to the field. It then argues that the creation of a gallery and collection led to the emergence of an internationalist aesthetics for modern art.

1 The field of contemporary art: modern art as a symbolic revolution

As I said in chapter 2, Bourdieu situates the study of intellectual practices in fields of cultural production. These fields mediate struggles over the production of cultural legitimacy, or value, for cultural works. One of his key concepts in theorising the mechanisms for the creation of such value is symbolic capital – or "the belief in the value of the work" (Bourdieu, 1993a: 73). The analytical framework of the chapters in this thesis is built upon Bourdieu's notion of cultural field, and the issue of symbolic production of value in art. In this chapter, I focus on the struggles over the assignation of symbolic capital for 'modern art' in a field of cultural production: the FCA. But before I start my analysis, the notion of FCA needs some clarification. In what follows, I want to distinguish, first, my analytical approach from other cultural studies of the same period; and, second, situate the particular issues I seek to address in this study of the making of aesthetic value for modern art.

This chapter is the only one in this thesis with a historical approach. The time period studied here spans between the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century. At the time, Ireland was in the paradoxical position of being a European country, and a British colony since the 17th century.[1] Since the 1880s, Ireland was submerged in a process of cultural

[1] Although the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland goes back to the 12th century, Ireland first became a British colony in the 17th century with the British-Irish civil wars of 1640-91. It was in the late 18th century, when the

transformation, the Celtic Revival, which sought to construct a distinct Irish culture. A number of commentators have shed light on this period of Irish history, and on the situation of Irish culture. Two relevant approaches are the accounts by Lyons (1982) and Hutchinson (1987). Lyons points out the need to critique the idea of culture as a unifying force. Rather, he says, Ireland is characterised by the co-existence of an Irish and Anglo-Irish culture operating within the dominant English culture. A key point of his argument is the identification of cultural products as helping to demonstrate the "ways of life" of these two cultures. In so doing, his account is not focused on the study of cultural products – i.e. language, literature. In fact, they play a secondary role: they are a means to illustrate a struggle between cultures. Hutchinson's (1987) study is focused on the nationalist struggle that sought to build a distinct native, Gaelic culture. In seeking to redress an emphasis on the study of political nationalism in Ireland, he investigates cultural nationalism as a "response to a crisis of identity and purpose that is rooted in the modern world" (1987: 3). In both cases, the study of culture is an instrument to explore a wider topic – a nationalist struggle, or a struggle amongst social groups.

My aim is to make the focus of attention the study of a specific cultural product: modern art. In so doing, I continue an existing line of investigation into Irish culture. In particular, a number of studies have shed light on the making of a literary canon.[2] In comparison to studies of literary culture, the visual arts have not raised the same wave of interest amongst academics. Some notable exceptions are Sheehy (1980), McConkey (1990), Kennedy (1991), Crookshank (1994), Fallon (1994). This emphasis is probably due to the fact that the visual arts played a minor role in the revival in comparison to a literary culture. In fact, the opening of the MGMA in 1908, which has been seen as a symptom of the Celtic Revival (Sheehy, 1980), is a late development in relation to the emergence of the linguistic and literary institutions of the Revival. In 1893, the Gaelic League led by Douglas Hyde and the Literary Theatre of William Butler Yeats were founded as the linguistic and literary institutions of the Celtic Revival.

But the present chapter also offers an alternative way of thinking about the municipal gallery and its collection, a topic that has been included in biographical accounts of Hugh P.

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term 'Empire' was used to describe the United Kingdom's possessions, that it became possible to think about Ireland as part of the British Empire (Howe, 2000: 13). A number of studies have revealed some of the strategies whereby the Irish were represented as an 'inferior' race, and a 'backward' nation. See, for example Curtis, L. Perry (1971); Foster, R.F. (1993); Douglas, R. *et al* (1998).

[2] For literary studies of the period see Kiberd (1995), Deane (1997).

Lane (Bodkin, 1956; Lady Gregory, 1973; Dawson, 1993; O'Byrne, 2000), and in some historical accounts of the period which mention, briefly, the establishment of the MGMA (Sheehy, 1980; Kennedy, 1991; McConkey, 1991; Fallon, 1994). It situates the emergence of modern art and the MGMA as events which were part of the FCA where symbolic producers struggle over the creation of aesthetic value, symbolic capital, for modern art. This is not to say that the visual arts and the literary field were disconnected from each other. As we will see, the dominance of literature is obvious in some of the distinctions used to characterise contemporary and modern art – e.g. prose and poetry.

As I said in this introduction, the focus of this chapter is to explore the possibilities of a symbolic revolution in the FCA. For Bourdieu this form of revolution occurs when a field of cultural production experiences a shift in the mode of aesthetic production, perception and judgement. In particular he gives as an example a transition from academic art to impressionist art towards the end of the 19th century in France. Most importantly, the advent of this new aesthetics is facilitated by a change in the field's structure, or in the position of those cultural institutions in charge of creating symbolic capital. He refers to the fall of the French École, which created a career for painters as masters of academic art (1993a: 241). This example is relevant because of the similarity between the demise of the Academy's monopoly in France, and the gradual loss of power by the R.H.A. in the FCA - the principal agent of cultural consecration for the fine arts. The making of the collection, and previous to it, the validation of modern art as a new aesthetics, took its toll on the Academy's capacity to produce symbolic capital for its works.

The following account explores the creation of aesthetic value for modern art, as well as the necessary changes in arts patronage to sustain this type of art. If the MGMA and its collection were, mainly, put in place through the efforts of Hugh Lane, the emphasis in this chapter is to explore how this form of *symbolic revolution* within the field (see section 3.1) was not merely his own undertaking, but a continuation of earlier attempts by public figures to develop a distinct aesthetics and patronage for modern art. In what follows, and before I refer to the position of fine arts and the RHA in the FCA, I introduce the various artistic tendencies prevalent in the field.

1.1 The visual art/s

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the FCA was characterised by the co-existence of various visual art forms: decorative art, religious art, fine arts, and an emergent modern

art. The revival of *decorative art* was, mainly, the work of the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland founded in 1895 by the Earl of Mayo (Larmour, 1992: 60). As early as 1883, we find various exhibitions of arts and crafts in the Dublin Sketching Club and the Dublin Arts Club and the Royal Dublin Society (ibid: 7). Other initiatives were the Donegal Industrial Fund (1883); the development, in 1886, of an Irish branch of the Home Arts and Industries Association in England (1884); and the establishment of the Irish Home Industries Association, which held its first exhibition in 1888 at the RDS (ibid: 29-54).[3] *Religious art* was stimulated by the patronage of painter Sarah Purser and playwright Edward Martyn. In 1903 Purser created a stained glass studio known as An Túr Gloine - Irish for 'The Tower of Glass' (ibid: 163). Both the decorative arts and the religious art movement were bound up with the establishment of classes at the Schools of the Royal Dublin Society (RDS). Stained glass and lace design were taught at the Dublin School of Art (ibid: 50). The RHA and its School were representative of the fine arts tradition.

It must be pointed out that these art forms not only sought to constitute a distinct Irish School of art, but they also intended to make art a vehicle for the articulation of national ideas through a national style. It is possible to say that the case of *modern art* is no different from these other parallel attempts. Particularly after the arrival of Hugh Lane, and once the project of a collection and a gallery took place, the conviction that modern art could articulate a distinct national School of painting was widespread amongst its supporters. However, as we will see in parts II and III, the emergence of modern art is more than the creation of a new artistic style. It was an attempt at a symbolic revolution of the FCA. This happened in at least two ways: it was part of a project to create a collection and gallery, and a new form of aesthetics based on the belief that works by foreign artists could help stimulate the creation of an Irish aesthetics. Conversely, in the case of the decorative and religious art, the achievement of national characteristics through art was based upon the reproduction of Celtic ornamental details (Larmour, 1992: 127). Given the close relationship between the emergence of modern art and the existing fine art in the FCA, I explore next the position of the RHA as an agent of cultural consecration.

1.2 The Royal Hibernian Academy

As I said earlier on, the MGMA has been described as the most conspicuous and lasting manifestation of the Celtic Revival (Sheehy, 1980: 107). This argument raises the question: What stopped the RHA from playing a part in the Celtic revival - as opposed to the MGMA?

[3] For a history of the Arts and Crafts movement in Ireland see Larmour (1992), Gordon Bowe (1998).

The emergence of modern art as a distinct aesthetics in the FCA is intricately related to this question. My view is that one of the reasons which made possible the emergence of modern art, and the MGMA was the challenge it posed to the academic aesthetics supported by the RHA. This challenge was also due to the paradoxical position of the RHA as an agent of consecration in the FCA. On the one hand, it held the monopoly for the production of symbolic capital for the fine arts. On the other hand, its position in the FCA is characterised by a struggle to obtain proper funding.[4] Let me look first at the type of aesthetics propounded by the RHA, to focus then on its financial situation.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the only institution in charge of artistic education was the Royal Dublin Society (RDS). However, the artistic community required other sources of funding, apart from private patronage. This situation was felt more acutely after the Act of Union in 1800 and the departure of many important art patrons; at this point the need for artists to exhibit and sell their work became a pressing issue.[5] In this context, the RHA was established by Royal Charter in 1823, holding its first annual exhibition in 1826. The aims of the institution were laid out in the preface to the exhibition's catalogue: the promotion of fine arts in Ireland through an annual public exhibition. But its principal objective was the teaching of young artists, chiefly in painting, as well as in sculpture and architecture (de Courcy, 1986: xii; Turpin, 1991: 198). In 1832 the Academy was granted an annual sum of £300 by the British Government.

The RDS had been running drawing classes since the mid eighteenth century.[6] However, the RDS' position would change in 1849 when its School was converted into a school of industrial design with an emphasis on the education of designers for applied, rather than fine art. The new School was to revive the production of manufactures in Ireland so that it would be able to compete with a foreign market on equal terms. This change had important consequences for the RHA because it then became the only institution devoted to the teaching of fine art, with all the most artistic and creative students driven to the RHA's Schools (Barrett and Sheehy, 1996: 444-5). In other words, it allowed the Academy to have the monopoly in the creation of a particular aesthetics, fine arts, and a career as academician, a professional painter.

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[4] The main sources on the history of the RHA are: Strickland (1969), de Courcy (1986), Turpin (1991), Walsh and Bouchier (1991).

[5] Previous to 1800, the Society of Artists in Ireland held a number of exhibitions from 1765 to 1780, which stopped due to the Society's financial difficulties (de Courcy, 1986: xi).

[6] See Crookshank (1986) for a history of the RDS.

However, from a financial point of view this event meant a setback for the RHA. For the state, the RDS schools were seen as the basis of future art educational development in Dublin, with most of state investment devoted to this purpose. This decision was to have a long-term effect on the RHA, and despite its claims for a new school of design linked to the Academy's,[7] by the end of the nineteenth century the Academy would suffer from serious lack of funds (Turpin, 1991: 199). The onset of the Great Famine in 1845 did not ameliorate the RHA's situation, which in the early 1840s had been enjoying some prosperity, partly as a result of purchases by the Royal Irish Art Union. This crisis reached its peak in 1857 when no exhibition was held and the school was closed (Turpin, 1991).

Thus it is possible to say that the artistic field was divided between the RDS' school of art, an institution with a solid financial foundation linked to the Science and Art Department in London, and the RHA in charge of teaching fine art but financially disadvantaged because its aesthetics was not supported by the British Government. After the Academy's breakdown, it became the object of a public enquiry by the Science and Art Department in London. This situation illustrates further the distinction between the two different aesthetics articulated by the RDS's and the RHA's Schools. One of the suggestions of the enquiry was to amalgamate the two schools,[8] and let the RDS take over the RHA's life art class, since it had better facilities for it. The RHA objected to this amalgamation, an objection based on an artistic division within the field: the RDS was established with the purpose to teach industrial art, and manufactures more generally, whereas the RHA was to be in charge of the education of artists, which should be directed by artists (Turpin, 1991: 199). After the RHA's School opening in 1862 a new curriculum of practice was defined. The school offered courses on antique, life study and painting, while discarding the study of 'original composition' on the grounds that this "would interfere with the original views of art which should arise in the private studio of the artist" (ibid: 200).[9]

By 1870, the RHA had the monopoly in the distribution of prestige or symbolic capital within the field of fine arts. An example of this is the Albert prize fund inaugurated in 1871 with a bequest of around £800 from the Prince Consort Memorial fund, which Queen Victoria directed towards art education (ibid: 202). A number of well-known Irish painters received

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[7] The case for a school of design was made George F. Mulvany, Keeper of the RHA schools 1845-1851 (Turpin, 1991: 199).

[8] The suggestion was made at the RHA's petition of an enquiry into its schools. An official from the Department of Science and Art, Norman MacLeod, suggested that the RDS School of Art take over the life class carried out by the RHA (Turpin, 1991: 200).

[9] Primary source, Unidentified press cutting, 26 August 1862 in Larcom papers *loc. Cit.*

this distinction, amongst them we find Walter Osborne, Joseph Malachy Kavanagh, Roderic O'Conor, and George Russell (ibid: 203). The RHA's monopoly as an agent of cultural consecration in the field can be explained by the reopening of its School in 1862, when the position of the RDS School was also redefined: the later was to promote the preliminary discipline in drawing; only after attending the RDS school was the prospective painter allowed to transfer to the RHA schools. This distinction reinforced the Academy's monopoly as the ultimate authority in assigning the status of 'painter' to its students. Within those considered 'painters' the RHA was able to distinguish 'good painters' by allocating them the title of member of the Academy. The titles distributed were: RHA for academician, ARHA for associate academician, HRHA for honorary academician, and RHRHA for honorary foreign academician (de Courcy, 1986: xxiii).

One contribution of the Academy's Schools was to set up the foundations of pictorial art, from which each artist would develop a distinctive style. As Turpin says:

> They could all impart the basic techniques of oil painting and composition as well as giving personal example as practising artists. Without their organisation and direction of the life class, young Irish painters would have been without the necessary foundation to profit by continental ateliers. (Turpin, 1991: 204)

This argument is contradicted by some of the views on the talents of the Professors of Painting at the RHA. For example, Henry MacManus, who taught at the Academy after the School's formal reopening in November, had rather conservative views about the art of painting:

> This staple course of the Academy does not embrace or recognise original composition amongst its studies, for any tendency in this direction is foreign to the object of legitimate academies, inasmuch as it would interfere with the original views of art which should arise in the private studio of the artist. (As quoted in Turpin, 1991: 200)

Similarly, Sir Thomas Jones, who taught at the RHA from 1884 –1893 is reported to be a commonplace artist, while his pictures were poorly painted, mechanical and without artistic merit (Turpin, 1991: 204). Added to these views on some of the Professors of Painting, is the argument that the Schools promulgated, mainly, traditional art forms. As Fallon says:

> The RHA did not shout down the major talents – it had just sense enough to know that it needed them – but all the evidence is that the average Irish academician was mediocre and careerist, as well as unimaginative ... Commercial portraiture, sentimental or humorous genre, laboured antiquarianism, conventionally picturesque landscape, made up the staple fare of the annual RHA exhibitions. Its members never took on with any real conviction or authority the role of forming or educating public taste, as the great RA personalities did in England. (Fallon, 1994: 59-60)

So far I have suggested that characteristic of the Academy's position within the artistic field was its capacity to create symbolic capital for the career of painter; and that its aesthetics, exemplified, mainly, by the type of teaching carried out in its Schools, was characterised by a certain decadence and traditionalism. The comments by W.B. Yeats, student at the RHA Schools, illustrate this last point. He writes:

> [I]n the Academy, I can't say that we had a great respect for our teachers. It is only right to say that none of them, in our opinion, were capable of teaching, but we learned from each other ... the chance of having some day a competent teacher, but he must have been a competent artist ... The students never took any notice of the Visitor. The occupation of the Visitor was to keep order. His teaching was a joke. The students learned from the best student that was there. The Visitor was nobody, and knew that students thought he was nobody. (As quoted in Turpin, 1991: 204-5)[10]

Yeats' views may serve us to understand why out of an institution's Schools with such precarious type of teaching emerged some of Ireland's most talented artists. If they could not learn from their teachers, they at least, could learn from each other.

Having looked at the type of aesthetics represented by the RHA, my next point concerns the financial difficulties suffered by the Academy since its inception. This conflict is related to the origins of a symbolic revolution in the FCA which, I argue, was brought about not only by the debate over aesthetics, but also by the emergence of a new form of patronage: a public gallery and modern art collection. However, for this change to occur the field had to go through a symbolic revolution at least in two ways: aesthetic and economic. We have seen

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[10] Primary source, evidence of W.B. Yeats, *Report by the Committee of Inquiry into the Work Carried on by the Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts and the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin*, Dublin HMSI, 1906.

some of the issues surrounding the RHA's aesthetics; let us focus next on its financial situation.

Some key periods in the Academy's history are those in which the institution underwent great financial crisis, due to the scarcity of its public funding. From its beginnings the RHA had only the fixed annual income of £300 granted from the British Government, which meant that it also had to rely on external sources of income, such as the sales at their annual exhibitions. The RHA's reliance on external funding indicates that the public interest in the arts was a crucial factor in the Academy's financial well being. Amongst some of the events that helped the Academy's finances we find the establishment of the Royal Irish Art Union in 1839, which purchased works of art at the annual exhibitions and distributed them as prizes to subscribers (de Courcy, 1986: xii). But the Art Union would collapse in 1847, the year of the Great Famine, which led to a considerable fall in exhibition sales. The situation would lead to a Government inquiry into the business of the Academy in 1857. As a result the Academy reformed its Charter, which coincided with an upsurge of public interest in the visual arts, and the restoration of the Arts Union around 1860. The 1880s were a prosperous decade for the Academy, which showed its highest record of visitors. However, this prosperity would not last long and the 1890s were characterised by the public's lack of interest in the RHA (de Courcy, 1986: xiv). It has been argued that this was due to the unsuitability of its premises located in Abbey St, at the north side of the Liffey River, which crosses Dublin. As Barrett and Sheehy explain "The social and intellectual centre of gravity of the city had shifted to the south side of the river. Abbey Street had become run down and no one was likely to visit it" (1996: 475). Whether the situation and location of the Academy's building was the only reason for the lack of interest in the Academy is difficult to ascertain, what is clear is that the institution's finances were not to improve in the short run. In 1901, a report was commissioned which recommended the closing of the Academy Schools, the integration of the Academicians into the staff of the Metropolitan School, and the relocation of the Academy to Merrion Square at the Government's expense (de Courcy, 1986: xiv-xv). The following year, in 1902, Hugh Lane appeared in the scene offering to organise an exhibition to help redress the Academy's finances, but the exhibition and the events that surrounded it will be dealt with later on in this chapter. For now it will suffice to say that the 1902 exhibition served to highlight the lack of private patronage for the arts. A review of the exhibition published in *The Irish Times* refers to this issue:

> [I]t is no longer the custom of every wealthy man to devote a portion of his superfluous riches to the formation of a cabinet of choice pictures ... Nowadays motor-cars, steam yachts, and racehorses run away with a lot of money which ought to belong to Art and Literature.[11]

This lack of interest in the arts, however, was not linked to a change in the taste of patrons, but to a more profound change affecting the social status of the gentry. If previously they "were able to give to the high arts a degree of patronage", the political troubles and the Famine are cited as the two main reasons for the gentry's social and economic downfall.[12] Dooley (2001) in his recent account of 'The Decline of the Big House in Ireland' is more specific about the peculiarities of collecting art amongst the Irish landed class.[13] Around the 1870s collecting fine art was a means "to create an environment or lifestyle that formed an outward expression of their perceived status in the society in which they [landlords] lived" (2001: 37). He explains that Irish houses became "the repositories of many fine arts collections" (ibid: 38). But from the 1880s onwards, the passing of the Wyndham Land Act entailed the transfer of landownership (ibid: 10-11). In other words, if collecting fine art was a sign of distinction amongst the Irish gentry, the changes in their social position meant the redefinition of the way in which they invested their economic capital. Consequently, there was a gap to fill in the field of pictorial art, and those gentry who wanted to support modern art had no longer enough means to become important donors or financial contributors.

As we have seen, the Academy was in the paradoxical position of having the monopoly over the production of symbolic capital in the FCA, while suffering from a lack of proper funds. Whether the Academy would have turned out into a different type of institution - i.e. renovating its attitude towards art teaching, or creating new ways of producing symbolic capital - had it enjoyed a greater source of income - is difficult to say. What this account suggests, however, is that the artworld was ready to welcome a new aesthetics, and a new form of patronage, which needed its own agents of consecration for the distribution of symbolic capital. The organisation of art exhibitions outside the RHA's walls is a case in point.

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[11] *The Irish Times*, 24th October 1902.
[12] *The Irish Times*, 15th January 1903.
[13] The term 'Irish landed class' does not refer to a homogeneous group, rather, it designates individuals with varied acquisitive power. According to Dooley it includes "landed magnates who owned tens of thousands of acres", and the "lesser gentry whose estates might be confined to a few townlands in one parish" (2001: 10).

2 Towards a new aesthetics for contemporary art

So far I have looked at the RHA's aesthetics and its downfall in patronage. Following from this, the aim in this part II is to try and outline some of the practices linked to the legitimation of modern art as a new aesthetics in the FCA. Of particular importance here are exhibition reviews as they exemplify the variety of public opinion raised by one and the same event.[14] As we will see, the making of exhibitions became a springboard for public figures to use their existing cultural capital and transform it into a symbolic capital, that would validate this new aesthetics. My starting point is the 1884 exhibition at the Dublin Sketching Club.

2.1 1884. An exhibition at the Dublin Sketching Club

In 1874, the Dublin Sketching Club (DSC) was formed for the purpose of bringing together "artists, amateurs, and other gentlemen interested in art, in friendly and social intercourse."[15] In December 1st 1884, the DSC opened its annual exhibition in the Leinster Hall, in Molesworth St, with a display of 318 works. The DSC was commemorating its tenth anniversary, which might have been the reason why alongside sketches by club members, this exhibition also displayed works by a number of non-Irish painters: James McNeill Whistler, John Singer and two other American painters – Julian Story and Ralph Curtis.[16] It also included works by Irish painters such as J.B. Yeats, Walter Osborne, and Academicians – e.g. B.M. Guinness.[17] The press at the time reflects the controversy caused by the

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[14] The initial selection of reviews for this chapter was based on the albums of newspaper cuttings, part of the Hugh Lane archive, held at the National Library of Ireland. Although the albums include, sometimes, articles from the British press, due to the nature of this study, the present sample only includes newspapers published in Ireland. My selection of articles has thus been based in accordance with the ideas being expressed, rather than with the ideology of the publication. However, given that the albums largely ignore the advanced-nationalist newspapers – namely, *Claidheamh Soluis* (the official publication of the Gaelic League), and *Sinn Féin* - I have decided to include them to make the sample as representative as possible of the political climate at the time. Thus, the survey for this paper includes, mainly, those newspapers from the *unionist*, *nationalist* and *advanced-nationalist* press, which engaged in a debate about the position of Irish culture and language. The difference between the divisions I have presented here lies in their political orientation. The *advanced-nationalist* press promoted a de-Anglicised Irish-Ireland in the belief that a separate Irish culture could provide evidence of a distinct nationality and could help guarantee it politically (Glandon, 1985: vii). The *nationalist press* – i.e. the *Freeman's Journal* - supported the Irish Parliamentary Party in its struggle for Irish Home Rule. In 1891, the newspaper abandoned the Parnell cause to promote the anti-Parnellite faction (ibid: 2). The *Irish Daily Independent* was planned to support Parnell and counteract the *Freeman's* withdrawal from this cause. The *Irish Times*, the leading *unionist* newspaper, was the organ of the Protestant interest in Ireland, although it provided a platform for both Catholics and Protestants among those who supported the existing political order.

[15] *Freeman's Journal*, 29th November 1884.

[16] The reasons for the inclusion of these works is not clear; Kennedy (1991: 4) suggests that some members of the Club such as the sculptor Frederick Lawless and the painter Walter Osborne were familiar with Whistler's work.

[17] *Freeman's Journal*, 29th November 1884.

inclusion of sketches and paintings by Whistler. More specifically, the reviews below present the beginning of a struggle over the definition and benefits of contemporary art.

Despite the acknowledgement that Whistler's work was "one of the main attractions of the exhibition"[18], there was a lack of agreement as to the merits of his art. The *Freeman's Journal*, for example, criticises his sketches as being "clumsily and carellsly painted, and not possessed of any artistic merit." For others, his paintings were subject of admiration:

> With regard to pictures of figures, both large and small, there can be no diversity of opinion as to the fact that they should be described in an exactly contrary way. Almost all of them are boldly drawn, and the details and colouring are carried out in a really faultless style, and with great fidelity to nature.[19]

The value of Whistler's works is put more explicitly in a review in the *Daily Express*, which focused on the great merit of the American artists exhibited. Entitled "American Artists at the Dublin Sketching Club Exhibition", it praised in particular Whistler's technique and specified the benefits of his art as a much better influence than any other in Dublin:

> [T]he instructive advantage remains to the members being able to study at leisure work resulting from better technique, better tone, and better art influences that we can obtain in Dublin. All really interested in the fine arts ought to see this American work – so original, so sensitive, and so daring, and learn to appreciate the advantage of painting with a square and well-considered touch.[20]

The article added that Dublin was fortunate in the DSC taking such an interest in bringing "the current art of the day." However, a critic for *The Irish Times* questions the usefulness of such an exhibition when the RHA's Academicians are anxious and willing to exhibit "the current art of the day" upon the Academy's walls:

> [T]he visitors to the Leinster Hall to-day will bestow upon the club pictures anything like the attention they are entitled to, and which they would receive but for the alluring attractiveness of the great works [Whistler's] upon the opposite wall ... when we have the Royal Hibernian Academy in our midst and its members willing and anxious to exhibit the current art of the day upon its walls, it might be safely left to the members of that institution

[18] *Freeman's Journal*, 29th November 1884.
[19] *Freeman's Journal*, 29th November 1884.
[20] *Daily Express*, 29th November 1884.

> to pace there, as they so successfully did at their last exhibition, work by greater and more artistic minds than our own.[21]

The mention of "the current art of the day" acquires a different meaning in these two reviews. While the former sees it as art which has received international recognition, e.g. Whistler's paintings, the latter suggests that the RHA is already bringing to the public contemporary art. In fact, the "alluring attractiveness" of Whistler's work seems to prevent the public from admiring the talent in the Club's pictures. The exhibition did not give raise to an engagement of public figures in the question of aesthetics. The exhibition, however, suggests the beginnings of an *aesthetic subversion* of existing hierarchies within the FCA in at least two ways.

First, what seemed to be at stake was a struggle over the type of contemporary art to be legitimated within the FCA. Was it the talent of international artists, or the aesthetics represented by the RHA? Second, the exhibition also brings to the fore a redefinition of the positions occupied by the categories amateur and career or professional artist in the FCA. Let me elaborate this point. The DSC was one of the many art clubs established during the 19th century in Ireland, by the Dublin intelligentsia (Crookshank, 1994: 270).[22] The Club's activities included art classes, sketching expeditions and exhibitions of the members' work (Barrett and Sheehy, 1996: 449). In general, these clubs and societies – e.g. the Water Colour Society of Ireland (1887)[23]– were an outlet for amateur artists to produce and exhibit their work. In this sense, they were contributing to the articulation of a distinction between the professional artists who were being trained at the RHA Schools, and the 'amateur' works supported by these clubs and societies. Yet it is possible to say that this distinction becomes less defined when a number of professional artists joined the ranks of these societies (Crookshank, 1994: 270). The exhibition at the Sketching Club proves this point because it displayed art works from both amateurs and professional painters from the Irish artistic field, as well as works by Whistler, an artist with an international

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[21] *The Irish Times*, 3rd December 1884.

[22] A Dublin dentist, William Booth Pearsall, set up the DSC in 1874 (Barrett and Sheehy, 1996: 449). In 1888, the Dublin Sketching Club amalgamated with the Dublin Amateur and Artist's Society founded in 1873, which had its origins in the 1872 Ladies' Sketching Club which the following year would admit male members and, thus, change its name (Barrett and Sheehy, 1996: 449).

[23] Founded in 1870 as the Irish Amateur Drawing Society, it changed its name to the Irish Fine Art Society in 1878, becoming, in 1887, the Water Colour Society of Ireland (Barrett and Sheehy, 1996: 449).

reputation.[24] Moreover, it can be argued that the exhibition counteracted the monopoly of the RHA as the only professional body for the display of work by professional artists, i.e. artists trained at the Academy Schools.

It would take another fifteen years, in 1899, before the value of contemporary art was put into question again. This lack of continuity is a symptom of the wider state of the cultural field, where the Celtic Revival was taking place but had not yet reached a stage when a group of intellectuals decided to revive the state of the visual arts, as was happening in the literary field. Let us look next at the next step in the making of the field of modern art: the *Modern Paintings* exhibition of 1899.

2.2 1899. The *Modern Paintings* exhibition

The 1899 exhibition opened from April 1st to 29th in the Leinster Hall. Its title *Modern Paintings* is quite telling of the type of aesthetics it sought to represent in the 88 pictures on display. The exhibition was said to include works by the best British and Continental artists and was aimed at "the illustration of the main tendencies of painting during the last half century".[25] For example, artworks by French, English and Dutch painters, amongst which there were examples of Corot, Millet and Daubigny, representing the French landscapists; Courbet and Clausen for Realism; Leighton, Millais, Orchardson and Watts for the Pre-Raphaelite influence; and Degas, Manet, Monet, Wilson Setter and Whistler for Impressionism. The works, whose value amounted to £60,000, were all privately owned and had been lent with "a laudable desire to promote the knowledge of art."[26] Amongst the lenders we find public figures such as Edward Martyn who contributed with one Monet, two Degas and a Corot, and George Moore with a Manet[27] (O'Byrne, 2000: 55), and the Scottish art collector, J.S. Forbes who lent thirty works including six by Corot.[28] The following discussion illustrates at least two ways of creating symbolic capital for modern art. First, press reviews at the time present a lively debate over the type of aesthetics necessary in the FCA. Two distinctions are particularly relevant: poetry and prose, and foreign and national art. A second theme is emerging here is the contribution of public figures, not

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[24] Whistler not only had an international reputation, but he was "one of the most controversial artists of his time." He had exhibited in the Salon des Refusés in 1863 and was friends with Degas, Manet, Monet and Toulouse-Lautrec (Kennedy, 1991: 4).
[25] *Freeman's Journal*, 1st April 1899.
[26] *Freeman's Journal*, 1st April 1899.
[27] Martyn bought an autumn river scene by Monet and two Degas advised by his cousin George Moore (O'Grady, 1996: 85; Frazier, 2000: 122).
[28] *The Irish Times*, 1st April 1899.

necessarily painters, who used their cultural and social capital to organise or support the exhibition.

The seeds of this event and the starting point of the debate on the purpose of modern art go back to George Russell's letter to the *Dublin Express* in September 1898, where he referred to the need for a Loan Exhibition of paintings to create a public taste, and inspire art students.[29] Most important though is the way in which Russell qualified the nature of modern art. For him its subtlety lay in its ability to represent not only an "external nature", but also "the symbol of internal things, dreams, spiritual longings." What is interesting is his argument about the suitability of modern art to express a 'Celtic imagination', and even poetry. As he said:

> The subtlety of modern art has reached a point where it seems able to express things long left to the poet ... The colours and forms of the visible world, long brooded over and transmuted in the alchemy of thought, have come to convey to many a dual significance, of which the least important for purposes of art is their reference to an external nature, and the more important is that they have become the symbols of internal things, dreams, spiritual longings, and the reveries of the soul. ... To bring to our people an understanding of a language like this, so capable of expressing the spiritual characteristics peculiar to the Celtic imagination, might result in the creation of a national art.[30]

Russell's intervention can be seen as an attempt to attach symbolic capital to modern art. That is, a capital built upon the premise that modern art is a vehicle for the expression of poetry, and a Celtic imagination that could lead to a national pictorial tradition. But Russell's ideas were not always supported by other press reviews.

On the day of the exhibition's opening, *The Irish Times* published a short article praising the possibility it afforded in providing knowledge of the foreign schools. Russell's expectation of a national art with a distinct Celtic imagination is absent here, where the suggestion is that Irish art can be stimulated by the exhibition of foreign art:

> The highest instincts of Art are always stimulated by comparison, and such an opportunity as this brings that essentially important influence into operation ... We undoubtedly have suffered to no small extent from our almost absolute ignorance of the production of foreign

[29] *Daily Express*, 10th September 1898.
[30] *Daily Express*, 10th September 1898.

> schools. We know little or nothing of their methods. Even the names of painters, familiar upon the Continent as household words, are unrecognised at home. But such an Exhibition as this will serve to remove a reproach, and remedy a disability.[31]

Other reviews were less explicit about the benefits of foreign art. For example, the *Daily Express* suggested that the exhibition would lead to a national school. The author traced an analogy between the Dublin exhibition and the Paris Salon of 1824 from which the "exquisite French school of Barbizon emerged." Implicit here is the view that a distinct Irish school of art is ready to emerge: "The soil, of course, was ready and the season fair; but may we not hope it will be so in Ireland?"[32] A review in *The Irish Times* supported, more specifically, the idea of a distinct Irish art based on foreign emulating foreign schools, but did not see impressionist art as particularly relevant for this purpose. While the exhibition was helping to "keep abreast of the times in the study and knowledge of art," the impressionist works were no better equipped than those by idealists or realists since they all equally represented "essential elements in the marvellous language of pictorial art."[33]

The challenge to Russell's views is best articulated in Purser's fictive conversation, published anonymously, amongst seven viewers at the exhibition (O'Grady, 1996: 85). The following quote notes how the exhibition was aimed at correcting false standards of taste in art, and refers particularly to AE's attribution of prose to Orchardson's work:

> So A.E. is wrong to compare Orchardson disadvantageously with Mr. Yeats, just because A.E. wants poetry. In the portrait of Sir Walter Gibney we are not offered poetry. We are given prose; not offered poetry. We are given very fine prose. It is like Vanity Fair. A.E., I feel sure, never reads a line of Thackeray, and I don't want him to look at Orchardson; but if he does, he should judge him for what he is, not for what he never wanted to be. To do so is to set up a false standard of taste and judgment, just the thing one hoped this exhibition would correct. I mean there is no use asking all painters to be poets, but we have every right to ask that they should be artists. They should have a pictorial idea, whether it be a spiritual one or not, and they should carry it out thoroughly.[34]

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[31] *The Irish Times*, 1st April 1899.
[32] *Daily Express*, 1st April 1899.
[33] *The Irish Times*, 1st April 1899.
[34] *Daily Express*, 29th April 1899.

Purser's argument has been seen as a defence of her identification with the less poetical painters (O'Grady: 1996: 87). However, for our purposes it is relevant to interpret this argument as two ways of thinking about value in aesthetics: prose and poetry. This distinction demonstrates the influence in a debate over aesthetics of terms from the literary field. Also important here is Purser's assertion that the exhibition was to correct a false standard of taste, i.e. that all painters be also poets, and to ask them to be "artists."

On the exhibition's closing day, one of its committee members, George Coffey elaborates on the distinction between artists and non-artists. Artists are those individuals who possess an "eye", which allowed them to see in nature more than someone with an "untrained eye" could perceive:

> They had all a very limited acquaintance with nature as seen through the eye, but the more they studied it the more they would find that the eye only saw what the mind allowed it to see, that the power of seeing is in the mind, and that it is only in so far as the mind enabled them that they saw anything ... A person with an untrained eye must remember that the artist sees more of nature than he does. The untrained eye saw landscape mainly as a mass of light and shade. Such a person if they asked him what it was that he had admired, they would find that he had seen very little, that he had not seen the colours, but only the broad mass.[35]

The term "untrained eye" suggests the recognition of modern artists as professional artists – as opposed to amateurs, as we saw earlier on. It shows that the aim of the debate was not only to delineate how modern art could define a national standard, but also to articulate who can be a modern artist.

I said earlier that, apart from a debate on aesthetics, the exhibition was characterised by the contribution of public figures, not necessarily painters, who used their cultural and social capital to organise or support the event. In fact, this is one thing that distinguishes *Modern Paintings* from the 1884 exhibition at the DSC, which also exhibited works by well-known, international artists. *Modern Paintings* can be seen as a conscious attempt to draw the boundaries for a new aesthetics in the FCA by mobilising the support of public figures from within and outside the FCA,[36] either by being part of the exhibition's committee, or lending

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[35] *Daily Express*, 1st May 1899.

[36] George Russell (AE), Sarah Purser HRHA (painter), Walter Osborne RHA (painter), Walter Armstrong RHA (Director of the National Gallery of Ireland), Vice-Provost Ingram of Trinity College Dublin, the politician and

their own artworks for display. It must be pointed out that those individuals involved in the exhibition were not exclusively part of the FCA. For example, only Sarah Purser and Walter Osborne were professional painters. George Russell, although he had studied at the RDS and RHA Schools and won awards, was mainly involved in the literary field. Other contributors belonged to the field of decorative art.[37] T. W. Rolleston participated both in the literary field and in the field of decorative art – in the latter as the Managing Director of the Irish Industries Association (Larmour, 1992: 73). Sir Arthur Vicar was involved in the Arts and Craft movement. W. Strickland and W. Armstrong belonged to the pictorial art field of old masters (as both worked for the National Gallery of Ireland) (Larmour: 1992, 50,60). The various occupations of those individuals suggest an important point in the making of symbolic capital for modern art. It brought to the FCA at least two types of capital: cultural capital – knowledge about art needed in the selection of works – and social capital – i.e. contacts with individuals who would loan works for the exhibition. A case in point is Sarah Purser. According to her biographer the exhibition allowed her the opportunity to become a "public promoter of modern painting", someone with the necessary prestige to support a distinct modern aesthetics, as opposed to being a private patron for the arts (O'Grady, 1996: 140).

2.3 1901. John Butler Yeats and Nathaniel Hone on display

The 21st of October 1901 saw the opening of a 'Loan Collection of Pictures' by J. B. Yeats and Nathaniel Hone to be held for a fortnight in Dublin at the rooms of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, 6 St Stephen's Green. The exhibition was financed and organised by Sarah Purser with a clear aim, to give recognition to the works by these two artists, neither of whom had had a substantial showing previously; a circumstance that a public exhibition with some of their most distinctive productions could help redress (O'Grady, 1996: 97). John B. Yeats and Nathaniel Hone were both Academicians since 1892 and 1880 respectively. The importance of this exhibition for our discussion is twofold. It not only serves to illustrate an ongoing debate over the symbolic capital of contemporary art; it also shows the growing

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editor of the *Daily Express* T.P. Gill, James Brennan RHA, George Coffey (curator and keeper of Irish Antiquities in the National Museum and President of the National Literary Society, (Frazier, 2000: 325), Professor Edward Dowden, George Noble Count Plunkett (Director of the National Museum), Lt.- Col. Plunkett, Thomas William Rolleston (a leader of the Irish Literary Revival in the 1890s and sometime editor of the *Dublin University Review,* (Frazier, 2000: 274; O'Grady, 1996: 156 fnote 30), Walter Strickland (Registrar of the National Gallery), and Sir Arthur Vicars. (O'Grady, 1996: 84).

[37] This is the case of James Brennan, T.W. Rolleston and Sir Arthur Vicar. Brennan was head master of the Cork School in the 1880s and the Dublin School of Art in 1899, where he taught Irish lace design (Larmour, 1992: 50,60).

importance of private patronage – e.g. in the form of exhibitions - to supply symbolic capital to the FCA, which the RHA was not prepared to do.

The 1901 exhibition originated from a number of contributions by public figures such as George Russell, Edward Martyn, George and F. York Powell (Professor in Oxford). This was the result of Purser's effort to give the maximum publicity to the event. For our purposes, these interventions exemplify various attempts by intellectuals to create symbolic value for the art of John Butler Yeats and Nathaniel Hone. The reviews by George Russell and Edward Martyn appeal to the national element in the works by Yeats and Hone, which contain the "seeds of an Irish genuine art"[38], and reflect "the true character of Ireland."[39] Despite this, their views differ consistently. Russell refers to Yeats' work as a form of "poetic imagination", while Martyn praises Yeats as a gifted painter of religious art.

For Russell Yeats' contemporary paintings - the exhibition showed both some of its earlier work as well as contemporary examples - reveal the spiritual life of his sitters, "a poetic illumination, a revelation of character." As he says:

> Some earlier pictures show him attempting to paint directly the ideal world of romance and poetry; yet interesting as these are, they do not convey the same impression of mystery as the pictures of to-day. Indeed, the light seen behind or through a veil is always more suggestive than the unveiled light. It may be that the spirit is a formless breath which pervades form, and it is better revealed as a light in the eyes, as a brooding expression, than by the choice of ancient days and other-world subjects, where the shapes can be moulded to ideal forms by the artist's will ... Mr Yeats ... has probably chosen wisely, and has painted more memorable pictures than if he had gone back to the fairyland of Celtic mythology.

In comparison, the technical aspect of his paintings is not of the same importance. As Russell notes, this is "not the most prominent characteristic" in his work. In fact, the value of his work is not its representational accuracy, or choice of subject, but its 'aesthetics of poetry': its suggestiveness, its revelation of what Russell describes as "a magic in his [Yeats'] vision". In this case, he is moving away from his previous concern that art was to represent Celtic themes. What is important here is art as "a symbol of the creative mind." This suggests, again, an idea raised in the 1899 exhibition, which is that art is the product of those endowed with special traits, as opposed to those who possess an 'untrained eye'.

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[38] George Russell. *Freeman's Journal*, 21st October 1901.
[39] Edward Martyn. *The Leader*, 26th October 1901.

Russell's views provide an interesting counterpoint to Martyn's, which echo his interest in creating a school of religious art or stained glass. He starts his review by focusing on the disadvantaged position of Yeats and Hone in the Irish art world, because they had not received the recognition they deserved. He then suggests that any artist who wishes to be appreciated must turn to religious art because there is a demand for it. In fact, Yeats is presented here as an artist with the right talent for such purpose. As he says:

> Mr. J. B. Yeats, one of the exhibitors here, would seem especially gifted for such work, if it is possible to imagine anyone succeeding in approaching the great masters of religious art in the past. His early work, influenced by the poetic intensity of Prerafaelism, whose spirit was often subdued to genuine religious emotion, shows the possibilities that lay within the range of his inspiration. Later this poetry was suppressed with deliberate intention in order to compete with modern realism on its own ground, and may be to show in his series of fine portraits that the dreamer could be a successful portrait painter if he only chose. Truly no artist has felt all the varied aestheticisms of his time as has Mr. J.B. Yeats.[40]

For example, he explains that even though the subject of "In a Gondola" – an illustration from Browning's poem – is not religious, the technical treatment in it is such that it suggests a "religious subject." The appreciation of Yeats' technique as a subject of religious painting, differs from Russell's views on the lack of technique in Yeats' work. For Russell, this is precisely, what made him an interesting example of a 'poetic imagination.'

In his contribution to the exhibition's catalogue, York describes Yeats' work as symbolic; a representation of "the visible signs of whatever inward and spiritual grace it contains"[41] which are achieved with the use of pictorial techniques. As he says:

> The "literary" picture abandons the real functions of a picture in art – to appeal to the eye and please you through the eye – and, instead, devotes itself to telling a story. Mr. Yeats is not painting "literary" pictures; he is trying to make you see what he saw, and feel as he felt when he saw, by the use of shape and line, by sweep of brush and stroke of pencil (York, 1901: 10).[42]

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[40] *The Leader*, 26th October 1901.
[41] 'John Butler Yeats. An Appreciation' in 1901.*Loan Collection of Pictures by Nathaniel Hone, R.H.A. and John Butler Yeats, R.H.A.*
[42] 'John Butler Yeats. An Appreciation' in 1901.*Loan Collection of Pictures by Nathaniel Hone, R.H.A. and John Butler Yeats, R.H.A.*

The notion that 'literary pictures' do not appeal or give pleasure in what they represent is an interesting addition to this discussion, which so far has seen a predominance of literary terms to designate the symbolic capital of modern, or contemporary art. Overall, these reviews bring to the fore the appropriation of contemporary art for the definition of wider concerns, i.e. – religious art, pictorial techniques, or poetry in art. As we will see, after the arrival of Hugh Lane in the Dublin art scene the intellectual debate will take a different turn, although by no means arrive at a final agreement as to what type of art deserves symbolic value. As I said, the exhibition exemplifies the importance of private patronage in the promotion of contemporary art. Let me elaborate this point.

The exhibition was a significant move towards the autonomy of contemporary art from the RHA, as an agent of cultural consecration. Both artists were linked to the RHA. Hone was Professor of Painting at the RHA Schools from 1894 to 1917 (Turpin, 1991: 204). Nonetheless, the need to achieve prestige for an artist such as Hone has its own logic. Described as the creator of "some of the finest watercolours executed in late nineteenth century Ireland" (Crookshank, 1994: 259), Hone never exhibited his watercolours at the RHA, but left them, together with the oils in his studio, to the National Gallery of Ireland (ibid: 259). This is understandable if we take into account that watercolours were not a favourite genre in the RHA, which relegated "all but a few water colours to an ill-lit back room" (ibid: 221). From this perspective, the exhibition provided a unique opportunity to appreciate Hone's watercolours, while granting the artist further symbolic capital, prestige, in the FCA.

J. B. Yeats, although an academician since 1892, had problems having his work accepted at the RHA's annual exhibitions. For example, his portraits for the 1900 exhibition had been accepted only because its President Sir Thomas Drew was trying to gather support for a larger grant from the Government for Irish art (Murphy, 1978: 225). Moreover, he submitted portraits again the following year, but they were rejected "on the first round of judging" (ibid: 225). The exhibition helped Yeats achieve prestige, which he could not obtain through the RHA, when his work aroused the interest of John Quinn, a famous lawyer who had "the time and money to indulge his tastes, which included art, literature, and Ireland." A biographer of Yeats refers to the optimistic outcome of the exhibition:

> Sarah Purser, by managing the affairs of a man who couldn't manage his own, had unwittingly succeeded in bringing him at last a measure of the fame he deserved, and in

> providing him with an impulse that would carry him through a half decade of remarkable productivity. (Murphy, 1978: 236)

The exhibition suggests two important points. The RHA no longer had the monopoly of cultural consecration for contemporary art. Even a non-academician such as Purser was able to draw the necessary symbolic capital (press reviews) and economic capital to organise such an event.[43] This shows that being a member of the RHA was not a requirement for private patronage of the arts. In fact, the exhibition's opening coincided with the RHA's annual show (O'Grady, 1996: 84), which suggests a conscious effort to differentiate the two aesthetics represented by these two events. The exhibition achieved public recognition by the conscientious work that Purser put into it, mobilising public opinion to give the event the maximum publicity. In so doing, it also enabled those individuals involved to use their cultural capital – knowledge about art – in their task to promote contemporary painting. The final section of this chapter introduces another example of private patronage in the FCA, mobilised by the exhibitions organised by Hugh Lane.

3 Hugh P. Lane and the making of a modern art collection

So far this chapter has focused on a series of exhibitions that, to different degrees, contributed to the creation of a set of guidelines or definitions for contemporary and modern art. Part III of this chapter is devoted to the exhibitions that were directly related to the project of establishing a modern art collection and gallery in Dublin. The individual behind this new project was Hugh Lane. Consequently, the making of a modern art collection is interpreted in what follows as a practice constitutive of a modern aesthetics and a new form of patronage for modern Irish art. It is relevant next to introduce the figure of Hugh Lane and his position in the field. As we will see, initially, his position is somehow disadvantaged in comparison to other well-known public figures and contributors to the FCA.

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[43] Although she was not an academician and would only become an honorary member in 1923, HRHA, she had achieved recognition in the artworld by other means. For example, she was a prolific portrait painter and had shown her work in the Dublin Sketching Club, the Dublin Arts Club, the Water Colour Society of Ireland. For contributions by Purser to the different societies see (Stewart, 1997: 604-6). The continuous approval from fellow artists on selection juries from these societies, gave publicity to her work. As O'Grady says, she had with her a stream of patrons who ensured her livelihood by buying or commissioning her work. Moreover, her style was a mixture of continental skills and Celtic motives, which according to O'Grady, were welcomed by the Irish public (O'Grady, 1996: 31).

3.1 Hugh Lane: a newcomer to the field

Hugh Lane's life is well documented by a number of biographies who, mostly, pay tribute to his role as founder of Ireland's first modern art collection and gallery. My purpose here, however, is not to relate his life achievements but to situate his position as an intellectual and a newcomer to the field of modern art. Although born in Ireland, Lane was spent most of his life in England. By 1901 he was a successful art dealer in old master paintings in London. Lane was the nephew of Lady Gregory, a prominent figure in the foundation of the Irish Literary Theatre, and got first involved in the revival of the Irish art scene during a visit to his aunt in 1901. Despite his close connection to Lady Gregory, it was through his profession as art dealer in London that he was able to accumulate cultural capital, and thus create a position for himself in the FCA. However, other public figures viewed his enthusiasm for the revival of Irish art with suspicion. An example of this will emerge around the value of some of the artworks selected by Lane to form part of the new collection. Conversely, Lane also helped gather a collection of contemporary British and European art for the Johannesburg Gallery, first opened in 1910, which illustrates the good reputation bestowed to him as a judge of art.

According to Lane's biographer O'Byrne (2000), he faced some mistrust due to his explicit desire to achieve social status and distinction through the obtainment of an officially appointed job. As O'Byrne says:

> Even as he became steadily wealthier by dealing in old masters, he continued to long for the recognition bestowed by officialdom. Lane obviously found his own professional success insufficient; he needed to have his expertise confirmed by a formal appointment. Being a dealer would never be as satisfying to him as being the director of a state gallery or museum. The one brought him money, the other honour, and it was the second of these which mattered more to him. Many of the tasks he was to undertake in the years ahead, often a considerable personal cost, can be explained by this persistent desire to find himself an official job. (O'Byrne, 2000: 46)

Apart from these intricacies, the importance of Lane's arrival to the field of modern art, and particularly, the setting up of a gallery of modern art cannot be underestimated. A new gallery and collection entail the emergence of a new institution for cultural consecration in the FCA. So far we have seen that cultural consecration for contemporary art was created by the RHA, and the series of scattered exhibitions organised by a number of individuals

interested in the revival of the visual arts. A new gallery fills a much-needed gap in the field, a position that no other existing institution could have achieved.

3.2 1902. The exhibition of Old Masters at the R.H.A.

In early October 1902 Lane approached Sir Thomas Drew, president of the RHA and offered to arrange an exhibition of old master paintings from the British and French schools that would be borrowed from Irish country houses at his own expense. The exhibition would supply an opportunity to see these schools, which were almost absent from the National Gallery. In so doing, it sought to revive an interest in art and encourage modern painting in Ireland by providing an opportunity for artistic education.[44]However, apart from this artistic aim the event was a means to help redress the Academy's ailing finances. Once Lane obtained permission to go ahead with his project he wrote to the Irish newspapers explaining the nature of his intentions. Press responses to Lane's project were enthusiastic. Both the *Irish Times,* and the *Evening Herald*[45] supported the need to revive an interest in national art, at a time when so much was being done to encourage Irish music, Irish literature and Irish industries.

The exhibition was opened from December 15th 1902 to February 5th 1903. Only a few weeks before the exhibition's closing, Lane took the opportunity to write a letter to *The Irish Times* equating the success of the exhibition with the public's interest in a revival of Irish art. He then suggested a series of reforms for the RHA: a new building, a grant to support the Academy's School, and "a fine gallery filled with pictures by the great moderns." This latter project was qualified as "the most necessary of all." For Lane such a gallery would provide an opportunity to "produce a school of painting equal in importance and in profit to any in the world." This was something the National Gallery could not provide because its collection was "of too early a date to do more than train the eye to the possibilities of "colour.""[46] What seems to be articulated here is an argument justifying the need for a modern art collection as an agent for the cultural consecration of modern Irish art: "We may have the best instruction in the world, and the finest building, but without having examples of the best work of modern painters to study and emulate it will be but slow teaching." This argument is built on the premise that old masters are no longer a valid aesthetic example for the emergence of a School of Irish art, and the further assumption that modern art can help stimulate a distinct Irish aesthetics. The need for such a gallery is furthered by the idea that

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[44] *Evening Herald,* and *The Irish Times,* 24th October 1902.
[45] *Evening Herald,* and *The Irish Times,* 24th October 1902.
[46] *The Irish Times*, 15th January 1903.

it would give Ireland a prestige, which according to Lane, all provincial towns in England already had. Lane ends his letter by encouraging the public to realise the benefits of his plans: "Let us join together in this desire to refine the national taste, encourage mental cultivation, and give rational amusement ... Ireland is able to produce the necessary genius, if given the same opportunities as all other great cities have provided for their people." As we will see Lane presented here two themes that would pervade in the symbolic struggle over the gallery and its collection: the creation of a national modern aesthetics, and the attainment of international distinction or prestige. Just before the exhibition's opening two members of the honorary executive committee Lane had assembled resigned: painter Walter Osborne and W.G. Strickland, on the grounds that a portrait attributed to Reynolds was a copy (O'Byrne, 2000: 44). Lane managed to refute this claim and thus restore his position as a judge of aesthetic value. However, the incident shows distrust towards his actions, which might have to do with the fact that he was a newcomer, from London, to an Irish FCA.

But the exhibition managed to stir controversy for other reasons. Two prominent public figures, writer George Moore and painter J. B. Yeats, engaged in a debate over the nature of art knowledge and the benefits of a modern art gallery. In a letter to the *Daily Express* entitled 'Protest from Mr. George Moore' he criticises the exhibition and expresses his opposition to an art gallery. For Moore the proposed gallery would only "lower and hinder" Irish art by establishing a false standard of taste, and he added that "thirty or forty years must pass before the value of a picture can be appreciated". Given that the "taste for the art of painting is not a popular one", rather than a gallery, Dublin should have a permanent orchestra and a hall.[47] Most importantly for our argument is Moore's view that art does not need the support of any public art collection or institution. As he says:

> Art can never be encouraged nor repressed ... Art arises in circumstances which cannot be foreseen or arranged. It arises unexpectedly and in unexpected places ... It appears in countries that are apparently the least prepared for it, amid circumstances that we should deem the most unpropitious ... in Holland ... it blossomed like a flower in the space of a night. The State did not purchase art, there were no art schools, and yet all of a sudden the Hollanders began to paint as well as men ever painted before in the world. The moment may come when Irishmen will begin to paint. Their beautiful country will inspire them ... and not the portraits painted by Mr. Sargent and Mr. Shanon. For the production of art only nature

[47] *Daily Express*, 30th June 1903.

> and genius are needed. Perhaps a few fine pictures too, and these they will find in the National Gallery.[48]

Moore's view was that art emerged from a combination of the contemplation of nature and individual genius. Thus artists do not need to look at examples from other painters to learn from them, and incorporate this learning into their own artistic production.[49] J. B. Yeats replied and opposed Moore's ideas with an argument, also published in the *Daily Express*, over the foundations of art knowledge:

> Art knowledge does not come by the light of nature or by the grace of God, but by very slow degrees, and as a result of much attention and good opportunities ... it is a common idea that any fool is good enough to pronounce on the merits of a picture, and nowhere is this kind of impromptu criticism more prevalent than here in Dublin.[50]

He proposed viewing popular pictures as a help to create a taste in art, confronting "important people" with popular pictures so that:

> [They] would rouse themselves, and after a while, if skilfully treated, would begin to progress, and to advance from strength to strength or shall I say from disgust to disgust, till at last, their education complete, they would begin of themselves quite spontaneously to search for the real masterpieces.[51]

The debate on the nature of art knowledge – e.g. individual genius vs. artistic technique - and on the extent to which a modern art gallery was useful to promote Irish art was crosscut by a concern about the type of aesthetics adequate for Irish art. This point had already been raised, in January 16th 1901, only a few months before the debate between Moore and Yeats took place. An article in the *Irish Independent* entitled 'Native art' praised Lane's efforts to establish a genuine school of native art in Dublin. However, while agreeing that the creation of a public arena for contemporary art would help develop an Irish art

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[48] *Daily Express*, 30th June 1903.

[49] It is only possible to speculate about Moore's reasons for opposing the foundation of a modern art Gallery. He was well acquainted with the work by Impressionists, mainly Claude Monet, and Edgar Degas whom he met in Paris, and was an advocate of British Impressionism in his book 'Modern Painting' (1893) (Frazier, 2000: 208). His opposition to Dublin Gallery's may be due to his dislike of cultural philanthropists. For example, in 1892 he opposed the taste of Henry Tate and the Chantry bequest to the National Gallery in London "on account of [Tate's] vanity and bad taste" (ibid: 343).

[50] *Daily Express*, 2nd July 1903.

[51] Ibid.

school, the author had his own views as to the type of aesthetics suited for this purpose. The importation of foreign art would make "an Irish Art Gallery a kind of cross between a Theatre of Varieties and a Café Chantant."[52] Here modern art was equal to national art, and if an Irish school of painting were to exist, it would have to be built upon the representation of Irish historical motifs:

> If by it is meant some of the more recent productions of certain British, French, German, and Italian masters, we entertain no burning desire to have them exhibited in Dublin ... The stones of Celtic legend and Celtic song, the dark but sometimes lightsome pages of the history of our country, afford many subjects for the brushes of skilful painters ... We believe that what Ireland needs for the creation of a genuine school of native art is not the wholesale importation of works of alien painters, but the development of Irish artistic taste and skill on distinctly Celtic lines.[53]

Another participant in the debate on the new gallery was Edward Martyn. Writing in *The Leader*,[54] in an article entitled 'Art and Nationality' he mentioned that Dublin already had a collection of pictures in the National Gallery, and that if another gallery was wanted it should be financed by private funds. Moreover, he seemed to dismiss modern art as a valuable aesthetics in his continuing support for a School of Religious Art. He says:

> But the foundation of a native School of Religious Art makes no demand upon the ratepayer. On the contrary it brings wealth to a large number of workers, and benefits the whole community by the home circulation of a vast sum of money, which has hitherto found its way out of this poor country into the pockets of foreign purveyors of miserably bad art.[55]

The nature of art knowledge and value for modern art are not as important for Martyn because he sees religious art as the exponent of a national art tradition. Hence, while he does not argue for a distinct modern aesthetics, he still provided one interpretation of national art. However, his interventions are to be taken into account in this analysis because they exemplify the existence of a struggle for the attribution of symbolic capital to the co-existing artistic styles that sought to represent a national Irish art. Also writing in *The Leader*, an article signed 'Chanel' attributes the success of the exhibition to its novelty qualifying it as "quite as much *caviare* to the general public as the performances of the

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[52] *Irish Daily Independent*, January 16th 1903.
[53] *Irish Daily Independent*, January 16th 1903.
[54] *The Leader*, 21st February 1903.
[55] *The Leader*, 21st February 1903.

Dublin Musical Society ... when the pleasure of newness has worn away it will meet with no better fate."[56] For him the difficulty of developing a distinct art tradition lies not in the form this tradition should take but in a lack of development in Irish art. Added to this is the lack of financial resources given "the smallness of the assistance we can get from the Irish aristocracy." At this point, the author suggests the same line of argument as Martyn's: Ireland needs the production of a national religious art – "[I]f there is to be a true development of Irish art at all, this seems to be the only avenue open to it."[57]

The 1902 exhibition produced a shift in the nature of the debate on the arts. Rather than an attempt at articulating a distinct aesthetics for modern art, it is now more closely related to the emergence of a distinct Irish school of art. In other words: what does an art tradition look like? What type of art is adequate to produce such a tradition – religious, foreign art, or Celtic art? A related issue is whether a gallery of modern art is needed for the development of an Irish school of painting.

3.3 1904. Towards an internationalist aesthetics for Irish art

In 1904,[58] Lane organised an exhibition at the R.H.A. with a collection that was to form the nucleus of the proposed gallery. The display included a considerable number of French works, and, in particular, French Impressionists such as Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, and Camille Pissarro. The origin of this project lay in the collection assembled by the Scottish entrepreneur James Staats Forbes, who had recently died leaving as a legacy a collection of around 4,000 pictures including the work of John Constable, the Barbizon school, 150 works by Jean Francois Millet, and 160 by Jean-Baptiste Corot (O'Byrne, 2000: 61). Lane approached the executors of Forbes' will who intended to offer the collection for sale,[59] with the suggestion to show and put on sale a selection of the pictures in Dublin, which eventually came down to 160. He did so in the hope that the pictures would be bought by individuals who would then donate them to the city. Lane also added – in case the selection from the Staats-Forbes collection was not attractive enough - a number of impressionist paintings that he borrowed from the Paris dealer Paul Durand-Ruel and some of his own pictures (O'Byrne, 2000: 62).

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[56] *The Leader*, 7th February 1903.
[57] *The Leader*, 7th February 1903.
[58] Also in 1904, Lane organised an exhibition of Irish art in the Guildhall in London. However, I do not discuss it here because this chapter is only concerned with the events in Dublin's FCA.
[59] Lane heard about the executors' intentions while preparing the Guildhall exhibition that same year (O'Byrne, 2000: 62).

One striking feature of this exhibition is the inclusion of French Impressionist paintings. Bearing in mind that the collection on show was to form the nucleus of Lane's projected art gallery, the exhibition – and future collection – differs from the European trend of this type of galleries, which would show, mainly, the art from their particular nation (Lorente, 1998). Clearly this choice would be able to position Ireland in the mainstream of the European avant-garde, which hardly coincides with Lane's nationalistic plans to create a school of Irish art. The question is: how can we explain Lane's sudden interest in Impressionist art? This question is related to what type of art is given symbolic capital so that it can help create a distinct Irish aesthetic.

It is only possible to suggest some reasons that might have led Lane to add French Impressionist paintings to the collection, given his lack of knowledge about this type of art. It has been suggested that his awareness of recent developments in European art increased during a holiday he took with his friend and painter William Orpen in September 1904 (O'Byrne, 2000: 53). During a short stay in Paris they visited the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel,[60] and, following Orpen's advice, who was already familiar with the main Impressionist painters, Lane bought works by Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Camille Pissarro for the Dublin collection. According to biographer O'Byrne, "[Lane's] complete ignorance of Impressionism before this date seems improbable; more likely, until he looked at the pictures in the company of an informed enthusiast, they had failed to inspire much interest" (ibid: 55). In addition, French Impressionism was by no means unknown in Dublin if we recall the 1899 exhibition 'Modern Paintings', which included works by Degas, Monet and Manet. What distinguishes the present exhibition from the 1899 display of modern, foreign art is the resolution that Ireland needed a gallery and a collection of modern art, including foreign art, in order to allow a distinct Irish aesthetic to emerge. More specifically, this exemplifies the attribution of a new aesthetic, French Impressionism, with symbolic capital in the FCA. However, this new association – and thus the picture-buying campaign organised by Lane - did not always receive the support it needed.

My purpose in what follows is to focus on the events that took place around the exhibition and explore the arguments made, mainly in the Irish press, on behalf of an international aesthetics for Irish art. These can be summarised as follows: it is contemporary art, as opposed to old masters, that can help foster a national taste; its benefit is that it can bring

[60] Durand-Ruel had promoted Impressionist paintings long before that school had achieved any notoriety. He had met Monet and Pissarro in 1870 when they were in London during the Franco-Prussian war. He represented some of their work as well as that of Renoir, Degas, Puvis de Chavannes and Alfred Stevens (O'Byrne, 2000: 53-4).

a distinct school of painting; the gallery would have one of the greatest modern collections in the world, thus making Dublin a prestigious art capital.

In the exhibition catalogue, Lane emphasised the possibilities of the collection on display, which if it was to become Dublin's collection would then rank amongst the greatest in the world. An editorial in *The Irish Times* on the opening day was equally enthusiastic. It recognised that the standard of Irish art had fallen lamentably low, but this could be avoided by providing opportunities of contrasting the work of Irish artists with the achievements of artists in other lands:

> [T]he exhibition which open today in the rooms of the RHA marks an epoch in artistic education in Ireland ... Without the inspiring examples of the great contemporary art of Europe, it is almost impossible for our native students to rise out of the slough in which they have been for so many years ... the modern student has more to learn from contemporary art than from the art of the past.[61]

John B. Yeats, writing in the *Daily Express,* supported the project of a modern art gallery. Firstly, because it would help painters develop the skill of "having eyes that see everywhere natural beauty", which can only be acquired by looking at paintings. Here a gallery is seen as helping redress the lack of appreciation of beauty in nature. Secondly, he perceives the gallery as a symbol of prestige for Dublin, which will then become "The Paris of the British Empire," while at present, Dublin was the only city of the kingdom without a gallery of modern art.[62] An article in the *Freeman's Journal* expressed the same point, saying that Dublin's gallery "would rival in interest any in the great English cities."[63]

An interesting addition to the previous views is indicated by the contribution in *Claidheamh Solais.*[64] If, previously, it had argued that Irish art needed to follow examples from an Irish golden period, it now suggests the development of an Irish aesthetics based on the study of foreign art: "Painting demands study of standards ... We must have schools, and we must, to adapt Arnold's phrase 'See the best the world has done.'" The author supports the collection on display, which, if secured permanently, would help in the progress of art and in

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[61] *The Irish Times*, 21st November 1904.
[62] Daily Express, 21st November 1904.
[63] *Freeman's Journal,* 21st November 1904.
[64] *Claidheamh Solais*, 10th December 1904.

"the regeneration of our people". In other words, having knowledge about art brings with it betterment for the Irish population at large.

Writing in *Claidheamh Solais,* Lady Gregory provides an interesting viewpoint on the question of the aesthetic value of the collection, particularly in relation to the French paintings on show. She emphasised the benefits of French impressionism and appealed for funds to buy some of these paintings. Of particular interest are her ideas about the benefits of French art to the "dignity" of the Irish nation, and as a contribution to its heritage.[65] In an article in *The Irish Times*, she added that if French art was secured for Ireland "London will become a mere provincial town, and Dublin the capital of the British Isles as far as modern art goes ... Dublin will become a place of pilgrimage for devotees of modern art." The 'dignifying' effect of French art stood here as a means to give the Irish capital an advantaged position from which to compete with its rival, colonial 'centre' London.[66] A month later, Lady Gregory would invoke the same internationalist rhetoric in an article in the *Freeman's Journal.* Here the proposed collection would mean "an advance in the dignity of our country in its place among nations", since the French art collection on display at the Royal Hibernian Academy was "the best representation of art outside Paris."[67]

In 1904, George Moore also spoke with enthusiasm, at Lane's request, of the prestige and benefits of French art. For him, France and French Impressionism in particular, were the source of modern art. Referring to the gallery and its collection as 'impressionist,' he said:

> [N]o collection would help an Irish or American town as much as a collection of impressionist pictures ... I believe that a gallery of impressionist pictures would be more likely than any other pictures to send a man to France, and that is the great point. Everyone must go to France. France is the source of all the arts. (Moore, 1906: 42)[68]

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[65] *Claidheamh Solais*, 7th January 1905.
[66] *The Irish Times*, 21st November 1904.
[67] *Freeman's Journal*, 13th December 1904.
[68] Lecture published as *Reminiscences of the Impressionist Painters* (1906). George Moore delivered this paper on 8th December 1904 at Lane's request. His support to the Gallery, in view of his previous criticism, is explained by Frazier as follows: "Moore, however, at first resisted the attempt to be recruited into the ranks of what he took to be another man's campaign for personal immortality, but an appeal to his vanity ("but you are the only one in Dublin to have actually known these painters") was enough to overcome his resistance." (2000: 339). In his biography of Moore, Frazier distinguishes Moore's proto-modernism whereby Paris was seen as the centre and all else the periphery of the artworld, from the cultural nationalism propagated by Lady Gregory and other members of the Gaelic League (ibid: 339).

However, not everyone agreed with the aesthetic appeal of the works on display. A letter in the *Daily Express* signed 'Philistine' asked whether there was any evidence "that loan collections of pictures help in any way our resident artists", and dismissed "the collection of grotesque specimens of the works of cranks and faddists of the modern impressionist school."[69] A correspondent in *The Irish Times*[70] signing himself 'Viator' questioned the high prices being asked for the paintings.[71] Claiming a "long experience of modern pictures and prices," for the author the exhibition was lacking in any pictures of first-rate importance, and added, "some are not even second-rate in subject and treatment." He suggested that the entire group of Staats Forbes paintings were hardly worth £3,000 – when the price being asked for them was £36,000. 'Viator' might have been Lieutenant-Colonel George Plunkett, then Director of the National Museum and strongly opposed to modern art (O'Byrne, 2000: 65). Similarly, a report in the *Evening Herald* was particularly critical of the French paintings, accusing them of "false sentimentalism and realism often of a grossly sensual kind".[72]

In order to contextualise the discussion on modern art and the development of an Irish school of painting, I refer next to the minority who supported Lane's projected art gallery. An example of the support received by Lane was a circular issued in *The Irish Times* by a group of Irish writers including Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats, Douglas Hyde, Edith Somerville, Emily Lawless, and George Russell. This was a call for financial contributions to purchase the collection of pictures on show, but in particular, those by French artists such as Monet and Manet, which were deemed "essential to a study of modern art."[73] It is useful to take this financial appeal as a starting point to explore who supported Lane's project. One of the arguments that I have made so far is that the FCA was affected by a change in the creation of its economic capital. If before the Anglo-Irish aristocracy were the private patrons of art, when they stopped performing this role this created a vacuum in the making of economic capital. This debate exemplifies a struggle over the creation of economic capital for a new emerging aesthetics. The problem was twofold. On the one hand, they had to counteract an artworld characterised by its lack of economic means. On the other hand, in propounding a new foundation for Irish aesthetics they also had to struggle with those conservative

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[69] *Daily Express*, 8th December 1904.
[70] *The Irish Times*, 21st December 1904.
[71] Some of the prices questioned were £1,250 for Corot's *Avignon, Palais des Papes,* £600 for a Monet view of Waterloo Bridge, £500 for Constable's *Cornfield* (O'Byrne, 2000: 64).
[72] *Evening Herald*, 2nd January 1905. See (O'Byrne, 2000: 68-74) for an account of the debate over Lane's wrong attribution of value to one Corot – *Peasants by a Lake* - supposedly a copy of a landscape, *The Fishermen's Rest at Lake Balaton* on display in Budapest's National Museum, by the Hungarian artist Geza Meszoly
[73] *The Irish Times*, 5th January 1905.

sections of society that were against this type of art. The question is: who became the new supporters of modern art?

On the one hand, some supporters were recognisable public figures such as George Moore and John B. Yeats. The catalogue of the 1904 exhibition listed a provisional committee including: the Earl of Drogheda, the Earl of Mayo, K.P., Sir Thomas Drew, (President of the R.H.A.), Lieut.Col. Hucheson Poe; T. Harrington, and Hugh Lane himself. This provisional committee was expanded and made into a General Committee "to carry out the project of forming a gallery of modern art for Ireland."[74] In this new Committee a number of new members were added, amongst them some of the names mentioned so far: George Russell, W. B. Yeats, T. W. Rolleston, Nathaniel Hone, R.H.A.[75]

On the other hand, individuals such as Lord Mayo, the Lord Lieutenant, Chief Secretary George Wyndham, Lord Dunaven, Colonel Hutcheson Poe, and Alderman Thomas Kelly, later a Sinn Féin M.P, had, in some way or another supported Lane's campaign to promote modern art. This particular group was representative of a very specific stratum of Irish society; they belonged to the Ascendancy class and were neither mainstream unionists nor (with the exception of Kelly) strong nationalists.[76] This meant that they occupied a social space that was not characterised by a significant amount of political capital – i.e. by belonging to a specific political party. As O'Byrne argues:

> The people who rallied around Lane were therefore almost the least effective of all in Ireland, because they could rely only on themselves for support. As was to become clear, their energy and enthusiasm was not enough to ensure the success of any undertaking in which they became involved. (O'Byrne, 2000: 73)

Added to this is the argument that Lane was not well acquainted with the different factions of Irish society because he had not grown up in Ireland. Biographer O'Byrne illustrates this point with a quote from the 1905 catalogue to the exhibition by then transferred to the

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[74] Unknown source, 21st January 1908.

[75] In addition to these names we have: Sir John Barton, C.B; Sir Chas. Cameron, C.B. Mr. Edmund Eyre, City Treasurer; Count and Countess Markievicz; Mr. E.P. Alabaster; Mr. Ambrose Lane; Mr. James Duncan, Mr. Charles MacCarthy, City Architect; Mr. John R. O'Connell, LL.D, and Mr. R. Caulfield Orpen, Honorary Secretary to the Committee, and Mr. Dermod O'Brien, R.H.A. Honorary Treasurer to the Picture Fund.

[76] For example, George Wyndham drew the 1903 Land Act, result of the 1902 Irish Land Conference, which permitted members of this class to negotiate a settlement with representatives of the Nationalist party. The act offered generous financial incentives for landlords to sell and tenants to buy property (O'Byrne, 2000: 72). The Earl of Dunraven and Colonel Hutcheson Poe were other members of the conference's committee.

rotunda in the National Museum in Dublin,[77] where Lane wrote that the modern art movement was "unique in Irish history, all classes and ranks joining without distinction of politics and creed in helping it on."[78] While this statement may sound naïve for some, it is also true that Lane was not completely unaware of politics in Ireland. Nonetheless, for our purpose, the question remaining is that a social class with no political but some economic capital was supporting modern art. This would leave the outward, internationalist aesthetics presented by this social stratum as the basis of a new Irish art school with some but weak symbolic capital.

3.4 1908. The opening of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art

On January 21st 1908, the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art opened its doors to the public. On display was its collection of 300 works including Irish, British, Dutch, Italian, and French schools, and Impressionist masterpieces by Pierre Auguste Renoir, and Camille Pissarro. In what follows I argue that public opinion created two lines of understanding the role and position of the gallery and its collection. Firstly, the collection articulated an international aesthetics based on the rationale that foreign art, in particular French art, could pave the way to a distinct Irish school. Secondly, the possession of an international art collection gave a distinct position to the MGMA in the FCA. It was not only the institution of cultural consecration for modern art, but also a means for Ireland to achieve international recognition. Let us see next how these views are presented in the press at the time of the MGMA's opening.

The *Sinn Féin* magazine praised Lane's achievement of giving Dublin its gallery of modern art, adding that "If every Irishman in his own sphere acted in the same spirit, Ireland ten years hence would be a country of self-reliant men and women." From a rhetoric of self-reliance, of an Ireland that relies on the virtues of its inhabitants, the author went on to praise the advancement that the gallery would bring to the Irish nation in relation to other nations:

> 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

[77] Although Lane wanted to extend the exhibition at the RHA, this space had already been committed. The matter aroused controversy between academicians and Lane's supporters. For example, George Moore questioned the Academy's decision not to alter their arrangements on the grounds that Lane's exhibition contained better pictures than would their own spring show. *Daily Express*, 5th December 1905.

[78] From the Introduction to *Catalogue of Pictures given to the City of Dublin to form a Nucleus of a Gallery of Modern Art,* exhibited at the National Museum, January 1905.

> 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. [79]

The complexity of this view is echoed in the English editorial of *Claidheamh Soluis*, which referred to the gallery as a real manifestation of the new life "commencing to surge through the veins of Ireland." The author recalls the underlying theme of this debate, the detrimental situation of Irish art. The gallery seemed to be a remedy to this situation since it would help Ireland "to put herself into communion with her own past." Referring to Hugh Lane, the article explained:

> He has made it possible for young artists so to educate themselves here at home in Ireland that their message of beauty may be delivered to Irish ears in accents which they shall understand, their secrets whispered to Irish hearts in tones which shall stir their inmost chords ... there will grow up in our midst a school of painters and sculptors whose work will be an authentic expression of the soul of Ireland, because it will be the creation of artists who are in a genuine sense Irish.

Although we are left without knowing how an "authentic expression of the soul of Ireland" is to develop from Ireland's new international collection, the editorial shifted to the prevalent rhetoric of international prestige. That is, the collection could bring Dublin a prestige granted "nowhere else in Europe save in Paris and (to a lesser extent) in London."[80] These last views suggest a theme that shapes this debate, namely that even where disagreement prevailed as to what type of school was a best model for Irish art, the gallery and its collection were a benefit for Ireland.

Ellen Duncan, who would be appointed the first curator of the Gallery (Boylan, 1996: 100), was more explicit than the previous writer about the Gallery's benefits. Referring to the collection as "a tour de force in selection", she emphasises its international distinction, which would make Dublin famous throughout Europe.[81] She then elaborated this point as follows:

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[79] *Sinn Féin*, January 25th 1908.
[80] *Claidheamh Solais*, January 25th 1908.
[81] *Irish Independent*, 18th January 1908.

> This Gallery will enrich the country directly and indirectly. Indirectly, because a cultivated people, whose minds are awake to the intellectual tendencies that are stirring in other lands, is better fitted to take its place in the world, better equipped for the struggle for existence, than one which is ignorant of those influences. Directly, by bringing the foreign artist, the critic, the connoisseur, the wealthy visitor to Dublin. The superb collection of foreign masterpieces in modern painting and sculpture now in Dublin will attract attention all over the civilised world.[82]

This quote exemplifies a rhetoric in which the knowledge of international aesthetics or 'intellectual tendencies ... stirring in other lands' constitutes a benefit to Irish people who, importantly, can then take their 'place in the world'. The benefits of the collection's international aesthetics had been suggested in the *Daily Express,* where the collection, named a "collection of French art," was hoped to provide crucial inspiration for Irish art. In so doing, this tribute to the collection was reaffirming a hierarchy of symbolic value in the different aesthetics represented by modern art; a hierarchy in which France was situated in the top position.[83] He concludes the article by saying:

> [I]t is more suitable to think over the possible advantages of this new gallery to us, to wonder if this collection of French art will influence the Irish intellect, stirring it to another attitude towards life ... The Irish mind has looked at life from the same point of view century after century ... France, who has always been the herald of new ideas, has blown her clarion in vain, Ireland never heeded the call. Perhaps – who knows, the unexpected always happens – Manet and Monet and their friends will bring about the change.[84]

The Irish Times praised the collection as one of the most representative and educative in the whole world, which would give Dublin a claim to *international distinction*.[85] The international impetus of the collection was highlighted. The gallery "had not been founded for the exhibition of modern Irish art only; there is no parochialism in art, and the aim of the Dublin gallery will be to illustrate modern art generally."[86] Rather, the MGMA and its collection re-positioned Ireland's status as a nation, "the Cinderella of the nations" had from that day something to be proud of, a "jewel of singular beauty and distinction"[87] was hung

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[82] *Irish Independent*, 24th January 1908.
[83] *Daily Express*, 20th January 1908.
[84] *Daily Express*, 20th January 1908.
[85] *The Irish Times*, January 21st 1908.
[86] *The Irish Times*, January 2nd 1908.
[87] *The Irish Times*, January 20th 1908.

about the image of the city. Finally, Lane's statement in the exhibition's catalogue supported the aforementioned views that the gallery meant a definite improvement to the Irish nation. As he said:

> 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.[88]

The catalogue supported this claim to international distinction by adding the following words by the then United States President, Theodore Roosevelt: "[the gallery] would be an important step toward giving Dublin the position it by right should have."[89]

To write a conclusion to the history of the gallery is necessarily an incomplete project. The gallery still exists in Charlemont House, the permanent location that was found for it in 1933. The school of Irish art as Lane and his followers wanted it never emerged. Lane tired of waiting to find an adequate building for the gallery donated his collection of impressionist paintings to the National Gallery in London. His death in 1915 meant that Ireland was left without its main patron. In these circumstances, those artists who wanted to adopt aspects of modernist art – for example, Jack B. Yeats, Mainie Jellett, Evie Hone, Harry Clarke - travelled to France, where Cubism and Fauvism had been replacing Impressionism. Dublin, however, continued to be dominated by the academicism of the R.H.A. When those artists who adopted modernist tendencies tried to exhibit in Ireland they suffered the incomprehension of art critics and the R.H.A. Lane's death also led to a long dispute over Lane's donation to the National Gallery. At present, some of the works are still shared between the MGMA and the National Gallery.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter I mentioned that it was strategic in various ways. One of my concerns was to use it as a springboard to discuss the possibility that the foundation of the MGMA was the culmination of an ongoing change or symbolic revolution in the FCA. The structure of the chapter has been designed to provide a basis to discuss this question. I said that the RHA was in the position of being the institution of cultural consecration with a monopoly over the distribution of symbolic capital in the FCA. That is, the main producer of symbolic capital for the art promoted by the RHA. However, this position was endangered

[88] 1908. *Illustrated Catalogue.* Municipal Gallery of Modern Art.
[89] 1908. *Illustrated Catalogue.* Municipal Gallery of Modern Art.

by an increasing lack of funds to run the institution, the lack of private patronage for the arts. Added to this was the emergence of alternative aesthetics in the FCA, such as modern and contemporary art, which would co-exist with the RHA's academic art. The organisation of exhibitions such as *Modern Paintings* (1899) was seen as a means to create new outlets for the promotion of modern art and provide a forum in which public figures discussed the type of aesthetics needed in the FCA. We saw, for example, a reliance on terms from the literary field – i.e. poetry, prose. But the arrival of Hugh Lane was to change the course of these events with his project for a gallery of modern art. The debates around the 1902 and 1904 exhibitions he organised produced a variety of public opinion over the need for such a gallery and the type of aesthetics representative of an Irish school of art – e.g. Celtic motifs, religious art, foreign influences. A striking issue here was the plan to include foreign art in the gallery's collection. More specifically, the benefits of French impressionist paintings for the emergence of a modern Irish school of painting became a contested issue. The foundation of the MGMA gave raise not only to the possibility of an internationalist aesthetics; it also became involved in the construction of France as an alternative centre of cultural power to its neighbour, Britain. In fact, the project of setting up a gallery of modern art was following a European model started in 1818 when Paris became the first European capital to have a museum of contemporary art – the Luxembourg Gallery. But the inclusion of foreign art in the MGMA's collection made Dublin a pioneer capital for another reason. As I said, at the time, museums of contemporary art had a nationalist emphasis, becoming a showcase for the latest art by artists of each particular nation (Lorente, 1998). This account leads me to the theoretical framework structuring the chapter. How does the making of aesthetic value occur? And, most importantly, can we argue that the MGMA caused a symbolic revolution in the FCA?

Overall, the study of various exhibitions has attempted to show how the production of symbolic value comes into being. I explored how the RHA became a leading producer of symbolic capital in the FCA. Another example was the use by public figures of their cultural capital to participate in a debate about the question of value in art. Similarly, I mentioned that Lane's supporters, although with a certain amount of economic capital to support the MGMA, did not belong to a concrete political fraction. These are issues that will emerge again in the following chapters of this thesis. In chapter 4, which is also focused on the FCA, we will see a development from these forms of investment into a situation in which a series of agents, including the RHA, and the MGMA, compete for the accumulation of symbolic

capital for contemporary art. To end I would like to reflect on the possibility of a symbolic revolution in the FCA.

My initial premise was that the MGMA led to a symbolic revolution in the FCA because it challenged the monopoly of the RHA in at least two ways. As a gallery of modern art it followed a French initiative, the Luxembourg Gallery, and became the only leading institution for the promotion of modern art in the FCA. It also facilitated the emergence of new ways of thinking about an Irish school of art, inspired by and based on foreign models. It is possible to say that it was against all the RHA was about. This was an institution run with funds from the British Government, and based on a British model: it was homologous with the Royal Academy in London, which promoted an academic aesthetics. These factors suggest a form of symbolic revolution in the FCA with regard to the production of symbolic capital, and the types of aesthetics prevalent in the field. However, despite its optimistic start, the MGMA became the victim of a series of events, which stopped this impending symbolic revolution. The difficulties in finding a permanent location for the MGMA prompted Lane to donate his collection of impressionist paintings to the National Gallery in London. The internationalist school of Irish art did not take place; at least in the way Lane projected it – i.e. Irish artists being inspired by the works in the MGMA's collection to produce a combination of Irish and international aesthetics. Rather, it was Irish artists who travelled abroad and consciously embraced artistic movements such as Cubism which they incorporated into their practice. A clear example of this would be artist Mainie Jellett who together with Evie Hone studied under Albert Gleizes, one of the major exponents of Cubist theory and practice (Ruane, 1995: 146). This historical episode gives a valuable insight into symbolic revolutions. This is a case where the FCA underwent a series of important transformations that constitute a basis for such revolution. However, maybe we need to re-think who are key players in symbolic revolutions, institutions and debates on aesthetics? In this case, history teaches us that another fundamental agent to create change, from an aesthetic point of view, is the artist. I will return to the issue of change in chapter 7 in relation to IMMA, to explore further whether art collection making can be a source of cultural transformation. The MGMA succeeded in opening the path towards a symbolic revolution, bringing the FCA to a successful start for this change to occur. However, this path needs the collaboration of artists. Even if the MGMA had succeeded in bringing the latest art from France, Irish artists still would have fled the country in search for inspiration from other experts abroad. This is something they could not find in the FCA.

CHAPTER 4
DUBLIN'S ART WORLD

Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored the practices involved in the making of Ireland's first public collection of modern art. I have argued that the foundation of the MGMA brought about a symbolic revolution in the field, but that this was short-lived. My emphasis in this analysis has been to present the various practices involved in the creation of symbolic capital for modern art; and the contribution of the MGMA to an alternative aesthetics and form of patronage in the FCA. Chapters 5 and 6 continue with the study of collecting by focusing on the Irish Museum of Modern Art. But before doing that, this chapter seeks to offer an account of the field of contemporary art (FCA), the field in which IMMA occupies its position as Ireland's national museum of modern art. This chapter can be seen as an initial context to start outlining the role and position of IMMA in the FCA. It is divided into three parts. Part I conceptualises the FCA as a field, and refers to the main events, which have shaped the FCA since the foundation of the MGMA until the present. Part II introduces the commercial and public art galleries, which will be the subject of analysis. Part III focuses on the processes in which these agents are involved, with an emphasis on the practices behind the creation of symbolic capital for contemporary art, and the relationships between the various agents in the FCA.

1 The field contemporary art as a 'field'

As I said in the introduction to this chapter, my aim here is to start outlining the FCA of which the IMMA is part. However, it also addresses a key topic in this thesis, which will continue in chapters 5 and 6. It explores some of the mechanisms involved in the making of aesthetic value. The difference is that it does not set out to analyse the nature of intellectual practices involved in art collection making. My use of the term 'field' is strategic here. It provides me with a methodological tool to understand some of the mechanisms involved in the production of aesthetic value in the FCA.

A key issue in field analysis is how to define the boundaries of a given field. For Bourdieu the boundary of the FCP is the site of a struggle over the definition of the writer, artist (1993a: 42). Following the same line of enquiry, the specific struggle I seek to explore is that over the making of aesthetic value for contemporary art. In fact Bourdieu warns us against any attempt at "dividing a line between the agents involved" in a particular field, which is a way of

imposing an "operational definition" of field (ibid: 42-3). Rather, the object of sociological study is a stake in field struggles; that is, how the field's boundary is held by the competing agents. This chapter explores, and questions, the struggles in which two particular agents are involved: commercial galleries and public galleries. However, this approach to field study is problematic from Bourdieu's point of view. This is because there are more agents involved in the making of aesthetic value in the FCA. For example, the National College of Arts and Design – the main institution in charge of teaching fine art - is omitted from the analysis, as well as any statements from contemporary artists. The decision to focus in only two sets of agents is related to the topic of this thesis: an exploration into public collecting. It is relevant to look at the practices of commercial art galleries because, arguably, they provide artworks to the museum's collection. Given that the IMMA is a public institution, other public institutions in charge of either collecting or displaying that type of art must be included to help us understand the relationships between the IMMA and other existing institutions.

My interest is to explore how these two sets of agents produce symbolic capital, and to overview the changing distribution of symbolic power amongst different institutions in the field. It is relevant to point out how my approach differs from previous conceptualisations of the Irish art world. There are only a small number of publications on contemporary and modern art in Ireland of which Kennedy (1991) and Walker (1997) are two outstanding contributions. These authors provide us with invaluable information on the development of the visual arts; an information which is crucial to my own analytical slant of field theory. However, their focus is on exploring the stylistic influences or benefits of events such as the Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA) or ROSC exhibitions, for example, on Irish artists. This leaves unexplained the shifting balance in symbolic power amongst different institutions, historically, as well as the changing practices involved in the creation of symbolic capital. Conversely, within the sociology of art we find other approaches to field analysis (Ardery, 1997). In what follows, I want to pick up where chapter 3 left off and look at some of the events which have taken place since the opening of the MGMA in 1908.

1.1 The transitional period: after the MGMA

After the foundation of the MGMA in 1908, it would take over 80 years for another institution for cultural consecration to emerge in the FCA: the Irish Museum of Modern Art opened in May 1991, endowed with the highest amount of symbolic power in the FCA. Although this is indeed a big span of time this is not to say that nothing happened in the field

itself. My specific interest in what follows is to examine the trajectory of the FCA after the opening of the MGMA in 1908. As we have seen the Gallery never achieved the symbolic power Hugh Lane and his followers sought for it. However, the FCA continued to develop new ways for creating symbolic capital for art and artists. Although I do not have the space to provide a detailed account, it will suffice to highlight some of the main events constitutive of a new epoch of the FCA.

1.2 The Irish Exhibitions of Living Art

In the 1940s outlets for the exhibition of visual art were limited, the RHA's Annual Exhibition being the most prestigious in Ireland (Hartigan, 1987: 58). The academicism of the RHA exhibition represented one type of Irish art. Another line of artistic practice was that by a generation of Irish artists who had studied abroad – e.g. Nano Reid, Norah McGuinness, Mainie Jellett, Evie Hone and Louis Le Brocquy - and had absorbed in their work contemporary European artistic developments. The clash between these two currents, however, came to the fore with the RHA's rejection of 'The Spanish Shawl' by Louis Le Brocquy for its Annual Exhibitions of 1942 and 1943 (ibid: 58). This rejection led to an important development in the FCA: the beginning of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art in 1943. Characterised as marking "the coming of age of Irish art" (Fallon, 1998: 240), this annual event became an alternative outlet for Ireland's best visual talents. It was a sort of Salon des Refusées in that it became an annual forum for those artists embracing a form of non-academic art practice (Hartigan, 1987: 58). It also provided a platform for young artists, and for the public who were unaware of artistic developments in Europe. At the suggestion of Le Brocquy's mother, a number of artists – Louis Le Brocquy, Evie Hone, and Mainie Jellett amongst others – set up to organise an exhibition of works by living Irish artists. This can be seen as a new way of creating symbolic capital for living art, which the field in its present state was producing but only for an academic type of art.

The symbolic capital originated by the IELA is all the more important because the other major player in the FCA apart from the RHA, the MGMA, was not playing an active role in promoting living artists either. This point becomes clear in light of the rejections of works by the MGMA during the 1940s and 1950s. The *Christ and the Soldier* by Georges Rouault was offered in 1942 and 1952, and both times refused (Walker, 1997: 24); and *A Family* by Louis Le Brocquy was turned down in 1951 or 52, after being exhibited at the Waddington's gallery and a group of collectors offered to purchase the painting (ibid: 38). In 1964, P.J. Carroll and Co, the tobacco manufacturers, introduced the Carroll's prize (ibid:

55). This was the first commercially sponsored open public prize for visual art (ibid: 183), and thus contributed to adding symbolic capital to Irish art, although it disappeared with the demise of the IELA.

The IELA enabled a good number of new artists to come to prominence. The exhibitions had symbolic power to legitimate good art, taking over the RHA's function, but in a completely different direction (Kennedy, 1991: 135). Kennedy supports this argument in pictorial terms: "perhaps the greatest achievement of the Living Art exhibitions was in demonstrating irrefutably that, despite the tenor of the times, Irish art was not immune to the mainstream of European intellectual endeavour" (ibid: 146). Hartigan also views the IELA as an alternative to the RHA:

> While the IELA was an alternative to the RHA, the two were not mutually exclusive and many people exhibited work in both, even though each represented a different point of view. The RHA maintained what it believed to be the tradition, while the IELA brought to the attention of the Irish public the fact that there were Irish painters and sculptors whose work reflected the artistic concerns of the Continent. (Hartigan, 1987: 58)

Another way of pointing out the IELA's importance is to say that the FCA needed symbolic capital to legitimate a particular form of artistic practice, and the IELA exhibitions were one way of providing it.

1.3 Commercial art galleries

Parallel to the IELA in the 1940s is the emergence of commercial art galleries, another crucial development in the FCA, which was to increase the production of symbolic capital in the field. The first gallery was set up in Dublin in 1925 by Victor Waddington, and stayed in business for thirty years (Walker, 1997: 31), until he moved to London in 1957, where he also became a leading figure in the artworld. In 1944 Leo Smith opened the Dawson Gallery, which closed in 1977 and continued as the Taylor Galleries in 1978; and in 1956 the David Hendricks Gallery was founded to close in 1988. Twenty years later, in 1976 the Oliver Dowling Gallery was opened. One way of assessing the impact of these galleries in the FCA is to look at the type of art they brought to Ireland. As Walker says, both the Waddington Galleries and the Dawson Gallery sold work by both Academicians and artists influenced by artistic movements outside Ireland. However, they also played a crucial role in "undermining the stranglehold of the RHA, offering an opening for independent opinion and

trade" (ibid: 31). The Waddington Galleries exemplify this role because Waddington did not confine his shows to Irish artists. Instead, he brought to Dublin many leading English and Continental artists, including Picasso, Bonnard, Matisse, Braque, Rouault, Kikischka, Ben Nicholson, Ivon Hitchens, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, André Masson (Fallon, 1998: 242). Similarly, in 1966, the David Hendricks Gallery offered an an exhibition of Kinetic art providing Ireland with a first acquaintance with international figures such as Vasarely, Soto, le Parc, Cruz Diez, Morellet, Riley, Sedgley and others (Lambert, 1983: 23). The following year the gallery organised an exhibition of Op Art.

A benefit to be derived from the emergence of a sub-field of commercial galleries was their task in promoting work by Irish artists, and, most importantly, in moving the art from the artists' studio into Dublin's emergent art market. In so doing, they not only created symbolic capital for those artists they represented, but they offered an alternative, and very needed space in the FCA for those who did not follow the stylistic lines promulgated by the RHA. Fallon's description of the RHA annual exhibitions as relying "heavily on dull, semi-official portraiture, laboured genre pieces, and tritely 'picturesque' landscape" (Fallon, 1998: 239) is suggestive of the academic-realist style they represented (Walker, 1997: 21). It is important, however, to point out the connection between these two seemingly disparate events: the IELA exhibitions and the workings of commercial art galleries. Art exhibitions give artists and their work a public profile, but commercial galleries are a much needed support mechanism to help both Irish and non-Irish artists sustain themselves financially. Fallon's quote is suggestive of this argument when he says:

> The Living Art exhibitions might exhibit modern Irish art publicly, James White [art critic][1] might publicise it verbally, a coterie of Dublin snobs might patronise it socially, but Waddington performed the essential service of selling it. (Fallon, 1998: 241)

This emerging art world created a fertile ground for usually wealthy individuals to invest in the visual arts, some of whom will become important donors to the IMMA (see chapter 5). For example, Vincent Ferguson who bought the Hendricks Gallery in the early 1980s, will donate an important set of works to IMMA's collection in 1997.[2] In a similar note, commercial galleries brought international art to collectors such as Gordon Lambert willing

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[1] In 1959, James White took over as director of the MGMA and quickly renovated the dilapidated institution (Fallon, 1998: 264).

[2] *Sunday Business Post,* 24th January 1993; IMMA press release, 'Ferguson Donation on Show at Irish Museum of Modern Art', 10th April 1997.

to add to their collections the latest art. As we will see in chapter 5, Lambert's donations are a backbone to the museum's overall collection.

1.4 Rosc Exhibitions

Another concerted effort in the realm of exhibitions was the founding of Rosc; a total of six exhibitions, which took place from 1967 to 1988. Their aim was to lift Ireland's profile in the international art world, as well as to improve its artistic production. As Charles Haughey then Minister for Finance put it: "a great renewal and fertilization of modern Irish art." All the exhibitions followed the same pattern with a display of around one hundred and fifty works by international artists as well as an 'ancient section.'[3] Progressively, the inclusion of two Irish artists in 1977, seven in 1980, and ten in 1984 supplemented the initial absence of Irish representation. This inclusiveness towards Irish art suggests an increasing awareness of the high standard of certain artists who could then be displayed alongside the best examples of international art. In short, the Rosc exhibitions are another example of the emergence of new players in order to compensate for a lack of institutions of cultural consecration, and hence for the need to devise alternative ways of creating symbolic capital within the field. This idea is put clearly by Dorothy Walker, Chairman of Rosc '80, who referred to the exhibition as compensating for the absence of a national museum of modern art:

> Rosc has a two-fold aim: a foreign policy and a domestic policy. The domestic policy arises from the regrettable fact that there is no National Museum of Modern Art in Ireland and that the Irish public in consequence is deprived of the experience of great twentieth century art. So the Rosc exhibitions act as a quadriennial Museum of Modern Art for the Irish public, and they are still attempting to catch up on major artists from abroad whose works have never been seen in Ireland.[4]

Another important point in this quote is how IMMA, or rather the lack of it, was given symbolic power as an agent of cultural consecration in the FCA precisely for its absence. Although Walker here refers to a venue for the exhibition of international art, as opposed to a collecting institution, this mention in 1980 elucidates how the mechanisms put in place to make up for this symbolic vacuum in the field were attempts to compensate for the lack of

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[3] Some of the ancient sections of Rosc ranged from ancient Celtic artefacts (1967), animal style in art across Europe (1977), and Chinese paintings from the 14th to the 19th centuries (1980).

[4] *Rosc '80 The Poetry of Vision. An International Exhibition of Modern Art and Chinese Painting.* Foreword by Dorothy Walker, Chairman of the Rosc Selection Committee, p. 11.

an IMMA. It also reaffirms the lack of success of the MGMA in creating a collection of renown, as Hugh Lane had planned. But to continue with the Rosc exhibitions, they mobilised economic capital through public and corporate sponsorship – e.g. Aer Lingus, the Arts Council, Carrolls - which shows an interest in the visual arts at a corporate level. In 1981, the international aviation leasing company, Guinness Peat Aviation, sponsored the GPA Awards, worth £25,000 each, to help young and emerging artists (Walker, 1988: 137). The prize lapsed after the takeover of GPA in 1993 (ibid: 183).[5] The GPA Awards offered an initial source of symbolic capital to Irish artists some of whom are now leading figures in the FCA: Felim Egan, Kathy Prendergast, Willie Doherty, Dorothy Cross and Alanna O'Kelly to name a few (ibid: 137-41).

1.5 Collecting and corporate collections

Apart from exhibitions and commercial galleries, another important source of creating symbolic capital in the FCA is collecting. In 1924 the painter Sarah Purser (see chapter 3) founded the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland (FNCI), to purchase works for the national public collections of Ireland.[6] In 1951, the Arts Council was established with the task to stimulate public interest in, to promote the knowledge, appreciation, and practice of the arts in Ireland (Kennedy, 1990: 224). During the 1960s the MGMA had no purchasing fund, but in 1960, under the directorship of Fr Donal O'Sullivan, the Council set out to build up a permanent collection of contemporary Irish art (Walker, 1997: 56). Apart from The Arts Council no other public institution was buying work by living artists. The Friends of the National Collections' policy was to buy works by deceased artists only. In order to fill a lack of purchases of works by living artists, Sir Basil Goulding founded, in 1962, the Contemporary Irish Art Society (CIAS) to buy works for the MGMA. The society still exists at present with the overall aim "to advance the development of contemporary Irish art and to promote the work of living Irish artists by acquiring their works and loaning or donating them for prominent display in public galleries and institutions."[7] Between 1962 and 1974 (in that year Dublin Corporation allocated a purchasing fund for the Gallery) the CIAS donated thirty-seven works of painting and sculpture to the MGMA. These developments suggest a series

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[5] Maurice Foley Vice-Chairman and Group President of the GPA Group is another figure that will be involved with the IMMA, both as a donor and also a board member (see chapter5). IMMA press release, 'Loans and Donations from Maire and Maurice Foley at the IMMA', 9th June 2000.

[6] The establishment of the FNCI was prompted by the realisation that the emergent Irish State was not in a position to acquire works for Ireland's public collections. It was only in 1970 that Dublin Corporation contributed towards an acquisition for the HLMGMA - £300 to the sum of £2,700 for a Joself Albers painting, *Aglow* . The remit of the FNCI included Northern Ireland with the acquisition of works for the Ulster Museum (Gordon Bowe, 1999: 27).

[7] 1992. *Contemporary Irish Art Society Exhibition.* Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art.

of initial efforts, at an institutional level, towards keeping contemporary art in the public domain.

To end this Part I, I want to address the topic of corporate collections. Described as "a source of stimulation and creativity for each organisation's employees" (O'Kane, 2000: 42), their influence in the FCA goes further than being a source of inspiration. They are a way of transforming the economic capital of business into symbolic capital or prestige for the companies who invest in art, as well as for the artists who have their works in these collections. In 1983, the Arts Council supported corporate patronage of the visual arts with the Joint Purchase Fund (originally titled the Hotels Scheme), a scheme aimed at encouraging public institutions e.g. universities, banks and hotels, to buy works for half price and the Council paid the remaining half. The scheme only lasted 6 years (1973-1979) but it allowed some corporate collections to buy works. For example, the Office of Public Works (OPW),[8] and the Bank of Ireland benefited from that scheme. The latter is Ireland's longest-established corporate buyer whose collection started in 1970. The Allied Irish Bank started collecting in 1980. Similarly, the Carrolls collection was built up in 1967 under the supervision of the architect Ronald Tallon (O'Kane, 2000: 39). Related to that was the emergence of COTHU ('promotion'), the Business Council for the Arts. Established in 1988, the council was to act as an information agency to advise and guide business on arts expenditure (O'Kane, 2000).

Of particular interest, and suggestive of the degree of expertise and seriousness attached to collecting, is the appointment of art advisers by important collectors such as the Bank of Ireland and the AIB to select and purchase works for the collection. Moreover, the activity of collecting is complemented by setting up particular interpretative frameworks, put in place through exhibitions and art catalogues that situate the symbolic capital of the group of works acquired. For example, leading collectors such as the AIB (Allied Irish Banks) and the OPW have published catalogues of their collections and organised exhibitions around the country to give a wider exposure to their artworks.[9] In this way, corporate collecting can act as an agent of cultural consecration within the FCA. In *AIB Art* (1995) Lochlann Quinn, as Chairman of the AIB group, positions their collection within the discipline of art history

[8] From its beginning in 1831, as the British administered Board of Works, the OPW has been responsible "for the fitting out and furnishing of State buildings", as well as "required to provide art works" (Moore, 1998: 13).
[9] The AIB organised an exhibition in 1985 and in 1995 with a selection of works from the collection, which was accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. The OPW organises annual exhibitions of the collection around Ireland and has published a chronology of its collection in three volumes titled *Art in State Buildings* (1997, 1998, 2000). See bibliography for details.

referring to it as "unique in terms of the depth and scope in which it traces the development of modernism in Irish art" (1995: 3). The introduction to the catalogue by art adviser Francis Ruane continues this line of argument:

> When AIB first decided to put together an art collection in 1980 the ambition was to acquire works that would trace the development of Irish art, beginning with the period that signalled the birth of modernism around 1880 and continuing right up to the present. Fortunately the Bank resisted the urge to find a quick solution to covering the bare wells of its new corporate headquarters, opting instead for a more long term approach. Now, fifteen years later, we are still acquiring artworks that will flesh out the historical dimension of the collection, although there has been a shift in emphasis towards the support of living artists. (Ruane, 1995: 5)

Corporate collecting shows some parallels with public collecting. The publication of catalogues, and the creation of frameworks to interpret the role and position of collections are some of the practices I discuss in chapter 5. Most importantly, corporate collecting is a practice that fills a gap in the FCA. As we will see, none of the public institutions have a representative collection of Irish art from the 1940s and 1950s; a type of art represented in collections such as the AIB and the Bank of Ireland.

2 The FCA: Dublin's commercial and public art galleries

In Part II, I want to outline the present configuration of the FCA by focusing on commercial and public galleries. I offer first a brief description of their role and activities as an introduction to an analysis of the various processes in which they create symbolic capital and power in the FCA, which is the object of Part III. As I explain below, this research is based on interviews with seven commercial galleries as well as four public institutions which articulate the core of exhibition and collection of contemporary and modern art: the Royal Hibernian Academy (1823), the Douglas Hyde Gallery (1978), the HLMGMA (1908), and the IMMA (1991).

2.1 Commercial art galleries

The Green on Red Gallery is owned and directed by Jerome Ó Dirsceoil. The gallery was launched in 1992 at 58 Fitzwiliam Sq., Dublin 2 and moved in 1997 to its present location 26 Lombard St. East, in a 2,500 sq foot custom-built space in Dublin's city centre. The gallery represents a total of 20 both Irish and non-Irish artists, including well-known Irish artists, Clare Langan and Alice Maher. It offers a programme based on 10 to 11 solo

exhibitions a year, and 1-2 group or thematic exhibitions a year. The gallery participates annually in international art fairs. In 2002, they include London (January), New York (February), Chicago (May), and Cologne (November). Website: www.greenonredgallery.com

The Hallward Gallery was started in 1993 and is presently located in the basement of a Georgian house on elegant Merrion Square – home to the National Gallery of Ireland. It specialises in the exhibition and sale of paintings, sculpture, drawings and prints by established and emerging Irish artists. It organises around 12 exhibitions a year including two group exhibitions and ten solo exhibitions a year. Artists are usually exhibited every two years. Those whose work has been shown in the Hallward include Robert Armstrong, Christopher Banahan, John Behan (RHA) and Vivienne Bogan. The gallery owner is Mary Tuohy who also directs the gallery with Phyllis O'Kane.

The Kerlin Gallery is one of Ireland's leading art galleries with a programme of national and international art. It was initially established in Belfast in 1983 as the On the Wall Gallery. In 1988 it moved to Dublin and changed its name to Kerlin Gallery. It enjoys a privileged location in Dublin's city centre, occupying a two floors building of 3,600 square feet just off Grafton St, Dublin 2. The gallery has two directors David Fitzgerald and John Kennedy. In 2002 it has participated in international art fairs such as the Armory Show (New York) and Art 32 (Basel). It represents around 20 artists, including well-known names such as: Willie Doherty, Sean Scully, Kathy Prendergast and Brian Maguire. Website: www.kerlin.ie

The Kevin Kavanagh Gallery. Owned and directed by Kevin Kavanagh. Kavanagh started at the Jo Rain in Temple Bar in 1994. In 1999 it changed to the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery of which he is the owner and director. The gallery is located in 66 Strand St Great, Dublin 1. It represents 20 artists, and organises an average of 12 exhibitions per year. Website: kevinkavanaghgallery.ie

The Rubicon Gallery Josephine Kelleher owns and directs the gallery located in the first floor of 10 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. It has been open since 1991. The gallery works with a total of 25 artists and organises between 14 to 16 exhibitions a years. Some of the artists exhibited are: Vivienne Roche, Kate Belton, Blaise Drummond, Eithne Jordan, Tom Molloy, and Michael Kane. The gallery has participated in international art fairs in the UK, Italy and Brussels. Website: www.rubicongallery.ie

The Solomon Gallery is owned by Suzanne MacDougald and directed by Tara Murphy. It is located in Powerscourt shopping centre, South William St., Dublin 2. Overall it works with 50 to 60 artists with a core stable of around 30. The gallery runs an average of 13 to 14 exhibitions a year. It offers an exhibition programme of Irish and non-Irish artists. The gallery has participated in international art fairs in the U.S. Website: www.solomongallery.com

The Taylor Galleries are directed by John Taylor, previously assistant of Leo Smith in the Dawson Gallery from 1964 to 1977. The Gallery started in 1978 as a continuation of the Dawson Gallery taking up almost all artists represented at the Dawson Gallery, and adding a few new ones. It enjoys a privileged location in 16 Kildare St, Dublin 2. It represents well-known, established Irish artists such as Louis Le Brocquy and Tony O'Malley.

2.2 Public art galleries

Douglas Hyde Gallery

The gallery which is situated in Trinity College is one of Ireland's leading contemporary art galleries. The programme often guided by a theme includes exhibitions by emerging and well-established artists from Ireland and abroad. Although opened in 1978 at its present location in the Arts Building in Trinity College, (Nassau St), its history goes back to 1959 with the setting up of a College Gallery by a group of students in Trinity College. Eventually, this led to the setting up of an art history course and a temporary exhibitions hall (Walsh, 1991: 21). The aim of the College Gallery during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was "to promote interest in visual arts in college, particularly amongst students, and to do so by building up a comprehensive collection of pictures – either original paintings and prints or reproductions – to decorate students' rooms and, later offices" (ibid: 21).[10] In 1967 the newly built Berkeley Library provided a suitable space as a temporary exhibitions hall.[11] This changed in 1978 when an opportunity arose to locate the gallery in the new Arts and Social Science Building in Nassau St. An agreement was then reached between Trinity, which was responsible for incorporating the gallery into the new building, and The Arts Council, which would provide funding for its exhibition programme. The new venue was named after Douglas Hyde, the first President of Ireland and a Trinity College graduate (Dawson, 1987: 40). In 1984 with the appointment of Patrick Murphy as gallery director the gallery changed its exhibition policy from an emphasis on "catching up on the backlog of 20th

[10] Quoted from David Scott, catalogue of the 21st Anniversary Retrospective Exhibition, College Gallery, 1980.
[11] Between 1967 and 1976 over 30 exhibitions of Irish and international art – e.g. Paul Henry, Norah MacGuinness, and Pablo Picasso - were organised, run by a committee comprised of staff and students (Walsh 1991: 22).

Century art" to a focus on documenting younger Irish artists (ibid: 23). Murphy left the DHG in 1991, and after a brief appointment of Medb Ruane, the Gallery has been under the directorship of John Hutchinson, who was appointed in March 1991, only a few months before IMMA's opening in May 1991. In May that same year, the Gallery opened a new space 'Gallery 2', a conversion of part of its storeroom, funded by a grant from the Arts Council. The Douglas Hyde Gallery is funded by The Arts Council, Trinity College and by various friends and patrons of the gallery. Website: www.douglashydegallery.com

Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art

The Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (HLMGMA) added 'Hugh Lane' to its title in 1975 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Lane's untimely death in the Lusitania in 1915. Together with the National Gallery of Ireland and the Irish Museum of Modern Art the HLMGMA offers a programme of temporary exhibitions as well as being a collecting institution. The Gallery is located in Charlemont House, in Parnell Square, at the top of Dublin's main thoroughfare, O'Connell Street.

The gallery offers an exhibition programme as well as an ongoing display of its permanent collection. Some of the exhibitions have shown artists such as Alice Maher (1999), Vivienne Roche (1999), Brian Maguire (2000), as well as emerging artists such as Catherine Owens (1999). The founding collection donated by Hugh Lane and his supporters has continued to grow and it comprises an extensive range of Irish and international paintings, sculptures, works on paper, and stained glass. The collection represents developments which have taken place in Irish art in the twentieth century, including a collection of stained glass, with as its highlight, Harry Clarke's *Eve of St Agnes*. Apart from direct purchases by the Gallery, the collection has benefited from donations by the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland, and The Contemporary Art Society. Its most recent acquisition is the donation by John Edwards of the Studio of Francis Bacon, which was accompanied by an exhibition of Bacon's works (2000). In 2001 the Gallery was awarded Best Larger Museum for the Francis Bacon Studio. The gallery is entirely funded by the local authority, Dublin Corporation. The Friends of the Gallery help support its education and outreach programme where artists work with schools and community groups throughout the city. Website: www.hughlane.ie

Irish Museum of Modern Art

The Irish Museum of Modern Art is Ireland's leading national institution for the collection and presentation of modern and contemporary art. It was opened to the public in 1991 in the restored Royal Hospital building and grounds in Kilmainham about two miles from Dublin's city centre. The museum offers a dynamic programme of exhibitions and other activities. This includes exhibitions of work from the museum's own collection, projects by its Education and Community Department. Its Artists' Work Programme is open to artists in all disciplines and of all nationalities. Artists participating in the programme are, usually, available to meet with visitors, providing access to the process of art making. The National Programme is designed to lend exhibitions of group and individual artworks from the collection to centres outside Dublin. The museum has launched a Friends and Patrons scheme to raise funds for the long-term development of its programmes and activities. It offers a wide range of benefits for individuals and companies.[12] (For more information see chapter 5). Website: www.modernart.ie

Royal Hibernian Academy

The Royal Hibernian Academy is an artist based and artist orientated institution dedicated to developing, affirming and challenging the public's appreciation and understanding of traditional and innovative approaches to the visual arts. The Academy achieves its objectives through its exhibition education and collection programmes consisting in lunchtime talks and tours; lecture series on contemporary art and old masters; and a schools programme offering guided tours. The *Friends of the RHA* was established in 1997 to support the development and upgrading of facilities, the production of exhibitions, and the Academy's educational programmes. It offers several membership modalities: individual, family, patron, benefactor, and corporate. The benefits enjoyed vary depending on each category of Friends, and include invitations to all exhibition openings, free entry to the RHA Annual Exhibition as well as to the Academy's educational events.

The Academy is located in the centre of Dublin, 15 Ely Place. The building consists of four galleries distributed in two floors. The three on the first floor are: the Gallagher Gallery, or main gallery, dedicated to curated exhibitions of Irish and international art (6000 sq. ft with 17ft. ceilings and louvered daylight); and Galleries II and III (1500sq.ft each). On the ground floor is the Ashford Gallery (1100 sq. ft.) which was inaugurated in 1999 for the use of

[12] Calendar of Events. May to August 2002. Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Academicians and Associate Academicians. It is also available to non-academicians who do not have commercial gallery representation in Dublin, (in this case exhibitions are limited to one presentation), and is designed to introduce artists to the collecting public and prove their commercial viability. The Academy is funded by the Irish Arts Council, by fundraising initiatives, the revenue from its Annual Exhibition, and by Benefactors, Patrons and Friends of the Academy. Website: www.royalhibernianacademy.com

3 The FCA as a market of symbolic goods

The *first* section of Part III explores the sub-field of contemporary art galleries, which occupies a *primary space* in the FCA. By primary I mean that they are the closest intermediaries between the artists' output and the consecration of their work. Once a work is produced, and the artist wants to follow this particular route, it goes into a commercial gallery. The *second* section investigates the sub-field of public galleries, which occupies a *secondary space* within the FCA. This means that their role as consecrating agents comes, usually, *after* commercial galleries have legitimised certain works as 'good art.' The term 'secondary' does not intend to suggest that this sub-field produces a form of symbolic capital of less legitimacy than the capital articulated within the sub-field of commercial galleries. Both sub-fields are instrumental in the consecration of artists and their work, but it is important to understand that they also occupy different types of space in the overall FCA. This point becomes clear if we bear in mind that the criteria of public galleries for exhibiting and buying works of art are built upon, to a great extent, the legitimacy these have previously acquired in the commercial galleries sub-field.

The following analysis is drawn from open-ended interviews with commercial and public galleries. With regard to commercial galleries, whenever possible I interviewed gallery owners, or alternatively directors or managers, although in some instances gallery owners also act as directors. I selected seven galleries as representative of the sub-field of commercial galleries for their participation in the Contemporary Art Galleries Association. The theoretical model for understanding the workings of these two sub-fields is Bourdieu's 'market of symbolic goods' (1993a).

Bourdieu theorises the artistic world as a cultural field of symbolic goods. The concept 'symbolic goods' is particularly pertinent to a study of the FCA because it helps envision the activities of its agents of cultural consecration, such as commercial and public art galleries, as 'symbolic producers' whose main task is to produce aesthetic value or a "belief in the

value of the work" (Bourdieu, 1993a: 37). As I noted in my discussion of Bourdieu in chapter 2, the market or field of symbolic goods is structured around the opposition *autonomy* and *heteronomy*, which refers to the ways producers achieve cultural recognition within the field. The autonomous pole, or *field of restricted production* (FRP) is aimed at what is termed 'high art' (classical music, the visual arts, 'serious' literature) and "develops its own criteria for the evaluation of its products" (ibid: 115). In the FRP economic profit is normally disavowed. The stakes for competition between agents are geared towards obtaining symbolic profit. As Johnson points out, this is "a profit of disinterestedness, or the profit one has on seeing oneself (or being seen) as one who is not searching for profit." (ibid: 15). This disavowal of economic profit does not occur in the heteronomous pole of the field of cultural production, what Bourdieu calls *field of large-scale cultural production* (FLSP). This field involves 'mass' or 'popular' culture (ibid: 16), and produces cultural goods for the public at large. As opposed to the FRP, it follows "the laws of competition for the conquest of the largest possible market" (ibid: 115). Yet Bourdieu himself warns his readers of seeing "more than a limiting parameter" in the opposition between these two modes of production, which can only be defined in terms of their relations with each other (ibid: 127). As he says:

> What is most important is that these two fields of production, opposed as they are, coexist and that their products owe their very unequal symbolic and material values on the market to their unequal consecration which, in turn, stems from their very unequal power of distinction. (Bourdieu, 1993a: 128-9)

I propose to enlarge the explanatory potential of the 'market of symbolic goods' model by examining the practices of the sub-fields of commercial and public art galleries in Dublin.

3.1 The sub-field of commercial galleries

The sub-field of commercial galleries occupies an in-between space between the autonomous and heteronomous poles described by Bourdieu. On the one hand, the galleries' main task is the creation of aesthetic value. This takes places through various practices, as we will see in the following analysis, but their overall aim is to obtain renown or prestige, namely symbolic capital, for the work of artists they represent. On the other hand, the creation of symbolic capital does not entail a disavowal of economic profit, as Bourdieu suggested in his theoretical model. A particularity of this sub-field is that galleries depend on the sale of work to sustain their business. My interviews suggest that the leading principle of this sub-field is the creation of symbolic capital, or prestige and consecration for the

artists they represent – as opposed to the mere accumulation of economic capital. It is difficult to assess to what extent obtaining financial profit prevails over the creation of symbolic capital, however, both practices are linked. Commercial galleries need to consecrate their artists before they can reap any financial profits. This twofold task is highlighted in an article in the Irish art magazine *Circa* in which Dunne refers to the specificities of the gallery business as follows:

> [T]he bottom line is that commercial galleries are not cushioned, like publicly funded institutions, from hard commercial reality ... and they have to sell work to survive. But to define them in terms of an exclusively commercial function is a distortion of the role they actually play ... Such a definition is in fact to concentrate on one level of analysis at the expense of all others. The others might include the significant fact that gallerists are usually engaged in a passionate way with art rather than profit. (Dunne, 2000: 13)

The above quote underlines the idea of commercial galleries as producers of two types of capital, economic and symbolic, and thus the need to take into account the link between these two practices in any analysis of the sub-field. But there is another key distinction to be made; this time with regard to both the sub-fields that concern us here. In their reliance on sales commercial galleries are unlike public cultural institutions, which are allocated a budget from public money (although not necessarily sufficient), and enjoy a certain renown or reputation by their position in the FCA. For example, they represent the nation (IMMA); the city (MGMA); or work within the confines of a tertiary educational institution, such as Trinity College (DHG). However, this does not mean to say that the sub-field of public galleries is closer to the FRP than the sub-field of commercial galleries. Although they do not depend on the sale of works, they rely on obtaining public funds –i.e. organising 'friends of' type of initiatives. Moreover, they depend on the public at large for recognition, which is one of the principles operating at the heteronomous pole of the FRP, or in the FLSP. Hence both sub-fields occupy different positions, which are important to outline here as a way to situate the following analysis on the sub-fields' autonomy. Bourdieu describes autonomy as "the power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products" (ibid: 115). One way of exploring the workings of autonomy in the sub-fields object of analysis is to look at the capability of galleries to develop or draw upon an existing type of art, which they wish to represent, exhibit or collect.

3.1.1 Autonomy and the creation of aesthetic value

In our cultural milieu, one could argue that the making of aesthetic value is a practice that follows no rigid canons or schools. Contemporary art practices are "devoid of any normative aesthetics", in the middle of a period of "aesthetic anomie" (Moulin, 1994: 9-10). An extreme example is philosopher Danto's view (1997: 16) on contemporary art: "For art to exist there does not even have to be an object to look at, and if there are objects in a gallery, they can look like anything at all."

However, these comments raise a number of questions: if anything can be art, why do only a few artists achieve international success? How can we then explain the need for artists to be represented by commercial galleries? On what grounds do gallery owners and directors assess aesthetic value when anything goes? Being able to distinguish 'good art' is for Bourdieu the result of having an aesthetic disposition (Bourdieu, 1993a: 8); a "distinctive expression of a privileged position in the social space" (Bourdieu, 1984: 56). Their aesthetic disposition enables gallery owners to enter the sub-field of commercial galleries; a much-needed skill in order to be accepted as a legitimate player. The following quotes provide us with an insight of how the interviewees representing the various Dublin galleries define their capacity to assess 'good art':

> In here we sort of know what we like and what sells and what our clients are going to want to see as well, so you sort of know when you see it. It's hard to say, it's just a feeling ... when you see the images you know, when they are posted into you or somebody brings a painting, you know straight away whether it is for us or not. I can't describe why, you just know. (Solomon Gallery)

> Well it's a bit of an instinctual thing, there is no real formula because the work is going to be original; I've never seen it before in some cases. So it's a personal response to what I think is very powerful for whatever reason to do with the material, concept. (Green on Red Gallery)

> You'll always be able to tell. There's always that little bit extra and you can tell by the work, but never with a name. (Hallward Gallery)

> Part of the appeal of art is that it speaks to you, so that's the emphasis. (Kerlin Gallery).

> I have a certain eye for the aesthetic, I know for fact that I'm very good at looking at stuff, and know whether I like it or not and why. I've always had that. If there was one thing that I

> have it's a sense of looking at something from an aesthetic point of view and know if it is good or what it's saying. Whatever that is, is a big help in here. (Kevin Kavanagh Gallery)
>
> It's something that you see and it works for you; it speaks to you and you're happy with it. (Taylor Galleries)

The use of expressions such as 'you just know', 'an instinctual thing', 'it speaks to you' point out a high degree of individual autonomy in the way galleries define aesthetic value; an autonomy that seems to be built on some innate qualities of those who look at works. This suggests an equal degree of autonomy in the articulation of an 'aesthetic disposition'; a disposition without which the field could not function because it is the disposition or ability to constitute a work of art as such. In the quotes above, aesthetic dispositions are built upon the positioning of aesthetic value as a residual category, embodying all that cannot be apprehended or quantified through rational terms (e.g. following the principles of art history). Yet, even the appreciation of art quality does not take place in a vacuum. As Bourdieu notes (1993a: 257), "the aesthete's eye which constitutes the work of art as a work of art" is created in the field itself.

In the study conducted, having an "aesthetic competence" is not necessarily related to having a particular education, a background in art history.[13] Of the seven interviewees only three had a background in art history. According to one of them not having this type of knowledge was beneficial: "I have no baggage as regards art history, what's good, bad, art education, and that's an advantage to run an art gallery". He added that assessing good art "is a learning experience"[14]. Another director of a long established gallery did not have such a background, but had a long experience of working in galleries.[15] Another interviewee said that despite having attended Art College, the gallery business is more to do with having experience in galleries.[16] These responses suggest, as Bourdieu indicated, that an aesthetic disposition such as the ones quoted above is not merely the result of an instinctual process. Rather, it is related to education and experience. But there is another conclusion to be drawn here. Autonomy in the creation of aesthetic value is not something innate but comes into being in the field itself. In this case the sub-field provides individuals in the gallery

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[13] The director of the Green on Red Gallery has a background in art history; the manager of the Kerlin Gallery also has a background in the arts, as well as the director of the Solomon Gallery. Of the two directors of the Kerlin Gallery, only one has been to an Art College. The owner of the Solomon Gallery has no background in art history.

[14] Interview with Kevin Kavanagh, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, 10th January 2001.

[15] Interview with John Taylor, Taylor Galleries, 26th April 2001.

[16] Interview with Kirsten Dunne, Kerlin Gallery, 18th January 2001.

business with the learning experience necessary to distinguish works with aesthetic value. In what follows, I start exploring the autonomy of this sub-field by focusing on the topic of scarcity, which according to Bourdieu is intricately related to the possibility of autonomy.

3.2 Scarcity as a form of autonomy

For Bourdieu, autonomy is related to the field's capacity to generate "a specifically cultural type of scarcity and value irreducible to the economic scarcity and value of the goods in question". The more autonomous a field, the more capable it is of operating as "a specific market", a market of symbolic goods (1993a: 117). Scarcity is a principle of the Dublin's sub-field of commercial galleries in various ways. Let me first refer to the Irish Contemporary Art Gallery Association as a way of introducing the issue of scarcity in the sub-field.

3.2.1 The Irish Contemporary Art Gallery Association

In the early 1990s, commercial galleries in Dublin were going through an economic recession. The Irish Contemporary Art Gallery Association (ICAGA) was set up in July 1993 to help the gallery business. Its aim was to create more favourable conditions to trade so that commercial galleries could keep their outlets open. In addition, it also sought to gain recognition and support for the important role of commercial galleries in the promotion of contemporary Irish art within Ireland and abroad.[17] More specifically, the ICAGA wanted to obtain recognition for galleries in two ways. Firstly, lobbying the government - the Arts Council and the Minister of Arts. The aim here was to obtain a better tax regime as a way of creating better conditions to stimulate the purchase of art – e.g. lowering the VAT rate. In turn, this was to help artists and the development of the visual arts in Ireland. In fact, there is a feeling that the Government does not pay as much as attention to commercial galleries as would be desirable. As one interviewee puts it:

> [The Government is] more interested in museums and community art groups and things like that. But they don't seem to understand that the visual art scene is inextricably tied to the commercial galleries, and without artists selling work they are not going to survive. So they don't seem to understand that galleries need some help for survival. (Solomon Gallery)

The ICAGA also sought to improve the lack of coverage given to galleries by the media. Secondly, this initiative was a means of giving a standard of excellence to galleries. The

[17] Interview with Tara Murphy, Solomon Gallery, 13th July 2002.

ICAGA would invite experts on tax issues to help gallery owners and directors to deal with their tax. In so doing, galleries sought to improve their self-image, particularly for artists, who could then "trust gallery association members" as carrying out their business "in a professional manner."[18] The ICAGA plays a less prominent role at present than when it was founded in 1993. This is due to the favourable economic climate the gallery business has enjoyed for the last five years. Originally, galleries met every month, whereas now they try to meet, approximately, once a year. One important task of the Association is the publication, every four months, of the 'Dublin Gallery Guide'. This is a directory of all public and commercial galleries in Dublin. The guide specifies which galleries are members of the Association.

When the ICAGA was set up it included six leading galleries: the Hallward Gallery, the Kerlin Gallery, Oliver Dowling Gallery, the Rubicon Gallery, the Solomon Gallery and the Taylor Galleries. At present, two other galleries have joined the Association – the Green on Red Gallery and the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery. The Oliver Dowling Gallery no longer exists. A committee of three honorary officers, a chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer, runs the ICAGA. The ICAGA contributes to create scarcity in the sub-field because not all commercial galleries are part of the Association. Out of a total of around fifteen galleries, only seven belong to the Association. The right to include new members is dictated by various criteria, which galleries aspiring to become members must fulfil. Membership is open to galleries who have been operating full time in Ireland, both north and south, for at least two years. They have to be commercial and privately funded, and they have to deal for more than 80% of their time in contemporary art; existing members of the Association must second new members. Most importantly, to be eligible they must have a standard of excellence, which means being "trustworthy and carrying out their business in a very professional manner."[19] While these criteria of eligibility are a way of setting up the sub-field's boundaries, it is also possible to see how the maintenance of this boundary, and thus of the field's scarcity is itself a source of struggle (Bourdieu, 1993a: 42). The *droit de suite*, or artists' resale right, is a case in point. A couple of years ago, members of the ICAGA lobbied against a re-sell law; a form of legislation currently implemented in Europe so that every time an artwork is sold the artist gets a commission. At present, artists only get commission when their sell their work for the first time. Artists then do not benefit from any subsequently re-sales, including sales at auction. The problem for commercial galleries arises in that it threatens the sub-

[18] Interview with Tara Murphy, Solomon Gallery, 13th July 2002.
[19] Interview with Tara Murphy, Solomon Gallery, 13th July 2002.

field by forcing a large amount of art dealing outside the sub-field's boundaries. As one interviewee explains:

> We were just worried. We have no problem with the artists making money out if it, but we were worried that it was going to force a lot of dealing underground. It was going to cause a lot of problems, like a black market, because people wouldn't want to pay the artist, so it was going to force that thing underground. So we were worried whether people would start to take their business and sell their pictures in the U.S. or outside of the E.U. Buyers and sellers wouldn't want to be paying the commission bit, so they would deal outside of the E.U. so we were worried it was going to affect our business. (Solomon Gallery)

3.2.2 Promoting artists in 'the long run'

Another way of thinking about scarcity is to look at it in relation to the number of artists represented by each gallery. Initially, the field generates scarcity because this is not capable of representing all those artists who seek to be promoted by commercial galleries. Consequently, achieving commercial representation becomes a site of struggle for artists. In turn, scarcity is a situation that benefits galleries because it gives them the autonomy, freedom and choice to select those artists, amongst many, they want to work with. Given that the main practice of galleries is the selection and promotion of a stable of artists, my concern is to explore the practices involved in maintaining the relationship artist/gallery. This can help us clarify how galleries produce symbolic capital for their artists, as well as how the accumulation of this capital creates symbolic power for commercial galleries. However, as we will see, the galleries' main interest is to establish relationships that will generate high levels of symbolic capital and power. In so doing, scarcity becomes a site of struggle and negotiation over the optimum relationship artist/gallery. My argument is that the achievement of an 'ideal' relationship reproduces the field's autonomy, and in this, time plays a crucial role.

Invariably, all interviewees said they were able to represent a limited number of artists. Generally galleries work with a core stable of fifteen to seventeen artists, and organise from ten to fifteen solo exhibitions a year. Shows can last two and half weeks up to a month. This means that they can offer exhibitions by the same artist every two years. Group shows are another form of exhibition, very usual at Christmas and summer. Solo shows are usually with artists from the gallery's core stable, while artists participating in group shows work with galleries on an occasional basis. However, in its present way of working the sub-field is

creating scarcity because it cannot accommodate all those artists seeking commercial representation. This point was made invariably by all those interviewed.

A gallery director of a long established gallery comments on the situation of his gallery as follows:

> When we started we had already about twenty-four artists, an ideal number to deal with because you could have one exhibition every two years by each of the artists. Unfortunately, I added a few immediately and then after that quite a few, in fact, far too many. So we have so many artists at the moment that we can't take any more, we can't create a space for them. (Taylor Galleries)

But this situation is not intrinsic to galleries long established, another director who had run his gallery since 1997 (this is the youngest gallery in the sub-field) comments on his struggle to reduce the number of artists:

> I've tried to keep it together and had to reduce the number of artists, and have to do that again. I think it will work in the long run, it means that you can give more time to the artists that you really like and push that more, and hopefully they will do more stuff with you. Last year I did exhibitions for one month. This year the shows are only three weeks, that's because I've promised too many people shows, and the second part of this year I do one month again for my favourite artists. (Kevin Kavanagh Gallery)

Another interviewee also mentioned how they have been reducing the length of shows in order to maximise the number of artists involved with the gallery. This particular gallery works with a core stable of thirty artists:

> There's very good work out there, but we just don't have the space for it. We used to have ten exhibitions a year. We're now running thirteen to fourteen. We're doing two and a half weeks change over or two and a half weeks exhibitions, and some exhibitions are three and a half weeks. So we have a quicker turn around now so we can fit in more, so it's definitely busier in here. (Solomon Gallery)

The imbalance between galleries able to represent new artists and the number of artists seeking commercial representation produces a situation of scarcity in which galleries are

free to choose the type of aesthetics they want to promote. This is clear from the following comment:

> Artists make constant applications to all the galleries, there are a lot of artists, so what we do we allow them to submit applications twice a year. We usually get about sixty or seventy applications and I see maybe three studios from each of those. So we accept applications but we don't look for them, or solicit them. Very occasionally an exhibition results. I do approach artists at various times whose work I feel absolutely fits with something that the gallery is working on. (Rubicon Gallery)

Galleries seem to have the upper hand as they can clearly select what type of aesthetics they want to represent, as is the case of this gallery director who can choose from a large number of offers. Initially, a scarcity of gallery space for artists seems to lead to a form of autonomy, or freedom of gallery directors to select the best possible works. However, galleries are particularly interested not only in promoting certain aesthetics, but also in creating a type of relationship with artists; an amicable and lasting relationship that can be sustained in the long run.

The gallery's interest is to work only with a few artists but 'effectively'. This type of relationship demands an investment of time on behalf of gallery owners and directors. This is how one interviewee makes this point:

> If I take an artist to work with me it's for a solo show, and that is a very large investment emotionally and financially, and we tend to probe a longer time relationship with that artist from day one. And as you do that over a period of ten years, obviously your portfolio fills up. We can only work effectively with a certainly limited number of artists, so as a gallery evolves the opportunity for artists to enter does narrow down. (Rubicon Gallery)

This gallery in question works very closely with eight artists: "we discuss every single element of what they do and their future plans." This is not to say that galleries are not willing to take on new emerging, young artists in their stable. In the following quote we can see, however, how this type of relationship is not always ideal:

> Years ago we used to have a policy of trying to nurture new artists and every year we had a new artist exhibition, a particular group show of maybe three to four artists each year ... But to be honest with you we found a lot of the young artists didn't have the commitment to stay

> with the gallery and they'd go off and show somewhere else or whatever, so we're showing probably less or making less of a big fuss of new coming artists. If we like the work we'll show it, but we won't make such an emphasis on the fact that it's an emerging artist, because usually they don't stay in one place for very long. (Solomon Gallery)

It must be pointed out that even though the Dublin field is relatively young - the longest established gallery still operating today started in 1978 - most galleries have had enough time to build up a reputation for themselves and the artists they represent, most of whom are mid-career or well established. For example, the two quotes above are from interviews with galleries that have been in the field for over ten and twenty years respectively. Time is on their side because they work with a core stable of artists whose reputation they have been promoting over these years. This position in the sub-field gives them the 'luxury' of deciding whether or not they wish to promote emerging artists. In other words, it gives them the autonomy or freedom to negotiate what type of relationships will prove, in the long run, beneficial to maintain. Another well-established gallery, for example, has chosen to promote emerging artists:

> We have a lot of fairly well established artists associated with the gallery, but we certainly don't need any more, and also when taking on an artist we have the top of it fairly well covered. So with the money that's out there for established artists we have enough artists to supply the works to these people. If we are taking on someone we would really like to take someone at the lowest price and then just build it up over a period of time. (Taylor Galleries)

Yet, it can also be argued that when they started they probably had to promote emerging artists. The gallery above would be an exception to this rule since it inherited most of its artists from the Dawson Gallery, which had just closed. However, it is possible to say that galleries must start by building up relationships with emerging or young artists. This becomes clear when we look at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery that has only been in the sub-field since 1999. Its origins go back to 1994, when Kevin Kavanagh and some friends started the Jo Rain Gallery in Temple Bar because there was a demand for space, for artists to show their work. This is how the gallery director describes his beginnings in 1994:

> [T]here was a demand for space, most of the artists that I showed they couldn't get shows anywhere else. There were two types, the younger artists who couldn't get a leg in, or the old, disenfranchised artists who for whatever reason couldn't get shows in galleries. So it

> was a bit of an odd ball, but it was an appeal, it was supposed to last a few months and it ended up lasting five years in that particular place. (Kevin Kavanagh Gallery)

This statement suggests that those galleries long established in the sub-field enjoy greater autonomy or freedom to choose which artists to work with than galleries that have been in the business for a relatively short space of time. The mention of a group of 'disenfranchised' artists points at how new galleries must start working with artists who are not well known yet. They have less autonomy to negotiate whether or not they want to work with emerging artists, in comparison to well-established galleries. Time then is a crucial factor in increasing the sub-field's autonomy. It gives galleries the opportunity to keep increasing the symbolic capital of the artists they represent. In turn, representing well-known artists gives galleries symbolic power or prestige, which can result in more artists wanting to be represented by that particular gallery. An important conclusion to be drawn from this is how galleries exist in a hierarchy in which those with high amounts of symbolic power would be able to reject the 'disenfranchised' artists above mentioned.

If we look now at the present position of the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery we can see the difference that *time* makes in the running of this business. Referring to how the gallery has changed over the years, he says:

> The emphasis is on quality, as opposed to quantity. Quality comes into the person as well as in the person you can deal with, and also then the work as well. Otherwise eventually there's a difference of opinion and that's the end of it. That's difficult and I've found that very difficult in the last few years when you come to a point when you realise that your reasons for giving shows in the past were trying to help someone out or different kinds of reasons, but in the long run that doesn't work. What works is getting on well with the person, being able to talk straight to the person, and also liking the work. (Kevin Kavanagh Gallery)

We can see here the early stages of a struggle to negotiate an optimum relationship with certain artists where the emphasis is on 'quality'. It is only with time that gallery directors are able to identify which particular relationships can work in the long run. The same reasons given here for choosing an artist are also described by the manager of a leading gallery who described the important ingredients for a successful relationship as: being able "to establish whether this is a personality that we can work with"; the quality of the work;

and the commitment of both parts in building up a long relationship.[20] In addition, as I have been arguing, this type of relationship needs to have been built up for some time. But this raises the question, why is it important to work with the same artist for a number of years? Or in what ways are autonomy and time related? The answer is that reputations are not created overnight; rather, they are built over a number of years. As the same interviewee says:

> There are artists that we represent such as Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin. Now in Ireland, to some extent, she's well known, but that's because she's been represented by our gallery for over six years. And Elizabeth Magill is someone who is incredibly talented, but again we work with her, we've been working with her for years, and we've been working on her international reputation and it's all coming together now. And suddenly these people say that we only represent well-known artists. That's not true, in actual fact we have been working with them for years and because of the work that's been going on in the gallery their reputation has changed, and you know this will be the work that we will continue to do. But you know you can't just appear and have this strong reputation, it takes a little bit of time. (Kerlin Gallery)

Another gallery, which has been in the sub-field for over twenty years, refers to time as an asset. Being in the field for this length of time gives them the possibility to promote their artists and thus give the gallery 'a good pedigree'. As he points out:

> I think because we have been around for so long that quite a few people get to know us, and they get to know the sort of work we handle and we have like a fairly good pedigree. Most of our artists have actually become quite well known and gone up in price ... so our pedigree is there and speaks for ourselves. We don't have to push too much now. (Taylor Galleries)

This is an example of autonomy because this gallery does not strive to conquer the market. Its reputation, position in the sub-field speaks for itself. Yet there are also setbacks to this position. The same gallery director mentions the difficulties they have when trying to sell works by emerging artists:

> You take a young artist and you think it's very exciting yourself and it takes a very, very long time for people to come here and buy them rather than the others. Everybody likes the icon, nobody likes the unknown really. (Taylor Galleries)

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[20] Interview with Kirsten Dunne, Kerlin Gallery, 18th January 2001.

In some cases having well-established artists associated with a gallery does not necessarily help it promote the reputation of emerging artists working with the same gallery. This is how the same gallery director envisions this conflict:

> Why come here and buy an Anita Groener when we can have a Tony O'Malley? ... O'Malley may just have been a very nice work on paper, but it's a very, very similar or lower price to a slightly bigger Anita Groener ... Admittedly it was a small Tony O'Malley and a fairly large Anita Groener, but when you come and you see it for yourself, it maybe a small diamond or a large piece of something else, and you may go for the small diamond. (Taylor Galleries)

The Hallward Gallery provides us with a contrasting example of this time-related autonomy because working with established artists gives them the luxury to work with emerging artists. As the interviewee says:

> We're kind of known for encouraging young emerging artists, and we're very lucky to have a stable of established artists which gives us the luxury to be able to dovetail on their reputations ... and so far we are very successful. (Hallward Gallery)

In this way, the risk involved is minimum since one 'bad' show, although not good for the gallery's finances, is not going to have a huge effect on the gallery's reputation in the field.

As I said, for Bourdieu a field's autonomy is linked to its capacity of generating scarcity. Initially, the sub-field of commercial galleries seems to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy by generating two types of scarcity: accepting only a small number of galleries into the Gallery Association, and representing a small number of artists, lower than the amount of artists seeking representation. My analysis has shown that insisting on relationships that promote artists in 'the long run' increases a gallery's autonomy since it increases scarcity for artists. That is, only a few artists can benefit from this kind of relationship, while galleries are free to choose whether they want to take on any new young emerging artists. Since relationships in 'the long run' need to be cultivated over a number of years, time is a crucial ingredient in this type of practice. Those galleries long established in the sub-field are more likely to be involved in this form of relationship than those in business for a relatively short time. Time gives the galleries the luxury to work with well-established artists. Hence taking on new artists is a minor risk because they do not rely exclusively on them to keep their business afloat. To continue my analysis of this sub-field I explore next other forms of

scarcity in the sub-field by focusing on two types of practice: the promotion of Irish art abroad, and the sale of artworks.

3.2.3 International renown: promoting Irish artists abroad

As I said, the main task of commercial galleries is to promote their artists. To do so, galleries articulate a set of common practices. For example, they all show their artists work in solo or group exhibitions, which are always accompanied by the publication of a catalogue. The form of catalogues varies depending on the galleries' budget, and whether they are for senior, well-established artists, or young, emerging artists. Galleries will produce a three-fold catalogue for the latter and an elaborate catalogue for the former. Gallery shows include organising openings, which are an occasion for galleries to send invitations to individuals in their mailing lists – i.e. journalists, art critics, gallery directors and collectors, to name a few. However, most of my interviewees said that openings are not a major selling event; rather sales are made in the few days before the openings.[21] One gallery director refers to them as "a very quiet affair. On average the little bit of selling is done before the opening, now you just have the artist and some artist's friends, a few sort of regulars, but very, very few".[22] All these practices – publishing catalogues, organising exhibitions and openings – are forms of investment for galleries because they are designed to give artists a public profile, that is, symbolic capital. In addition, all galleries advertise in newspapers and magazines in Ireland. The supplement to the *Irish Times* (The Ticket), and the *Gallery Guide* published by the Irish Contemporary Art Gallery Association are some of the main ones; others include *Circa Magazine* and *Irish Arts Review.* In general, galleries do have a very small advertising budget, so this is not their main way of promoting themselves and their artists.

One gallery director mentioned that they advertise in England when they have an exhibition by an English artist.[23] Yet the form of advertising varies according to the way directors promote their galleries. Of the seven interviews six respondents said they had promoted their galleries internationally at different stages.[24] Another gallery director mentioned her plan to give the gallery an international role by exhibiting abroad.[25] The Green on Red, Kerlin and Rubicon galleries advertise in international magazines. One of the reasons mentioned

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[21] Interview with Tara Murphy, Solomon Gallery, Taylor,
[22] Interview with John Taylor, Taylor Galleries, 26th April 2001.
[23] Interview with Tara Murphy, Solomon Gallery, 8th February 2001.
[24] Green on Red Gallery, Kerlin Gallery, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Rubicon Gallery, Solomon Gallery, and Taylor Galleries.
[25] Interview with Louise Dolan, Hallward Gallery, 19th December 2000.

was: "to build our international client base more aggressively".[26] Added to this, five galleries have set up their own website to promote an interest in the artists and galleries inter/nationally.[27] Apart from these forms of publicity, a very important practice in the creation of an international reputation is the participation of galleries in international art fairs. The international art world operates as a source of symbolic capital and power for artists and galleries respectively. Most importantly for the present argument, it reveals the existence of another type of scarcity in the sub-field: international renown. The sub-field, as I have presented it, is positioned within the boundaries of the Dublin art world. It is a crucial source for the production of national reputations; however, those galleries seeking international renown for their artists need to operate within an international art world. Participating in international art fairs allows galleries in Dublin the possibility of obtaining a position in the international field of commercial galleries. Similarly, exhibiting foreign artists in Dublin creates an international reputation for the galleries involved. These are then two practices that help counteract the scarcity of international symbolic capital and power in the Dublin art world.

Irish galleries compete with other galleries internationally when they participate in international art fairs for the exhibition and sale of works. All the galleries in the sub-field have participated, or have an interest in taking part, at international art fairs. Two galleries in particular are very active. In 2000, the Kerlin Gallery took part in art fairs in Europe and the U.S - London (UK), Basel (Germany), Chicago (U.S) and the Armory Show in New York (U.S.). The Green on Red has participated in art fairs in Germany (Basel and Cologne), and the U.S. (Chicago). The Solomon and Rubicon galleries, although less active, have also taken part in art fairs in the U.S and Europe respectively. An interviewee refers to the importance of this practice for Irish galleries:

> There are so many places that are coming to the fore, countries that are opening new museums, and there is a huge international art contacts that really needs to be discovered you know, especially when you're in Ireland you need to work twice as hard. (Kerlin Gallery)

Yet participating in art fairs involves a huge expenditure on behalf of the galleries. An interviewee referred to a cost of £25,000, which means that in order to break even they

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[26] Interview with Josephine Gallagher, 11th January 2001.
[27] The galleries with website are: Green on Red Gallery, Kerlin Gallery, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Rubicon Gallery, and Solomon Gallery.

need to sell from £50,000 to £60,000 worth of works.[28] This is one of the reasons why gallery directors choose very carefully in which art fairs they want to invest. One in particular mentions that before embarking in such a project, he travels to art fairs "as much as possible to assess which ones are the ones that would suit me best or would be best showing in, and they were always with a view to showing in one in Europe, one in the U.S., and one in London."[29] However, international art fairs are a luxury not all galleries can afford. The Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, for example, needed a private loan to finance its participation in an art fair in London. Expenses can be ameliorated when, like in this case, three galleries shared expenditures incurred in the transport of artworks.[30]

Besides financial expenses, art fairs are described as "hugely risky" because they may not produce the results expected –i.e. sales or making contacts. This risk increases if we consider that it is only after repeated visits to art fairs that the possibilities of establishing contacts is built up. As one interviewee says:

> Even now not many art galleries do that, or Irish galleries do that because it's a very expensive thing to do. It's hugely risky especially when you're doing it for the first time. Now that the Kerlin is established to a certain extent, people would come back to us in the art fairs, but it takes a lot of building up and that's a high risk factor. And you know there were years when there was a lot of trying out, when you kind of go to the art fair, it doesn't really seem to work, it's not the result that you thought would be, or may be a huge loss. (Kerlin Gallery)

But there are other factors that influence galleries' participation in art fairs, despite the investment of time and money they require. For example, one interviewee mentions the positive effect of Ireland's favourable economic climate and a growing interest in Irish culture. This quote brings to the fore how the sub-field of commercial galleries is positioned in relation to wider fields such as the FCA and the cultural field, which can have an effect on its practices:

> There has been a lot of interest in Irish culture internationally, so when you go to these art fairs, people didn't even know where Ireland was. Now there's a better interest, so when you go away you get a lot more feedback from people who have a general interest in Ireland, and

[28] Solomon Gallery.
[29] Interview with Gerome O'Drisceoil, Green on Red Gallery, 25th January, 2001.
[30] Rubicon Gallery and Green on Red Gallery.

> they are quite interested to see what kind of artists we have. I suppose another thing would be that with the economic climate at the moment, not that we can afford to, but you're more likely to take the risk. It's a very risky thing to go and do ... It's just the times that we're living in at the moment are just a little bit easier. Ten years ago, the galleries could hardly even afford the rents here in Ireland. (Solomon Gallery)

Despite the fact that financial risks can be minimised by developments outside the sub-field, participation in art fairs continues to be a risky affair. Why is it then important for Irish galleries to participate in these international events? Is the sale of artworks worth this form of investment? According to two interviewees, the benefits of this practice lie in the possibility of Dublin galleries finding representation for their artists by galleries abroad. The director of the Green on Red Gallery refers to this:

> This is really the kind of fruit of repeated visits to art fairs when galleries get to know the artists I work with, apart from any sales I might have needed to have at the fairs. I'm also looking for contacts with other galleries who would pick up on some of my artists. I don't pick; they pick me. Or I hope they pick me, and that's happened for a number of my artists, like Alice Maher, Clare Langan, are artists of mine who so far have been picked out and are represented by galleries abroad. (Green on Red Gallery)

Similarly, the following quotation illustrates this point; the ultimate aim of art fairs is not to sell art, but to promote Irish based artists abroad:

> When we go out there we do quite well. I mean each year we have broken even I suppose, which is good. The gallery breaks even, but we make money for our artists. We also have introduced a couple of artists to international galleries through the art fairs, that's when we meet other galleries ... It's very good not only for making clients or international contacts, but it's good for meeting other galleries and getting new international galleries for our artists. It's not just for selling, it's for promotion, for promoting artists. And a lot of artists may be very well known here and have sell out exhibitions, but they've got to go further afield, and there's no point just staying in Ireland. (Solomon Gallery)

Another practice that draws from the international art world is the exhibition of art from abroad in Dublin's galleries. Initially, a situation in which galleries can promote a limited number of artists seems to run counter to the strategy of bringing international shows to local galleries when there is space available. The exploration of this paradox, however, can

provide us with further insights into the scarcity of symbolic capital within the sub-field's national boundaries. Showing international artists in Dublin, or 'importing' art from abroad, usually with an amount of symbolic capital attached to it, although not necessarily, has proved to be very successful for some now prestigious galleries in the field. It helps galleries increase their symbolic power and gives them prestige as agents of cultural consecration, which in turn increases the prestige of their artists. As an interviewee comments on their work with international artists:

> It's something that we would consider very important to do, and actually I think that's what has put the Kerlin in the position that's in ... I would say that the shows that we have had have always succeeded on one level or another, even if they haven't been financially successful. Very often they have helped to increase the reputation of the Kerlin, to strengthen it, both in Ireland and abroad, and that helps to strengthen the position of our artists because of the reputation of the Kerlin. (Kerlin Gallery)

The above quote points at how the financial risk involved in bringing non-Irish artists to the sub-field is counteracted by an increase in the galleries' symbolic power, their reputation, and that of their artists, their symbolic capital.

The Green on Red Gallery exercises the practice of bringing international artists to Dublin, but in this case, with the added risk of exhibiting international artists which may not be as well known abroad yet. As the gallery director explains:

> The idea of showing international art with young or non-Irish artists was partly to show people outside that I was serious and committed and interested in showing very good, the best of contemporary art. That I was interested in the very best that was available and bring art as best as that was possible in an Irish context ... If I spend the first five or ten years showing unknown artists brought from home, it's not going to create the same kind of waves or interest or send out the same kind of signals. So I just went for a kind of fast-track approach really. (Green on Red Gallery)

The Solomon Gallery brings around ten per cent of its exhibitions from abroad. Here the emphasis is on helping build up an international taste or aesthetics for its local clients, based on well known foreign artists:

> So it's just bringing in international work to our Irish clients as well. I mean we don't want to just keep feeding them with Irish work only, we want to show them that there's more out there as well. And a lot of the foreign exhibitions that we would have, they could be artists who people have never heard of here, but they are in every single museum collection in the world ... So we just try to broaden people's horizons I suppose and for our clients as well. (Solomon Gallery)

In this discussion on international renown I have exemplified another side to the scarcity issue. As I pointed out above, the sub-field of commercial galleries creates scarcity because it can only produce national reputations for the artists involved. In order to achieve international renown, galleries need to take part in a wider international art world. Participating in international art fairs and exhibiting 'foreign art' in the Dublin's galleries are practices that give both galleries and artists international renown. They can offer high amounts of symbolic capital for those artists involved as well as symbolic power for the galleries in charge. Financial investment and a high degree of risk, e.g. lack of sales of foreign artists, or lack of interest from galleries abroad in Irish artists, characterise these types of practices. This sheds new light on my previous analysis of scarcity. I said then that most galleries prefer to promote artists in 'the long run'; a form of relationship, which is built over time and that brings high amounts of symbolic capital for galleries and artists. This example showed that galleries enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in the sub-field, and the crucial role they played in maintaining the field's scarcity. The achievement of international renown is another step towards autonomy for galleries. It gives them high levels of symbolic capital and power in the Dublin sub-field. This autonomy is obtained through practices requiring high levels of financial investment and risk needed to be able to operate in the international art world. In the last part of this analysis, I look at the scarcity prevalent in the practice of selling artworks to public collections.

3.2.4 Selling artworks and public collections

The sale of artworks helps sustain the sub-field because it provides galleries with a financial return to run their businesses. I said earlier that commercial galleries occupy a mid position between autonomous and heteronomous poles of the field of cultural production as theorised by Bourdieu. They are not driven solely by the search for financial profit, but the attainment of symbolic capital for their artists. My aim now is to focus on the sale of artworks as a practice that also produces symbolic capital. Bourdieu highlights this issue when he argues that in the FRP economic profit is normally disavowed. What prevails,

instead, is a 'profit of disinterestedness', which indicates how the field is driven by the search of symbolic capital. But this raises the question: how can we conceptualise the practice of selling art as a disavowal of economic profit? This is an important point if we take into account that all galleries usually benefit from a fifty per cent of commission on their sales, which shows the reliance of galleries on financial profit.

Commercial galleries sell to individuals, small and large businesses, corporations, and private collectors such as the Allied Irish Bank, the Bank of Ireland, KMPG, Anderson Consulting, and the Arts Council.[31] All galleries mentioned an increase in sales as a result of the country's economic prosperity. However, two interviewees agreed in saying that an increase in prosperity does not automatically lead to more people buying art.

> In Ireland people with money buy a fast car, a better dress, buying art is something that is quite specific and quite possibly even an elite pursuit or interest, and is something that you really have to educate yourself in before you start to do it properly or do it and enjoy it ... That's a small market and it has increased, but not commensurate with the boom. (Green on Red)

For the interviewee below, it is the quality of the art represented and the gallery's location that has created an interest among some people. His statement links in with what has just been said, art appreciation takes time, and those with more money 'who don't buy art are not going to buy art'. As he says:

> The gallery has got better, the location is better and there are more people coming in, and there is more interest, as opposed to people having more money in their pocket. Because I find that people with more money do go on holidays and buy a new car. But as regards to more money for the arts I find that people who don't buy art are not going to buy art if they have more money. (Kevin Kavanagh Gallery)

Another gallery director refers to the time investment needed in order for the public to be able to appreciate art. She says:

> There are people who are quite knowledgeable; they know exactly what they want. They have impressive collections over many years. And then there are the new I.T. guys if you will. It's not that they don't have the knowledge, they have this kind of Kevin Clainy taste, and all this

[31] Kerlin Gallery and Hallward Gallery.

> minimalist stuff, which is great fun, but I think it needs more time. They just haven't got the time, they couldn't ... and it's not because they aren't knowledgeable about art, they just haven't got the time. (Hallward Gallery)

The mention of time as an important factor in evaluating artworks brings to the fore differences between gallery buyers. There are those who have been acquainted with artworks for a long time; they possess an aesthetic disposition and thus 'they know exactly what they want'. Conversely, the 'I.T' guys' may know about art, but still need the necessary time to build up the knowledge that allows them to distinguish 'good art'. But this leads me to an important point because the ultimate goal of artists, and gallery owners, is to have their works bought not by I.T or even knowledgeable individuals, but by a special type of buyer: museum collections. As one interviewee put it "that's the ultimate goal."[32] Two other gallery directors noted the importance of selling to museum collections:

> Of course, selling art that's how we function. We have to and it's, of course, it's an important part of this, especially to museum collections, because it's great for us to be able to say we're selling to such and such museum collection. Having said that, it's also very important for the art to be out there, for the people to see the work. (Kerlin Gallery)

> It's very important for my artists to be in their collections [museums], however big or small the work they buy is. (Green on Red Gallery)

Further evidence of this is found in the artists resumes, which some galleries produce in their website.[33] These include a description of their art practice, the type of media they work in; solo and group exhibitions; participation at international events such as the Venice Biennale; and, importantly, they mention all the collections representing works by this particular artist. However, the symbolic power of museums to legitimate artworks by including them in their collections raises an interesting issue. As I have said, individuals take time to cultivate an art disposition, yet a museum such as IMMA established in 1991 already possesses a high amount of symbolic power for those artists in its collection (see chapter 5). It is possible to say that, in this case, a museum such as IMMA does not need to have been in the FCA for a long time and yet it already provides symbolic capital to those artists in its collection. An interviewee made this argument in relation to IMMA, which she saw as having an important role in consecrating Irish art. She says:

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[32] Interview with Tara Murphy, Solomon Gallery, 8th February 2001.
[33] A good example is the Kerlin Gallery website: www.kerlin.ie

> It's very nice to have a big brother or a big sister, feeling that there is a museum where your artists may one day end up. And when you're travelling it's a kind of common platform for many other international museums and galleries who may be less aware of the smaller galleries, of the private galleries, but who should be aware of the museum. So it kind of clarifies a presence for contemporary art in the city, and I think the absence of a major museum of contemporary art would be unthinkable at this point. (Rubicon Gallery)

This opens up an interesting question: how does IMMA create symbolic power for itself, given that, at least initially, time does not seem to be a contributing factor? But the making of IMMA's collection is the topic of chapter 5, for now it will suffice to point at this as a topic that needs to be explored.

Yet the symbolic capital obtained by artists who sell their works to museum collections presents a paradox because the galleries interviewed say they have sold very few works to museums in Ireland. A gallery which has been in the sub-field since 1978, Taylor Galleries, has sold seven works to IMMA, while the Hugh Lane Gallery "when it was active bought in twenty years two or three pieces."[34] When asked as to the reasons for not buying more artworks from galleries he said: "I don't actually know why they don't buy, it could be a personality thing ... I think obviously directors have a particular type of taste and maybe we don't fit into their taste." (Taylor Galleries)

Another interviewee made the same point arguing that museum purchases are related to the type of art galleries sell. As she explains:

> A lot of our artists here would be quite representational and traditional. It's not very sexy work, so they're going to look towards artists who have a greater international dimension or artists who are very much in the news, or getting a lot of publicity. So they'll buy our senior artists, but our work isn't really what they are looking for, and that's just the museum's policy. (Solomon Gallery)

This quote brings to the fore another side of gallery sales to museums. On the one hand, galleries receive the highest amount of symbolic capital for artists who sell works to museum collections. On the other hand, museums seek to purchase particular types of artists such as those with an international reputation. However, this does not seem to be a

[34] Interview with John Taylor, Taylor Galleries, 26th April 2001.

clear-cut rule of the sub-field. The Kevin Kavanagh gallery has not sold any paintings to any museums apart from IMMA. Despite its short time in the sub-field, it has developed a good working relationship with the museum to which it has sold four paintings. This suggests that museum directors may be interested in collecting art by emerging artists – this is the kind of work a newcomer such as the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery is able to promote given its short time in the sub-field. This is how he refers to Declan McGonagle, IMMA's former director:

> Declan bought four paintings from me by three different artists. But the confidence is really good because he is interested. He comes in once or twice a year, and he invites you up to their place, and he kind of makes a big deal about you, which is nice because no one else does. I mean the Douglas Hyde Gallery don't, the RHA don't, the Hugh Lane doesn't. I'm not even in their invitation list ... But the museum they make a big deal. They let you know what's on, they are nice and friendly, they introduce you to people, and say how good you are and how well you're doing, which is nice to hear and that's why I love going to the museum. (Kevin Kavanagh Gallery)

But there is a common thread running through these views. The sale of artworks to Irish public collections is a practice generating scarcity in the sub-field of commercial galleries, because galleries are not able to sell high amounts of works to such collections. So while offering the maximum amount of symbolic capital to artists, they also maintain the sub-field's scarcity. Another side of this issue is when there are certain works which can only be of interest to certain museum collections. This is the case of the Green on Red Gallery when it sold a film installation to the IMMA:

> The number of sales I have made to Irish museums has been very small. They've made some key purchases like the film that we showed in 1991 of Clare Langan's work, which was called '40 below' and got her short listed for the Glen Dimplex was purchased by IMMA for £10,000. I would not have sold that to any other client. I haven't since to anyone else, it's really only museums, and it was back then the only museum that would buy that kind of work. (Green on Red Gallery)

Moreover, despite the galleries' efforts to invite public galleries and museum directors to their openings as well as contacting them whenever they have works that may suit their collections, the interviewees in this study said that they do not get a huge response from them. But this opens up another issue because the scarcity of purchases has led to the lack of a representative public collection of Irish art. I will deal more specifically with this in

chapter 5, but it is important at this stage to point out the initial struggle of a commercial gallery, which intends to fill in a 'gap' in the FCA.

> Over all the years we are asked quite often where can people see what's been happening in Irish art over a period of time, and there's just nowhere to send people. And it's just an awful gap if you've been working here for so long, and at this stage I'd like it to be something that we could help. And I know we could. We started our own little group, about five people altogether. In a very short period of time we realised between the five of us we could actually piece together Irish related art over fifty of sixty years. We could piece together quite well, still with a few gaps that we hoped to fill. (Taylor Galleries)

The group in question consists in this gallery director, two collectors, one artist and one art historian. At the time of writing this thesis the project has not yet materialised.

The scarcity of purchases by Irish public institutions brings me to the end of my analysis of the sub-field of commercial galleries. My overall aim was to evaluate the practice of making aesthetic value, or artistic renown – symbolic capital. I started from the premise that the assessment of aesthetic value is the result, not of an individual's aesthetic preferences (i.e. gallery directors' taste), but of the articulation of a range of practices in the sub-field. I have followed Bourdieu's argument on how the agents' capability of producing aesthetic value is related to the amount of autonomy enjoyed by the field. I have then focused on the notion of 'scarcity', which he suggests as the measure of a field's autonomy. The making of aesthetic value is a practice that includes several aspects. We have seen how scarcity operated in a number of practices: trying to building up relationships between artist and gallery that will work in 'the long run'; participation in international art fairs; exhibition of foreign art in Dublin; and the sale to Irish public collections. Most importantly, scarcity is not only created within the sub-field of commercial galleries, but it also originates through its position in a wider art world. The international art world and the sub-field of public galleries – here seen as Irish public collections – exemplify the kind of relationships in which the sub-field is involved. This suggests that a field's autonomy is not only directly related to the practices taking place within the field itself. It is made possible by the strategic operations of commercial galleries both at a national and an international level. Next I would like to continue this same line of enquiry in the sub-field of public galleries.

3.3 The sub-field of public galleries

In the rest of this chapter, I want to continue my assessment of the autonomy in the FCA by looking at the sub-field of public galleries. This includes at least four galleries: the Royal Hibernian Academy (1823), the Douglas Hyde Gallery (1978), the HLMGMA (1908), and the IMMA (1991).

Characteristic of the public galleries sub-field is its reliance on external sources of funding. Usually public institutions such as the Arts Council, Dublin Corporation or the Department of Arts and Culture fund galleries. In addition they seek additional income from private sponsors or by setting up 'Friends of' initiatives, which consists in private individuals willingly contributing with their money to finance public galleries. The main task of public galleries is the collection and exhibition of art – only the HLMGMA and the IMMA collect. It is through these two functions or practices that they create symbolic capital for the artworks they collect and/or show. In turn, they obtain symbolic power or renown from different sources, one of them being the public at large. The more visitors they have, the more successful their shows are. In this case the sub-field would be closer to the heteronomous pole of the FRP as described by Bourdieu, because their role is to produce 'cultural goods' - for example, exhibitions - for the public. However, the sub-field also relies on other forms of symbolic power such as reviews by art critics, who would contribute by evaluating its various practices. As I have been saying, the main factor of a field's autonomy is its capacity to generate symbolic scarcity – as opposed to economic scarcity. That is, of not creating enough symbolic capital for the existing demand in the field. A common thread of the four institutions involved is that they all deal with contemporary art. They are autonomous because they have the power to choose what specific aesthetics they want to represent (or collect) and how they want to use or exhibit them – e.g. layout, lighting. In this sub-field, however, scarcity acquires a new form: it is shaped by an overlap in aesthetics seen in the representation of a similar type of aesthetics by the various institutions involved. Let me clarify first what I mean by 'an overlap in aesthetics' to look next at the relationship between the different players in the sub-field.

3.3.1 Overlap in aesthetics

Art critic Brian Fallon has tackled the debate around the 'overlap in aesthetics' between Dublin's various public cultural institutions. In an article in the *Irish Times,* Fallon referred to "an overlapping of aims and interests" between public art galleries and museums, resulting

in an inability for public galleries "to make the most of the resources at their disposal."[35] He adds that they "function in a way virtually unrelated to one another. That is not the same as outright rivalry, but there is no cohesion evident, no obvious attempt to define reciprocal roles."[36] This lack of cohesion manifests itself in the existence of various galleries acting as venues for temporary exhibitions of contemporary art. As a result, a number of galleries, says Fallon, are exhibiting works by the same artist, as in the case of Sean Scully's work, which has been shown at the DHG, IMMA, the HLMGMA and the Kerlin Gallery. Arguably, an exhibition of Sean Scully will not have the same impact, or create the same prestige when the public is able to see it at four different venues. This situation positions the various institutions in competition with each other over the exhibition of contemporary artists. An overlap in aesthetics – both in the practices of exhibiting and collecting – entails an increase in the production of symbolic capital within the field, which diminishes the symbolic power of these institutions as agents of cultural consecration.

Art critic Aidan Dunne has exposed another side of the debate. In an article entitled 'Wanted: good home for art'[37] he argues about the lack of public gallery space in Dublin, a claim made in connection to the donation by two Irish artists, Sean Scully and Hughie O'Donoghue, to the state. These donations have brought to the fore an existing situation in the field. On the one hand, "Dublin already has more than enough galleries", and, on the other hand, there is still a need for a representative collection of contemporary and 20th century Irish art. Dunne suggests the Crimea Banqueting Hall, as an obvious choice, which should then "come under the auspices of an existing institution", with IMMA as the "logical candidate", and possibly the HLMGMA. Let us remember at this point that Dunne's claim of a lack of such collection is not new; it was brought up in my interview with a director of a commercial gallery, and it will appear again in chapter 5.

The problem seems twofold: one of setting up distinct roles and functions between the various institutions, and adding new ones, such as a representative collection of 20th century Irish art. However, the peculiar situation of the public galleries sub-field helps us shed new light on the issue of scarcity, which I have been discussing in this chapter. In the sub-field of commercial galleries scarcity was either created by the limited amount of artists galleries were able to represent, or by the sub-field's relation to other fields – an international art world – or agents – Irish collecting institutions. In general, this was a

[35] *The Irish Times*, 6th June 2001.
[36] *The Irish Times*, 6th June 2001.
[37] *The Irish Times*, 5th December 2000.

situation in which there were more artists seeking representation than space galleries could provide. In the sub-field of public galleries we find a rather different picture. Scarcity is present in terms of aesthetics, because there are too many galleries dealing with the same aesthetics. It is possible to say that there are still many more artists than public galleries in Dublin. However, as I pointed out, it is often the case that public institutions struggle to exhibit or collect one same Irish artist. From this point of view aesthetic scarcity prevails in the sub-field.

In what follows I want to flesh out various aspects of this competition in aesthetics. I start by looking at the role of the DGH with regard to the emergence of IMMA; secondly, I focus on the difficulties of the HLMGMA and the IMMA as collecting institutions in the FCA;[38] finally, I explore how the RHA has reinvented a new role and position for itself in the FCA.

3.3.2 Exhibiting aesthetics: the DHG and the IMMA

One common thread between all the public institutions is their role as venues for the temporary exhibition of contemporary art. But this form of practice can lead to a 'competition in aesthetics' when various venues are exhibiting a same artist. There are number of examples that illustrate this point. For example, in 2000 both the HLMGMA and the IMMA exhibited artworks by the well-known artist Francis Bacon. This competition was aggravated when the authenticity of the drawings exhibited at IMMA came under dispute. An article in the *Sunday Times* notes the division amongst experts and how the artist's estate had set up a panel to examine the drawings. As a result IMMA was not allowed to use Bacon's name and could only exhibit them as "works attributed to the artist."[39] The HLMGMA put up an exhibition of some of Bacon's key works. This was debated by the press at the time, which questioned whether it was the role of a national institution – and thus endowed with the highest amount of symbolic power in the sub-field - to show works 'attributed' to Bacon, while a Municipal Gallery put on an exhibition of some of Bacon's best original works.

But this example is not to be taken as an accidental overlap of aesthetics. Rather, it illustrates a deep conflict regarding the remits of the various institutions in the sub-field. The relationship between the DHG and the IMMA highlights another aspect of this conflict. As I

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[38] The RHA also has its own permanent collection, but it is never on display, and thus it does not form part of the Academy's activities (Mulcahy, 2002: 47).

[39] The sketches belong to Barry Joule, a friend of Bacon who met the artist in 1978 and became thereafter his driver and confidant. *Sunday Times*, 19th March 2000.

noted earlier, since its establishment in 1959 the College Gallery has aimed at fostering an interest in the visual arts by building up a comprehensive collection of pictures. The provision in 1967 of an exhibition space - the Exhibition Hall, and forerunner of the DGH - facilitated the organisation of exhibitions of work by Picasso, Warhol, the Pop Art of major American and British artists, and retrospectives of Irish artists such as Paul Henry and Norah McGuinness (Dawson, 1987: 39-40). Importantly, the role of both the College Gallery's collection and the Exhibition Hall has been seen as filling the gap of "a significant collection of International Modernist art" (Walsh, 1991: 21). Arguably, this was the role of a collecting institution such as a National Museum of Modern Art, which at the time was still absent from the FCA. However, the opening of IMMA in 1991 put an end to this situation. Most importantly, it led to a new position for the DHG in the FCA, which until then was regarded the major contemporary arts venue in Ireland (Walsh, 1991: 21). Let me elaborate this point.

At the time of its foundation, IMMA did not have a huge art collection; maybe this circumstance influenced the emphasis given by the museum to temporary exhibitions. This policy was detrimental to the DHG because the IMMA was said to "take up the prime position on the stage that the Douglas Hyde has hitherto dominated" (Hutchinson, 1991: 21). Yet in 1991, the gallery's new director, John Hutchinson, saw this situation with optimism:

> But this is as liberating as it is challenging. The Hyde can now make the most of its assets – an enviable position in the centre of the city, ample space, and a university context – to carve out a new niche for itself. The gallery can adopt a more focused exhibition policy, take more risks, and still be an intrinsic part of the fabric of the art scene. Given the right shows and a high level of intellectual debate in its publications, there is no reason why the Douglas Hyde should not increase its constituency and simultaneously continue to contribute to general artistic discourse. (Hutchinson, 1991: 21)

This quote suggests how the establishment of the IMMA brought to the fore the need to redefine the DHG's role. Initially, the plan was to increase its symbolic power by 'making the most' of its geographical position in Dublin's city centre; an important point if we consider that the IMMA is located in Kilmainham about two miles from the city centre. To keep increasing its symbolic power the DHG was to be re-defined with the introduction of a new

exhibition policy, which means redesigning the type of aesthetics it supported. But a new aesthetics proved not to be enough.

Three years later, Hutchinson reassessed the position of the DHG vis-à-vis IMMA. He referred to advantages the DHG had in relation to IMMA, and also added:

> [W]e're no longer the senior contemporary art gallery in the country. IMMA, given its current focus, has taken over that role. This means, for instance, that a famous international artist like Anselm Kiefer, who showed at the Douglas Hyde in 1990, would probably choose to exhibit at IMMA rather than here, were he invited to do so. A national institution, by definition, has real status. (Smith, 1994: 80)

But the disadvantaged position, or displacement in the FCA, suffered by the DHG led to a situation of struggle and competition between both institutions. As Hutchinson said, if he felt the work of an artist was particularly suitable to the gallery's exhibition programme "I would try to convince him or her that the Douglas Hyde was the right place in which to show" (ibid: 80). The overlap in aesthetics turns into a situation of scarcity in the sub-field when both institutions may want to exhibit the same artist. This raises an interesting point because it indicates a scarcity over the attainment of symbolic power. Moreover, we see how scarcity can potentially lead to a struggle over the legitimation of the same aesthetics, in a race where the DHG wants to maintain its symbolic power in the FCA.

Almost 10 years after IMMA's opening, Hutchinson continues to see too much of an overlap in roles. "Our institution would like to see more of a differentiation of roles", since "all of us, to a greater or lesser extent, are going for the same things."[40] As to the consequences of this situation he adds:

> I don't think it has eased our path at all ... there's more competition between institutions than there was. This is partly because everybody is a little more professional than they were then or fifteen years ago.[41]

For him the improvement has taken place in the overall FCA because "there is more activity going on, and IMMA is, of course, a major player in that activity, and without IMMA the

[40] Interview with John Hutchinson, DHG, 14th November 2000.
[41] Interview with John Hutchinson, DHG, 14th November 2000.

whole scene would be devoid of a major voice."[42] However, there is also the need to redefine the roles of museums in the sub-field. "It would be good, I think, in broad terms, to be able to look at a contemporary artist and then go to a museum and see the sources from which he or she is taking ideas."[43] The museum's task would be to portray how certain artists become classics or icons, how a canon of values is formed. This is how Hutchinson explains his view on IMMA's role and position:

> The idea of deconstructing the notion of a museum, I think had less meaning in our context than it would have done elsewhere because there was no model of a strong traditional or modernist collection, or modernist idea of a museum to deconstruct. So in a sense, it was deconstructing something that didn't exist and to keep the name museum and to try and redefine the notion of a museum in a social and cultural context where people didn't already have a given notion of what a contemporary art or modern art museum would be, I think was perhaps overly ambitious.[44]

Again we see how the overlap in aesthetics can be resolved by redefining the roles of each institution. In this case, IMMA is a museum, as opposed to a gallery space for the exhibition of contemporary art. It is difficult to predict whether this is a viable solution given that IMMA has both roles. Maybe Fallon's proposal is what the FCA needs: "Greater cooperation between the public art institutions and some over-all monitoring of their activities, without any sacrifice of their independence"[45] However, Fallon is thus arguing for a reinvention of the overall structure of the sub-field, which can be difficult to achieve. As I noted, a field's autonomy lies in its capacity to generate scarcity. We have just seen how the IMMA and the DHG are also in conflict to keep their prominent roles in the sub-field. Scarcity is generated in two ways: when various institutions try to fulfil a similar role in the sub-field, and when they want to exhibit a similar type of aesthetics. It is less likely that such a struggle will take place between the National Gallery of Ireland, which collects and exhibits, mainly, old masters, and the DHG exhibitions programme. This argument leads to a different conclusion to Bourdieu's because he sees scarcity directly related to autonomy. That is, the more scarcity a field is able to generate, the more autonomy enjoyed by that particular field. While the public institutions involved create scarcity in the field, as in the case of commercial galleries, the important point, and what differentiates this form of scarcity from that in the sub-field of commercial galleries, lies in the effects it has in the sub-field. Namely, it reduces the

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[42] Interview with John Hutchinson, DHG, 14th November 2000.
[43] Interview with John Hutchinson, DHG, 14th November 2000.
[44] Interview with John Hutchinson, DHG, 14th November 2000.
[45] *The Irish Times*, 6th June 2001.

autonomy of some agents such as the DHG, which now has to struggle against the 'real status' of a national museum.

3.3.3 Symbolic power and public collecting: the HLMGMA and the IMMA

Although chapter 5 focuses specifically on the practices involved in the making of a collection for the IMMA, it is fitting at this point to discuss some of the situations of competition between the museum and the HLMGMA. One key issue is that due to limited funding, collecting institutions such as the HLMGMA and IMMA rely highly on donations for their collections. This point becomes apparent if we consider their respective acquisition budgets. The HLMGMA had a budget of euro 38,000 for 1998, 1999 and 2000. In 2001 its budget was raised to 34,400 euros and in 2002 to 46,400 euros.[46] In 1991 the IMMA had a budget of IE£90,000, in 1993, 1994 and 1995 IE£100,000, in 1997 and 1998 IE£150,000, and in 1999 IE£200.000.[47] The limited possibilities of these budgets for making substantial purchases comes to the fore when we think that paintings by a relatively well established Irish artist such as Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin were recently on sale at the Kerlin Gallery for 4,500 euro each.

Tax relief is a measure set up to ameliorate this disadvantaged economic situation. This incentive encourages donors resident in the Republic of Ireland to give their "heritage items" to national collections. Section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997 titled 'Tax relief for the donation of significant heritage items to the National Collections' provides for "a non-refundable tax credit of 100% against the value of the item to be donated." The maximum approved expenditure per year is: IE£750,000, and a minimum of IE£75,000.[48] The tax act applies to items donated to the following national institutions: the National Archives, the National Gallery, the National Library, the National Museum, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, and the Irish Architectural Archive. From this list it emerges that the HLMGMA does not qualify for tax relief on the grounds that it is not a national institution, but municipal. Initially this situation seems to give the IMMA an advantaged position as a collecting institution in the sub-field of public galleries. It can attract those individuals or groups who want to donate their works as part of the tax relief incentive. In so doing, it

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[46] Despite the fact that the HLMGMA is allocated a set budget for acquisitions, on occasions Dublin City Council, the gallery's public funding body, extends this budget to allow the purchase of specific artworks. In 1998, the gallery spent over 50,000 euros, and 77,000 in 2001. Phone conversation with Anne Gibney, Department of Environment and Culture, Dublin City Council. 30th August 2001.

[47] These figures are only approximates. Interview with Catherine Marshall, 25th June 2001.

[48] 'Cultural/Heritage Tax Reliefs', TSG 98/13. Department of Finance.

facilitates the attainment of symbolic capital in the form of works for the museum's collection, which is one of the sources of the museum's symbolic power (see chapter 5).

The IMMA has successfully secured important donations for its collection through the tax relief act. Amongst some of these are: the Ferguson collection, a collection from the Bank of Ireland, a body of work by Brian Maguire, and Irish works from the Foley collection.[49] Conversely, Barbara Dawson, director of the HLMGMA, has referred to the detrimental effect the exclusion of the Gallery from the tax act has had on their collection: "with that incentive we would be able to add to our collection of early twenty century Irish art; people would buy for us because they like this collection."[50] The present legislation creates a situation of competition between the IMMA and the HLMGMA in which IMMA, initially, seems to be the winner because it can attract private collectors to donate works for the museum's collection. However, it is possible to interpret IMMA's seemingly favourable position as a mixed blessing. As senior curator at the IMMA, Catherine Marshall, explains, once the yearly limit for donations has been reached collectors may decide to leave aside their donations for the following year, or they may not happen at all. This was not the case before the tax relief was put in place, when collectors were also offering donations to IMMA.[51] This seems to suggest that the tax incentive puts donors in a more financially advantageous position than they would have enjoyed before the act was put in practice. However, national institutions such as IMMA now have to struggle harder to obtain donations that would have been given to them in the first place.

Let me now link this discussion to the scarcity issue. I mentioned earlier that in the case of the DHG and the IMMA scarcity prevailed for two reasons: firstly, because they exhibited a similar type of aesthetics; and, secondly, because they both wanted to play a leading role as exhibiting venues for contemporary art. In the present example, both the HLMGMA and the IMMA aim to collect a similar aesthetics: contemporary Irish art. Including only the IMMA in the tax act seems to worsen a situation of competition in which IMMA is more likely to attract donations for its collection than the HLMGMA. Even if the HLMGMA were to be included in the tax act we would have another type of conflict between these two institutions, on the grounds that they still collect a similar aesthetics. This would be favourable for donors, however, who would be able to choose which institution they want to donate or loan their artworks to. With regard to the sub-field's autonomy, aesthetic scarcity

[49] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[50] Interview with Barbara Dawson, HLMGMA, 26th November 2001.
[51] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

in the practice of public collecting leads to struggles between agents as we have seen. Most importantly, the existence of both aesthetic and financial scarcity in the practice of collecting reduces, rather than increases, the autonomy of the institutions involved, which needs to be ameliorated in two ways: in the redefinition of the aesthetics of collecting in the sub-field, and through the intervention of external institutions, such as the legal system.

3.3.4 Reinventing the Royal Hibernian Academy

As I said earlier the main priority of public institutions is to create symbolic capital for the artists they represent. This is also the case of the RHA, which is as we have seen in chapter 3, an artists run institution, and the longest in the FCA. The aims of the Academy are "to encourage, advance and promote the practice of the visual arts in Ireland and the Irish public's experience of visual art." (Fallon, 2000: 11-2). My interest in what follows is to flesh out how this aim takes place through what I call a redefinition in the production of symbolic capital by the RHA, a change that keeps a balance between two poles: *tradition* and *innovation*. Let us review first the RHA's traditional practices: membership, educational approach, and the annual exhibition.

The Academy is limited to thirty full members and ten associate members by its charter established in 1823. If there is a vacancy in membership, the members elect one of the ten associates to fill it. At present, the Academy is seeking to expand its membership, but this process is curtailed by the restrictive conditions set up in the Academy's original Charter. To change this Charter would be a lengthy process involving an act of the Dáil (the Irish Parliament) (Mulcahy, 2002: 42). The idea now is to expand the number of academicians by instituting a new class of senior member called Senior Ranking Academician. This would enable the Academy to bring in another ten people (ibid: 44).

At present, the Academy offers an education programme, which includes lunchtime tours and evening talks. In chapter 3, I mentioned the importance of the RHA's schools in the training of artists, particularly around the end of the 19th century. The schools were closed in 1939 (Fallon, 2000: 13). However, the possibility of re-opening the Academy's schools has been a subject of discussion. While this project has not yet materialised, it is relevant to mention the type of teaching the Academy's schools would attempt to provide. An underlying belief of the Academy is the "centrality of drawing to the practice of art" (Fallon, 2000: 11). The Academy's schools would attempt to maintain a "fundamental training in the traditions". Arthur Gibney, President of the RHA, refers to his views on the training of

future artists, and how they differ from the teaching students receive on the technique of drawing at the National College of Arts and Design:

> They should [study drawing] but we don't think they do. There is so much pressure on students today to pick up all the experimental aspects – video, photography – that we feel that there's a dearth of fundamental training in the traditions. We're not interested in producing academic painters. We're interested in producing painters who have a view of tradition. I mean, we feel that the whole ideal of Academies originally was a synthesis of the arts and the study of the technique. Sort of a classicism and classical values, rather than the reproduction of classical formalism. And what we want to look at really is a school that teaches very high values – visual values. The visual is going out of art at the moment. It's a very traditional ideal. (Mulcahy, 2002: 47)

This quote suggests how the Academy wants to keep its role as an institution with a traditional approach; in this case, in the practice of teaching artists traditional aspects of painting. The promotion of this type of skill is a way of bringing back a more traditional view of artists as "painters with a view of tradition." Gibney's views stand in contrast to some of the authors I mentioned earlier. In particular I quoted philosopher Danto saying that artworks "can look like anything at all" (1997: 16).

A last aspect which characterises the Academy as a traditional institution is its Annual Exhibition. The RHA follows its inheritance, a tradition of organising an Annual Exhibition of work by Academicians, which was first put in place in 1826 (Turpin, 1991: 198). It invites an open submission by other artists and processes an average of 2,000 entries and charges a low commission rate. The exhibition is a selling event, with an overall of 400 paintings and as many sculptures. It includes works by its members and invites an open submission by other artists. There is a charge of 25% commission at the Annual Exhibition with a turnover around 6,000,000 Euro. An innovation in the annual exhibition is the inclusion of film and photography. As president Arthur Gibney says:

> [W]e do value traditional relationships and disciplines and we are anxious that they should not be overlooked. We don't see ourselves at the cutting edge of experimental or installation art. It's not our constituency. But we have opened up to Film as an art form and Photography. (Mulcahy, 2002: 47)

What characterises the RHA, as it is run at present, is that alongside the more traditional aspects I have presented here stands its eagerness to be innovative. This point becomes clear in the Academy's exhibition programme. This programme is not run by Academicians, but by Academy's director, Patrick Murphy. It involves two types of exhibitions.

The Ashford Gallery provides an exhibition space for artists – both academicians and emerging. Usually it is designated for people who would find it very hard to get an exhibition at any of Dublin's commercial galleries because they have no previous selling records. Exhibitions at the Ashford Gallery change every three weeks, and the Gallery's commission is 40% (Mulcahy, 2002: 44). The Gallagher Gallery fulfils a different purpose. A novelty here is the introduction of retrospectives of senior Academicians' work, to try and create a proto-history of the RHA, which include Melanie Le Brocquy (1999), Camille Souter (2001), and Charles Brady (2002). Secondly, the Gallery also shows works by mid-career artists such as Grace Weir (2000), Siobhán Hapaska (2001), both of whom represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale (2001). Underlying this exhibition programme is the reinvention of the type of aesthetics represented by the Academy. As director Patrick Murphy explains:

> It's very important that as an artist run institution we are seen to have a fan loyalty to all forms of art, because I don't believe in form anymore as a designation for different types of art, I think all forms are valid now ... what I am very interested in is this idea that with Asian work you're using very contemporary media to treat very traditional subjects ... and that's an important element to get in here into the country and also into the Academy because the Academy is said to be a traditional institution, so you have to find a way to deal with those traditional topics.[52]

The position of the RHA in the FCA can be described as trying to find a balance between two roles. One is keeping the RHA's structure of a traditional institution consisting in a board of Academicians, which continues to hold an Annual Exhibition (a practice that goes back to 1826). Parallel to this traditional role is the reinvention of the RHA by playing the role of a commercial gallery and a leading exhibition venue bringing to the public work by Irish and international artists.

[52] Interview with Patrick Murphy, RHA, 12th April 2001.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the FCA by looking at the sub-fields of commercial and public galleries in Dublin. My premise was that they share an interest in the production of symbolic capital and power. According to Bourdieu's 'market of symbolic goods' these two sub-fields re-produce a particular product, which is 'high art', because their main task is the production of aesthetic value. In Bourdieu's model the production of 'high art' is situated in the FRP, and autonomy is a key feature in it. However, I have argued that the sub-fields here concerned do not strictly follow Bourdieu's model because they have features of the field of large-scale production. For example, commercial galleries seek to obtain economic profit from the sales of works, and the public galleries' success relies, to a large extent, on the recognition they obtain from the public at large. I have set out to investigate the extent to which these two sub-fields are autonomous, or have 'the power to define their own criteria'. I have said that an initial clue to the commercial galleries' autonomy was their freedom to choose the artists they promoted. Similarly, in the sub-field of public galleries there was autonomy to the extent that gallery directors could choose what aesthetics to represent. My analysis has attempted to shed light on these initial propositions with an examination of some the practices articulated in these two sub-fields. More specifically, I have looked at the scarcity created by these practices, which is according to Bourdieu, a way of evaluating a field's autonomy.

The main task of the sub-field of commercial galleries was the promotion of artists, but my analysis has shown how not all forms of relationship between artists and galleries are equally profitable to galleries. I argued that galleries want to work with the same artists in the long run; to build up a reputation for them until they become well established. I also looked at how they draw on an international art world to acquire symbolic capital and power. This takes place through practices such as participation at international art fairs and the exhibition of non-Irish artists in Dublin. Finally, I focused on the sale of artworks and said that museum collections offer the highest amount of symbolic capital to those artists represented. An interesting point here was that while individuals do take time to build up an 'aesthetic disposition', an ability to distinguish 'good art', a national museum such as IMMA does not require this time investment in order to consecrate the artists in its collection. Its position as the only national collecting museum in Ireland is what gives it, at least initially, its symbolic power. Another side of this question, as we will see in chapter 5, is how IMMA manages to keep or increase this symbolic power.

With regard to the sub-field of public galleries I noted that their autonomy to choose what particular aesthetics to exhibit, and collect – both the HLMGMA and the IMMA collect contemporary art – is curtailed by an overlap in the aesthetics represented in the various galleries involved. I argued that this overlap leads to situations of competition and struggle over the attainment of symbolic capital and power. The foundation of the IMMA caused the DHG to redefine its role and position in the FCA, and this led to an argument for a redefinition of the museum's role. The HLMGMA and the IMMA were also positioned in a competitive situation when the former was not included in a tax exemption benefiting individuals donating or loaning artworks to national collections. It is now the task of the HLMGMA to achieve a homologous position to that of the IMMA in the FCA. Finally, I offered the example of the RHA as an institution that has developed a dual practice: it has kept its view on tradition and transformed itself into a leading venue for the exhibition of contemporary art.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, it provides us with a platform for the analysis of the practice of collecting, which is the subject of chapters 5 and 6. It is fitting now to draw together some initial points on practices in the FCA to carry over to the next chapter. The practices examined in this chapter do not take place in a vacuum. In other words, they are not simply the result of the tasks carried out by commercial or public galleries. The promotion of an artist's career either by selling and/or exhibiting, or collecting his/her work – which I designate as the making of aesthetic value - needs various forms of support, i.e. economic capital is necessary to run commercial and public galleries; similarly, commercial galleries draw symbolic capital from an international artworld. Yet the attainment of these support mechanisms positions participants in the sub-fields in asymmetrical power relationships. In the case of commercial galleries, time plays a crucial role in helping galleries secure relationships with artists, which can produce high amounts of symbolic capital and power. In the process, the sub-fields' autonomy becomes a site for struggle and contestation. In the case of public galleries, reinventing their role is an important mechanism or strategy. As the case of the RHA shows, repositioning the academy and creating a dual role for it focused on keeping tradition while opening to change has given the academy a new position in the field, and an added symbolic power which it had been losing since the emergence of the FCA, as I explained in chapter 3 and earlier on in this chapter.

An initial conclusion here with which to open up the following chapter, is that the making of aesthetic value is not a legislative practice as Bauman theorised it. Let us recall that for him the intellectual practice of modernity had a key role in the creation of a worldview also called 'modernity'. The need to struggle, obtain capital from other fields brings us closer to Bourdieu's notion of intellectual practice. If legislators contributed to the making of a social order, the practices analysed in this chapter are not suggestive of this purpose. Rather they are aimed at the *reproduction of the sub-fields* and the overall FCA. This process occurs through the creation of symbolic capital and power for the sub-fields. The analysis suggests the important role of museums in the FCA, and the high amounts of symbolic power they embody. Can we then argue that those involved in practices in museum are articulating another form of practice, maybe legislative? If so, would this suggest that it is its position in the FCA, which can give, in this case a public museum, the ground to legislate?

CHAPTER 5
COLLECTING AS AN INTELLECTUAL PRACTICE

Introduction

The last two chapters of this thesis – chapters 5 and 6 - offer a study of the intellectual practices involved in making IMMA's collection. In the context of the thesis as a whole, they can be seen as the culmination of the previous two chapters, which have prepared the ground for this study. Chapter 3 has looked at the genesis of modern art collecting in Ireland by exploring the practices that sought to obtain symbolic capital for modern art as well as symbolic power for the MGMA. This was the forerunner of IMMA as the first institution of cultural consecration for modern art in Ireland. Chapter 4 has shifted this historical emphasis to the present and looked at the FCA by examining its autonomy and how this is related to the field's scarcity. Chapter 3 and 4 have provided an exploration into the ways in which the making of a modern art collection in the present is part of a field, the product of its history, and reproduced by a set of practices. As we will see, many of the practices in this chapter illustrate ideas already mentioned particularly in chapter 4 –e.g. the scarcity of symbolic capital in the FCA.

The chapter is divided into three parts. Part I presents the theoretical framework informing the chapter: Bauman's concept of interpreters and Bourdieu's notion of field. The chapter then provides an overview of IMMA's collection and the main agents involved in collecting. Parts II and III outline the practices involved in the making a collection. Part II explores the creation of frameworks for the sub-field – the museum's philosophy and its policy for collecting. Part III discusses the specific practices involved in collecting – acquisitions, loans and donations. The aim here is to investigate what type of intellectual practice – e.g. legislating or interpreting – is being articulated in the practices presented. My argument is that setting up the sub-field's frameworks is a form of legislation, and collecting is an interpreting practice. The chapter concludes with an examination of the various intellectual practices articulated in IMMA's sub-field and opens up new ways of thinking about interpreters in relation to Bourdieu's and Bauman's theories. It argues that both legislative and interpretative practices are constitutive of collecting, but that we need to search for new theoretical models for thinking about the making of aesthetic value as embodying distinct form/s, and struggles, of intellectual practices.

1 The Irish Museum of Modern Art as a field: legislating and/or translating

So far this thesis has been using the concept of field to discuss various aspects of the making of aesthetic value. In chapter 3 it designated the genesis of a field of modern art brought about by the making of Ireland's first modern art collection. Chapter 4 has referred to the field's autonomy in the making of aesthetic value by focusing on the notion of scarcity. This chapter continues to apply this concept but with a different theoretical impetus. It provides us with a testing ground in which to explore the practices involved in art collection making.

My approach to the sociology of art collecting is informed by Bauman's notion of interpreters and Bourdieu's theory of intellectual practices. My starting point is that interpreters carry out their practices in fields, and that they can both legislate within fields and translate between them. This chapter seeks to explore whether those engaged in the practice of art collection making play a legislating role; or whether it is only translating that prevails. As I said in chapter 2, interpreters operate in postmodern communities. Their task is to validate these communities or models of order. In turn, this validation is legitimated by the criteria developed within a particular community, or "upheld by the habits and beliefs of a 'community of meanings'" (1987: 4). For Bauman postmodern intellectuals can both legislate and translate. Legislating is the task of validating communities by bringing in typically modern criteria that are validated by the particular traditions or communities in which they are situated. More specifically, it entails assuring the survival of certainty and reason within their own communities, supplying criteria for criticism, and spelling out the rules which decide who are the rational discussants in a given community. In other words, it means that intellectuals set up their own rules, which allow them "to arbitrate controversies of opinion and make statements intended as binding" (1987: 5). Translation is the practice of facilitating the communication between communities, so that statements made within the system of knowledge of one community can be understood in the respective systems of knowledge existing in other communities. My aim in this chapter is to explore these two forms of intellectual practice in the realm of art collecting. My initial questions are: How do interpreters carry out their role as translators between communities? What is involved in the task of legislating or validating communities with modern criteria?

But these questions raise another set of issues for the present study. For Bauman postmodern intellectuals are no longer involved in the making of aesthetic value. This is why Bourdieu's theory of intellectual practices is a valuable analytical tool. It enables us to

conceptualise the making of aesthetic value as the practice of symbolic producers operating in cultural fields. I will be using his concepts of symbolic capital – e.g. prestige, aesthetic value - and symbolic power – knowledge frameworks - to theorise how intellectuals articulate the various practices related to art collecting. An added problem in Bauman's model is his idea of community, which is not specific enough to be applied empirically. Community could be equally applied to qualify a particular culture – e.g. Irish culture – or to a particular artform – e.g. postmodern art. In order to deploy the notion of 'community' in the following empirical investigation we need more specificity as to how communities may function and how to draw their boundaries. To overcome this methodological impasse I refer to communities as fields. In this case IMMA is an example of a postmodern community; a specific sub-field within the FCA.

Chapter 4 provided a starting point to start delineating what is the IMMA sub-field. As I said then, IMMA is a public institution, part of the sub-field of public art galleries. I also suggested that it is the institution of cultural consecration with the highest symbolic power in the FCA by means of its position as the only national museum of modern art. I elaborated this point in my discussion of how the foundation of IMMA led to the DHG's loss of a leading position in the sub-field. Another point I made about the sub-field of public galleries is its dependence on the public's attendance and on public funding. While these issues will arise again in the following analysis, my interest in this chapter is to focus on two aspects of IMMA's sub-field: the making of the sub-fields' boundaries and the practice of collecting.

I have dealt with the study of boundaries in chapters 2 and 3, where I looked at the genesis of a field of modern art and the autonomy of the FCA as resulting from struggles within the field, respectively. My analyses have shown that intricately related to a field's boundaries is its capacity to function autonomously from other agents outside the field. My question is to investigate how does IMMA set up itself as a sub-field, which is linked to the question of how much autonomy it enjoys as a sub-field. This is not the same as saying that the emergence of this new sub-field took place on May 21st 1991, when the museum was officially opened. My interest is in the symbolic production of the field's boundaries, in the type of knowledge or worldview that gives IMMA its own distinctive position in the FCA. A related question is then to investigate the specific intellectual practices involved in field making.

Although this is the first chapter looking at the making of IMMA's collection, there are some insights provided by the previous chapters, which can help give a distinct analytical angle to

this and the following chapters. In chapter 4, I introduced various ways in which agents in the sub-fields of commercial and public galleries created aesthetic value for contemporary art. This concern also runs through this chapter, which explores the making of aesthetic value for IMMA's public collection. We saw then how important it was to situate the practices within the FCA in a larger context of an international art world, in which commercial galleries in the FCA sought international renown for their artists. Chapter 3 also helped us understand the influence of international art movements – e.g. impressionism – in the creation of a collection for the MGMA. In light of these analyses, this chapter explores whether art collecting is also a practice influenced by developments in other artistic fields.

1.1 An introduction to the making of a modern art collection

As I said, in Part II I assess the practice of collecting and identify the intellectual role it plays, legislating and/or interpreting. My analytical focus will be on how participants, namely IMMA's staff and board members, govern the creation and allocation of symbolic capital for the collection. To introduce this analysis I offer first in Part I a brief profile of the *collections* that are now part, or have been part, of IMMA's collection, as well as refer to the interviews with participants in the process of collections, on which I have based my analysis.

1.2 An overview of IMMA's collection/s

The museum's collection owned or on long-term loan comprises works, mainly, by 20th century Irish and non-Irish artists. The collection has been developed by purchase, loans and donations, as well as by the commissioning of new works. In the next section I will deal with the specific practices that determine their acceptance or rejection. However, let me offer at this point a general view of some of IMMA's collections. IMMA inherited from the RHK the Madden Arnholz print collection, donated in 1987, spanning the history of European print-making up to the end of the 19th century.[1] A serious backbone to IMMA's collection was the donation by collector Gordon Lambert of more than three hundred pieces, particularly Irish works dating from the early 1960s onwards. This donation was made to commemorate IMMA's opening, although Lambert continues to be a benefactor of the museum. In 1990 the O'Malley collection of 150 works by major artists like Jack B. Yeats, Louis Le Brocquy

[1] The Madden Arnholz Collection was donated to the RHK Kilmainham by Claire Madden in memory of her daughter Etain and her son-in-law Dr. Fritz Arnholz. 1998. *Catalogue of the Collection.* Irish Museum of Modern Art.

and Paul Henry was offered on permanent loan.[2] In 1992, part of the Lafrenz collection was offered on an eight-year loan.[3] In 1995, IMMA secured a ten-year loan of works by printmaker Mary Farl Powers.[4] In 1996, the Weltkunst collection of contemporary British art was loaned for 10 years. It includes sculptors' drawings by leading British artists from the early 1980s to the present days, such as Richard Deacon, Antony Gormley, and Damien Hirst.[5] In 1997, Vicent and Maureen Ferguson donated 35 works by Irish artists or artists closely associated with Ireland which represent most of the dominant strands in Irish painting. The donation includes paintings by Brian Maguire, Elizabeth Magill and Michael Mulcahy.[6] In 1998 IMMA accepted on a two-year loan the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection. Set up by the late Victor Musgrave and curated since 1984 by Monika Kinley, the collection comprises over 750 works by artists outside the traditional mainstream world of art. In 1999, the loan was extended for another five years.[7] At present, the loan has been extended indefinitely.[8] In 2000 there were three donations and loans. Firstly, the Jefferson Smurfit Group plc donated 150 prints, mainly by Latin American artists, from the collection Smurfit: Cartón y Papel de México Collection. Secondly, a long term loan of fifty works by Maire and Maurice Foley who have also funded the purchase of other works for the museum's collection.[9] That same year, IMMA received a long-term loan by George and Maura McClelland of 400 artworks from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The collection is particularly strong in mid twenty-century Irish painters and sculptors, of

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[2] American born, Helen O'Malley Roelofs acquired the collection when she lived in Ireland and Europe. She donated them to the Irish American Cultural Institute in 1979, but at the time there was no suitable venue for their display. The opening of IMMA provided an opportunity to exhibit the collection, which was loaned on behalf of Helen O'Malley to the museum as a permanent memorial to Ernie O'Malley, IRA veteran, author and art critic. The collection also includes a large body of work by American, Mexican and European artists. *Evening Herald*, 2nd May 1990.

[3] The works were loaned by German collector Klaus Lafrenz; they include a number of leading minimalist and conceptual artists pieces by Michael Bauch, Hubert Kiecol and David Navros. Press release, 'Lafrenz Collection at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', 14th May 1992.

[4] The loan was made by the artist's estate. Mary Farl Powers was born in America but first came to Ireland at an early age where he became a highly influential artist and teacher in the development of printmaking. Press Release, 'Mary Farl Powers Loan and Major Acquisitions for IMMA', 27th March 1995.

[5] The collection was created in memory of the late Adrian Ward-Jackson, an art consultant, collector and patron of the visual and performing arts. In 1994 the trustees gave the collection on loan, while they continue to acquire works for IMMA during the time of the loan. Press Release, 'Weltkunst Collection of Contemporary British Art at IMMA', 11th April 1995.

[6] Press Release, 'Ferguson Donation on Show at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', 10th April 1997.

[7] Press Release, 'Art Unsolved: the Outsider Collection at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', 12th May 1998; and 'Outsider Art Collection to remain at the Irish Museum of Modern Art until 2006', 22nd October 1999.

[8] Marshall. 2001. *Celebrating a Decade*. Irish Museum of Modern Art, p. 35.

[9] A noted businessman and collector, Maurice Foley was member of IMMA's first board in 1990. He was chairman of its second board from March 1997 to March 2000. Press Release, 'Loans and Donations from Maire and Maurice Foley at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', 9th June 2000.

Northern Irish artists in particular.[10] After this overview of what has been received, I introduce next the main players involved in the process of collecting.

1.3 Main players behind collecting

In order to analyse the practice of making an art collection we need to identify the main participants in this process. IMMA's director, and a board with a non-executive role run the museum. The first board was set up in February 1990 to get the museum up and running. The Taoiseach[11] appointed businesswoman Gillian Bowler as chairman of the board of the forecoming IMMA for five years. Usually boards consist of twelve to fifteen members appointed by the Minister for Arts and Culture. They include politicians, architects, art collectors and critics, businessmen, as well as artists. This shows a close relationship between political power and the management of cultural institutions and politics, since board members are political appointments.

Another task of the museum's first board was the appointment of a director, for which a temporary sub-committee from the board was selected. At present, the board is structured around several sub-committees: acquisitions, finance, buildings and operations, human resources and education and community.[12] Decisions regarding the collection are made initially by the sub-committee of acquisitions and need the approval of the overall board. Its responsibility is "to identify and recommend acquisitions by purchase, donation or long term loan."[13] With an average of four to five members, the sub-committee meets once a month or every six weeks; unless an important decision needs to be made in which case a new meeting is arranged. IMMA's director acts as the chief executive and manager of the museum and also participates in sub-committees. The senior curators of IMMA's programming departments - collection, temporary exhibitions and education and community - play a significant role in the process of collecting by being able to attend and bring their own proposals to the acquisitions sub-committee.[14] In practice, all board members have the opportunity to attend any of these sub-committees, but there is always a core membership designed by the chairperson, which together with the chairperson, and the director have a vote in acquisitions. Senior curators do not have a vote.

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[10] Former gallery owners in Belfast the McClellands have promoted leading Irish artists such as Colin Middleton, Tony O'Malley and Dan O'Neill. Press Release, 'McClelland Collection on show at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', 4th September 2000.

[11] Term used to refer to Ireland's prime minister.

[12] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

[13] McGonagle. 1998. *Catalogue of the Collection*. Irish Museum of Modern Art, p. 4.

[14] Other departments, apart from IMMA's three programming departments are: Public Relations, Operations, Security, Finance and Personnel. Interview with Catherine Marshall, 25th June 2001.

Methods

The following analysis draws on data obtained in twelve open-ended interviews which included the three senior curators of IMMA's programming departments as well as those board members who agreed to be interviewed. While a particular attempt was made to interview board members who participated in the various acquisitions sub-committees, interviews also include members who were not part of this sub-committee, but who also had their own views on IMMA's collection. The sample obtained is representative of the workings of acquisitions because it includes members of different boards, but is limited in that even though all board members were contacted, not all of them agreed to be interviewed. The first board ran until 1994, followed by a second board from 1994 to 1999, and a third board, which started in February/March 2000. At the time of the interviews IMMA's third board had just been appointed. This board differed from previous ones in that only two members were re-appointed, while in previous boards a larger number of members were kept. The most relevant interviews in terms of exemplifying the practices of collecting are those with members of the first and second boards because the acquisitions sub-committee of the third board had only been active for a short space of time.[15] Given that I had no access to board's meetings or those of the sub-committee of acquisitions, I base my analysis of practices on the statements obtained in my interviews with board members. This information is complemented with various other sources such as newspaper articles, museum catalogues, and press releases from the museum, which I use in order to contextualise my analysis.

One issue to bear in mind is that most of the interviews referred to here were with members of the first and second boards, which spanned IMMA's first ten years in operation. This means that their practices took place in the context of an emergent institution. Hence what we see next is the practice of *initiating a collection*. It is possible that if the present analysis had been based on data collected from later boards, the results or relationship between legislating and interpretative practices would have differed consistently. I will come back to this issue again in the conclusion to this chapter after we have an overall view of the type of practices involved in collecting.

[15] There is one exception given that one of the members of the acquisitions sub-committee in the third board had been part of it since 1990 (and before).

At the time of the interviews the director of IMMA was about to leave the institution as a result of a disagreement at board level around the renewal of his five-year contract. Although I will not be dealing with the public debate behind this episode, it meant that the director was not available to be interviewed for this research. Yet this episode brings to the fore the crucial role of the board's power within IMMA's field. I have supplemented the lack of this interview with other sources such as previous interviews and newspaper articles more generally. In view of this delicate situation, and despite the fact that my interviews do not deal with the conflict between board and director, I have decided to keep the identity of board members anonymous. I only reveal the names of staff members who speak on behalf on their position in the museum.

2 Intellectual practices of collecting

This analysis explores the various intellectual practices involved in the making of a collection for the IMMA. It is divided into two parts. In the first part I provide a context to IMMA's foundation, highlighting some of the debates before its opening in 1991. It continues to introduce IMMA's worldview and collecting policy. The second part refers to the specific practices involved in the making of a collection. It deals separately with acquisitions, on the one hand, and loans and donations, on the other.

2.1 The importance of being an Irish Museum of Modern Art

On October 5th 1987, the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey announced that a Gallery of Modern Art would be established in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham (RHK). A former retirement home for the British army built in 1686, the RHK is situated about two miles from Dublin's city centre. Yet this announcement was only the end of a long struggle to designate a function for the RHK. Its beginning goes back to August 1978 when the Department of the Taoiseach issued a press release announcing the approval by the Taoiseach to proceed with the restoration of the RHK.[16] The idea was to utilise it as a Conference Centre for Ireland's Presidency of the European Council of Ministers in 1984.[17] Overall, the building was to be given a public use and "should be available to as wide a sector of the public as possible."[18] With the purpose of finding a role for the RHK a committee was set up to report

[16] Report of a meeting of the Inter Departmental Committee on the RHK, Kilmainham held on 7th May 1980. Source: Department for the Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, and The Islands.
[17] Report of a meeting of the Inter Departmental Committee on the RHK, Kilmainham held on 7th May 1980. Source: Department for the Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, and The Islands.
[18] Meeting of Inter-Departmental Committee to report on possible uses of the RHK, Kilmainham. 31st January 1984. Source: Department for the Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, and The Islands.

on its possible uses.[19] After its £20 million restoration in 1987, the future of the RHK - widely regarded as Ireland's finest 17th century building – was still insecure. Initially thought to be an adequate venue for a conference centre, this proposal was dismissed when Dublin Castle became a more appropriate location for the centre.

The announcement of the long-awaited institution of modern art created controversy for various reasons. Indeed, every single aspect associated with it – its location, funding, function and collection – stirred public opinion. It aroused speculation and criticism for several reasons. It meant the refusal of the proposal to have the Gallery in Stack A – a 1820s building in the city's docklands. It also pre-empted the possibility of having part of the National Museum in the RHK while the new museum would be based in Stack A. Yet the Gallery was to be opened as one of the events of Dublin's City of Culture. Renovating Stack A would have required an important financial expenditure from the Government, while the RHK only needed minor alternations to serve the purpose of a museum. On November 17th 1989, the Taoiseach announced that Ireland's Gallery of Modern Art would be opened in 1991 as part of the Dublin City of Culture Programme.

The museum was opened on 25th May 1991. To commemorate the occasion the then Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, gave a speech, which can be seen as aiming to settle the controversies which had surrounded the museum. Haughey refers to the establishment of IMMA as "a cultural priority of high order", with an important social and cultural role to play in "the national life and consciousness."[20] Ireland is experiencing a period of vitality and creativity in the visual arts, which started in the 19th century, continued after independence, and is still in place. In other words, artistic creativity must be sustained by the opening of a museum to give it symbolic capital. This is an argument that runs throughout the speech, which refers to the adequateness of the RHK as the 'right' location for the museum. According to this argument, the IMMA situates Ireland in line with other European countries such as Italy, France and Spain where art museums have also been located in historical buildings. Moreover, he asserts that a neutral white space is not an adequate setting for the exhibition of art, and favours its location in a historical building such as the RHK. In this environment, says Haughey, "art is not robbed of its place in the historical continuum in

[19] Some of the suggested uses are: exhibition of documentation pertaining to Irish writers, poets and playwrights; a Postal Museum of items catalogued by the GPO (General Post Office); an exhibition of Irish Cartography; display of Modern Irish crafts; display of paintings from the NGI (National Gallery of Ireland). the National Museum of Ireland. Source: Department for the Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, and The Islands.

[20] Speech by the Taoiseach, Mr. Charles Haughey, T.D., 25th May 1991. Government Information Services Office, Department of the Taoiseach.

which we all live."[21] He explains how IMMA will allow Irish art to achieve the symbolic capital it deserves, by situating it alongside foreign works and making it known worldwide. He finishes his speech by pointing out the immense influence and benefits of IMMA for Irish art:

> 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.[22]

Haughey's speech illustrates a number of ideas I mentioned in chapter 3 about the role of the MGMA. For example, how a new museum will benefit Irish artists in their "level of artistic achievement". Also the view that it will allow Irish art to take up the place it deserves both nationally and internationally. What is interesting for our argument is how the making of symbolic power for IMMA, of which the speech is an example, is articulated on values very similar to those pronounced around 1908. At the same time, in what follows, we will see how some of the issues raised by Haughey acquire a new perspective as they are incorporated into IMMA's worldview – e.g. a historical building being an adequate setting for contemporary art. In this sense, IMMA is both part of a history of the field of modern art (chapter 3), as well as the beginning of a new sub-field with its own distinct worldview.

2.2 Reinventing the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham: a worldview for IMMA

One of the initial ways of obtaining symbolic power for IMMA was through its appellation as an Irish Museum of Modern Art. As we have seen in chapter 4, the foundation of a national museum caused the restructuring of the FCA – particularly, in relation to the position of the DHG. But in order to maintain its position as the cultural *institution with the maximum amount of symbolic power within the FCA*, IMMA as a sub-field relies on a series of intellectual practices that produce symbolic power. In what follows, I focus on two practices that have served this purpose: the creation of IMMA's worldview, or *raison d'être;* and a policy for its collection.

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[21] Speech by the Taoiseach, Mr. Charles Haughey, T.D., 25th May 1991. Government Information Services Office, Department of the Taoiseach, Government Buildings, Dublin. Haughey had already expressed his view about the benefits of situating contemporary art in a historical building in an interview for *The Irish Times*, 31st December 1990, only a few months before IMMA's opening.

[22] Ibid.

In what follows, I present, first, the main ideas behind IMMA's worldview. The arguments are mainly McGonagle's,[23] but the museum's board must endorse them. McGonagle himself mentions this collaboration between his ideas for IMMA and the board: "All the board wrote that. We talked about what it would be, how it would work, what general remit we needed."[24] This remark underlines the board's instrumental role in reifying or transforming into symbolic power for IMMA, McGonagle's philosophy for the museum. However, it is still possible to say that the ideas, which I present here, are distinctly McGonagle's. In an interview he offered in summer 1990 he referred to the opposition between process and product, use and ownership and the need for art to address its context. These concerns, as we will see, are also present in IMMA's worldview.

> I would hope that every word in the title [Irish Museum of Modern Art] would take on a completely new meaning in the future.[25]

This quote by McGonagle gives us an idea of the amount of symbolic work behind IMMA's overview. The need to redefine the notion of museums as treasure houses is a constant theme in McGonagle's thinking. Emerging in 19th century Europe, this type of museum is concerned with fixing values through the collection, classification and display of objects. For example, as I said in chapter 2, museums used their collections to represent Western Europe as the apex of civilisation. For McGonagle, the redundancy of this model is clear. IMMA's museological agenda is to redefine this existing model: "the function of museums at the end of the 20th century has to be to test and unfix values."[26] This view is also echoed in an interview only a few days before IMMA's opening entitled, 'An art museum for the 21st century: Declan McGonagle on revolutionising Irish art'. More specifically, he refers to the need to redefine not only museums, but also previous definitions of art and buildings. As he says:

> One of our tasks in the long term will be to redefine what a museum can be first of all here in Dublin and in Ireland, but then in Europe and the future. There are lots of definitions around about art, about museums, about buildings. We have to keep what's of value but reject what's redundant.[27]

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[23] See interview published in *Artscribe*, summer, 1990, before his appointment as director in September that same year.
[24] Interview with Declan McGonagle by Niamh Ann Kelly, 14th January 1997. See bibliography.
[25] *Sunday Tribune*, 19th May 1991.
[26] *Sunday Tribune*, 19th May 1991.
[27] *Sunday Tribune*, 19th May 1991.

In order to evaluate further what this labour of redefinition entails we need to ask: how is this distinction between the museum as a treasure house and a redefined museum achieved? What does it seek to reject or keep?

In his foreword to IMMA's initial exhibition catalogue 'Inheritance and Transformation', McGonagle indicates a shift from a "modernist, hierarchical, centralist world" in which Ireland was beyond the pale, to a "problematic, millennial world," in which "the pale cannot exist." [28] The reference to the pale points at the changing situation of Ireland from being a British colony to being an independent country, since 1922. Most importantly for our argument is that setting up this distinction serves here to justify the task of redefining the museum's role in Irish society. As he explains:

> 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 ongoing cultural process, not as producer and consumer.[29]

This quote raises a number of interesting points which can help us structure the main arguments behind IMMA's worldview. First, museums can contribute to a process of transformation of existing social and cultural values. Second, in order to be part of this transformation museums need to develop new agendas in two ways: *re-defining an existing language* and *creating new structures*.

One example of re-defining an existing language is the proposal for an alternative way of thinking about art, which is one of IMMA's founding principles. A new notion of aesthetics is part of a wider need to keep up with a changing world. As McGonagle says:

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[28] The catalogue is also the title of IMMA's first exhibition, which is telling of the kind of task the museum is set up to fulfil. 1991. *Inheritance and Transformation*. Irish Museum of Modern Art.
[29] 1991. *Inheritance and Transformation*. Irish Museum of Modern Art.

> We're at a moment when all economic, social, political and cultural structures, which had seemed very secure, are being turned upside down. I don't think any word as crucial as art can retain the meaning that we thought it had.[30]

In this context, the museum's specific task is to renegotiate an existing form of knowledge and value about art and the art world more generally. That is, definitions of "artist and non-artist, and of the categorisations which have traditionally ascribed value to art, artists and cultural institutions in society."[31] In the following quote, McGonagle explains how the museum is to take upon this task of redefinition in the realm of aesthetics:

> 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, with the Le Brocquy show, for instance. It was a clear contest with his earlier work and his later work. Sometimes we do it between exhibitions like with the Le Brocquy, the Beverly Semmes and the Event Horizon. And sometimes we do it between individual works like the collection show, 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.[32]

In chapter 6 I will discuss some of the complexities involved in the idea of art as contested by exploring the visual arrangement of various exhibitions of IMMA's collection. What is interesting here is the shift from art as consensus to a notion of art as creating a contest. The related argument that IMMA's task is to create a multiple, contested experience for viewers is facilitated by the museum's location in a historical building. In fact, the benefit of locating contemporary art in a historical building is another argument for how IMMA seeks to re-define the experience of art viewing. As McGonagle remarks:

> At the end of the 20th 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.[33]

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[30] *Sunday Tribune*, 19th May 1991.
[31] *Art Unsolved. Works from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection.* Wall text by Catherine Marshall.
[32] Interview with Declan McGonagle by Niamh Ann Kelly, 14th January 1997. See bibliography.
[33] *The New York Times*, 18th August 1991.

But the agenda to locate art in a classical architectural context is not merely a way of defying a 'white box' space or exhibition design (see chapter 6). It goes further than a mere attempt to re-define ways of seeing or experiencing art; IMMA's location is what makes it such a crucial player in the transformation of social structures. McGonagle explains this point as follows:

> [The RHK] 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[34]

This quote helps us understand a point McGonagle made earlier on, which is that in order for museums to be part of a transformation of existing values they need to develop new structures. The RHK seems to provide such a novel structure. According to McGonagle, the RHK is a key reference point to help us situate Ireland as part of a wider European context because the building is suggestive of similar architectural contexts in the continent.[35] It also brings to the fore how the function of a museum is to explore the past, and how through this exploration IMMA is participating in a wider transformation process. But the idea of engaging with and exploring the given past has further consequences. It positions IMMA as a key institution to help re-define Ireland's colonial history, of which the RHK, a former hospital for British soldiers, is part. The proposal for a new museological agenda is in this way linked to a conceptualisation of a millennial world in which the pale does not exist.

In order to specify more clearly how IMMA's function can help deliver these aims, let me look at another point in the museum's agenda: the central role of contemporary art in helping to blur concepts such as 'core' and 'periphery'. Irish art plays a key role in addressing questions of identity, for example. As McGonagle explains:

> 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 center rather than on the margins. What in the '70s used to make Ireland marginal, that is, the unsettled nature of

[34] *Sunday Tribune,* 19th May 1991.
[35] McGonagle is probably thinking about the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris.

> 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.[36]

The implication here is that Irish art can re-position Ireland from the 'periphery' of Europe to the 'centre' by engaging in a critical debate over issues such as national identity. In this way, Irish art is seen as a redeeming force; it not only addresses its local context, but it also helps transcend it. In fact, this argument is also a means of giving status to Irish art, which is here given a leading role: "We should engage in a critical conversation with the rest of the world, so that Irish art can go out into that world in confidence and maturity."[37] It becomes part of a critical conversation in which the 'local' engages with the rest of the world.

But there is a second line of argument running through the distinction between the local and international contexts: they are two constituencies, which a museum should address. As McGonagle points out:

> I regard the museum as a conversation. We should be in conversation with everyone. No one should be left out, locally, nationally, internationally. You have to be international and local at the same time. I believe it is possible for anyone to negotiate the meaning of contemporary art, if given the opportunity. And it's up to us to provide that access to local people.[38]

This idea becomes clear if we think about the structure given to IMMA. The artistic activities of the museum are divided into three departments: education and community, exhibitions and collection. This is an important point that since the task of each of these departments reflects a principle of IMMA's worldview.

The Education and Community Department is based upon two main premises: art is part of its constituency, and IMMA is an inclusive museum. For McGonagle, the link between art and its community or context is clear: "What I'd like to move away from is the idea of the quality of art being determined separate from a wider constituency."[39] The museum's task is then to address its local constituency of Kilmainham and Dublin, more generally. As he explains:

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[36] Interview published in (Castle, 1991: 107-10).
[37] *The Irish Times*, 16th April 1990.
[38] *Sunday Business Post*, 5th April 1998.
[39] *Sunday Tribune*, 19th May 1991.

> In all of its aspects, IMMA will emphasise the connection that exists between the artist and the art institution, the society and community within which they both work ... we will address the particular locality of Kilmainham and Inchicore and extend that address to other parts of the city of Dublin and indeed other parts of Ireland. (McGonagle, 1991: 62)

The Education and Community Programme, organised by the department of the same name, is built up upon the role of IMMA as an inclusive museum. It is part of McGonagle's attempts to re-define the role of cultural institutions, and the hierarchy of value embedded in them. This hierarchy would situate the audience for contemporary art not in Kilmainham, but in wealthy areas of Dublin. For McGonagle, a museum task is to re-negotiate this hierarchy by expanding, as opposed to limiting, participation in the visual arts to wider audiences. In fact, this is a second premise structuring the Education and Community Programme. As senior curator Helen O'Donoghue explains:

> Our brief in the Education and Community Department from the outset has been to be inclusive rather than exclusive and the programme aims to establish new ways of creating a forum where artists and public(s) can meet and where meaningful exchange and reciprocal learning can take place ... The Museum aims to develop opportunities for the public to participate in cultural activity, to encourage personal expression through creative opportunities and to develop confidence when encountering contemporary art.[40]

The international remit of IMMA finds its expression in all the three programming departments, but it finds its most obvious expression in the Exhibition Department. Temporary exhibitions are designed to establish IMMA as a museum with an international reputation. This is achieved by bringing both international and national artists, and by collaborating with international museums in the exhibition making progress – e.g. through loans of particular art works. Writing on the museum's first ten years, senior curator of exhibitions, Brenda MacParland, says about the department's programme:

> The policy of the Exhibition Programme is to make exhibitions of twentieth century and contemporary art by emerging and established contemporary artists as well as by historically important twentieth century figures. Since its inauguration the Museum has consciously positioned itself and all its programmes in an international context, and, after ten years of consistently innovative, entertaining and thought-provoking programming, has

[40] 2001. *Celebrating a Decade,* p. 48. Irish Museum of Modern Art.

> established itself as an international Museum with a proven reputation, whilst at the same time developing effective working relationships with national and local constituencies.[41]

This quote points at how the making of temporary exhibitions has given IMMA an international reputation, which is one of IMMA's founding principles, alongside the development of relationships with its local community and also the country at large. Although I will be referring to IMMA's collecting policy in detail in section 2.3, and its various activities in Part III, it is important to point out now how the collection department reflects the museum's worldview to be local and international at the same time. As senior curator of the museum's collection, Catherine Marshall, puts it:

> We don't want this place to be just about Irish art we want it to be completely international ... So we are saying that it is the Irish Museum of Modern Art just because it is sited in Ireland and because the way this place develops is shaped by Irish minds and Irish history and an Irish context, but the art collection is not bound by Irishness at all.[42]

It is relevant at this point to reflect on the type of intellectual practice involved in the making of IMMA's worldview. The arguments here presented constitute a system of knowledge, which delineates the boundaries of IMMA as a sub-field within the FCA. The making of these boundaries is a practice which creates symbolic power for IMMA, giving it its distinct role and position in the FCA. In my discussion I have provided various examples of this knowledge making practice, highlighting the type of role and function IMMA is set to fulfil. Starting from the premise that the museum poses a challenge to the treasure house model, its worldview is based on the possibility of creating new structures and ways of thinking about the role of museums in the 21st century. A crucial issue here is the definition of IMMA as bringing in a new model of museum, which can contribute to the transformation of social and cultural values. Other related arguments in its worldview are the aim to re-define existing ways of thinking about art, and the experience of art viewing: by proposing art as a contested concept, exhibiting it in a historical building, and giving it a key role in repositioning Ireland from the 'periphery' of Europe to the 'centre'. Finally, I said that IMMA is seen as an inclusive museum. In light of the importance of art to its own context, the museum encourages the participation of its surrounding community in the visual arts, while also establishing relationships at a national and international level. The museum's three programming departments are set to provide these various forms of engagement.

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[41] 2001. *Celebrating a Decade,* p. 16. Irish Museum of Modern Art.
[42] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

In the context of my analysis of intellectual practices, the making of IMMA's worldview is an example of how postmodern intellectuals carry out their tasks. In fact, this is a practice, which reveals some of Bauman's arguments on how interpreters operate. My first point is that the making of IMMA's worldview can be seen as an example of how interpreters validate particular sub-fields. More specifically, the validation of IMMA's sub-field is only dependent on the criteria developed within the sub-field itself. That is, it does not rely on the acceptance of external agents. Although I said that IMMA, as part of the sub-field of public galleries, relies on audience's attendance for its success, its worldview does not need the validation of agents outside its sub-field. In my discussion, I have focused on how IMMA's three programming departments represent various principles of IMMA's worldview. In following the museum's worldview and putting it into practice, these departments are providing the sub-field with the necessary criteria to validate, legitimate IMMA's worldview from within its own sub-field.

There is a second point to be made here because the making of IMMA's worldview shares some of the traits of a legislating practice in the postmodern context. Defining a museological agenda for IMMA, a particular view on aesthetics for this new model, and the role of museums as agents of transformation are ways of setting up what Bauman calls "procedural rules" (1987: 5) for a given sub-field. These rules or knowledge framework is what enables a museum such as IMMA to intervene in controversies of opinion – e.g. how to think about aesthetic value. A crucial distinction, however, between this type of practice and that of legislators in modernity is that it is bound, as I said, to the specific sub-field, which legitimates these particular rules or criteria. Conversely, modern legislators created knowledge, which was extra-territorial, not bound within the boundaries of a given sub-field. They had the power to validate their knowledge, which could then be held in any sectors of society (Bauman, 1987: 5). Let me continue this discussion of IMMA's worldview by looking next at another practice: the making of a policy for the museum's collection.

2.3 A policy for an art collection

Although McGonagle had referred to his ideas for a collection in various press interviews,[43] these ideas were also presented to the public in the first catalogue for the museum's collection published in 1998.[44] In his foreword to the catalogue McGonagle refers to how

[43] See, for example, *Sunday Business Post*, 19th May 1991; *Sunday Tribune*, 19th May 1991 and (Smith, 1994).
[44] A series of circumstances are responsible for what may seem a rather late development in bringing out this catalogue, given that the museum had been collecting since its opening in 1991. The appointment of Marshall

the museum collection has been developing since 1991. Collecting is the responsibility of the sub-committee of acquisitions, set up in 1990. Its role is "to identify and recommend acquisitions by purchase, donation or long term loan." The collection is to be exhibited around the country, as part of the museum's mission. In 1998 the museum owned 583 works, including donations. The Contemporary Irish Arts Society and the Friends of the National Collections (see chapter 4) are amongst those who have donated works to the museum's collection. Loans, both short and long term, are another way of adding works to the collection. Most important in this discussion is how McGonagle formulates the museum's policy for collecting: "the Museum only purchases current work by living artists which includes those artists who work collaboratively and encourages loans and donations of works going back to the nineteen-forties." The difference in emphasis between purchasing contemporary works while also accepting loans and donations of more historical works is strategic in that the museum's budget only allows the purchase of contemporary works – historical works tend to be more expensive (for a discussion of IMMA's budget and collecting, see 3.1, and 3.2). But the museum's policy to collect works by living artists is presented as one aspect of a new way of thinking about museums. As McGonagle explains:

> In Museum practice generally it is no longer taken as a given that collecting institutions can provide a complete permanent consensual representation of anything. As a new institution the Irish Museum of Modern Art is in a strong position to be part of this new thinking and to represent the present by collecting works more or less as they are made. The centre of gravity of the Collection therefore is in the present and, if maintained, this process will ensure that the Museum's Collection will become historical over time and be representative of its own period.[45]

An important point is the relationship between the museum's role and its collection. IMMA's collection is "directly related to the strategic identity of this Museum."[46] We find a conceptualisation of the collection that follows a similar line to the museum's overall worldview. For instance, exhibitions of the collection are juxtaposed with those from other programmes to challenge the existence of a "single chronology of art in the second half of the twentieth century." This is one of the founding principles of IMMA, as I said earlier, the

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as senior curator for the collection in 1995 was a catalyst for the definition of a clear policy for the type of modern art IMMA collects. Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

[45] 1998. A Collection in the Making' in *The Irish Museum of Modern Art. Catalogue of the Collection,* p.4-5. Irish Museum of Modern Art.

[46] 1998. A Collection in the Making' in *The Irish Museum of Modern Art. Catalogue of the Collection,* p.5.

negotiation of art value, and in this process the collection has a key role. For McGonagle the museum's collection is instrumental in the negotiation of what 'art' is:

> It is not necessary, therefore, for the Museum to own any one specific chronology of the past in order to show it. The problem with a singular reading of the past is that it can turn artworks into specimens which, like butterflies, have to be killed in order to be classified. Art making is dynamic. Its meaning has to be negotiated each time it is experienced and the Museum aims, in building its Collection in the present, to sustain rather than suffocate that dynamic and that process of negotiation for the public. The alternative would be to accept pre-determined art historical and institutional boundaries where the task would be to fill up a given matrix rather than renegotiate the matrix itself.[47]

The policy for IMMA's collection echoes the museum's worldview, in particular its aim to re-define an existing language for thinking about aesthetics. The collection is seen as a vehicle to put into practice the museum's view on aesthetics. As I said, for McGonagle exhibitions were to provide a multiple and contested experience for viewers. Similarly, the function of IMMA's collection is not to provide a single reading of art history, but to help re-negotiate a museological agenda in which museums are opening up the meaning of artworks to their audiences. As he adds:

> The making of this Collection and indeed this Museum is based on the idea that artists, the Museum and the viewer are in history and not merely observing it. Since the targets therefore are moving rather than fixed this Collection can never be complete. In that sense the Collection will always be in the making.[48]

So far, collecting is seen as a reflection of the museum's overall worldview. However, in order to explore further the intellectual practice involved in the making of a policy for collecting, we need to focus our attention in how this policy is negotiated in relationship to other fields. My argument is that IMMA's collecting policy is to be understood as a form of negotiation between IMMA's sub-field and the sub-field of public galleries, the FCA, and an international art world. Let me explore this argument by looking at the notion of 'modern art' behind IMMA's collecting policy.

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[47] Ibid. p. 5. Irish Museum of Modern Art.
[48] 1998. A Collection in the Making' in *The Irish Museum of Modern Art. Catalogue of the Collection,* p.5. Irish Museum of Modern Art.

The definition of 'modern art' as the dividing line for IMMA's criteria for collecting is, partly, developed as a response to what I have referred in chapter 4 as an 'overlap in aesthetics' in the FCA. As I said then, various institutions in the FCA such as the HLMGMA and the IMMA are collecting the same type of art, namely, contemporary. McGonagle makes a similar suggestion in his policy statement: the museum's collection is directly related "to the other public collecting institutions in Ireland with which this Museum shares aspects of art activity in the twentieth century."[49] But this relationship of IMMA with other collecting institutions[50] is precisely the reason why IMMA decided to set up a dividing line for the type of 'modern art' it collects. As Marshall explains: "it was appropriate for us to have some kind of starting point because otherwise there is too much duplication going on between the other national collecting institutions and ourselves."[51] This shows how IMMA's policy is dictated by the relationship of IMMA with, in this case, the sub-field of public galleries.

It is possible to say that IMMA's collecting policy is related to two other fields: the FCA and an international art world. In fact, the definition of 'modern art' is based on some of the events in the history of the FCA, and on developments in a wider international art world. Marshall makes this link explicit in the following explanation:

> [1940] it's really the year in which modernism took off in Ireland ... in which the White Stag group were established in Ireland, they were a very avant-garde, international group in Ireland. They came here to get away from the war in the rest of Europe. It's also around the time, 1943 to be more precise, when the first Irish Exhibition of Living Art was held ... the first really modernist forum in Ireland. The third reason for picking that period, the 1940s, is that it was a period of great change internationally and international modernism really took off around then with the New York school. Artists from Europe flew into New York to get away from the political climate, so it was as good a point as any; good internationally and good nationally, so we pitched at that.[52]

This quotes allows us to see how the definition of 'modern art' is based on other developments outside IMMA's sub-field – e.g. the Irish Exhibition of Living Art. At the same time, this definition seem to follow one of the museum's founding principles, which is to be

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[49] 1998. A Collection in the Making' in *The Irish Museum of Modern Art. Catalogue of the Collection,* p.5. Irish Museum of Modern Art.

[50] Apart from the HLMGMA, another institution concerned with the collection of early 20th century art is the National Gallery of Ireland. Despite its emphasis on collecting 'old masters', the NGI has also acquired 20th century art works, as in the case of its holding of the J.B. Yeats collection. *The Irish Times*, 26th January 1999.

[51] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

[52] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

both local and international. Setting up a policy for collecting follows this same path because it occurs through a negotiation of this criterion in relation to a national and international artworld.

Another line of argument about the relationship of IMMA's collecting policy with an international art world concerns the criteria for collecting works by both national and international artists. This policy aims to create a particular relationship between Irish and international art. As Marshall explains:

> The vast majority of works in the collection are Irish because it's what we know best ... But I think it's equally important that we temper that with good international works so that the Irish artists that we buy are not being put into a ghetto of some Irish collection that is only known to be Irish. It says something really significant about Irish artists like Kathy Prendergast or Dorothy Cross if their work is shown alongside Damian Hirst or Gilbert and George or the Kabokovs ... We don't think they are inferior to those international artists and equally it means that when international curators, and critics and visitors come to visit the museum ... they also see Irish art of quality on an equal footing and they go away talking about it.[53]

The policy of collecting international art enables the placement of Irish art and international art together with the purpose to equal the artistic status of Irish art to that of international art. This negotiation can be seen as a way of setting up an international standard for Irish art; a practice meant to increase the symbolic capital of Irish art in the juxtaposition of displays with Irish and international work from the collection. We saw a similar example in chapter 4 where some commercial art galleries brought art from abroad as a means to give symbolic power to their businesses. The issue here is to incorporate works of international renown from outside the FCA to make explicit the high standard of Irish art. Having looked at the main points of IMMA's collecting policy let me now elaborate on the particular type of practice representative of this form of policy.

My analysis of IMMA's collecting has attempted to present two different aspects of policy making. First, I have highlighted how this policy is a continuation of the principles shaping IMMA's worldview. In this sense, it can be argued that this is a form of legislation, which is now expanded to the role of museum in collecting. A particular example is the view that

[53] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

collecting does not intend to fix value in art. That is, owning "any one specific chronology of the past in order to show it." Instead, collecting is a practice which follows a principle of the museum's worldview: the negotiation of aesthetic value that occurs each time art is experienced in the museum. Second, is the idea that in order to set up a particular definition of 'modern art', IMMA's professionals have drawn on developments in the FCA and the international art world. A related argument was the emphasis on collecting international art as a way of showing how Irish art is of equal standard. The important point here, and what differentiates IMMA's worldview from its collecting policy, is that this second aspect of policy making brings to the fore another type of skill in interpreters: translation between fields. This is a practice whereby events outside IMMA's sub-field are incorporated into one particular practice of the sub-field – the making of its collecting policy. This example helps us re-define Bauman's notion of interpreters as translators. For him translating is an expertise, which attempts to avoid the distortion of meaning between communities. His argument is based on the premise that each community has a distinct knowledge system, which requires the intellectual skill of translation to be comprehended by individuals in other communities. But the type of translation concerning us here helps us expand Bauman's argument. We see how translation between communities is directed towards a specific purpose: it supports a legislating practice, the creation of a collecting policy, by providing it with the necessary knowledge, or concepts from surrounding fields.

In the rest of this chapter I explore how these frameworks are put to work in the practice of collecting, as well as assessing how far can we argue that collecting is a form of translation.

3 The making of a collection

So far we have seen how the making of IMMA's worldview and collecting policy entails two forms of interpretation, legislating and translating. My aim now is to continue this exploration of intellectual practices by focusing on the practice of collecting. The following analysis is structured around two forms of collecting: acquisitions, and loans and donations. Both forms share the same aim: they are a means of assigning symbolic capital to those selected to be part of the collection. At present, IMMA's collection consists of over 4,000 art works, of which approximately 330 are purchases made by the Acquisition Committee.[54]

[54] Marshall in 2001. *Celebrating a Decade.* Irish Museum of Modern Art, p. 35.

3.1 Acquisitions

In order to flesh out the various ways in which collecting takes place, I compare, first the involvement of IMMA's two programming departments - Exhibitions (ED), and the Education and Community Department (E&CD) - in acquisitions; and, secondly, the practice of general acquisitions, including the role of the sub-committee of acquisitions. Let me first introduce these two departments

Exhibition Department

The ED is in charge of organising a calendar of temporary exhibitions for the museum. Some of its exhibitions have brought to Dublin artists with international reputations such as Pablo Picasso, Ilya and Emilia Kabokov, Juan Muñoz, Antony Gormley, Gilbert and George, Louis Le Brocquy, Kiki Smith, and Sean Scully. We can see then how the department plays an important part in bringing symbolic capital to IMMA's sub-field by making it a venue for the display of international artists. But the department also brings works by young international artists, and in so doing it contributes to increasing their reputation. A case in point is video artist and photographer[55] Gillian Wearing, who exhibited at IMMA (1997), and that same year was awarded the Turner Prize (the £20,000 sterling prize is the British art world's most important award). Apart from the prestige given to artists, exhibiting in a historical building such as the RHK is another incentive that draws artists to IMMA.

Other initiatives by the ED are the Glen Dimplex Artists Award and the Nissan Arts Project. The Glen Dimplex Award was first made in 1994 and consists of IE£15,000, and an award for a Sustained Contribution to the Visual Arts in Ireland. The award is open to Irish artists for work exhibited at home or abroad within the year previous to the award, and to non-Irish artists who have exhibited in Ireland.[56] It is aimed at placing Irish art in an international context, as well as raising the profile of contemporary art in Ireland and of contemporary Irish artists. Irish art critic Aidan Dunne has characterised the award as the "successor to the GPA Emerging Artists Award" in place during the 1980s (see chapter 4),[57] a connection suggestive of the important role of the ED in producing symbolic capital for artists in the FCA. The Nissan Arts Project is sponsored by Nissan Ireland. It started in 1997 and continued in 1998 and 2000 when its budget was increased from IE£40,000to IE£100,000.[58] The ED is a key player in the production of symbolic capital for the museum,

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[55] *The Irish Times*, 4th December 1997.
[56] Press Release. 'Winner of Glen Dimplex Artists Awards 2001 Announced', 25th May 2001.
[57] *The Irish Times*, 24th May 2001. Aidan Dunne.
[58] Press Release. 'The Nissan Art Project for the Millennium until December 2000', 27th September 2000.

and artists are very willing to exhibit in the museum: we have "unsolicited proposals" and "everybody wants to show here or a lot of people who have never even seen the building."[59]

Education and Community Department

The E&CD was the first to be set up with the appointment of its current senior curator, Helen O'Donoghue, in January 1991, a few months before the museum's opening in May that same year.[60] The department offers a series of programmes – school, community, family and artists work programmes – as well as a series of guided tours and seminars, in order to explore artworks and artists' work practice. This is a key programme in delivering IMMA's philosophy, which wants to challenge previous notions of art and artists. The school programme offers guided tours, discussions and visits to the artists work programme to pupils and students of all ages. A highlight of the department is its community programme, which seeks to engage with the local community of Kilmainham providing various groups, such as women from the Family Resource Centre, St Michael's Estate in Inchicore - the opportunity to create their own art at workshops. A number of exhibitions have emerged from this programme: *Unspoken Truths*, 1992 (a cross city project exploring women's lives); *Once is Too Much*, 1998 (a collaborative arts project with women and artists exploring the issue of violence in society); and *...and start to wear purple* (retrospective exhibition of older people's engagement with the museum since 1991). The appointment of a community development worker to IMMA's board (1995-2000) demonstrates the government's support of the museum's inclusive policy.[61] After this brief introduction into these two departments, I examine next the involvement of each department in acquisitions.

Acquisitions, ED and E&CD

It is common practice to ask those both Irish and international artists who have had an exhibition at IMMA whether they would be willing to sell, donate or loan works to the museum's collection. In general, buying from the exhibition programme is a way of getting works by international and Irish artists into the collection. As MacParland explains:

> There's a very strong relationship between the international exhibition programme, or if it's Irish, and acquisitions because you know it builds up a memory as well and it means if you've got a good work you know it's a good opportunity to buy pieces. Artists ... it's like they go away feeling fantastic every single time and that's absolutely true. So a lot of times they want

[59] Interview with Brenda MacParland, IMMA, 20 June 2001.
[60] Interview with Helen O'Donoghue, IMMA, 17th July 2001.
[61] O'Donoghue in 2001. *Celebrating a Decade.* Irish Museum of Modern Art, p. 48-51.

> to donate work and they certainly want to discount work because they want to be in our collection, as much as I want them in our collection. And then it's very nice because it's a continuum and it's a way of getting international artists' work into the collection.[62]

Through its ED the collection has received works from well-known artists. One example is Juan Muñoz's *Conversation Piece* (1994), which is on loan to the museum as a result of the artist's exhibition at IMMA that same year. (See appendix, image 3). In buying works from previous exhibitions IMMA acquires them at a stage when they have already been endowed with a high amount of symbolic capital. Here collecting offers a twofold transaction of symbolic capital. On the one hand, it increases the collection's prestige by obtaining works which already possess an important amount of symbolic capital, to the extent that they merit an exhibition at IMMA. On the other hand, artists obtain symbolic capital from IMMA by becoming part of its collection. This path to acquisitions seems to be a quite straightforward process:

> Usually the discussions in acquisitions are about the lack of money and you paying for something large over three years. And if we have had an exhibition here and it's been a success and we want to buy work from it, there's little point in having an argument about it because by then it's like, it has been accepted usually, and then it's all the questions of value for money.[63]

This comment suggests the importance of temporary exhibitions in IMMA's sub-field: the works exhibited have already been consecrated and thus there is no need to argue about the aesthetic value of the work; only their financial value seems to be a topic of debate.

In this form of acquisitions the ED acts as an intermediary by bringing art works from various fields – e.g. FCA or the international art world – into IMMA's sub-field. In this sub-field works increase their symbolic capital by being exhibited in a public institution. More specifically, the ED is an intermediary in a form of collecting involving a transaction of symbolic capital between works from a given field outside IMMA and the museum's collection. Interpreting is indicative of a form of translation between fields. I have raised a similar point in my discussion of IMMA's policy when the notion of 'modern art' was built by borrowing existing knowledge from other fields. But the present argument sheds new light onto this form of translation between fields. Collecting requires that interpreters also act as

[62] Interview with Brenda MacParland, IMMA, 20 June 2001.
[63] Interview with Brenda MacParland, IMMA, 20 June 2001.

intermediaries within their own sub-field. Exhibition-making is an example of this form of translation in a process requiring various steps: it brings art works into the sub-field, increases their symbolic capital through their exhibition, and finally, presents some of them to the sub-committee of acquisitions for approval. Let me continue this discussion by looking at the role of the E&CD in collecting.

The relationship between the E&CD and collecting emerged from conversations between O'Donoghue and McGonagle as to the possibility of acquiring for IMMA's collection works created within the Department's programmes. This proposal was made to the museum's board, which endorsed it. As a result, since 1994, a clause was put in for the first time that work created through Education and Community programmes could be considered for acquisitions.[64] The first work proposed to acquisitions was a chair, as O'Donoghue explains:

> I had someone who was going to buy it. My problem was there were three young men who made it, but really was one, but he just disappeared in that I think he's gotten involved in crime or something. So I couldn't track the boy down, we still have the chair in the museum, but I couldn't track him down and I would have needed his permission to make an acquisition and go through with that, so that has been put on hold.[65]

This quote illustrates the possible problems involved in attempts to purchase works originated in non-mainstream artistic practices, one of the museum's founding premises, for the museum's collection. Such obstacles have been recognised by O'Donoghue who explains the reasons why some works created within the Department's programmes, would not be put forth to the acquisitions sub-committee:

> Because of the complications around making an acquisition, I must say that there are probably things that if somebody said to me why did you not consider that, would be for other reasons, as opposed to it being or not a good piece of art[66]

But the department has also succeeded in having work acquired for the museum's collection. The work in question was made for the *Unspoken Truths* project, which took place from 1991 to 1996. It engaged women from the Family Resource Centre, St. Michael's Estate in Inchicore, with artists from all programmes at the Museum for a period

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[64] Interview with Helen O'Donoghue, IMMA, 17th July 2001.
[65] Interview with Helen O'Donoghue, IMMA, 17th July 2001.
[66] Interview with Helen O'Donoghue, IMMA, 17th July 2001.

of two years. The museum acquired a video installation, *Open Season* for IE£4,000.[67] O'Donoghue refers to this purchase:

> That was the first time women who wouldn't consider themselves artists were given a space in a public funding institution. So the decision to select the video piece, I was absolutely delighted with that because that was a summary piece, it was towards the end of the process. So *Open Season* I think represents the whole process, but it also represents their awareness of the museum as a place that had been a hospital anyway.[68]

The value of *Open Season* lies in its representation not only of the museum's activities, but also of the women's awareness of creating work in what had previously been a hospital and is now a museum. Another contribution to its value is McGonagle's interest in the work. As one board member says:

> Declan McGonagle was really interested in one of the video pieces. It's up on the museum at the moment. It's the one there's a curtain, it's a hospital bed and it's about violence against women. But he really liked it because those rooms were hospital rooms. He really liked that piece and he wanted to buy that and everybody else around at that time wanted to buy it as well. They bought it for IE£4,000, but it broke history, and it wasn't because I was in the museum, they bought it because the art was good. (8)

This quote is from an interview with a board member and community development worker who was involved in the *Unspoken Truths* project. Her mention of her lack of influence in the purchase is suggestive of the specific factors, which add to the work's value. The fact that *Open Season* is representative of the museum's activities, and that McGonagle had an interest in it, are two key elements. There is an additional point to be considered, which is its participation in the *Once is Too Much* exhibition. I mentioned earlier how the ED created symbolic capital for the artists and works exhibited; the present example is no exception. The following quote is from McGonagle's contribution to the Exhibition Leaflet accompanying the exhibition:

> Once Is Too Much is a manifestation of empowerment. It speaks generally about the capability of those who are disempowered through economic, social, cultural or violent

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[67] The *Unspoken Truths* project was developed by the Family Resource Centre, St Michael's Estate; the Lourdes Youth and Community Services, Sean McDermott Street; the artist Ailbhe Murphy and the IMMA. Exhibition Information. *Once is Too Much.* 28 November 1997 - 15 February 1998.

[68] Interview with Helen O'Donoghue, IMMA, 17th July 2001.

> marginalisation, to empower themselves. It is already clear that culture can be the servant of that process, indeed, I would argue that culture, what we make and what we do to say who we are is *the* key mechanism for self validation. However, it is also clear that inherited institutional hierarchies have not always assisted this process, that they too often have seen themselves as defending rather than sharing culture, as if culture was merely an antidote to reality rather than a means of renegotiating it ... This is not simply a matter of novel institutional convention, but a concerted attempt by this museum to provide sustained access to the emancipating power of culture, in this case the visual arts, and to fix these values in the realm of the real for the future.[69]

This rather long quote is useful to help us understand how exhibition-making involves the creation of symbolic capital in situating the art works displayed within particular knowledge frameworks. Here this process happens in three ways. First, in the designation of art from the community as a manifestation of empowerment; second, in the proposal that culture is a mechanism for self-validation, and a means for renegotiating reality; third, in positioning IMMA as participant in this renegotiation – i.e. the visual arts are an example of the emancipating power of culture. My aim here is not to discuss the validity of these ideas, but to point out the various ways in which art from the community is given value within IMMA's sub-field. Initially, the E&CD seems to suggest a similar type of intellectual practice at work as in the case of the ED. We see how practices within IMMA's sub-field give symbolic capital to certain works, and how in so doing they acquire legitimacy, value as being suitable for the museum's collection. That is, translation involves creating a relationship between the community and IMMA's sub-field in which works acquire value. The difference here is that the ED exhibits works, which already possess an amount of symbolic capital, whereas here the task of creating symbolic capital, aesthetic value, for art from the community originates within IMMA's sub-field. This suggests at least two arguments. First, that there are various degrees of translation between fields. Rather than being an intermediary, the E&CD is a key player in the making of aesthetic value. Second, how one agent within a given field, in this case McGonagle, can carry out legislating and interpreting practices. More specifically, his participation in the publication for the *Once is Too Much* exhibition points at his role as translator of the value of art from the community for a museum such as IMMA.

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[69] Exhibition Information. *Once Is Too Much*. 28th November 1997 – 15th February 1998.

With these arguments in mind, I move next to the discussion of 'general acquisitions'. As we will see, the ideas presented here on the nature of intellectual practices will acquire new relevance, and allow further development.

General acquisitions

My discussion of the role of the ED and the E&CD in collecting has highlighted how interpreting can take various forms. Interpreters can translate within their own sub-field, or between their sub-field and other surrounding fields. This is a useful distinction to evaluate next the practice of 'general acquisitions', or those that do not originate from the activities of these two departments. More specifically, general acquisitions originate within IMMA's sub-committee of acquisitions. That is, at the suggestion of members of this sub-committee, including other senior curators. A starting premise is that all purchases fulfil an aesthetic criterion, as Marshall points out: "The bottom line is we buy things that we think are good art"[70] This analysis, however, wants to shed light onto the various requirements needed to fulfil this criterion: IMMA's worldview, financial resources, and the importation of cultural and social capital into collecting.

IMMA's worldview

One factor which influences what acquisitions are made is their ability to meet the guidelines set up in IMMA's worldview and collecting policy. The following quote suggests an intricate relationship between the criterion of 'good art' and its capacity to follow some of IMMA's principles. As Marshall points out:

> [T]hey are good because they raise questions, they don't offer comfort as much as they challenge, but they contain some kind of promise within them that they are worth that challenge ... All the works that we buy work on a number of different levels ... We've tended to buy things that will yield up a lot more than one reading or one meaning or will be useful over a wide variety of cultural contexts.[71]

The view of artworks 'yielding more than one reading' and 'offering challenge' echoes ideas presented earlier in this chapter. In particular, the definition of art as contested, as opposed to consensual, and being able to create multiple experiences. Collecting is a crucial element as a selection process that allows choosing only those art works fulfilling the criteria set up by IMMA's worldview. The following quote specifies this point:

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[70] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[71] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

> A collection like ours, we'd like to feel that has been built up over a period of years, and will go on to be built up in the same way. And we buy things after we carefully consider them over and over and over again. We don't buy in whim, we try to have that extra investment of is it really going to serve our collection? Is it really going to serve the public, this place, the national programme? How will it fit within the sort of general philosophy and policies that we have. So all of those things I would like to think are part of an organic whole, so it's definitely not about flash buying in order to impress somebody.[72]

Here we have a collection built upon expertise, dedication, following a particular worldview set up for IMMA. This suggests that collecting is a practice which creates symbolic capital for the artworks acquired, by drawing on the symbolic power of the sub-field's overview and policy. An added consideration in acquisitions is the purchase of works that can be used and fulfil various requirements within IMMA's sub-field. Buying works which can be handled in the national programme, for example, means that considerations such as size and fragility need to be taken into account. As Marshall explains:

> We like to show things in constant rotation, we like to show things in the National Programme. So I like to think that the work that we buy is capable of being handled from time to time, taken in and out and shown in rotating displays and so on. Very, very precious material would be damaged if it is moved around on a constant basis so I think that's a consideration, but it's not an overriding.[73]

But apart from fulfilling IMMA's worldview, other concerns inform the selection of adequate works for the collection, which highlight the relationship between IMMA's sub-field and other fields. IMMA as a leading institution in the FCA has a responsibility for collecting Irish art, which has received special recognition at an international level. This is the case for Kathy Prendergast, an Irish artist whose work won a prize in the Venice Biennale. A board member raises this point. He says:

> The fact that Kathy Prendergast had won one of the major prizes in the Venice Biennale meant that we had to buy it. You know there was no question; we have to acquire that because if you don't do that it means that nothing outside can affect what we do. This was a major honour given to an Irish artist and, yes, of course, we acquired it. (5)

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[72] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

[73] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001. The opening of the New Galleries as a new exhibition space also allows IMMA to exhibit works, as in the case of Picasso, which require special environmental conditions.

This quote suggests how events in the international art world, such as the Venice Biennale, influence the type of art purchased for the collection. Another board member brings another side to this issue in claiming the need for more communication between the acquisition process and artists. As he explains:

> In terms of the Irish dimension of the collection I felt that it was fairly comprehensive in one sense, in that they had all of the names so most artists were represented in one way or another. But the artists were not to my mind represented in the best way. I felt that and still feel that the museum must collect the best of Irish art, but collect the best samples from those artists, and perhaps involve the artist at the time of selection, so the artist may have ideas about which particular work he or she thinks would be a work to remain in the collection. So I felt that it needed to be more communication with artists, and I also felt that artists needed to be represented much better. (4)

The argument in this quote is that IMMA not only needs to acquire good Irish art, but that it also must ensure that Irish artists are represented with the best examples of their work. This view is particularly important when the suggestion is made about a lack of involvement with artists. For example, by asking them what particular works they would like to have represented in IMMA. It demonstrates the point made by the previous interviewee; that collecting is a practice involving a relationship between IMMA's sub-field and the FCA, In fact, the comments so far presented articulate two forms of translation. In the case of selecting works, which follow IMMA's worldview and fulfil other requirements of the sub-field itself, we see a form of translation within IMMA itself. In the last two examples, collecting is presented as a form of translation between fields e.g. events in the international art world, such as the Venice Biennale. Or, as in the last instance, a practice that requires more involvement between IMMA's sub-field and the FCA – e.g. communicating with artists in this field. My next point illustrates the various practices attempting to negotiate acquisitions with IMMA's limited financial resources for collecting.

Negotiating financial resources

For its opening in 1991, IMMA was given an initial budget for acquisitions of IE£250,000,[74] and that same year it was allocated a budget of IE£90,000.[75] Each year IMMA receives a sum of money for acquisitions from the Department of Arts, and the museum can use up to 40% of that amount for various expenses such as paying for storage and conservation of

[74] *Sunday Business Post*, 19th May 1991.
[75] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001. See chapter 4 for IMMA's acquisition budgets.

works.[76] One aspect of the type of art bought for IMMA is the relationship between purchases and the financial resources for collecting available to IMMA. In chapter 4 I said that characteristic of the sub-field of public galleries was its financial autonomy in the sense that they were allocated public funds to finance their various activities. However, my interviews with board and staff members also reveal a lack of economic capital in IMMA's sub-field. To supply this scarcity, the various departments have sought external sources of funding for their various programmes. For example, the ED, as I said, has managed to establish relationships with sponsors – i.e. Glen Dimplex, and Nissan – to create awards and exhibitions. Collecting is another practice which is under funded. The quotes below suggest the lack of an adequate financial budget to build up a collection.

> The issue of us having a bigger acquisition budget to buy more and better art all the time it's actually a big question, our acquisition budget is tiny compared to European or international collections.[77]

> We've made some good purchases, but we're only dipping ... the money is so small, so insignificant in purchasing terms today. (1)

> We were not financially supported to the extent that the other museums of that calibre around Europe and the world are. So I think the acquisitions budget is a joke, in all honesty, you wouldn't even buy one decent work for what the acquisitions budget is. (2)

Initially, these quotes can lead us to think about the disadvantaged situation of IMMA, and particularly, the difficult task of the sub-committee of acquisitions, which needs to keep acquiring works for the collection with a low budget. One way of dealing with this obstacle is to arrange deals with commercial galleries to pay for works in instalments. A board member makes this point as follows:

> It tends to be more Irish artists who tend to be certainly cheaper than the international ones, but we also have a policy then of spreading if it's something enormous like IE£100,000 spread it over two or three years. And the international artists and galleries are very good about that; they'll do that. We pay it on the long term; we can split it up and spend IE£ 20,000 this year and the following year. (6)

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[76] This is the only figure stipulated by the Department of Arts. The overall funding received is divided between IMMA's various departments by the director. Interview with Brenda MacParland, IMMA, 20th June 2001 and Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

[77] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

This shows how the sub-committee is not completely restricted to acquiring certain works only because they are more affordable than others. It also suggests another characteristic of the task of interpreters: the reliance of collecting on agents outside IMMA's sub-field. This is a point I raised in my discussion of IMMA's collecting policy, as in the case of the definition of 'modern art'. Another side of this issue is provided by the following comments about the type of discussions emerging in the sub-committee of acquisitions. One board member refers to the lack of proper funding for acquisitions:

> We were a small group on the acquisitions committee. Some board members and the director obviously and curatorial staff as well. And they brought, well any of us could make recommendations and we discussed the recommendations and we sort of tried to watch the funding. It was trouble free, hassle free, except that money was always a problem. We never had enough money, and I mean there were no horrible arguments, or people pushing their idea. There were a couple of things bought in my time that I wouldn't personally have purchased, but there was general agreement at the table that they wanted it, and so it was fine. (1)

This quote illustrates an important issue. Apart from the everyday management of finances, the personal taste of board members is also a key factor in the purchase of works. The expression 'I wouldn't personally have purchased' is suggestive of this. Senior curator, MacParland, makes a similar point when she refers to acquisitions:

> There's a lot of debate on that committee, but it's pretty good, it works pretty well. It's pretty fair ... There are compromises, and there are things that I would not choose, that I would not bring forward. But at the same time, for the money, and if somebody is very enthusiastic, and three board members agree, you know, we don't usually have a fight, but it's a compromise then.[78]

These quotes bring to the fore how acquisitions take place through a process of negotiation and agreement amongst the members of this sub-committee. Initially, this may seem a rather obvious point. However, its relevance lies in that it helps us envision how acquisitions take place through two types of negotiations: financial and aesthetic taste. I raised the issue of personal taste in chapter 4 when I referred to the aesthetic dispositions of commercial gallery owners. I highlighted then that this was a crucial factor in the creation of aesthetic value for contemporary art because the taste of gallery directors dictates what type of art

[78] Interview with Brenda MacParland, IMMA, 20th June 2001.

they want to represent. Acquisitions present another situation in which the individual aesthetic dispositions of sub-committee members play a secondary role, at least for two reasons. First, because there needs to be an agreement amongst members. This means that sometimes, as the above quotes indicate, concessions need to be made to include a work in the collection, which does not represent the taste, or aesthetic disposition of other members. Second, aesthetic dispositions are only one factor amongst others. For example, the need to work with a small budget, or the requirement to acquire works which fit into IMMA's worldview. This argument provides us with a further insight into the nature of collecting. It helps us re-define the idea of translating within one sub-field. We see here that interpreters need to negotiate their own individual taste in aesthetics with other factors, both within and outside their own field, which also have an effect on the type of art acquired. This point will acquire wider relevance in the last part of this analysis of acquisitions, which focuses on the use and transference of capitals embodied by interpreters into the practice collecting.

Putting capitals into practice

The possession of adequate forms of capital is a key asset for those in charge of acquisitions. The following discussion looks at the role played by two types of capital – cultural and social – which play a crucial role in the accumulation of symbolic capital for IMMA's collection through acquisitions.

Cultural capital, seen here as knowledge or expertise about the national and international art world, is an important factor because it determines the contribution a board member can make to the process of acquisitions. An example of this is the case of senior curators whose knowledge of the art world makes them key players in bringing proposals to the sub-committee. As one board member points out:

> A lot of what we bought were objects that were brought to us by the curators. You know they'd be out there looking at the exhibitions. We would too, but you know they'd be seeing more than we saw. They'd bring their material. They'd know the gaps and so on. (1)

The cultural capital of board members is equally important to the practice of acquisitions. For example, a well-known artist refers about his proposed input to the sub-committee:

> As an artist I think I would have links or knowledge of how the general artistic community would view the museum, and would also be quite aware of what they expect from the museum. Whereas other members of the board would bring different qualifications to it, for instance, legal or financial. (4)

Another sub-committee member offers a more detailed account of how one's own cultural capital is transferred into the practice of collecting. This quote in particular is from an interview with a well-known Irish artist. He explains:

> I was determined that the sub-committee of the board dealing with acquisitions should acquire Irish art, and it was in a sense, my own interest was in that area. It acquired more than Irish art, but I was specifically watching that aspect ... I would have been instrumental. If my period on the board comes down to anything it's probably those two acquisitions [Kathy Prendergast and Shane Cullen] ... they were things that I personally sought. It was within a policy that I had, which the board shared, there was always an open door in all those issues. (5)

We see here how acquisitions occur through a combination of cultural capital, knowledge of contemporary art, and an individual's aim to purchase Irish works for the collection. This quote also sheds new light onto a point I made earlier. It shows that the interpreters' aesthetic dispositions acquire a crucial role when they are used strategically, -e.g. combined with the possession of a particular cultural capital and individual determination.

Another example of practice is that of a board member who saw it as his responsibility to increase his cultural capital. Visiting art exhibitions and artists' studios is a way of keeping up to date with the work of contemporary artists, which IMMA may be interested in buying. An additional interesting point in the following quote is that this board member also uses his position as a presenter of a national arts programme to promote the museum. As he puts it:

> Part of our responsibility was to go to see artists' work, so that was part of what I had to do. So that was very practical and I did, and then also in terms of my own contribution to it, because I was presenting the biggest arts programme in the country I used to keep the interest of the museum very much close to my heart. So if I knew there was something coming up I'd make sure there was an interview, so from that point they were the practical

> things that I was able to do. But, certainly, keeping up-to-date with exhibitions and going to visit artists that was all part of my brief. (2)

This quote illustrates how the practice of interpreters can articulate a flow of two forms of capital. Social capital, in terms of contacts and position in the art world, is deployed to promote the museum. The flow of capitals occurs because promoting IMMA is a practice directed to increase the museum's symbolic capital – e.g. public prestige.

This flow or exchange of capitals can take various forms. One interviewee mentions that being on the IMMA's board may be perceived as a sign of distinction: "If you're writing as I do for journals and they want a mini biography it's quite nice to be able to say you're on the board of the IMMA. People think she's got a bit of clout. It doesn't mean you got clout at all actually, but it's picked up in that way." (1) Being on the board is also perceived as increasing one's cultural capital, or knowledge about the art world. (2) Of particular interest are the cases of board members who experienced some kind of conflict, as a result of their position on the board and on the sub-committee of acquisitions, more specifically. One board member decided not to take part in the sub-committee because it could clash with his own private interest in collecting. As he puts it:

> There were plenty of people there with their own opinions about what the museum should spend their money on. I also felt to some extent I was a collector myself and there might have been times when I might have been competing or could have been in a competitive situation and the museum wasn't short of people with the talent and the ability to make their own selection, so I just didn't bother going for that reason. (3)

A member of acquisitions, however, saw her position as problematic in relation to proposing the work by some of her own family members to the sub-committee. She says:

> There's one thing, I suppose one little personal thing, two of my children are artists, one is a painter and one is a sculptor. The sculptor is now quite a high profile, but because I'm on the board, I'm on the acquisitions committee, we can never either show them or buy them, so it's working against them that I'm there ... This is not fair to them, however, it doesn't really seem to be interfering much with their career. (6)

Despite these situations of conflict, the use of capital is quite positive to the practice of collecting. In particular, it provides important resources given the lack of adequate financial resources for collecting. A strategy to negotiate this type of scarcity is the deployment of cultural and social capital. One interviewee refers to the reliance of acquisitions on 'sympathetic' friends. As he explains with regard to acquisitions:

> It was all done on favours and friends and people who were sympathetic. That was the way it was done. And again that was where the board members' knowledge of the world of art, the chief's executive's knowledge of people and socialising with them and writing to and about and for them was all very useful. (2)

The following quote develops the same argument by making explicit the key role of McGonagle who used his network of contacts in helping secure acquisitions:

> The acquisitions budget was absolutely minimum, thus it required a very significant PR exercise with many of the major collectors and major museums around the world. Again this is where McGonagle was very successful, he had the stature, he was known, and also he knew the international art world as a contributor to many magazines, as a highly respected writer and critic, he knew his way around, as did a number of the board members ... It was so important for us to be able to show and get loans and come to positive agreements with some of the top artists in the world. So we were able to get favourable terms where we were able to purchase, some of them would contribute pieces of their work because they liked the surrounding, the approach being taken. (2)

This last discussion on the use of capital illustrates a further aspect of translation; it takes place through the importation of capital by board members who then use it within IMMA. Examples of this are the use of knowledge, contacts. In addition, board members gain prestige, cultural knowledge and, in some cases, decide to promote the museum from their position outside IMMA's sub-field. The last two examples in particular help us understand how acquisitions need the support of certain types of capital – cultural and social - which are then transformed into symbolic capital – acquisitions of art works for the collection. Most importantly, they provide us with valuable information about how interpreters can carry out the two roles Bauman outlined: translating and legislating. McGonagle's role is a case in point. In sections 2.2 and 2.3 of this chapter I have attempted to show how McGonagle's overview for IMMA, and his collecting policy articulate a form of legislation, which was aimed at giving symbolic power to IMMA's sub-field. At this point we see another

type of role in which McGonagle takes part. It is not only his position as director of IMMA which enables him to translate between fields, although this gives him a certain prestige, but also his existing reservoir of other forms of social capital – e.g. respected writer and critic, knowledge of the international art world. Translation then is related to the type and amount of capital possessed by interpreters and to the strategic use they make of them from their position in a given field.

3.2 Loans and donations

Overall, the practice of accepting loans and donations differs from acquisitions in that it does not involve a financial payment; in this sense they are free. However, there is a second sort of transaction taking place because having a loan or donation accepted not only increases the symbolic capital, prestige, of the works in question, but also that of the donors or lenders – e.g. private or corporate collectors. The following discussion is structured along the same lines as my previous analysis of general acquisitions: IMMA's worldview, financial resources, and the importation of capitals into collecting.

IMMA's worldview

Initially, the museum is quite free to select donations suited for the collection. Marshall comments on their ability to control which loans and donations they select for the collection:

> I wouldn't actually have a major problem about the way the collection is developing at the moment because the first thing we should say here is we only accept loans or donations of artwork that we want to have in our collection ... We are very free about the way we select from donations and loans on offer to us. We've been quite ruthless about that, and I'm happy to say that good collectors are also in favour of that policy. Even the kindest and most generous of people to us have offered us work from time to time that we haven't taken, and they have understood that. It hasn't been an issue.[79]

The mention that collectors are quite willing to acquiesce to the selections made by the museum is quite telling of IMMA's leeway in this form of collecting. But there are specific criteria, such as the museum's collecting policy, which dictate what is accepted or rejected. One board members refers to the rejection of donations as follows:

[79] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

> Supposing you were going to be given a magnificent Paul Henry, that is hard to fit into the philosophy of the IMMA, very easy to fit into another entity like say the Municipal Gallery, or National Gallery ... It would have been easy to say, thank you we'll accept it, the person gets the tax write off, but the artist had no place in the going forward of the museum. The artist was dead, it was an Irish artist, had no real relevance to any intellectual route forward for the museum, so in those instances we had to say no. (2)

The expression, 'is hard to fit into the philosophy', highlights how the loans and donations are accepted provided they follow some of the principles of the museum's worldview and policy. The Irish artist mentioned here, Paul Henry (1878-1958), was already producing work at the beginning of the 20th century, thus the mention that some of his early work may not fit into IMMA's collecting policy, which starts from the 1940s.

In my discussion of IMMA's policy for collecting, I mentioned that IMMA's purpose is not to own any specific chronology of the past in order to show it. Rather, the emphasis is on a displaying art in a way that allows artworks to take on multiple meanings. The following comment by a board member exemplifies the importance of display in the choice of loans and donations:

> I am all for donations, but I think the donations have to be monitored and don't take anything that comes. You have to be very selective so that what's coming in is good and it's adding to the collection, and it's not just oh yes, we'll take anything ... As a whole, we had to know that we could use it, display was uppermost, and something that was only to just be given and put in storage, no good. (1)

The public's demand is another criterion at work in the selection of loans and donations. For example, indicators such as comments on the museum's visitors book, or the evidence of popular pleasure at retrospectives by Irish artists – i.e. Mainie Jellett, Patrick Swift – encourages the museum to accept loans of historic works.[80] What is highlighted here is how collecting is a form of controlling the demands from outside IMMA's sub-field, with the requirements from within the sub-field. As Marshall points out, historical works have a preference amongst the public: "[y]ou can never actually completely satisfy public demand for more and more historical works in the collection because that's what the public know about."[81]

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[80] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[81] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

Initially, these views suggest how loans and donations are selected provided they fulfil some aspect of the museum's worldview or collecting policy. This idea is suggestive of a skill of translation, which ensures that only those art works following the museum's legislating frameworks are able to become part of the museum's collection. However, we see another side of this argument in the acceptance of one particular loan, the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection, (see chapter 6 for a discussion of its display). The collection comprises works by artists outside the traditional mainstream world of art (see 2.1). One of the reasons leading to the acceptance of the collection is its relevance for the museum's collecting policy. As Marshall explains:

> We accepted a loan of an outsider collection because ... the programmers and the previous board believed that it was absolutely appropriate to this museum with its policy about questioning who is an artist, what is an artist, who should be in an art collection, who should be in a public collection and so on. We very much believe that is up to us to raise those discussions and how better to do it than by bringing a collection of outsider art.[82]

The acceptance of the loan complies with the museum's policy.[83] The term 'outsider art' is used to categorise the work by individuals who are not professional artists, who produce outside the mainstream art market. Such donation fulfils a principle of IMMA's worldview; the aim of re-defining a new language for thinking about art and artists (see 2.2). However, there is an additional point that needs to be considered here, which shows a further aspect of the practice of interpreters as translators. As I said earlier, accepting loans and donations is a way for accumulating symbolic capital or prestige for the artworks and collectors. Yet in this case, the priority of this loan is not the accumulation of prestige. Private collector Monika Kinley makes this point explicit:

> Prestige doesn't really come into it, because outsiders were never out for prestige. It's just that we wanted to show these wonderful works to people who don't know anything about art, and to people who know something about art, because it's very interesting in relationship to

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[82] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 21st March 2000.

[83] Although the process of accepting the collection did not cause disagreement in the sub-committee, this is not to say that other board members agree with this policy. One interviewee in particular disagreed with the outsiders being part of IMMA's collection:

> That collection should be somewhere else, it could have been taken over by one of the banks or an institution that would have the resources to finance and to take it to all parts of Ireland, but I feel that's not high art, it's not of the quality that a national collection should be, but there's a place for it. (4)

> what people consider art, and what people consider works produced by professional artists.[84]

Hence Kinley as a collector is not interested in creating symbolic capital, or prestige, for her collection. Rather, her aim is to bring her collection into a public institution where they can be used to raise questions about value in art – i.e. saying that non-professional artists can produce art. In fact, the reason why Kinley decided to loan the collection to IMMA is to do with McGonagle's views on value in art. As she says: he "would appreciate that the best of outsider art is just as important as mainstream art."[85] This comment leads us to see a significant practice at work in this loan: the assignation of aesthetic value for outsider art by placing it alongside a mainstream art collection. Kinley herself makes this point: "I've tried to collect the best of it, as far as we could afford it. We do consider it as good as what is shown in the museum."[86] She adds: "hopefully one day they won't make the distinctions."[87] An important point is the role IMMA plays in the re-production of aesthetic value for outsider art, as opposed to prestige solely. Arguably, this consideration would not be that significant in the donation or loan of mainstream art collection. Display is a key practice here, as Marshall explains, IMMA's policy is to exhibit outsider and mainstream works together:

> My secondary aim is to integrate it into exhibitions of our more mainstream collection so that all the time we are saying that this is quality art, I mean reinforcing that. This is quality art irrespective of where it comes from, but I was hoping that in the process of doing that, it also raises questions for the public about who is an artist, what is an artwork ... We think the work these artists are doing is art whether it is inside the gallery or it is not. We are saying that whether they were educated or not it is still artwork and bringing them in here we hope will help keep these questions open for people. You know keep them questioning what is going on rather than defining what it is.[88]

We see here two forms of translating in the acceptance of loans and donations. First, translation is a way of ensuring that loans and donations comply with the museum's policy. Second, we see how collecting is a key practice in the making of aesthetic value for outsider art. In my discussion of art created within the E&C programme I said that IMMA's sub-field plays a key task in the production of aesthetic value. This entailed a form of translation

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[84] Interview with Monika Kinley, 4th July 2001.
[85] Interview with Monika Kinley, 4th July 2001.
[86] Interview with Monika Kinley, 4th July 2001.
[87] Interview with Monika Kinley, 4th July 2001.
[88] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 21st March 2000.

whereby art from the community was created and given symbolic capital within IMMA's sub-field. In the present case we have a similar type of practice at work. Art from a private collection is brought to IMMA's sub-field. In the process, translation occurs in two ways: first, by giving symbolic capital to the works in question, which is due to IMMA's leading position in the FCA; and, second, by giving it symbolic capital in terms of aesthetic value. It is possible to say that outsider works in the collection are already endowed with aesthetic value through the process of collecting. However, the key task of translation is exemplified in how IMMA does not make distinctions between outsider and mainstream art; in the museum they are exhibited together. Marshall's comment is quite telling of this aim: IMMA aims to bring the public the possibility of viewing art, or "an experience of good quality, irrespectively of where it comes from."[89]

Negotiating financial resources

Apart from the criterion of fitting into the museum's worldview and collecting policy, loans and donations are important because they supply historical works for the collection, which IMMA could not afford to purchase. As one board member explains, the Government is not going to provide funding to buy these types of works. Hence the only way of having them in the collection is through donations. He says:

> The cash value of the donations we've got must run into millions so I would actually think that collectors like to see their collections ending up in public institutions ... The idea of museums buying treasure pieces or wonderful paintings is really not on because the amount of money involved is too great. Whereas collectors want to see a happy home for their collections which they have spent a lifetime of enthusiasm building, and therefore that's the natural way to put together the collections of treasure pieces, donations rather than purchases. (3)

This comment reflects a point I made earlier, which is how collectors benefit from giving their collections to a public, national collection. It also highlights that IMMA benefits from accepting donations because they provide historical works for its collection. Another benefit lies in the possibility of accepting donations which are acquisition led. That is, chosen by the museum. Marshall makes this point:

> It's also fair to say that the number of the recent donations have been donations where we wanted to buy a particular work or a body of work and we went to generous people who are

[89] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 21st March 2000.

> well disposed towards contemporary art and said to them, could you buy it for us? Because we haven't' got the money to do it, and then we acquired it as a donation from that person but it was acquisition led, purchase led if you like and there have been a few major donations to us that took that went down that road.[90]

But apart from these benefits, loans and donations require an additional control, which does not occur in acquisitions. As I mentioned in chapter 4, tax relief is a measure set up by the Government to promote the donation and loan of works to a public institution such as IMMA. I pointed out then that tax incentives could require further control to be exercised by the museum. The issue here is to be able to distinguish between those collectors, which only seek prestige for their collections, and those making a genuine contribution to the museum. As one board member puts it:

> If some piece has been part of a long-term collection in the museum, or exhibited there it adds a certain cachet to it. And I think that's where we need to be careful in the museum's role in dealing with collectors because often they could be just trying to enhance the value of their collection... If that's what their motivation is rather than actually contributing something to the gallery, I think we need to be careful about it ... I know the tax laws and we're going to get a brief on it because if you give work to a gallery, not even permanently, then you can get tax relief and then you can claim the works back after many years. I don't think that's very healthy for the growth of a collection. (7)

This comment gives a further insight into the criteria governing the acceptance of loans and donations: the need to control the shape of the collection. Apart from the ethics of this type of practice, (for example, do collectors genuinely want to give their works to IMMA?), the museum must ensure the possession of loans of works for a sustained period of time. Hence, the advantages for collectors require the exercise of a great deal of control from the sub-committee of acquisitions. This control can happen in various ways.

The need to control the acceptance of donations is raised by another board member. More specifically, the aim is to maintain a balance between acquisitions, on the one hand, and accepting loans and donations, on the other. As he says:

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[90] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

> There are major gifts coming and you know that was a kind of pressure on the museum not buying, but I felt that the museum has got to keep controlling the shape of it, not just receiving from others. (5)

This comment points out that despite the earlier examples, which suggested a great deal of freedom in the choice of loans and donations, there are also constraints involved in this type of practice. More specifically, an emphasis on accepting loans and donations may be detrimental to the shape of the collection.

For MacParland the issue is to be able to build a collection upon purchases, rather than merely accepting donations:

> I would say that almost everything we own has a quality is good quality. We haven't accepted any rubbish or bad donations. I would have my favourites, but it's grown from strength to strength and it's huge. But I suppose when we initiate purchases rather than accept donations, we should be really saying, well what is it that we really want? What do we focus on in the next three years?[91]

This comment suggests that the museum is actually relying more on donations than acquisitions. This is an obvious point if we recall that the collection consists of over 4,000 works, and only about 330 are purchases. Another interviewee criticises the museum for accepting "almost all donations". As he explains:

> There were some very important artists but they were only represented by one or two fairly minor works. Now these works were generally donated to the museum, and I still have a problem with the form of those donations. I feel that the museum accepted almost all donations, and thus accepted works that were less than great. (4)

We have seen several arguments favouring the acceptance of donations. They provide historical works, which could not be bought with the museum's limited acquisition budget. A related task is the need to control what type of aesthetics are admitted into the collection. An important issue here is the view that there must be a balance between acquisitions and loans and donations. This, I said, suggests that the museum enjoys more freedom in acquisitions than in dealing with loans and donations. Overall, there is a lack of agreement as to the amount of loans and donations suitable for the collection. The task of translating in

[91] Interview with Brenda MacParland, IMMA, 20th June 2001.

this case entails the control of the type of aesthetics, or symbolic capital, entering IMMA's collection. The last example in this discussion will reveal a similar concern with the issue of control.

Putting capitals into practice

In my discussion of acquisitions I noted how the possession of cultural and social capital by members of the sub-committee was a key asset in this type of practice. In loans and donations we find a different situation in which what prevails is the control of symbolic capital to lenders and donors. For example, sometimes, they make specific requirements to the museum – e.g. setting up conditions over the display of their art works. Marshall explains this situation:

> What has been an issue with lenders and donors, and specially with donors, is they will give art work provided we say we hang it permanently somewhere or we will call a gallery after the person who donated it. We have always refused to go down either of those roads.[92]

This quote is indicative of the intricate relationship between collecting and display. Both are ways of giving symbolic capital to art works, and individuals see it as their task to control the allocation of symbolic capital. The rejection of this type of demand is also endorsed by a board member who says:

> Someone could not say I will give you this painting but I want it hanging six months of the year on show in the museum. We absolutely refused that outright. We said no, it has to be within the context of a show that has been put on, and a show will not be put on just to facilitate one painting or sculpture ... On the acquisitions sub-committee we used to have a lot of people saying we give you this, and then of course there was the attraction of a tax write off ... So we had a lot of those presented to us, and in the main we said thank you but no. (2)

This quote fleshes out Marshall's comment on how certain collectors are making demands that the museum does not want to accept. As I said, exhibitions are a means to provide symbolic capital to works on display. Collectors want to increase the amount of symbolic capital for their collections by having them on show for long periods of time.

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[92] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

Although the museum has no set exhibition policy – see chapter 6 – the exhibition of works given on loan or donation follows certain guidelines. Loans and donations are usually displayed in the museum to commemorate and mark their arrival to IMMA. As Marshall says:

> We try to call attention to that new donation and to the process through which the donation came about because we want other people to get excited about that process as well. And also to honour it and celebrate this important new body of work in the collection, and then thereafter we integrate it fully into the collection, and we use it as if it's always belonged there. Rarely then we go back to a big show with that collector's name on it.[93]

The provision of exhibition space is a way of allocating symbolic capital, honour, to loans and donations. Another example of this practice is the dedication, in June 1999, of part of the museum's exhibition space to honour art collector and donor Gordon Lambert.[94] The act of naming a gallery after a collector is not only a way of increasing the symbolic capital of Lambert. It also increases the symbolic capital of IMMA by demonstrating the relationship between the museum and such a distinguished collector. An important point is that Lambert never asked for such an honour. The museum's board was aware that, as Marshall explains, he never laid any conditions on the museum:

> Gordon never asked for that. It was something that the museum did in 1998 as a gesture of gratitude because he had been such a generous giving donor who never actually laid down any conditions on us at all. I think the board was very mindful of the fact that he was getting older and that he had done so much for Irish art, and indeed for modern art in Ireland over the last fifty years, that it was appropriate to make a special gesture in his favour.[95]

This last discussion on use of capitals shows how IMMA has an upper hand in the distribution of symbolic capital – e.g. prestige – through the practice of exhibitions. Exhibitions in an institution such as IMMA endow collectors whose works are displayed with a certain amount of prestige. I said earlier that translating entails a control of loans and donations with regard the type of aesthetics they represent. Translating in this case is also a form of control, but also of exchange of symbolic capital. For lenders and donors, this takes place in two ways, by having their works accepted them for the collection, and by

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[93] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[94] For an account of Lambert's role as donor to IMMA see (Marshall, 1999).
[95] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

having them exhibited in the museum. For IMMA, the task is to ensure that this exchange of capital is based on the disinterestedness, lack of demands, from those involved in it.

Conclusion

To conclude I want to start by recalling the various arguments I have made in this chapter. My aim in this chapter was to explore the nature of art collecting making, as a particular example of intellectual practice. In particular I have attempted to investigate whether collecting is a form of legislation and/or translation. Following Bourdieu, I have conceptualised IMMA as a sub-field within the FCA, as opposed to Bauman's notion of 'community'. This is the analytical ground in which to explore what kind of intellectual practices, and various exchanges of capital between agents take place. The chapter has addressed first the making of the field's boundaries through the creation of IMMA's worldview and collection policy, to explore then the relationship between these knowledge frameworks and collecting practices.

My discussion of IMMA's worldview has led me to argue that this practice is a form of legislation, which establishes particular systems of knowledge about the function of art museums and art, more generally. In relation to IMMA's collecting policy I have said that it shares traits of legislating and translating types of practices. It legislates from the point of view that it continues the same line of IMMA's worldview but in the realm of collecting. For example, I have added, that this policy also relied on the skill of interpretation between the FCA and an international art world and IMMA's sub-field. A case in point is the notion of 'modern art'.

My exploration of collecting has focused on acquisitions, and loans and donations. Although I argued that collecting is a form of translation, I have also pointed at the diversity of translating practices it gives raise to. What seems to prevail is not translation but translation/s within IMMA's sub-field and between fields. In addressing the same topics throughout my analysis I have been able to show how both acquisitions, loans and donations are a translation from within IMMA's sub-field because they are following the museum's worldview and collecting policy. However, my analysis of the negotiation of financial resources and the use of capitals by those involved in collecting has provided a different picture. We saw how acquisitions take place through the agents' negotiation of factors both within and outside their own field. International events such as the winning of an important award at the Venice Biennale by an Irish artist meant that the museum would want to have

that piece in its collection. Agreement from within the sub-field was also required as a form of negotiation of the individual taste in aesthetics of those individuals involved in collecting. In the case of loans and donations the issue of controlling the shape of the collection, given the tax concessions benefiting lenders and donors, was of extreme importance. Nonetheless, there was certain disagreement amongst participants as to whether tighter control was needed to ensure that only appropriate donations were accepted for the collection. This was an important issue given that IMMA relies on loans and donations to obtain historical works for its collection. Mostly, this practice was a case of translation from within IMMA's sub-field, ensuring that lenders and donors did accept IMMA's conditions – e.g. it would show the works only when it was deemed appropriate, not at the lenders' or donors' petition.

A final important insight into collecting was the way in which individuals used their own cultural and social capitals to facilitate certain acquisitions or even loans and donations. The way in which capitals were put into use varied. One board member saw it as his responsibility to increase his cultural capital – e.g. visiting exhibitions – while being a board member. McGonagle was another case in point because he deployed his social capital in the FCA, and an international artworld, to secure purchases or loans for the collection. The example of well-known artists on the board also illustrates their resourcefulness in acquiring works for the collection. Similarly, as Marshall explained, the museum succeeded in obtaining donations which were acquisition-led. It is at this point that Bourdieu's *field*, and the notion of IMMA as a sub-field interacting with fields outside is most useful. Translation occurs through the use and negotiation of various forms of capital – cultural, social and symbolic. Moreover, this discussion showed that one individual could both legislate and translate depending on his position in a given field. As director, McGonagle was able to legislate a distinct worldview and collecting policy for IMMA. As member of the acquisitions sub-committee he was successful in putting his various capitals at work for the museum's own interest.

I would like to end this chapter by opening up some questions, which I will be dealing with in chapter 7. So far only chapter 3 in this thesis has looked at the possibility of change in fields. The present chapter offers important insights to present here and discuss further in chapter 7. We saw that a principle of IMMA's worldview is the idea that museums can be participant in the transformation of social and cultural values. It could be argued that collecting contributes to this process, through the selection of works which can help raise

or challenge existing views on art value. The acceptance of the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection is a clear example of how collecting can help the museum achieve its questioning ideas on the nature of aesthetics. However, the idea of questioning value in art cannot occur without visitors or audiences who play such a role in this process. In fact, IMMA's involvement in participating in a process of transformation seems to be only in a mediator's role between artists and the public. In order to have a clearer picture about how the museum puts into practice its worldview we need to look at exhibition making, which is the topic of chapter 6. In addition, an exploration of exhibitions can further our insights into collecting since this is a key process in assigning symbolic capital to the museum's collection.

Throughout this chapter I have been exploring the possibility of a two-fold role of interpreters – legislating and translating. However, Bauman's thesis provides us with another type of intellectuals, the legislators of modernity, who participated in the making of knowledge crucial to the "maintenance and perfection of the social order" (Bauman, 1987: 5). I have not discussed this concept deliberately. Of particular relevance in Bauman's theory of 'legislators of modernity' is the idea that intellectual practices can indeed contribute to the creation and maintenance of the social world; and this is an issue that needs to be explored in detail. I would argue that the practices of collecting we have seen here do not fit into that definition. What we see instead is a notion of intellectuals related to Bourdieu's model of practice as a form of struggle and negotiation geared towards the increase of a collection's symbolic capital and the field's symbolic power. IMMA's philosophy also articulates a struggle with other models; however, it alludes precisely to the connection Bauman makes in his definition of modernity's intellectual practice because one tenet of IMMA's philosophy is that the museum can contribute to a process of cultural and social transformation. This leads to the question: is it possible that in our so-called postmodern world the intellectuals of modernity continue to carry out, at least partly, their role? Bauman seems to give us two answers. Firstly, that it is possible because intellectuals have not abandoned their "universalistic ambitions" "towards their own tradition." Secondly, that it is not possible from the point of view that interpreters are no longer "orientated towards selecting the best social order" (ibid: 5). For the moment, I want to move to chapter 6 which can provide us with new arguments to this ongoing discussion to which I will return in my conclusion to this thesis.

CHAPTER 6
DISPLAYING THE COLLECTION

Introduction

Throughout this thesis I have addressed the subject of exhibitions, if only tangentially. In chapter 3, I described how the emergence of the RHA created a most needed exhibition space in the early FCA. In chapter 4, I have looked at the struggles between the DHG and the IMMA, in their role as venues for the exhibition of contemporary art. In chapter 5, I discussed exhibiting as a way of increasing the symbolic capital of IMMA's collection. In this chapter I analyse several exhibitions of IMMA's collection. As we have seen, IMMA's worldview and collecting policy introduced ways of thinking about the museum's role, art, and its display. My aim then was to explore the practices of collecting in relation to these frameworks. The analysis of exhibitions presented in this chapter provides us with new material to continue this discussion. It allows us to explore the relationship between collecting and the practices of exhibiting: do they reinforce, or challenge each other?

The chapter is divided into two parts. Part I introduces the term 'field of vision'. It provides a ground on which to investigate the practices of IMMA's curators involved in exhibition making, while distinguishing exhibition making from collecting. Sections 1.1, and 1.2 provide a historical overview of exhibitions, as well as the specific concerns informing the making of exhibitions at IMMA. Part II analyses three exhibitions of IMMA's collection: *Irish art Now, Art Unsolved,* and *Art Without Precedent,* based on the analytical tools and theoretical arguments developed in Part I. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter's main findings to situate them in the context of a discussion on collecting practices

1 Exhibitions as 'fields of vision'

An initial question to start thinking about exhibitions of IMMA's collection is to establish their relation to the analysis of art collecting in chapter 5. As I pointed out then, exhibitions are a key practice in IMMA's sub-field for various reasons. They confer symbolic capital to the lenders, donors of the works on display. In addition, they are means of providing knowledge frameworks, as I discussed in the example of the *Once is Too Much* exhibition (see 3.1, chapter 5); that is, particular ways of thinking about the artworks on display. However, this chapter is concerned with exhibitions of IMMA's collection, as part of the process of collecting. The link between collecting and exhibiting the collection lies in that both are ways of making aesthetic value for the museum's collection. Hence, they provide us with fertile

ground to study the nature of intellectual practices. That is, how curators induce certain ways of thinking about the art works on display, and about the museum's collection, through the practice of exhibition-design. Most important and what this chapter seeks to investigate, is the specific nature of the relationship between the intellectual practices of collecting and exhibition making. We have seen how the making of IMMA's collection is a way of giving prestige to those art works accepted for the collection. (Although we have seen, as in the case of the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection, how collecting can also confer aesthetic value.) This chapter continues this line of argument by looking at how exhibitions make aesthetic value by shaping how spectators perceive art. This is not a new argument. In fact, there is an increasing literature which explores how exhibition design can induce not only specific understanding of artworks, but also shape ideas about the social world, e.g. 'the nation' (Duncan and Wallach, 1980) (see 1.1 in this chapter).

A premise in this chapter is that exhibitions constitute 'fields of vision,' in which exhibition making, as a particular type of intellectual practice, takes place. Following Bourdieu, my idea is to conceptualise 'fields of vision' as a type of intellectual field, where symbolic producers carry out their practices. With regard to Bauman's arguments on interpreters, an added question this chapter seeks to answer is: do they legislate and/or translate between fields of vision, or rather, within a given field? To what extent is IMMA able to negotiate its own autonomy, or criteria for the display of art?

The exhibitions I investigate in Part II take place within IMMA's sub-field. This leads to the question: why think about exhibitions as 'fields' of a given sub-field, as opposed to intellectual practices within IMMA's sub-field? Or even, as a sub-sub-field of IMMA's sub-field? A way of answering this question is to focus on what constitutes a field's boundaries. Earlier empirical chapters of this thesis (chapters 3,4 and 5) provide a case in point with regard to collecting. In order to investigate this practice, I have looked at the historical genesis of the field in Ireland (chapter 3); I have then contextualised collecting in the FCA (chapter 4), and finally, seen collecting as a practice within IMMA's sub-field (chapter 5). Exhibition making is a practice that needs the same type of sociological approach: to be situated historically, given a specific contemporary context, and a set of analytical tools –i.e. how to think of exhibition making as intellectual practices. What makes exhibitions of IMMA's collection a particular field of vision is that exhibition making is a practice in its own right. That is, it is situated not within the field of collecting, but in the field of exhibition making. Part I of this chapter is envisioned to provide the necessary context and analytical tools for thinking

about IMMA's exhibitions. Part II uses these tools in the analysis of three exhibitions of IMMA's collection. However, as important as identifying what is distinctive about my analytical approach to the study of IMMA's exhibitions, is the need to differentiate it from previous general attempts to set up a distinct methodology for spatial analysis.

The study of space is not a new topic within sociology. It is part of a long line of theorising, which can be traced back to classical social theorists. A case in point is Simmel's exploration into the "changing character of human conduct under the changed conditions of modernity or urbanism" (Ennison and Smith, 2000: 5). The observation of social interaction in particular spatial settings is also the topic of Goffman's enquiry. Examples of this approach are *Asylums* (1968), and *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1969). In his chapter on 'regions and region behaviour', Goffman uses the term 'region' to qualify any place bounded by barriers to perception (1969: 109). Barriers to communication include those elements which isolate areas, or regions, visually or aurally. His aim is to make explicit the performance, or activity of individuals in regions, particularly focusing on the way in which it influences that of other participants (1969: 26). Specific regions he mentions in his study are: hotel kitchens, radio and television broadcasting, and filling stations. Goffman, however, does not include as his topic of enquiry, the study of exhibitions as a particular form of region. Goffman's ideas are a useful starting point, to help understand how a given physical space can determine how people interact in it. It is possible to say that contemporary approaches to the study of how audiences behave in museum exhibitions are developments of Goffman's line of theorising. Hooper-Greenhill (2000: x), writing from the discipline of museum studies, sets out as her main empirical question: "what happens when people go to museums?" Drawing on communication and learning theory she discusses the construction of meaning in museums (2000: xi). Although this chapter also discusses the ways in which museum exhibitions create meaning, the aim here is not to evaluate how visitors interact or experience museums. Rather, it is to investigate the nature of the intellectual practices involved in art exhibition making. Another study concerned with display analysis is Macdonald's (1998) *The Politics of Display*,[1] which explores the political nature and the uses audiences make of representations of science and technology in museums. Amongst the various contributors to this book is sociologist Andrew Barry. His interest is to explore how museum visitors interact with displays in contemporary science museums (1998: 98). The emphasis of the volume is similar to my own in its purpose to investigate

[1] For a sociological approach to exhibitions in the nineteenth century, although not to the study of space see (Fyfe, 2000: 53-76).

questions of cultural production and knowledge in museums. As I said, I envision exhibitions as spaces, which create ways of thinking about aesthetic value in shaping how spectators perceive art. In general, the difference between the line of theorising here presented and my own, is that in studying social space the focus of their enquiry is the public – i.e. how they interact with each other, or with the objects on display. Conversely, my emphasis is on the intellectual practices, which shape how visitors perceive art.

1.1 Exhibition design: a historical perspective

The following account provides a historical overview of the changes taking place in an international field of vision (IFV). The aim of the following overview of exhibition design is twofold. First, it provides a context for thinking about the historical development of exhibition design techniques. More specifically, it explores the changing ways in which exhibitions have created ways of thinking and seeing works of art; what I call the *field of vision*. But the IFV has another application. It suggests a wider reservoir of knowledge about how to design exhibitions from which museum professionals, such as in IMMA, draw in the practice of exhibition making.

This context then is also a way of helping us understand the crucial role of display practices in the creation of aesthetic value. Second, it also looks at the means museum professionals deploy in the display of art works. In so doing, I intend to identify various key techniques, which I will use as analytical tools in the study of exhibitions in Part II. The increasing number of studies on exhibition design illustrates the interest in this new area of inquiry. The implicit acceptance of a work's autonomy, and the study of its intrinsic qualities, is now shifting towards the analysis of its public display. As Staniszewski notes, "a work of art, when publicly displayed, almost never stands alone: it is always an element within a permanent or temporary exhibition created in accordance with historically determined and self-consciously staged installation conventions" (1998: xxi).

The emergence of the public museum at the end of the 18th century was the result of a shift in the nature of power: from private to public collections. The practices of collecting previously restricted to wealthy and power individuals such as kings and the aristocracy were now in the hands of the modern state. But the change was more than a change in the ownership of collections; it entailed new ways of selecting, classifying and displaying works. A case in point is the foundation of the Louvre in Paris (1793), where earlier 18th century display arrangements which grouped items by theme, material or size were divided into

national schools and art historical periods of artists providing a panorama of art history (Duncan and Wallach, 1980: 455; Hooper-Greenhill, 1989: 71; Bennett, 1995: 44). At the same time, the work of living artists was singled out and displayed separately. The first example of this trend was the Luxembourg Gallery founded in 1818 also in Paris. Bennett follows Fischer (1991) in saying that art museums were informed by the 'technology of the series.' Placed in series, individual artworks are not relevant in themselves, but as part of a history of art in which they are provided with sources (ancestors) and consequences (descendants) (Bennett, 1995: 44). Some museums such as the Louvre, the National Galleries in London and Washington, and the Metropolitan Museum of New York are contemporary examples of the 'universal survey museum', or the public art museum (Duncan and Wallach, 1980: 452). The advent of the public museum brought with it a new relationship towards its public. Bennett notes that the task of art museums in the 19th century was no longer to dazzle its visitors, as in the case of princely collections, but "to enlighten and improve its visitors morally, socially, and politically" (Bennett, 1995: 44). As Duncan and Wallach note, the change from the prince to the state as a host, also "redefines the visitor" who is no longer addressed as "the subordinate of a prince or lord", but as a "citizen and therefore a shareholder in the state" (1980: 456).

If we move into the 20th century, we find a new model of art museums where works of art are displayed "to be looked at as things of beauty" (Duncan, 1995: 16). Duncan herself warns us against seeing only two sides of this practice - the aesthetic museum and the educational museum - as ideal types of "what art museums should be". In the educational model, "works of art are framed as historical or art-historical objects", while the aesthetic model highlights "the unique and transcendent qualities" of artworks (ibid: 4). Nonetheless, a number of authors have noted the prevalence of 'aesthetic installations' in 20th century museums and art galleries. Their origins have been traced to the exhibitions designed by Alfred Barr, director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) (1929-43) (Grunenberg, 1994; Staniszewski, 1998). In her study of installation design at MoMA from 1929 to the present, Staniszewski argues that Barr's installation method has become the norm for 20th century modern museum practices: "so common and so standardized that its language of form and its function as a representation have become transparent and invisible" (1998: 66). It was in MoMA that "the most authoritative history of modern art" was forged (Duncan, 1995: 103). Given the prominence of Barr's practices today, I want to review the main traits of his installation design techniques.

In MoMA exhibition design is the means to present the history of modern art unfolding in a succession of styles or movements – as opposed to the principle of hanging by national school. Particularly useful here is the use of "chapel-like rooms exclusively devoted to *the* major art-historical figures" (ibid: 105-6). Duncan uses the term 'ritual spaces', to designate the narratives created in art museums to celebrate individual achievement and the progress of modern art. In MoMA such a ritual positions artists such as Picasso and Pollock as key figures in the achievement of progress, measured in the "degree to which art achieved greater abstraction" from the representation of a presumably objective world (ibid: 108).[2] This is achieved in at least two ways. Firstly, by hanging pictures in chronological sequence depending on style and period, with identity labels – i.e. giving title, date and name of lender. The use of didactic labels is particularly important; a novelty introduced by Barr. As Staniszewski notes:

> [T]they were compositions in which wall labels explicitly linked the works of art historically and conceptually, making visible the unity and coherence of the show. Barr's labels enhanced the sense of the exhibition as an entity unto itself. (Staniszewski, 1998: 64)

In addition to a chronological arrangement and framing of works with didactic labels was Barr's approach to the presentation of works in the "aestheticisation of art" model (Grunenberg, 1994: 204). Here aestheticisation points at a process of appropriation and domestication whereby works of art are "detached from their original context of production" - i.e. their social and political implications. This autonomy is achieved by giving predominance to the aesthetic dimension of works of art over architectural and site-specific associations: placing paintings on neutral-coloured, or white walls; positioning them at just below eye level and well spaced. Importantly, it is the 'aestheticisation of art', which prevails over the educational component of exhibitions – i.e. explanatory labels. As Staniszewski says, "wall labels, however historical, served as documents underscoring the aesthetic validity of an exhibited work" (1998: 66).

The spaces described by Grunenberg and Staniszewski are not restricted to the MoMA, they elucidate a more generalised form of exhibition design and gallery space; what O'Doherty calls the white cube. In his collection of essays *Inside the White Cube* (1986), he mounts a criticism against the implicit 'neutrality' of the gallery space. As does Duncan, he acknowledges the relationship between gallery design and the projection of a particular view

[2] See Duncan (1995: 111-32) for an analysis of MoMA's ritual space as gendered.

of art history: "the history of modern art can be correlated with changes in that space and in the way we see it." In short, the 'white cube' is the ideal context for the 'aestheticisation of art'. "[T]he ideal gallery", as O'Doherty puts it, "subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself" (ibid: 14). 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." (ibid: 15).

However, despite the prevalence of the 'aestheticisation of art' model in exhibition design, other exhibition practices –e.g. surrealist – have presented a contest and challenge to Barr's practices.[3] In fact, it was in the 1920s and 1930s that new parameters for exhibition design were established by the international avant-gardes – dadaism, surrealism, or Russian constructivism. After the end of the First World War what Kachur terms the "ideological exhibition space" started to flourish in Europe and the U.S. – lasting, approximately, until the beginning of the Second World War. That is, "the abandonment of a seemingly straightforward or avowedly neutral presentation in favor of a relatively subjective format," which, from around the 1920s, became one of the "major new rhetorical devices of art" (Kachur, 2001: 6). It was a practice that emerged from artists themselves, as Staniszewski points out, "Artists fascinated with the possibility of creating public exhibition spaces saw installation design as one of many new arenas of mass communication that would transform modern life." (1998: 4).[4] Starting points for this trend were the dadaist displays, "with exhibition space echoing the tenor of political protest artworks," and Constructivist installations, which experimented with the exhibition space i.e. its colouring (ibid: 6-7).

But the most obvious challenge was that of the Surrealists, who by 1938 started to inscribe their style in terms of display. A paradigmatic example of 'ideological space' was the 1938 surrealist exhibition *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* in Paris, whose overall space was aimed at discomforting the viewers. For example, viewers were first faced by a corridor lined by sixteen mannequins on one side, all of which were dressed by a particular artist/writer. This use of space produces a specific relationship between viewer/exhibition

[3] Even in the MoMA there were other type of exhibition designs according to the wide range of displays in the museum: displays of modern design and architectural prototypes, and for political propaganda. However, I have highlighted his 'aestheticisation of art' design because, as we will see in Part II, it resembles, partly, the use of space at the IMMA.

[4] For further reading on novel installation designs see chapter 1, 'Framing Installation Design: The International Avant-Gardes' (Staniszewski, 1998: 3-59).

space, as Kachur puts it: "An unexpected, more corporeal interaction thus replaced the usual encounter with pictures on a wall. Instead of the eye taking refuge in a pictorial space, the spectator's body was confronted by a series of kinaesthetic equals, life-sized personages" (2001: 37). The unexpected encounters continue in Duchamp's installation, *1,200 Coal Sacks,* consisting in 1,200 empty coal bags hanging from the ceiling. Although the sacks were filled with newspapers, their intended effect was to "discomfort the viewers" – who possibly felt uncomfortable at the possibility of a sack falling over their head. Both the mannequins and the 1,200 sacks were planned to "induce the metaphorical suggestion of the interior as exterior" (ibid: 73).[5] Another important design technique was the exhibition of paintings in a space where it was difficult to see them. Again this lack of visibility of the artworks seeks to reverse the expectations of the 'aestheticisation of art' model where artworks are properly lit. It creates a space which obstructs viewers from actually looking at artworks. This disorienting and obstructionist *mise-en-scène* makes viewers uncomfortable, the format of the display itself becomes the ground for a polemic (2001: 4). We find a similar example in the Surrealist Gallery at the Art of this Century exhibition (1942) in New York. Staniszewski refers to some of the Gallery's effects:

> [A] stage set for a sensorially augmented aesthetic experience that affected the viewer's sight, hearing, and touch. Each work had its own spotlight, which went off every two or three seconds; the lighting was engineered so that half of the paintings were lit half of the time. Every two minutes a recording of the roar of a train was sounded. Paintings, mounted on wall hinges, enabled the visitor to tilt them to his or her desired viewing angle. (Staniszewski,1998: 22)

What we see here is a shift from the object towards the environment, so that they are both equally important. But the challenge of the international avant-gardes to existing ways of exhibition design goes further than a simple change in the style of displays. Hetherington argues that the artistic practices of, for example, Duchamp's readymades – e.g. the making of a urinal – and their subsequent placement in a museum, challenge modern ideas about the positioning of the viewing subject. As he says:

> [T]he Dadaist project is fundamentally about restoring heterogeneity to the object world by challenging bourgeois conceptions of art and art's taming within the disciplined exhibitionary

[5] For a discussion of the exhibition see 'The Origin of Surrealist Exhibition Space: The 1938 Paris Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme', pp. 20-103, in Kachur (2001).

> spaces of the gallery and the museum and their associated positioning of the viewing subject. (Hetherington, 1999: 68)

Hetherington's argument suggests that new forms not only of art, but also of exhibition display can create particular fields of vision. More specifically, he points out the same argument I made earlier, that exhibitions shape the public's perception of the art on display.

In his book, *Experience or Interpretation. The Dilemma of Museums of Modern Art* (1996), Serota discusses how exhibition design techniques shape the meanings of art works to the present period. He argues that the conventions for the display of artworks have changed since the 1980s. Referring to Barr's policy to hang works by movement, he says that this policy was followed by museums into the 1980s, "although with less breadth of vision than the early Barr" (ibid: 11). He differentiates a "curatorial *interpretation* on the works" (ibid: 8), which has informed curatorial practices since the mid 19th century, from a predominant role where the curator is "a maker of *mises-en-scène*" (ibid: 10). The concept 'curatorial interpretation' is suggestive of a form of display by national school, and later on, as in Barr's case, by movement. We can apply to those examples Serota's notion of curatorial interpretation, as the "combining works by different artists to give selective readings, both of art and of the history of art" (ibid: 8-9). For Serota, this curatorial role has been superseded by the practice of curators as makers of *mises-en-scène*, or settings for the contemplation of artworks. The relevance here is that those settings enable viewers to take a more active role in the understanding of artworks. As Serota puts it: "an absolute concentration of focus on the work of single artists obliges us to develop our own reading of the work rather than relying on a curatorial interpretation of history" (ibid: 10). Exhibitions displaying successive groups of works by single artists exemplify this second trend, while also allowing visitors the freedom to create their own opinion and judgements of works, "with all our faculties given over to the experience of the work itself" (ibid: 10). As he explains:

> The evident limitation both of the labyrinth and of the flexible space [at MoMA, New York] was one factor which encouraged a new form of display in the late 1980s. The Pollock display at the Museum of Modern Art is but one example of a much wider trend which within ten years has established a new, now even dominant convention for the presentation of twentieth-century and contemporary art. It is a convention which gives absolute weight to the work of individual artists, which favours presentation over analysis and which

> undermines the traditional priority given to the curator as the person who exercises discriminating judgment over selection and display in the museum. (Serota, 1996: 15)

The problem with this argument is that in saying that presentation undermines the priority of curators in the exercise of judgement, selection and display of art, it seems to be doing away with the principle of presentation itself. While there may have been a change in the conventions for the display of artworks, even in its presentation format, it continues to require the judgement and intervention of curators. In addition, Serota's view on exhibitions as merely providing settings for presentation is suggestive of a curatorial practice which emphasises the formal qualities of artworks – as opposed to situating them in a particular art history period, for example.

Nonetheless, Serota's argument is useful as a starting point for my discussion of exhibitions as grounds for the articulation of intellectual practices. In particular, the notion of curators as makers of *mises-en-scène* recalls Bauman's role of interpreters as that of facilitating communication between participants (1987: 5). Here curators no longer play a key role in providing an interpretation of art history, for example. Instead, they are facilitating a context, the presentation of artworks, to viewers so that they can develop their own reading of them. In the case of IMMA, curators borrow techniques from an existing IFV, which they incorporate into specific exhibitions, providing the settings in which visitors can contemplate art works. In so doing, they act as mediators, translating between an IFV and IMMA's field of vision. Initially, it would seem that Serota's model of 'curatorial interpretation' is a practice that does not fit into IMMA's aesthetics. As we saw in chapter 5, McGonagle emphasised the need to redefine existing ways of thinking about art, seeing it as the vehicle for contest and providing multiple interpretations. Conversely, the argument for a 'curatorial interpretation' is based on the active role curators play as authorities in the making of aesthetic value: "the person who exercises discriminating judgment over selection and display" of art works (Serota, 1996: 15). However, in the previous overview we saw that, at some points of history, two models of curatorial practices prevailed: aesthetic and educational. While my analysis in Part II seeks to assess Serota's argument of curators as makers of *mise-en-scène*, it is relevant to acknowledge the possible co-existence of design techniques from these two different models of practice.

The historical overview on the conventions of exhibition design in the IFV has constituted a useful ground to consider before I move into a discussion of the curatorial conventions, or

concerns, in exhibition design within IMMA's sub-field. The various use of texts in exhibitions, the symmetrical arrangement of works, the possibility that exhibition spaces can make visitors uncomfortable – e.g. surrealist space - and the representation of art as autonomous from any external contexts, are some initial issues that give us a comparative perspective in which to situate the following account of curating practices at IMMA.

1.2 Exhibiting the collection in IMMA's sub-field

In the previous section I have discussed the historical development of display practices. I said that this context provides us with a set of key analytical tools for how museum professionals carry out the task of exhibition making. This is an important element of 'fields of vision'. To complement these ideas, and to start my exploration into the intellectual practices involved in exhibition making, I focus next on the views of IMMA's curators of the museum's collection. It must be pointed out that these ideas do not constitute an exhibition policy per se. Rather, they are insights obtained from my interviews with the two curators in charge of exhibitions of IMMA's collection: Catherine Marshall and Marguerite O'Molloy, senior and assistant curators of exhibitions from the museum's collection, respectively. The lack of a specific exhibition policy indicates that the ideas presented here are not representative of a form of legislation. For example, they are not aimed at creating a set of specific guidelines for the display of works in the museum. Instead, they exemplify some of the ways in which IMMA's curators negotiate their own practice within the sub-field, based on their knowledge of the museum's worldview and policy. This premise leads me to another set of questions: to what extent is IMMA's worldview a concern relevant to the practices of IMMA's curators? What can we say about the way they interact with the international field of vision? Is exhibition making a form of translating between fields, or merely within IMMA's sub-field?

IMMA's worldview

Exhibitions of the museum's collection are informed by IMMA's worldview and collecting policy in various ways. We saw in chapter 5, that one of IMMA's principles was to challenge existing ways of thinking about art. This is also a premise informing the practice of exhibitions. As Marshall explains:

> Wanting always to question value, that is a guideline for nearly everything we do, so that's postmodern. But we don't go downstairs to hang a show saying I'm going to be postmodern today. We do go down saying we're going to put together a good exhibition that is hopefully

> challenging and questioning and if we put one cultural icon in one place, we try to put something that challenges that icon in another place.[6]

Added to the suggestion of positioning art works within a particular exhibition in ways that challenge each other, there is also the possibility of showing the collection in various changing displays. In so doing, the collection acquires 'multiple meanings, or interpretations of the art works in question. Marshall puts this point as follows:

> That's another thing I should say as part of our collecting policy, we never put anything permanently in one place, we constantly show the collection in changing displays and the idea behind that is not just that it enables an institution to show its collection sooner or later, but also because it allows for more multiple interpretations of artwork, you know showing work in different contexts. So nothing becomes frozen into one identity or one place on one wall or whatever.[7]

Another important concern is to organise exhibitions of the collection in line with the other activities of the two programming departments, ED and E&CD. The following quote indicates how important it is to complement the activities of the E&CD with exhibitions of the collection, which help facilitate the issues raised within certain E&CD programmes:

> We try to put work on show that facilitates the work of the Education and Community department a lot because IMMA is very proud of its Education and Community initiatives. And if the collection can support that in a serious way, we'd like to do that because at the end of the day the museum's first duty is to its publics. Its second duty is to the artists whose work is here I think but its first duty is to the publics who use the museum. We would try to programme the collection in a way that helps the Education and Community access programme.[8]

The relationship between the display of contemporary art and the RHK is another element, which informs the curators' way of thinking about the display of art in IMMA, as integrated into a bigger, historical context. The following comment, however, introduces another practical consideration in exhibition design: the need to work with artists in the process of exhibition making. As Marshall explains:

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[6] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[7] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[8] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.

> 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, and they are here because modern art looks good in them. So they are there to show the work the way the artists want their work to be shown, and against clean white walls, but very much integrated into a bigger whole.[9]

However, important as following the artists' requirements for the display of works may be, it is also possible to say that exhibition is informed by the process of selection in collecting. A case in point is the purchase of works which seek to redefine identity. As O'Molloy explains:

> I think that the arguments are in a way addressed already. The decisions for the works that are going into the show have been made, so they are picking up on the idea of art as redefining identity ... The work has already been purchased by the museum so that's when that is addressed really, I think. So if you're displaying the work, again you're not really doing that job twice, the job is kind in a way, I am not saying it's done already. I mean if you are trying to address how a work is displayed or received or read then you're going to be presenting it in certain way, but you're still dealing with the work and I think the museum is doing its job. If it's open access, if it's then through the tours the museum is giving, whether they are open or addressing those issues.[10]

So far, we see that IMMA's worldview and collecting policy are present in the ways curators think about the task of exhibition making. This points out that exhibition making is a form of translation within IMMA's sub-field; it is based on and informed by the wider boundaries set up by McGonagle, to give symbolic power to the sub-field. Let me focus next on the specific concerns informing exhibition design.

Exhibition Design

Exhibition making is not merely informed by the musuem's role and collecting policy. An added responsibility on behalf of the museum is to exhibit works by living *artists* following the artists' own requirements for presentation. In fact, working with artists is part of the museum's policy:

> 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 for the first time; we bring the artist here

[9] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[10] Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, IMMA, 4th June 2002.

> to show us how to install it, if it is problematic in any way, or to work out even what rooms in the building are suitable for their work and so on. And that's an absolute part of our policy ... I think the artist made the work with a particular set of ideas in his or her head and we would, of course, want to tap into those.[11]

Although it is the museum's responsibility to be involved with the artist in the presentation of his/her work, this practice does not seem to constrain or interfere with the role of curators in the design of exhibitions. As O'Molloy explains:

> If an artist makes a piece of sculpture and they decide that this piece of sculpture is not supposed to go on a plinth, it's supposed to be displayed directly on the floor, you make sure that it's shown the way the artist wants to show it, it's part of the work ... I don't think that's limiting at all; I think that's a very practical, but very important decision that an artist makes about the display of their work. If somebody makes a picture and they decide that there isn't supposed to be a frame, you don't put a frame on it. You know these are modes of display and presentation of the work, which are bound up with the meaning of the work as well, so to change that or to see that it's limiting, well no it's not limiting at all.[12]

Apart from ensuring that the works' requirements are met, exhibition making entails another type of responsibility: to ensure that works are positioned to 'their best advantage'. O'Molloy elaborates this point as follows:

> You're trying to organise that the exhibition shows the work to its best advantage; so that the room is well lit; that the pieces hang correctly; that it's positioned well; that aesthetically it looks good; that if there are any requirements for a video that the video is working, you know basic kind of requirements ... For me an exhibition should look good, the bottom line is it's a visual thing. It should look great. It should be exciting and should be well lit. It should be well positioned; works should be given enough space to breath.[13]

As we see from the quote above, the phrase 'to its best advantage' refers to the various elements of exhibition belonging to an IFV: the hanging and positioning of works are practices that enhance the display of works of art. That is, they are not intrinsic or exclusive practices to IMMA's sub-field. The use of texts is another convention present in the sub-field.

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[11] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[12] Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, IMMA, 4th June 2002.
[13] Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, IMMA, 4th June 2002.

Collection exhibitions use extended captions offering some interpretation about the exhibition's *raison d'être*. Marshall distinguishes the *labels* used in collection exhibitions from non-collections exhibitions, those by the ED: "they just put up very minimal modernist labels." This is how she explains this difference in emphasis:

> That's usually because their shows are very much more focused, the ancillary information that you might need is usually in the form of books and catalogues, and they would have much more reading material on offer. The collection department doesn't have a budget to bring out nice books every time, doesn't have any budget for that. We're lucky if we get a little exhibition guide. But from the first day that I came to work here, 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 postmodernist idea, I think, not a modernist one. It's completely against the white cube aesthetic.[14]

An interesting issue here is how one's cultural capital – e.g. knowledge about art history – can be applied to a particular form of curatorial practice: the use of texts to accompany the visual arrangement of artworks.

Another important requirement for the presentation of the works is their *size*. As O'Molloy explains, the size of a work can indicate that it must be positioned in a certain way. This is then a starting point for the visual arrangement of works:

> There are loads of different positions that you're coming from when you're going to do the layout of a large exhibition like this, [Irish Art Now] some of the works are very physically large, so they need to go in a certain position. So that's going to be a starting point for you in some ways as well, but then out of that grow the other decisions because: who are you going to put next to this artist? Or what works are you going to display close to this? Is it visually good? You know all those things.[15]

So far the making of collection exhibitions in IMMA's sub-field is a practice drawing on previous developments in an IFV. This is a form of translation in which curators in IMMA operate between IMMA's sub-field and an IFV, from which they borrow techniques of design. Moreover, the positioning of works, the use of labels and texts, the arrangement by size, are

[14] Interview with Catherine Marshall, IMMA, 25th June 2001.
[15] Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, IMMA, 4th June 2002.

elements that contribute to provide an aesthetically ordered space – as opposed to the surrealist spaces I referred to in section 1.1.

But once these primary requirements are taken into account, exhibition design also allows a certain leeway for curators to create particular readings of the artworks on display. The spatial arrangement of works and the location of a museum or gallery – i.e. a historical or new building – participate in giving artworks different meanings. For example, in the *Irish Art Now* exhibition (see 2.2), works toured to different venues and thus offered different readings according to where and how they were exhibited. O'Molloy makes this point:

> It's very interesting because basically you have the same works in five different venues and you see a completely different reading of some works depending on what they are placed beside, or what sort of building they are in, the history of that building. There are all sorts of ways that these works can change even though this is an exhibition doing a very specific thing. It's presenting a particular reading of Irish art in the 90s, poetic and political ... You can't pin down the work saying you know this work is only saying this one thing. The works have multiple meanings; so the displays would reflect that, so each individual in the four different venues would add their own take.[16]

This quote offers an interesting argument on IMMA's aesthetics. It points out that artworks have multiple meanings, and that display practices can reflect this element. This is not to say that the positioning of a work is a way of defining or fixing its meaning. Rather, the spatial arrangement of works seems to enable both open and closed readings of artworks:

> You can either be opening up new readings or closing them off ... You are either opening it up to the possibility for a new meaning, or new reading, or you're not, or you're saying this is it, and it's defined. Sometimes you can find that a very straightforward or conventional, or traditional way of presenting work can be restrictive in saying that it's laid in stone, this is what this work means. But if you can manage to create a more open exhibition then you have more possibilities for the work being accessed by a greater number of people.[17]

The possibility of artworks offering closed or open meanings, according to how they are displayed is an interesting view to relate to Serota's arguments. Open meanings, seems to suggest the making of mise-en-scènes. As I said, this model gives viewers an active role in

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[16] Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, IMMA, 4th June 2002.
[17] Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, IMMA, 4th June 2002.

understanding artworks. The notion of closed meanings points at a practice such as Serota's 'curatorial interpretation' in which curators exercise a crucial role in creating meanings for artworks, through the use of display techniques. This argument reinforces my earlier suggestion that an analysis of exhibitions must account for the possibility of a co-existence of design techniques. It also indicates that Serota's model for contemporary curatorial practices is then not as clear-cut as he suggests.

In addition, IMMA's conventions on exhibition design give us some insight into the practice of exhibition making. In fact, we can see a similarity between an IFV and IMMA's sub-field in relation to the conventions used in exhibition design. The emphasis on *selection* and *positioning artworks* to create particular meanings – i.e. open or closed – has been present in IFV since its beginnings. We saw how the arrangement of works by theme and size later gave way to a display according to national schools, which prevailed during the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 20th century, we also find an emphasis on positioning works to create particular meanings. In MOMA, for example, works were hung by styles to demonstrate the chronological development, or progress of certain artists. Another convention in the IFV and also present in IMMA's sub-field is the use of *texts and labels.* These similarities suggest that IMMA's conventions are part of the conventions of an IFV. Bringing them into the sub-field is a way of translating, through importing and adapting, techniques from one field into another.

Hence in this discussion we have seen two forms of translation in exhibition making. One concern is to follow IMMA's worldview and collecting policy, which I see as a way of translating within IMMA's sub-field. That is, curators are putting into practice ideas created within the sub-field. In addition, curators need to borrow their exhibition techniques from an IFV. In so doing, they translate forms of knowledge by incorporating techniques from an external field to then use them in IMMA's sub-field. To continue this discussion, the last part of this chapter focuses on exhibitions of IMMA's collection. These analyses then are used to explore how IMMA's curators put into practice the conventions here outlined.

2 Entering the Irish Museum of Modern Art

The museum exhibition space consists of ground and first floor and is divided between the East and West Wing. The ground floor has the Gordon Lambert Galleries in the West Wing, and the East Wing galleries. In addition there is some exhibition space in the landing, next to the reception area, which is used by both temporary exhibitions and exhibitions of the

collection. The collection department is in charge of exhibiting the collection. Usually, the space destined for this purpose is the West Wing on the first floor, although exhibitions can also take place in the East Wing. The courtyard is also a site for exhibiting outdoor works of the collection. My purpose in this part of the chapter is to analyse three exhibitions of the collection.

My analysis of exhibitions is based on the interior spaces of the RHK, but the building itself creates a particular encounter for those visitors who arrive at the museum. Even though it is situated within the community of Kilmainham, the RHK's structure, its monumental architecture and magnificent gardens set it apart from its surroundings. The New Galleries are not situated within the museum's main building, but on the grounds of the Formal Gardens surrounding the RHK; in itself indicative of their position as an addition to the main space. Before arriving at the museum's building visitors are presented with some permanent outdoors works from the museum's collection. On the East Lawn is a sculpture by Michael Warren, *Beneath the bow* (1991). Plastered on the wall of the museum's East Arch is Lawrence Weiner's *Water and Sand, Sticks and Stones* (1991). We see how the works create a route for visitors to follow as well as becoming incorporated as part of the museum itself. Those visitors who enter the museum's main building must walk along its two main avenues - the East or West Gate - to cross the East or West Arch (see appendix, images 1 and 2) which brings them to the museum's courtyard (image 3). Once we cross the archway we arrive at the museum's courtyard; a space, which has been the site of various exhibitions. Image 3 shows the display of Juan Muñoz's *Conversation Piece* (1994) in the courtyard. It is quite common to see visitors taking photographs of themselves next to Munoz's figures. The experience of visitors interacting at their ease with the works outdoors – e.g. being able to touch them - changes as we enter the museum's building (image 4). Visitors find maps of the museum site and floor plans of the main building and the New Galleries, with an introduction to the museum's background – information about its building, opening - and its different Departments and Programmes. The museum visit begins.

2.1 Exhibiting IMMA's collection: initial questions

Before I start my analysis of exhibitions it is relevant to spend some time devising the questions that it seeks to answer. In my previous discussion I argued that in exhibition making IMMA's curators translate in two ways: within their sub-field, following IMMA's worldview; and between fields, their own sub-field and an IFV, which provides them with a set of techniques – i.e. positioning and selection of works, use of texts. My main aim now is to

investigate if these forms of translation also occur in exhibitions of works from IMMA's own collection. To do so I set out two lines of investigation. An initial question is to explore the extent to which the display of artworks is informed by IMMA's worldview. In chapter 5, we have seen that the selection of acquisitions, loans and donations, is informed, at least partly, by IMMA's worldview and collecting policy.

A first line of enquiry aims to clarify if the same relationship exists in relation to the selection and display of works. That is, how crucial are the selection, use of texts, and display of works in delivering IMMA's worldview and collecting policy? Can we argue that they are creating new ways which of thinking about art which are relevant to IMMA's worldview? And this leads me to my second line of enquiry, which focuses on the use of exhibition techniques.

Part I of this chapter has set out to provide the necessary tools to analyse exhibitions. They can be divided into two: the conventions used in exhibition design – both in the IFV and in IMMA's sub-field; and Serota's model of contemporary curatorial practices as 'making a mise-en-scène'. In fact, this model makes explicit the use of various curatorial techniques, which can serve us here as starting points for analysis. For example, the idea that exhibitions display successive groups of works by single artists points at the need to explore the visual arrangement of works. Similarly, the notion that exhibitions allow an absolute concentration on the works on display is suggestive of the aestheticisation of art approach, in which artworks are not supported by any techniques such as texts and labels. However, my previous discussion of IMMA's conventions adds other elements that need to be included in this analysis: the role of texts, and the positioning of works to provide multiple interpretations are two other practices that need to be investigated. Hence I set out the specific questions that will help me explore Serota's models in light of the conventions both in IMMA's sub-field and in the IFV.

A second line of enquiry then is focused on the production of texts (labels and captions) and space (positioning of works). What types of texts, labels and captions are used in the exhibitions? Are they educational – i.e. didactic – situating the works displayed within a period of art history? Or do they merely enhance the aesthetic qualities of artworks? How are works positioned? Are they grouped by single artists or by artistic movement? What is the relationship between the provision of texts and the positioning of works?

The following analysis looks at three exhibitions of IMMA's collection, *Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political, Art Unsolved,* and *Art Without Precedent* by focusing on three exhibition techniques: selection of works, textual presentation and spatial arrangements. It then brings together the main points raised in these analyses to reflect, more generally, on the intellectual practices involved in exhibition making.

2.2 *Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political*

In its display at IMMA, the *Irish Art Now* exhibition occupied the East Wing Galleries on the First Floor, but the show emerged as the first touring show of the collection to the U.S. Independent Curators International (ICI) initiated the tour, and McGonagle curated the show: he selected the artworks, and wrote in the exhibition's catalogue,[18] which presents the themes the exhibition sought to address.[19] Initially, the exhibition was to be shown in the U.S. only, but in the process it was decided to exhibit it in Dublin to celebrate the first touring exhibition from the collection.[20] On its arrival at IMMA after its two-year U.S. tour, the exhibition had its final showing in 2001/02 (14th November - 7th March). Although McGonagle was the exhibition's curator, by the time of its show in Dublin he had already resigned from his post. Assistant curator of the collection department O'Molloy took over the spatial arrangement of the works. The exhibition's wall text is written by head of collection and senior curator, Marshall. So we have an exhibition curated at three stages by three different individuals.

Selection for display

The *Irish Art Now* exhibition includes forty works by thirteen artists working in different media - painting, photography, sculpture, video and installation. As the title indicates they are all of Irish background -Willie Doherty, Mark Francis, and Paul Seawright are from Northern Ireland. In this sense, the exhibition is representative of a wide variety of artistic

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[18] The catalogue includes three essays: one by former director Declan McGonagle, titled 'Renegotiating the Given'; a second essay, 'Ireland', by journalist and author Fintan O'Toole; and a last essay by Kim Levin 'Poetics, Politics, and Irish Art: Thirteen Questions'. *Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political.* Merrell Holberton Publishers Ltd and Independent Curators International. 1999.

[19] ICI in New York contacted Declan McGonagle to organise an exhibition of Irish art. Their role is to contact curators they are interested in working with, and invite them to be a guest curator for an exhibition they want to promote. Given that McGonagle was also interested in promoting Irish art and the museum abroad, the co-operation between IMMA and ICI resulted in the exhibition 'Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political', curated by McGonagle as ICI's guest curator. ICI was in charge of organising the venues for the US tour; and the exhibition travelled to the McMullen Museum of Art in Boston, the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador in Newfoundland, Pittsburgh and the Chicago Cultural Center. Interview with Catherine Marshall, 25th June 2001.

[20] This decision was made at senior programming level in which are involved at least: director, head of exhibitions, head of collection, and head of education and community. Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, 4th June 2002.

practices by artists at both sides of the border. The exhibition, however, does not show a large number of works by each artist. While there are cases in which we only see one work by a particular artist – i.e. Alanna O'Kelly's video installation, *Sanctuary/Wastelands,* and Maurice O'Connell's installation *Never Mind "Kangaroo," Just Answer the Question* – the exhibition presents an average of three works by each artist. The small number of works per artist is an early indication of the aim to portray the artistic practice of a group, as opposed to an in depth focus on works by the individual artists.

Most of the works selected are part of the museum's collection, except in those cases when it was necessary to borrow recent works by an artist, which were not in the collection. It must be pointed out that these are artists who have been previously consecrated through the commercial gallery system as seen in chapter 3. This differentiates them, as we will see, from the outsider artists in IMMA's collection. Of the thirteen artists in *Irish Art Now,* the Kerlin Gallery represents seven (as we have seen in chapter 3, the Kerlin Gallery is a leading commercial gallery in its sub-field): Dorothy Cross, Willie Doherty, Mark Francis, Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin, Alanna O'Kelly, Kathy Prendergast, and Paul Seawright. The Green on Red Gallery represents Alice Maher.

Textual presentation

The exhibition includes a wall text written by Catherine Marshall. The text follows the ideas presented by McGonagle in the catalogue published to accompany the exhibition's tour to the U.S. It also mentions her name and also Marshall's position in the museum, senior curator and head of collections. This is a way of legitimating the contents of the interpretations it offers. But its importance as an analytical tool is twofold: to explore how the message it conveys is related to the positioning of works, which I will discuss later on; it also provides fertile ground to investigate the intellectual practice of translation. The text in this exhibition exemplifies a didactic approach to thinking about art. It situates the works on display within their own context of production, and explains how they are participant in a process of change and transformation.

The exhibition's aim is bringing "to public scrutiny the changes that have taken place in attitudes to visual art and to art making in Ireland, during the last decade of the 20th century."[21] Hence from the beginning the task of curators is to translate between fields, bringing developments in the FCA to IMMA's sub-field. The text situates Irish art in its own

[21] Wall text. Marshall, C. *Irish Art Now; From the Poetic to the Political.*

particular context, Irish society, arguing that changes in cultural, social and political spheres of Irish society are matched by corresponding changes in the visual arts. In this way, Irish art is conceptualised as dynamic, and Irish artists as reflecting on the changes around them in their practice. Some of the changes mentioned are the population growth in cities, the feminist revolution, and the development of the Irish economy. Artists in the exhibition deal with a set of novel issues: the legacy of colonial experience, a feminist examination of religious rituals. An important point is that in emphasising the cohesion among the artists on display, the text also situates their practice as exemplifying some of the museum's ways of thinking about art:

> Ultimately the artists all share the questioning of language and communication made explicit in Maruice O'Connell's *Never Mind "Kangaroo", Just Answer the Question*. If language is indeterminate then we are all responsible for our own interpretations and our own construction of meaning; this is an uncompromisingly political position.[22]

The connection between this quote and IMMA's worldview on aesthetics comes to the fore in the view that all artists are involved in the questioning of existing language and ways of communicating. As we saw in chapter 5, this is a key principle of IMMA's sub-field. The important turn here is that in this context, it is viewers who are now key players in the construction of meaning for artworks. The mention of this task as a political position gives a second meaning to the term 'political' in the title. It is not only Irish art that is political – i.e. redefining existing perceptions of its environment – but also viewers are taking political positions in relation to art. This argument illustrates one of the principles of IMMA's worldview, which is the redefinition of ways of thinking about art. In this case, the text articulates a form of translation within IMMA's sub-field by making explicit how the selection of works fits into its views of aesthetics. My next point is to explore the type of translation occurring in the spatial arrangement of works.

Spatial arrangements

The exhibition took place in the East Wing of the museum consisting of a long corridor and seven adjacent small rooms. My argument here is that presentation techniques create two types of spaces: first, the use of space as 'aestheticisation of art', a mise-en-scène, allowing visitors to concentrate in the perception of artworks; and, second, space also creates an analytical approach to art, encouraging multiple readings of the works.

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[22] Wall text. Marshall, C. *Irish Art Now; From the Poetic to the Political.*

Identity labels are used to give basic information about the works. They state: name of the artist, title, year, materials and origin of the work – i.e. the museum's collection or a loan from the artist or a gallery. Hence their role here is not didactic, as in the case of the wall text referred above, but simply referential. As I said in my discussion of IMMA's conventions, section 1.2, the design of exhibitions entailed a responsibility towards exhibiting the artists' works according to their specific instructions. This exhibition exemplifies this practice. For example, Willie Doherty (image 5) requested that the photographs exhibited here be hung lower than normal. Other type of requirements were those of installation works, as in the case of Alice Maher's *Familiar 1,* which needed a certain type of wall for the peg to go in, so that the flax can hang on it (image 6).[23] But there is more to the presentation of works than simply fulfilling the artists' requirements. In what follows, we see how the spatial arrangement or *positioning* of works by curators is a useful way to help us identify how it shapes the ways art is perceived. I will refer first to the works in the small rooms, and secondly, to those in the long corridor.

Initially, the position of the works in the exhibition space suggests a classification according to artist. All the seven small rooms are connected so the viewer can decide whether to look at the works following the rooms' sequence, or to go from the rooms to the corridor and vice-versa. One way of starting to move through the exhibition is to walk along the corridor and start exploring the rooms attached to it. If we follow the room sequence we continue to find an emphasis on positioning works by individual artists in each room. The first room we find displays a single work by Maurice O'Connell, *Never Mind 'Kangaroo,' Just Answer the Question*. It shows a stuffed wallaby standing on the floor next to the analyses questionnaires hung on the wall. In the corridor we see, on one side, three ink paintings by Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin grouped together (image 7). Opposite to them there is an entry to room (1) displaying four photographs by artist Willie Doherty. *Incident* and *Border Incident* are positioned in two consecutive walls (image 5), and two other photographs *Longing/Lamenting* occupy another wall. This room provides an entrance to a dark room showing Alanna O'Kelly's installation video *Sanctuary/Wastelands*.

The next room (2) shows a different form of display because it contains works by two different artists: Ciarán Lennon – an oil titled *Hearth*– and Billy Quinn's *Billy* (image 8). Next to the room there is a small space with a small television showing Dorothy Cross' image on

[23] Interview with Marguerite O'Molloy, IMMA, 4th June 2002.

video *Storm in a Tea Cup*. This space leads to another room (3), which includes two works also by Cross *Saddle*, and *Kitchen Table* (image 9). The next space to this room is a study space with a desk, chair and six publications for viewers to sit down and read.

The *study space* is relevant for various reasons. It allows viewers to learn more about each artist from the biographical texts on the artists displayed. It also emphasises the didactic ethos of the exhibition provided in the wall text. Apart from the exhibition's own catalogue, there are other three catalogues of previous Irish art exhibitions: *Shifting Ground*, at IMMA; *0044*, a travelling exhibition of Irish artists based in the UK, and *When Time Began to Rant and Rage* a travelling exhibition of Irish art. These catalogues position the exhibition within a sequence of exhibitions of Irish art or Irish artists, which have been shown both in Ireland and abroad. They highlight a tradition of exhibiting Irish art, as well as presenting Irish art as a subject deserving study. The desk also provides biographies of the artists, which is significant if we consider that they are not presented as texts within the exhibition space – i.e. next to each of the artists' works. This lack of biographical statements reinforces the fact that the works displayed illustrate the practice of a wide group of artists. However, if we follow the sequence of small rooms we find an arrangement of space according to individual artists. In short, the exhibition suggests, at least, two possible ways of thinking about the artists in question: as individual creators, and as part of a wider group.

Following the study space is a room (4) with six relatively small works (four hung on one wall and two on another) by Ciarán Lennon, symmetrically displayed at the same height; In the same room we find two televisions positioned on white pedestals showing Caroline McCarthy's video installation *Greetings*. A small space next to this room shows another video installation by McCarthy, *Journey through the longest escalator*. This room and the room with works by Billy Quinn and Ciarán Lennon are the only two examples of small spaces where works by two artists are positioned together. The last three rooms show again works by individual artists: Paul Seawright (5), Alice Maher (6) and Mark Francis (7). In room 5 we see three photographs by Paul Seawright hanging individually on each of the room's walls. Room 6 contains three works by Alice Maher: a sculpture, *Staircase of Thorns* hanging on a wall; another wall displays an installation work, *Familiar 1* (image 6); and the last work, *Coma Berenices*, is a charcoal on paper hanging on a third wall. We find a fourth work also by Maher in the small space next to the room, *Berry Dress*, shown on a glass shelf which allows us to see the thorns underneath the dress. The last of the rooms (7) displays four paintings by Mark Francis positioned individually on each of the walls.

The displays in these rooms prioritise an arrangement by artist. This is emphasised by the positioning of very few works in each of the rooms. Moreover, the rooms are small with relatively low ceilings. This type of space enables viewers to have an 'intimate encounter' with the works on display. Although the windows in the rooms facing the museum's gardens can distract visitors from looking at the art, the layout of works in the spaces re-instates a sense of contemplation of the works displayed. In short, the rooms are suggestive of Serota's notion of mise-en-scène, as spaces, which enhance the contemplation of artworks.

The long corridor, however, creates another type of viewing space. Of significance to this discussion is that the positioning of works in this space can suggest in viewers a wide range of interpretations of the artworks on display. Most of the physically large works are positioned in the corridor– either hanging on the wall spaces available between the entries to the rooms, or positioned directly on the floor (image 10). The demands of space may be a reason why we see works by various artists. First, on the left, is Billy Quinn's *Quinn's Da*, consisting in eleven large panels (60x60 inches each) of laser prints hung on the wall. Also on the left, we see another large work, Ciarán Lennon's painting *1/3/92B* - 97x195x4 inches. Next to it are two photographs by Paul Seawright *Black Spike* and *Flag* both from his Fire Series. Image 11 shows the same side of the corridor with Abigail O'Brien's installation work, *The Last Supper*, including seven photographs, a long table positioned on the floor with white tablecloth and a chair. The last exhibit on this wall is O'Brien's, *The Ophelia Room* - three large photographs hung on the wall. The display of works by different artists continues at the other side of the corridor. As we enter, on the right, we see three ink paintings by Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin (image 7). Next are two works by Kathy Prendergast *Love Object* (a comb and hair positioned in a glass vitrine secured to the wall) and *Prayer Gloves* (image 12) on a small shelf; close to them, in the middle of the corridor, is positioned her large sculpture, 108x104x28 inches, *Stack A* (image 10). Although works continue to be displayed according to artist, the use of space in the corridor offers a broader perspective of various practices in Irish art, as opposed to a focus on an Irish artist.

The corridor itself provides a different viewing experience from the small rooms. This is a long, wide exhibition space with a high ceiling, and windows looking onto the museum's courtyard. In short, the intimate encounter created in the small rooms is not possible here. Viewers are more encouraged here to seek relationships between the various works on display. The question is: what sort of links can we establish between the works? Although, according to the exhibition text, all the works share an engagement in topics such as

politics, gender, and landscape, these connections maybe not be obvious to all viewers. Particularly not to those not endowed with an amount of cultural capital, or knowledge about contemporary Irish art. This is particularly the case of those works whose conceptual nature means that their meaning may not be obvious at a first glance – i.e. Prendergast's *Love Object* or Maher's *Familiar 1.* But the exhibition is intended to enable viewers to create particular links between the works. For example, at first glance, we can see a certain link between Abigail O'Brien's *The Last Supper* – with photographs of only women involved in a contemporary version of the religious ritual - and Kathy Prendergast's *Prayer Gloves*, which may suggest the rigidity or imposition of praying as a religious practice. Both artists can be seen as challenging conventional ways of thinking about religious rituals. Another possible association is that between Ciarán Lennon *1/3/92B* and Fionnuala Ní Choisáin whose abstract paintings position them as the more poetic artists in the exhibition. Particularly, if we compare them to Paul Seawright's political use of photography to document the destruction in Northern Ireland; or Billy Quinn's photographs suggestive of the passing of time and arrival of death (of the eleven images only the last one portrays an empty chair). These are only some examples and there may be many others. For example, Prendergast's *Stack A,* Seawright's photographs and McCarthy's video, which are positioned in a close space, appear to be works that want to challenge a traditional view of Irish identity as closely tied to the land. Similarly, O'Kelly's video and O'Doherty's photographs deal with the idea of memory and how one's idea of a landscape may not be necessarily accurate.[24] This reading highlights the thematic affinities of works in both the rooms and the corridor. Again, the ability to make interpretations linking the works depends on our position within the exhibition space, and on our possession of cultural capital. The distribution of works in the corridor allows multiple readings of them. Although the use of exhibition techniques –i.e. use of vitrines, shelves – does not in itself provide innovative ways of looking at art, the distribution of works certainly achieves that.

As I said earlier, the artists in this exhibition are all well-known, professional art practitioners. Hence this exhibition provides an interesting point to compare the two following exhibitions from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection, which only include artworks made by non-professional artists.

[24] These readings were suggested in my interview with assistant curator Marguerite O'Molloy. 4th June 2002.

2.3 *Art Unsolved*

In what follows I explore two solo exhibitions of the outsider art collection. As I mentioned in chapter 5, the outsider collection is on loan to the museum. But, most important is the fact that they have not acquired symbolic capital through the practices of consecration in the FCA described in chapter 4. What makes outsiders different from let us say the artists in *Irish Art Now* is their lack of interest in promoting their work. As the collector Monika Kinley puts it, "outsiders were never out for prestige."[25] A key difference between outsiders and mainstream artists, at least in terms of exhibition design, is that the former do not set up requirements for the presentation of their works. This gives curators an added responsibility because apart from positioning the works to their best advantage, they need to devise ways to present them - as opposed to ensuring that the artists' wishes are met.

The display practices I explore here are solo exhibitions, that is, they only display works from the outsider art collection. Here I will be referring to the two solo exhibitions, which have taken place since 1998, when the collection was loaned to the museum: *Art Unsolved* (13th June – 14th October 1998) and *Art Without Precedent* (29th January – 9th May 2000).

Selection for display

Art Unsolved was organised to commemorate the loan of the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection to IMMA. This is a usual practice in the museum. Each time a loan or donation is made to the museum, an exhibition is set up to present the works to the public. The exhibition comprises more than 200 works by some 70 artists, from a collection of over 750 works by artists from as far as Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the U.S. and Australia.[26] Initially the selection of artists does not give us much information as to the type of exhibition we are about to see. This is because its main aim, apart from introducing the collection to the public, is to provide an interpretative framework for thinking about 'outsider art' as a distinct aesthetic category. This becomes clear in the exhibition's textual information (the exhibition's wall text), which introduces the main traits of 'outsider art.'

Textual presentation

Two types of texts frame the display of the exhibition: the wall text and identity tags to accompany each work. In this occasion, the wall text is co-written by McGonagle and Marshall. The exhibition's title, *Art Unsolved*, is borrowed from a piece in the outsider

[25] Interview with Monika Kinley, 4th July 2001.
[26] Press Release. 'Art Unsolved: the Outsider Collection at the Irish Museum of Modern Art.' 12th May 1998.

collection by Dusan Kusmic. But the term is used here to illustrate a general principle of all art. As the wall text says: "Applied to Outsider Art, it suggests that the artworks are ultimately unsolvable because the scientific method, the basis of consensual art history, is actually not applicable to them." But 'art unsolved' has a "more universal application"; it indicates a characteristic of all art, not only outsider art: "It suggests that all art is unsolvable, is unknowable, that there can be no single, permanent definition of value and meaning in art."[27] In designating outsider art as 'unsolved' and then applying this principle to all types of art, the text calls our attention to the fact that outsider art is equal to all art – including that by professional artists. In fact, as we saw in chapter 5, this was the aim behind the acceptance of this collection on loan, to emphasise the lack of distinctions between outsider and other works: "the work these artists are doing is art whether it is inside the gallery or it is not."[28] The text also points at the suitability of the loan in the context of the museum's worldview. Outsider artworks "make a powerful argument for a new way of looking and thinking about art which is open and inclusive rather than closed and exclusive." The text then adds:

> [The Collection] is an appropriate loan to this Museum because of the Museum's founding principle that it must engage in the renegotiation of standing definitions of artist and non-artist, and of the categorisations which have traditionally ascribed value to art, artists and cultural institutions in society. There is currently an opportunity and, in fact, a necessity, as we face a new millennium, to create and support new, broader definitions of value in art.[29]

The mention of the link between IMMA's worldview and the collection is relevant here. In making this connection, the text acts as a mediator within IMMA's field. It brings to the fore that the exhibition is fulfilling the museum's worldview. But there is another type of translation at work in the text because it also notes the difference of outsider art from mainstream art. For example, it reveals the unusual circumstances in which outsiders produce their work, and their indifference to the "world of traditional art history": "the artists who produce outsider art do not have professional qualifications." The text specifies the conditions in which outsiders create their art:

> Scottie Wilson ran a junk shop until one day he tried out the gold nib of a pen he had intended to melt down and became totally committed to drawing form then on. Dusan

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[27] Wall text. McGonagle, D and C. Marshall. *Art Unsolved.*
[28] Interview with Catherine Marshall, 21st March 2000.
[29] Wall text. McGonagle, D and C. Marshall. *Art Unsolved.*

> Kusmic was traumatised when a fellow inmate of a post-war refugee camp committed suicide during a mealtime. Using the bread he was unable to swallow he began to mould small objects and unleashed a flood of creative energy which was sustained throughout the remainder of his life. Although blind in one eye, Madge Gill worked at night, rarely using artificial lighting, to produce hundreds of drawings at the behest of her 'spirit guide.'[30]

There is an underlying tension in this text. Outsider art is presented as an aesthetic paradigm for seeing and thinking about all art: it is unsolvable; a type of knowledge, which echoes IMMA's worldview. At the same time, the exhibition draws on knowledge outside IMMA's sub-field – information about the artists' lives - which creates a way of thinking about outsiders as a group. This suggests how the text is built upon a form of translation between fields, importing knowledge from outside the sub-field to illustrate the characteristics of this type of art. The overall emphasis of the text is didactic in informing visitors about outsider art and encouraging them to have a questioning approach to art. Apart from the wall text, we also find a study space with the collection's catalogue, the *Art Without Precedent Exhibition* (1979), and various issues of the outsider art magazine *Raw Vision*. Bearing this argument in mind, I explore next the visual arrangement of works.

Spatial arrangements

The exhibition occupied the East Wing of the museum – the same space as the *Irish Art Now* exhibition. As we have seen this exhibition space recalls, partly, a *modernist aesthetics of presentation*: the white walls, grey floor, and lack of any ornamentation put forth a claim for the seriousness and relevance of the art on display. Again each work is given an identity tag including only basic facts such as the work's title, its maker, the year the work was made, the type of materials used and the works' source, the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection.

In this exhibition we find a stronger emphasis than in *Irish Art Now* on positioning works within forms of presentation, such as the use of props: vitrines, pedestals and tables with vitrines. Image 13 is a view of the long corridor showing the use of tables and a pedestal with vitrines to facilitate the display of works. These forms of presentation are used to protect fragile works, but they are also a way of creating particular ways of looking at artworks. As Putnam points out:

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[30] Wall text. McGonagle, D and C. Marshall. *Art Unsolved*.

> The act of placing an object in a vitrine immediately focuses attention on it and suggests that it might also be both precious and vulnerable. The vitrine reinforces the notion of the unique, untouchable and unattainable and, perhaps significantly, has its roots in the medieval church reliquary. It therefore enhances the inherent visual power of an object to catch a viewer's attention and to stimulate contemplation. The effect of placing something in a vitrine is to 'museumize' it: the glass creates not just a physical barrier but establishes an 'official distance' between object and viewer. By rendering untouchable the contained object or work of art, the more important and precious it becomes (Putnam, 2001: 36).

Vitrines are ways of highlighting the formal qualities of the works on display. They are a means of controlling the exhibition space, projecting a distance between artworks. But, as Putnam notes, they also stimulate a contemplative state in viewers. In short, they are conducive to a prolonged gaze. That is, viewers are more likely to be interested in something that has been so carefully separated from the rest; presented as a self-contained entity valuable in itself. Image 14 shows the landing space. The use of props is particularly obvious here. The positioning of small sculptures on pedestals with vitrines and bigger works on pedestals shows a careful classification of works according to not only fragility, but also size. In favouring presentation, and highlighting the formal qualities of the artworks, the exhibition recalls Serota's argument about the making of *mise-en-scènes*. However, the presentation of outsider art is also helping deliver the museum's worldview, and collecting policy: outsider art is displayed using the same type of exhibition techniques as those employed in the presentation of mainstream art. In so doing, the exhibition achieves its aim to renegotiate standing definitions of art value. In IMMA all art is presented following existing display conventions.

However, the exhibition also breaks its impulse to aestheticise outsider art in its emphasis on positioning works by different artists together. This is a feature prevalent in the whole exhibition space (corridor and rooms). For example, image 15 shows one of the small rooms attached to the corridor in which we find works by at least three different artists. The rag doll in the glass vitrine is by Michel Nedjar, the double-sided triptych is by Henry Darger, and one of the drawings is by Jean-Marie Heyligen. Apart from a variety of artists, we can see how the rooms display quite a number of artworks. In image 16 we find a combination of works by various artists grouped together. Works are symmetrically positioned, and in some cases in double-line hanging. The organisation of works of differing

sizes in centre line alignment gives a visually balanced relationship.[31] This is a concession to the viewer because it places works so that the viewing height coincides with the average eye-level for adults (Dean, 1994: 57). The wall on the right side of the image includes works by, at least, six artists. From left to right we see works by Friedrich Schroder Sonnenstern, Richard Nie, Warren Robin, Juanita Rogers, August Walla, and Michael the Cartographer.

A similar form of display prevails in image 17. It includes artworks by various artists, sometimes in double-line hanging. This mode of presentation evokes a lively visual aesthetics created by positioning works close together, as opposed to keeping them well spaced. It creates a sense of outsiders as being part of a cohesive group. Conversely, a display of a very small number of works, and well separated would have reinforced a notion of outsiders as individual artists. But the spatial arrangement of works is evocative of 'outsider art' in general, rather than 'outsider artist'.

This arrangement of artworks does not seem to prioritise the creation of multiple meanings as in *Irish Art* Now. This is rather difficult given the amount of works, ten on one wall (image 16), and their similar medium (they are all paintings) and size. What prevails is a space organised around the formal similarities of the works on display, as opposed to any existing thematic slants in outsiders' art. In addition, some rooms include two modes of presentation, glass vitrines and works hanging on the walls (images 17 and 18). These rooms enable two forms of looking. We find some works in vitrines, thus singling out their formal, aesthetic, qualities and creating a sense of contemplation or a prolonged gaze. We also see paintings hung close together and sometimes in double-line, which projects a vision of outsider artists as a group. The 'intimate encounter' created by the scarcity of works in the rooms of *Irish Art Now* is not possible here. But most important is that the techniques of positioning and presentation of works keep viewers occupied looking, rather than allowing them time to think on what they see – i.e. emphasise links between works.

[31] Another type of arrangement is the "flush alignment" in which objects are arranged so that all the top or bottom edges are aligned. As Dean notes the "center line/eye-level relationship is lost in this organization", which favours the distribution of works in relation to the physical space (Dean, 1994: 57), suggesting that the viewer's needs are not a priority in this form of display.

2.4 Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection

Selection for display

The origins of the artists selected for this exhibition highlight the international nature of the outsider collection: Austria (Oswald Tschirtner), Britain (Madge Gill, Carl Peploe, and Ben Wilson), Checkoslovakia (Anna Zemankova), France (Michel Nedjar), Italy (Carlo), and the U.S. (Henry Darger, and 'J.B.' Murry). The selection of artists is revealing because they are all well known in that they are part of an established outsider canon. The names of Henry Darger, Ben Wilson, Madge Gill, Michel Nedjar, John Murry, Oswald Tschirtner and Anna Zemankova can be found in recent books on outsider art.[32] From this point of view, the exhibition contributes to reinforce the reputations of outsiders who have achieved consecration within the field of outsider art, as opposed to exploring the works of less known artists in the collection. Moreover, the biographical texts serve to create a hierarchy within the artists exhibited, since they highlight the symbolic capital, prestige, of some outsiders whose work is included in the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne (Carlo, Anna Zemankova); or as the case of Henry Darger who is presented as "One of the most famous of all Outsider artists since his discovery in 1973."[33]

Textual presentation

The title *Art Without Precedent* is a statement that somehow gives *cohesion* to the production of these artists. They all produce work, which follows no previous models or examples. As the exhibition's text says: "All share an ability to focus totally on their own inner vision uninhibited by training, received art practice or, above all, by the weight of art history."[34] This rather conventional definition of outsider art is the same as that presented in *Art Unsolved*. But the title *Art Without Precedent* links the exhibition to previous events in the field of outsider art. The first landmark outsider exhibition in the UK was titled *Outsiders an art without precedent or tradition* (1979). The use of the same title positions the present exhibition as continuing with well-known events in the field of outsider art. As we will see, the inclusion of knowledge from outside IMMA's sub-field prevails in most of the text.

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[32] For example, in John Maizels' *Raw Creation*, 1996, in Colin Rhodes' *Outsider Art. Spontaneous Alternatives*. 2000, and in the exhibition catalogue *Private Worlds: Classic Outsider Art From Europe*, 1998 for the exhibition held at the Katonah Museum of Art (US). Carl People is the exception whose works I have not found referenced.

[33] Wall text. Marshall, C. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection.*

[34] Wall text. Marshall, C. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection.*

The text mentions the title of the previous exhibition, *Art Unsolved,* which again is used to characterise or universalise a definition of art as transcending boundaries between outsiders and insiders. This is a claim that the exhibition says to fulfil as it makes "a powerful argument for a new way of looking and thinking about art which is open and inclusive rather than closed and exclusive." Thus we find the same way of situating outsider art as an alternative interpretative framework, for looking and thinking about art in an inclusive way. Finally, the text links this framework to the museum's policy, which is the renegotiation of definitions of artist and non-artist, as well as of the categories which, traditionally, have ascribed value to art, artists and cultural institutions.

The text refers to the artists in the exhibition as representing "most of the leading issues relating to Outsider Art." In so doing, it supports the selection of the artists on display. It continues to describe the particularities of outsider artists' production. Their "ability to focus totally on their own inner vision uninhibited by training, received art practice or, above all, the weight of art history."[35] It also elaborates on how some of them work at the margins of society – i.e. from psychiatric hospitals; that most of them have no professional training as artists; their lack of concern for the art market. These artists then are selected as representing the various traits of the notion 'outsider artist'. The exhibition's wall text reveals two practices at work. First, is the translation within IMMA's sub-field. Here the exhibition is portrayed as illustrating the museum's principle to renegotiate value in art. Second, translation occurs between fields. As in the *Art Unsolved* exhibition, the text brings information, which belongs to the field of outsider art, into IMMA's sub-field – i.e. circumstances in which outsider artists create their works. This form of translation continues in another source of written information included in the exhibition: biographical statements for each of the artists on display.

Biographies are important for what they say about each artist and their work, and also because they establish the artists as individual figures, and also memorable characters whose lives are worth recording. I mentioned earlier that some of the biographies indicate the prestige of the artists. Added to this the texts offer two other types of information: *didactic,* personal details, and *aesthetic*, formal qualities of the artworks. The following portrayal of Madge Gill is suggestive of a didactic stance, which informs viewers of the specific circumstances in which the artist produced her work:

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[35] Wall text. Marshall, C. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection.*

> She gave birth to a still born daughter and in the same year lost the sight of one eye. At this time she began to draw and embroider, often working late at night with little or no light. She disclaimed ownership of her work saying that she was guided to do it by a spirit called Mynineresť.[36]

The aesthetic stance of biographies reveals details such as the kind of materials and the skill of outsiders. For example, Oswald Tschirtner's biography states:

> The minimalism of Tschirtner's pen and ink drawings is as shocking by avant garde standards as the work of the New York School in the sixties and seventies, yet he was quite unaware of art movements outside of the walls of his hospital.[37]

In another occasion, similarities are drawn between outsiders and mainstream artists, as in the case of John Murry's account:

> Murry's drawings and paintings, often on both sides of the paper, or like Picasso's newspaper drawings, overlaid on pages of journals and periodicals, hinge around a highly personalized and expressive form of calligraphy. The script is arranged in rhythmic groups of colours and forms and contains a spiritual message which Murry interpreted by examining it through a bottle of 'holy water'.[38]

Apart from providing two types of information, the writing of biographies is another example of translation between the field of outsider art and IMMA's sub-field. In what follows, I want to assess how the balance between the didactic and aesthetic components of the exhibition, and IMMA's worldview, is put into practice in the display of artworks.

Spatial arrangements

The exhibition took place in the Gordon Lambert galleries; a space consisting in three consecutive rooms with windows overlooking IMMA's gardens. This space is smaller than the East Wing in which both the previous exhibitions took place. The equal repartition of works in the space suggests that all works in the exhibition are of an equivalent artistic quality. A classification by artist structures the arrangement of the forty-one works on display. Given the nature of the space - three rooms and hanging space in the walls between

[36] Wall text. Marshall, C. *Madge Gill.*
[37] Wall text. Marshall, C. *Oswald Tschirtner.*
[38] Wall text. Marshall, C. John 'J.B.' Murry.

the windows looking onto the gardens – we find more than one artist in each room. Image 19 shows the first room as we enter in the galleries, with sculptures by Michael Nedjar, and Carl Peploe's books lay out on a table with vitrine. Image 20 shows another view of the same space including the display of a double-sided triptych by Henry Darger, and one of Nedjar rag dolls in. Image 21 shows the second room, which includes both-sides drawings by Carlo in frames and up on pedestals; hanging on the wall are Madge Gill's drawings, and, also by her, a silk embroidery displayed on a table with vitrine. Hanging on the wall are Oswald Tschirtner's drawings. The same image also offers a glimpse of the third room were Ben Wilson's 'Sungod' hungs, and in a continuing wall we find John Murry's drawings and paintings. Hanging on the sidewall in between the windows are Anna Zemankova's drawings.

The techniques of presentation are the same as in Art Unsolved - i.e. some objects are in glass vitrines (image 21), other paintings are positioned in stand up frames on pedestals (image 22), and the rest of the pictures and figures are hung on the walls with an identity tag of the same kind as in the previous exhibition (image 23). The use of these forms of presentation serves to emphasise the uniqueness of the works in question. Glass vitrines also stimulate the contemplation of the objects because these can be apprehended from various viewpoints. Together with stand up frames on pedestals they enhance a sense of movement; it breaks the symmetry of the works hung on walls by allowing viewers to move through the gallery space. Conversely, paintings are hung flat against walls; this mode of presentation limits the movement of visitors to the contemplation of a single perspective on the works. A more dynamic experience could be achieved, for example, by tilting paintings to a desired viewing angle. Props also serve to delimit the exhibition space; there is enough space between displays for visitors to move freely and the symmetry of the positioning of displays creates the exhibition as an ordered and controlled environment. Overall, the presentation of artworks achieves the exhibition's articulation of a principle of IMMA's worldview, which is to renegotiate ways of looking at art. In this case, outsider art is displayed using the same kind of techniques that would have been used in exhibitions of works by professional artists in the collection.

Despite the similar use of presentation techniques most striking in the exhibition is the use of space. Compared to *Art Unsolved*, we find here fewer objects on display, and emptier walls. Image 24, for example, shows only two objects in a large wall. Similarly, in image 23 paintings are hung in single line hanging, as opposed to the double-line hanging prevalent in

Art Unsolved. This is an important point given the relatively small size of the Gordon Lambert Galleries in comparison to the East Wing in which the collection had been displayed. This is a much more intimate space and yet the scarce displays give the impression of a much larger exhibition. Let me now elaborate on the main conclusions brought to the fore in each exhibition for the present study of intellectual practices.

The analyses presented here suggest two orientations underlying the display of artworks from IMMA's collection: didactic and aesthetic, which shed new light on Serota's argument on contemporary exhibition practices. In *Irish Art Now* the information in the wall text is a crucial component in helping viewers create some of the interpretations I suggested. As I said, it points out how Irish artists are engaging in topics such as the questioning of religious rituals. The visual arrangement of works is encouraging a questioning stance towards art, which is claimed both in the text and the museum's worldview. The selection of works is another key practice here because the inclusion of different artists may not have allowed the relationships between works I suggest. From this point of view, the relationship between text, selection and positioning of works is helping IMMA deliver its worldview. Hence, these practices exemplify a form of translation within IMMA's sub-field. However, the state of contemplation enhanced in the small rooms is more suggestive of the 'aestheticisation of art' stance. Serota's argument of curatorial practices as facilitating contexts can be applied here. The various interpretations of works and the links between text and arrangement of works are not that explicit in these types of spaces. Hence we find the co-existence of at least two models of curatorial practices, one that is committed to delivering the museum's worldview, and another which follows the dominant mode of display in the IFV, as theorised by Serota.

In *Art Unsolved* an aesthetic approach to display co-exists with a didactic approach to outsider art. On the one hand, the exhibition projects outsider art as valuable in itself as an object of aesthetic contemplation. This is achieved by the use of props such as glass vitrines and pedestals. By these means, outsider art is isolated from any of the ideas mentioned in the exhibition text e.g. the fact that conventional ways of apprehending art cannot be applied to it, or the unusual circumstances surrounding its production. This mode of display is the same that would be used in the exhibition of mainstream works. In so doing, the exhibition is delivering an important principle of the museum's worldview: the renegotiation of aesthetic value. On the other hand, the quantity of works displayed in the rooms emphasises their identification as part of a group or aesthetic genre. In this sense, the spatial arrangement of

works is related to the text's definition of outsider art as group. However, this mode of positioning does not facilitate the making of connections between the works by various artists, as in *Irish Art Now.* It makes it difficult to see a link between the positioning of works and the exhibition's claim to create new ways of looking at art. Although the text certainly encourages viewers to rethink ideas about who is an artist, and the presentation of it, as I said, probably achieves this aim, the aestheticisation of outsider art, while helping to achieve the museum's worldview, can also make this process difficult.

I argue that of the three exhibitions *Art Without Precedent* is the one where Serota's view of curatorial practices comes to the fore most explicitly. The aestheticisation of art prevails in the whole exhibition space. Moreover, the positioning of works fulfils another of Serota's criteria: it displays successive groups of works by single artists. However, this aesthetic component exists, as we have seen, alongside a didactic ethos. My analysis of the exhibition highlights both an aesthetic and a didactic dimension in this exhibition. The small amount of works presented by each artist, an average of five or six, offers the possibility of an in depth study of the artists' production. The educational side of the exhibition does not contribute to positioning outsider art as a didactic exhibit only; namely, an object with which visitors can interact and thus learn about it further. The addition of individual biographies in this second exhibition makes outsider art accessible in two different ways: with information about outsider artists and about the aesthetic aspects of their work. In the visual arrangement of works, however, a stronger presentation of outsider art as an object of aesthetic contemplation predominates than in *Art Unsolved.* This is achieved by the use of conventional presentation techniques as well as the inclusion of very few works well spaced. In addition, selection is a key practice here because it has only included a small number of works in the exhibition by well-known outsider artists. As we saw in *Art Unsolved* the inclusion of a larger amount of works enhance a group identity, rather than individuality. Here it is the individuality of the outsider artists on display that prevails. The modernist space and conventional display techniques enhances the aesthetic features of outsider art – i.e. the artistic skills of their producers. In turn, this emphasises its autonomy from some of the typical concerns informing the notion 'outsider artist', e.g. the unconventional lives of the producers, and of their form of production. The aestheticisation of outsider art continues.

Conclusion

My aim in this conclusion is twofold. First, I want to discuss the several arguments raised about the intellectual practices of exhibition making in IMMA's sub-field; and, second, to explore the relationship between collecting and display.

At the beginning of this chapter, I said that collecting and exhibiting the collection are two related practices as two ways of making aesthetic value for the museum's collection. My initial premise is that exhibitions create aesthetic value by shaping how viewers perceive art. Moreover, that in looking at how this process occurs we can shed some light onto the intellectual practices involved in exhibition making. In order to explore these practices I have devised the concept 'field of vision'. The chapter then has unfolded various elements of this type of 'field.' In my overview of exhibition design I have looked at the changing elements involved in exhibition making historically. I have situated these elements as part of a international field of vision IFV, meaning that they provide a common ground, or set of tools, for those professionals engaged in exhibition making. The use of texts, arrangement of works, and creation of space were crucial elements of the IFV. Serota's argument on the contemporary nature of curatorial practices has also provided a useful starting point to explore whether his model can be applied to IMMA's exhibitions. His view is that curators no longer play a predominant role in exhibition making i.e. exercising their judgement over selection and display. Rather, what prevails is the making of mise-en-scène, or creation of context in which viewers can contemplate art and draw their own interpretations of the works on display.

The chapter has then started to enquire into the nature of exhibition making in IMMA. The idea here was to present the concerns informing those curators in charge of displaying IMMA's collection. In addition, I wanted to know if the conventions of exhibition design in the IFV are also present in IMMA's sub-field. I said then that IMMA's worldview is an element informing curatorial practices, in particular the notion of questioning value in art. This account has also revealed the existence of a set of conventions for exhibition design. For example, working with artists, the use of texts, the positioning of works to create certain readings – i.e. 'open' or 'closed'. An important finding in this discussion is the realisation that exhibition making is not a legislating practice. In this case, it was a form of translation within IMMA's sub-field, ensuring that the museum's worldview and principles of its policy were implemented. Translation also occurred between fields, because some of the exhibition design techniques in the IFV were used in IMMA's sub-field.

The analysis of exhibitions has followed the same line of enquiry, asking whether exhibitions are translating within, that is, fulfilling IMMA's worldview. In addition, I have addressed a number of questions based on the previous account about what type of exhibition design techniques are prevalent in IMMA, and on Serota's argument on curatorial practices. I have focused on three exhibitions with the aim to explore three factors of exhibition making: selection of works, textual presentation and spatial arrangements. Let me summarise my main findings. We have seen how the three exhibitions used explanatory wall texts, and also provided a study space with relevant books for the visitors to read. The wall texts in particular were committed to deliver IMMA's worldview and encourage in visitors a questioning approach to art. From this point of view I said that they exemplified a form of translation within IMMA's sub-field. They also offered information drawing on events outside IMMA's sub-field – i.e. about Irish society, culture, and outsider art. In the *Art Without Precedent* exhibition we saw how the biographical statements included information that was not merely explanatory, but also related to the aesthetic qualities of the works on display. My focus on the spatial presentation of works has showed that it contributes to delivering different aspects of IMMA's worldview, and in different ways. In *Irish Art Now*, we saw how the positioning of works enhanced multiple interpretations of them, but in other spaces – the small rooms – the exhibition created a context for the contemplation of works. From the beginning we have seen how in their more 'aesthetic' approach, which emphasised the formal qualities of artworks on display, Serota's view of intellectual practices was still relevant. However, the didactic stance of the exhibition, and the idea that exhibitions are to follow the museum's worldview are curatorial techniques, which help us see that IMMA is not only committed to providing a mise-en-scène form of display.

The exhibitions of the outsider art collection have suggested similar findings, but with a different emphasis. Again, the provision of explanatory texts was a means to set the exhibitions as delivering the museum's principles. In both cases we have seen that the presentation of outsider art in ways no different from those used to display mainstream art, fulfilled the principle of renegotiating value in art. In IMMA both outsiders and non-outsiders are presented as 'art'. But the exhibitions showed a strong aesthetic component, which was at its strongest in *Art Without Precedent.* The display of very few works, well spaced, differed from *Art Unsolved* with its emphasis on a notion of outsiders as a group.

In general, we see that exhibitions of the collection are part of IMMA's field of vision, in which certain struggles take place. The commitment to a didactic approach to art – i.e.

questioning art value and educating the public about Irish and outsider art - struggles with an impulse to simply 'aestheticise' art. Maybe this is what McGonagle meant by the creation of contest in aesthetics. But to be more precise, what we have is a contest between various elements of exhibition design, which create different kinds of aesthetic value for the works on display – i.e. aesthetic and didactic. Bourdieu's idea of symbolic struggles amongst symbolic producers (chapter 2) is at work here. There is struggle over one aspect of IMMA's field of vision: exhibition design. An explanation for this struggle could be the fact that some exhibitions, such as *Irish Art Now*, are curated not only by one person, but three. Finally, an aspect in which the relation between collecting and exhibitions of the collection is more prominent is in the process of selecting what works to put on display. In *Irish Art Now*, we saw how important it was to choose works which delivered the message the exhibition sought to address: that Irish art can be political; engaged with contemporary issues affecting Irish society and culture. This point shows how the two practices are part of the same process; they support a particular form of aesthetics, which enable IMMA to put exhibitions that, at some level, contribute to renegotiating ways of thinking and looking at art.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION
INTELLECTUAL PRACTICES AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

In this conclusion, I would like to reflect on the contribution made to the sociology of intellectuals and the sociology of arts by returning to the two main issues structuring the thesis. First is the idea that the making of aesthetic value is a form of intellectual practice through which, for example, art collections are constructed. A second and related issue is whether the making of an art collection is a type of cultural practice, which can contribute to social and cultural change. My aim here is to overview the main findings of the theoretical and empirical chapters with regard to the intellectual practices of collecting, and then to focus on three key topics this thesis has sought to address: the making of aesthetic value, intellectual practices, and cultural transformation. Let me first introduce the main issues of the theoretical framework informing this study.

In chapter 2 I have attempted to build up a 'theory of intellectual practices' to explore the practice of art collecting. Drawing on Bauman's and Bourdieu's work on intellectuals, the central topic of discussion was whether we should conceptualise intellectual activity as the performance of a role – i.e. legislator, interpreter; or whether intellectual practices vary according to the fields in which they are situated, and thus can only be analysed in relation to a given field. I argued that while the benefit of Bauman's theories is in putting intellectual practices at the core of social change – from modernity to postmodernity – this approach was lacking in Bourdieu. However, he offered us a detailed theory of how intellectual practices contribute to the making of aesthetic value; whereas for Bauman the making of aesthetic value is no longer the outcome of intellectual practices. Starting from the premise that contemporary intellectual practices, what Bauman calls the interpreting strategy, can both legislate and translate, I set out to explore how these various forms are articulated in the making of an art collection for the IMMA. With regard to Bourdieu, I argued that his view of intellectual practices as taking place in cultural fields was a very useful analytical tool to explore the making of art collections. In general, field analysis with its emphasis on the symbolic aspect of intellectual practices, the exchange of capitals in the process, and the notion that symbolic struggles are at the core of intellectual fields seemed a useful analytical ground on which to explore Bauman's definitions. Having said that, my aim was not only to 'use' Bourdieu's tools for analysis, but to critically engage with them by expanding, in particular, his notion of field of cultural production to designate the activities of

a museum such as IMMA – IMMA's sub-field, and various agents within the FCA, e.g. the sub-field of commercial art galleries.

The empirical chapters of this thesis have been devised to illustrate various aspects of art collecting in the FCA. Overall, they have tried to explore how the making of aesthetic value, that is, the assignation of symbolic capital to artworks, occurs in the FCA, and then to situate, more specifically, how this process occurs in the practice of collecting. Chapter 3 offered a historical introduction to the FCA. Starting from the premise that the making of aesthetic value is the outcome of practices within the FCA, the chapter looked at the changes in aesthetics and patronage around two main institutions: the RHA and the MGMA. It argued that the RHA had the monopoly over the production of symbolic capital in the field, but that this position was challenged by various factors: its lack of proper financial resources, the emergence of alternative aesthetics in the FCA – i.e. modern art – and sources of patronage for the arts such as exhibitions. Chapter 3 was the historical counterpart to chapter 4, which contextualises the practices of various agents engaged in the production of aesthetic value, symbolic capital, in the FCA, and starts outlining the position of IMMA in the field as Ireland's national museum of modern art. Chapters 5 and 6 have explored more specifically the nature of intellectual practices. Drawing on the theoretical framework I constructed in chapter 2, the chapters have investigated the nature of interpretative intellectual practices behind the making of IMMA's collection. In chapter 5, I have conceptualised IMMA as a particular sub-field within the FCA, while in chapter 6 I have referred to exhibitions of IMMA's collection as part of IMMA's field of vision. Let me present next the main findings in these chapters on the issue of intellectual practices as a way of leading the discussion into the topic of cultural transformation.

Chapter 4 on Dublin's art world has highlighted the central role played by commercial and public art galleries in the FCA. We have seen that commercial galleries are an important element in the FCA because in promoting artists' careers they also legitimate a particular type of aesthetics in the FCA. The relevance of this task comes to the fore when we realise that one way for IMMA to build its art collection is through the purchase of works previously validated, given symbolic capital, by commercial galleries. From this point of view, IMMA, as part of the public galleries sub-field, plays a secondary role in the legitimation of artists. However, chapter 5 has showed that IMMA's collection is not merely built up through its purchases to commercial art galleries; it also relies on loans and donations from private collectors, for example.

Chapters 5 and 6 are key chapters in this thesis because they explore the specific intellectual practices involved in the process of art collection making. Both chapters have sought to answer the same question, although chapter 6 does this through a distinct focus on exhibition making: is collecting a form of legislation, or translation? Or does it articulate both types of practices? My analysis has suggested that the making of IMMA's collection is a practice involving two forms of interpretation: legislating and translating. One of my main arguments in chapter 5 is that IMMA is a sub-field whose worldview and collecting policy is built upon both legislation and translation. These practices, I said, are a means of giving IMMA its symbolic power as the leading cultural institution for collecting and exhibiting modern art in the FCA. I qualified them as legislating because they constitute a system of knowledge, which delineates the boundaries of IMMA as a sub-field within the FCA. In this sense, they resemble Bauman's idea of validation of communities. However, I have showed that the creation of a collecting policy relied on a form of translation, which was seen as a support to a legislating practice. A case in point was the definition of 'modern art', which was based on knowledge from surrounding fields – the international art world and the FCA. Hence translation pointed at a form of mediation, or the importation of knowledge from outside IMMA's sub-field in order to elaborate the concepts structuring its collecting policy. My main aim in the rest of the chapter was to redefine the mechanisms involved in translation. I discovered that it can occur in at least two ways, between IMMA's sub-field and other fields, and within IMMA's sub-field. Hence, translation*s*, rather than translation, is the term which captures the variety of ways in which this type of practice is articulated.

In looking at acquisitions, loans and donations I realised that a key issue in the acceptance of works for the collection is indeed to follow IMMA's founding principles. Particular relevant was the idea of accepting works which were challenging, or provided various interpretations, and also the possibility of contest. I introduced the example of the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art collection as an example of a loan, which fitted into IMMA's principle to renegotiate value in art. From this point of view, I argued that collecting was a form of translation within IMMA's sub-field; that is, a way of putting into practice the museum's worldview. However, the chapter also revealed other forms of translation at work. Two examples are worth mentioning here. First is the use of cultural and social capital by those individuals involved in collecting in order to help secure particular loans and donations. These capitals were used to counteract, for instance, IMMA's low purchasing budget. This argument also helped me pose the following argument: how one individual can both legislate and translate according to his or her position within a given field. McGonagle, for example,

was able to legislate IMMA's worldview from his position as the museum's director, and also translate – e.g. helping to secure loans - in his involvement with the sub-committee of acquisitions. Another relevant finding was the ability to legitimate work from within the sub-field. This was the case of purchases which were also artworks produced within the museum's E&CD. As opposed to artworks acquired after they were given symbolic capital within the FCA or an international art world, artworks from the community were not part of the FCA or any other cultural fields outside IMMA, and hence they relied on IMMA's validation exclusively. In this case, IMMA exercised a strong form of translation because it validated art from the community from its beginning until it acquired the maximum legitimacy within IMMA's sub-field: it became part of the museum's collection.

My aim in chapter 6 was to continue my exploration into art collecting by looking at the relationship between collecting and exhibiting. In chapter 5, I mentioned how important exhibition making was as a way of giving symbolic capital to the artworks on display. Hence a focus on exhibition provided a valuable insight into the making of aesthetic value for the museum's collection. In this chapter, I devised the concept 'field of vision' to distinguish the specificity of exhibition making, as opposed to collecting. After exploring various historical approaches to exhibition design prevalent in an IFV, I explored the specific conventions with regard to exhibition design in IMMA's sub-field. An important finding in my discussion was the realisation that exhibition making is not a legislating practice. Rather, it is a form of translation within IMMA's sub-field, ensuring that the museum's worldview and principles of its collecting policy were implemented. I argued that translation between fields occurs when exhibition design techniques from the IFV are used in IMMA's sub-field. Having introduced the main findings in this thesis, it is relevant to explore next how these ideas can shed some light on the topic of aesthetic value by focusing on the contribution they offer to Bauman's and Bourdieu's theories.

The arguments presented here can help us expand Bauman's account of intellectual practices. A crucial finding is the ways in which legislating and translating practices co-exist. The idea that the validation of what he calls postmodern models of order, or communities, occurs through legislation, which it also needs the support of translating practices, adds to his initial conceptualisation of translation. For him translation was a strategy aimed at "preventing the distortion of meaning in the process of communication between communities" (Bauman, 1987: 5). But the expression 'preventing the distortion of meaning' does not bring to light the complex processes through which translation can take place. For

example, his argument does not envision a key idea in running through chapters 5 and 6, which is that in order for translation to occur we need legislating frameworks to be put into place. Hence translation is a support mechanism that legitimates the systems of knowledge created through legislation. Conversely, the validation of communities through legislating practices does not have significance in itself if it is not followed by a set of translating practices aimed at putting them into practice. Another relevant outcome in this thesis is the amount of communication occurring between communities, or fields. My chapter on exhibitions has revealed what may seem a rather obvious point, that IMMA's exhibition design techniques are part of an IFV from which they borrow them. I say obvious because it is likely that as museum visitors we have come across similar display practices e.g. symmetrical positioning of works, use of glass vitrines. What is less apparent is how display practices are themselves a form of translation between fields.

Apart from expanding our understanding of particular aspects of intellectual practices, the argument about how both translating and legislating practices co-exist leads to another interesting issue: as far as intellectual practices are concerned, can we then argue that postmodernity has superseded modernity? My view is that in the realm of art collecting modernity and postmodernity co-exist as distinct intellectual practices. Nonetheless, how is this argument helping us understand the creation of value in art? In order to answer this question we need to return to an issue I raised in chapter 1. I then pointed at a main tenet of the sociology of the arts, which perceives the arts as a social construction. By this I meant that approaches such as Bourdieu's or Becker's situated the production of art as the outcome of a set of agents within particular fields or art worlds. This is an important insight, which moves away from theories which link aesthetic value to individual genius, for example. However, my attempt in this thesis has been to move beyond a social production of value approach. While social theory can certainly help us understand the factors underlying the production of artworks, a focus on the arts – as in this case, the making of art collections – can serve to further and expand particular aspects of social theory – e.g. intellectual practices. Apart from saying that the making of art collections are the outcome of both legislating and interpreting practices, we can take this argument further to reflect on their role in the making of a social order or worldview. For Bauman, legislating in modernity is a means of validating a particular social order. This thesis has shown that postmodern legislation is also a way of validating communities, or a particular postmodern social order, which I called 'field'. However, the fact that legislation is still possible as an intellectual practice suggests that there is an argument to be made against those who

think that we live in a totally postmodern world. If features of modernity still exist in contemporary society, maybe we can argue that modernity and postmodernity as distinct worldviews co-exist? This position contrasts with those who argue about the existence of a part postmodern turn characterised by a loss of certainty and agreed-upon standards of cultural excellence (Huyssen, 1986).

It is certainly possible to argue that aesthetic value is not a rigid category. My own research suggests how it can acquire various forms depending on the period and location in which it is articulated. In chapter 3, we saw how the MGMA's collection was built upon the premise that a distinct school of Irish art based on foreign models could emerge. In chapter 4, aesthetic value was initially directly related to the judging criteria of commercial gallery directors. In chapter 5 on IMMA we saw how certain works were given aesthetic value to become part of the museum's collection provided they followed the museum's collecting policy. Hence, rather than saying that the arts reflect a postmodern condition, I would argue that the arts are a reflection of existing models of intellectual practices, which are put in place in cultural fields. This leads me to my last point in this conclusion: can we argue that intellectual practices can produce cultural transformation. Initially, two chapters in particular can help us answer this question, chapter 3 and the idea of symbolic revolution, and chapter 5 in which I mentioned that IMMA was conceptualised as a key player in a process of transformation of existing social and cultural values.

This thesis has provided at least two avenues to explore the possibility of intellectual practices playing a role in cultural transformation. I raised this issue in chapter 3 where I explored whether the MGMA had caused a symbolic revolution in the FCA. It also emerged in chapter 5 in relation to IMMA's role, seen as contributing to a process of transformation of existing social and cultural values. Nonetheless, this raises the question: how can this transformation made explicit at the level of practices be implemented? A key principle in IMMA's worldview is that the museum articulates a questioning stance to art. More specifically, for McGonagle, IMMA sought to renegotiate ways of looking and thinking about value in art. Chapter 6 provided a useful source of information as to how these principles are represented through the practice of exhibition making. We saw how ways of presenting outsider art were an effective means to argue that this art is no different from art made by professional artists, since in IMMA they are all displayed using the same exhibition techniques. But this leads to another interesting issue, which is the role of intellectual practices in this process of questioning values. In other words, can we argue that

intellectual practices – e.g. exhibition making – are constitutive of change at the level of culture? My view is that intellectual practices act as an agent, a mediator between the artistic community and audiences. As such they facilitate a debate in aesthetics, for example. However, this situates the focus of transformation in audiences, as opposed to intellectual practices. The assumption here is that in visiting a museum such as IMMA, and understanding some of the debates put at work in exhibitions of its collection, audiences can change their ways of thinking about value in art. This idea is difficult to sustain unless it is backed up by sociological research on audiences responses to IMMA's exhibitions, based on the premise that they address the issue of change.

Chapter 3 has brought to the fore another way of thinking about intellectual practices and change. My aim in that chapter was not to explore the nature of intellectual practices, but to understand whether the MGMA created a symbolic revolution in the FCA. I argued then that the MGMA was the culmination of incipient changes in the FCA, which challenged the monopoly of the RHA as the main producer of symbolic capital in the field. In addition, the aesthetics proclaimed by the RHA were also being challenged by alternative ways of thinking about art. This process started most clearly in 1899 with the exhibition *Modern Paintings*, and the ensuing public debate over the type of aesthetics it represented. The MGMA led to a symbolic revolution in the FCA because it created a new institution for the production of symbolic capital and also it validated a model of aesthetics based on the premise that foreign art, particular French impressionism, could give rise to a distinct Irish school of art. My conclusion suggested that this symbolic revolution was short lived because the proposed school of art never emerged. It was only when Irish artists travelled abroad and learnt from other experts about prevalent artistic movements such as cubism, that Irish art embraced foreign models. This argument brings to the fore the key role of artists in the production of a new aesthetics in the FCA, or opposed to the RHA's academicism. In relation to the question of intellectual practices and change, it is possible to say that although initially they seemed to be relevant to the emergence of new forms of legitimation within the FCA, in the end, they did not play such a role. It seems that IMMA is not following the same path as the MGMA. By positioning itself as a mediator of cultural transformation IMMA's intellectual practices can have a leading role in facilitating cultural change.

Although this sociology of art collections provides a specific approach to sociological aesthetics shaped by a study of intellectual practices, it has also opened up possible avenues for further research. More specifically, my discussion above suggests the need to

explore the role of audiences, artists, and museums in cultural transformation. In chapter 1 I introduced various sociological explorations into audiences, artists and museums. It is relevant now to reflect on the contribution these lines of investigation can make to the types of research needed here. As we saw then sociologists have devised distinct ways of exploring the tastes of audiences in their consumption of artworks. However, one point in my discussion is that audiences can have a role in cultural transformation. This creates a need for further research to explore not only how taste in art leads to the reproduction of social differences, but whether contexts such as IMMA can help audiences become involved in developing new ways of thinking about aesthetic value, for example.

Another line of enquiry requiring exploration is the role of artists. In chapter 1 we saw that sociologists have been concerned with explaining the processes through which artworks were given value. Of particular importance was the study of art worlds, fields, and organisations whose activities played a key role in consecrating artistic works. In this sense, this thesis continues this line of investigation since it also situates the production of aesthetic value in a given field. However, my main aim here has not been to study the possibility of artistic change, a concern of sociologists such as Becker, Bourdieu, and Zolberg, but of cultural change. It was only through my research on art collecting practices that I have realised how artists can play a key role in cultural change. Looking back now on the ways devised by these other sociologists to analyse artistic change, it is possible to say that their approaches are limited. Although they are very useful in showing the processes whereby a change in aesthetics occurs, they do not expand their analyses to explore whether artists can play an active role in processes of cultural change. In other words, the role of artists is subsumed within sociological analysis of wider cultural activities in art worlds, for example. Hence, there is a need for a sociology of arts to give a more primary position to this issue. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic revolution is an interesting attempt. The problem here, as I argued in chapter 2, is that his argument only allows for partial change in fields – e.g. in aesthetics – whereas for him the possibility of transformation in fields is not possible.

Finally, my discussion of IMMA and its role in cultural change suggests that a focus on intellectual practices is a useful avenue to explore the role of cultural institutions, not only in the production, but also the transformation of culture. This would be an interesting addition to those approaches we saw in chapter 1, based on the study of museums from an organisational perspective. My emphasis has not been on museums as organisations, but

on two specific practices carried out in museums – collecting and exhibiting, which I have also situated in a wider field, the FCA. However, my exploration of IMMA suggests that museums offer other sources of investigation, for example, their educational or community programmes. A valuable contribution to a sociology of museums would be to explore the roles museum's activities can play in change at the social or cultural level. In general, my suggestion is that any approaches to the sociology of arts must take into account the need to contribute to wider theoretical issues within their own discipline. A study on intellectual practices is one way of doing this, but there may be others.

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Materials from the Irish Museum of Modern Art

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'Exhibition information' *Once is Too Much.* 28 November 1997 – 15 February 1998

Exhibition's wall text

Art Unsolved. Works from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection. Wall text by Declan McGonagle and Catherine Marshall. May 1998

Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection. Wall text by Catherine Marshall. January 2000

Irish Art Now; From the Poetic to the Political. Wall text by Catherine Marshall. November 2001

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'Lafrenz Collection at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', 14th May 1992

'Mary Farl Powers Loan and Major Acquisitions for IMMA', 27th March 1995

'Weltkunst Collection of Contemporary British Art at IMMA', 11th April 1995

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'Art Unsolved: the Outsider Collection at the Irish Museum of Modern Art', 12th May 1998

'Outsider Art Collection to remain at the Irish Museum of Modern Art until 2006', 22nd October 1999

'Loans and Donations from Maire and Maurice Foley at the IMMA', 9th June 2000

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Department of the Taoiseach

Speech by the Taoiseach, Mr. Charles Haughey, T.D., 25th May 1991. Government Information Services Office

APPENDIX 1



IMAGE 1. Entrance to the Irish Museum of Modern Art. East Gate. Photo: author



IMAGE 2. Entrance to East Arch. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 3. Courtyard. Juan Muñoz, *Conversation Piece*, 1994. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 4. Reception area. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art

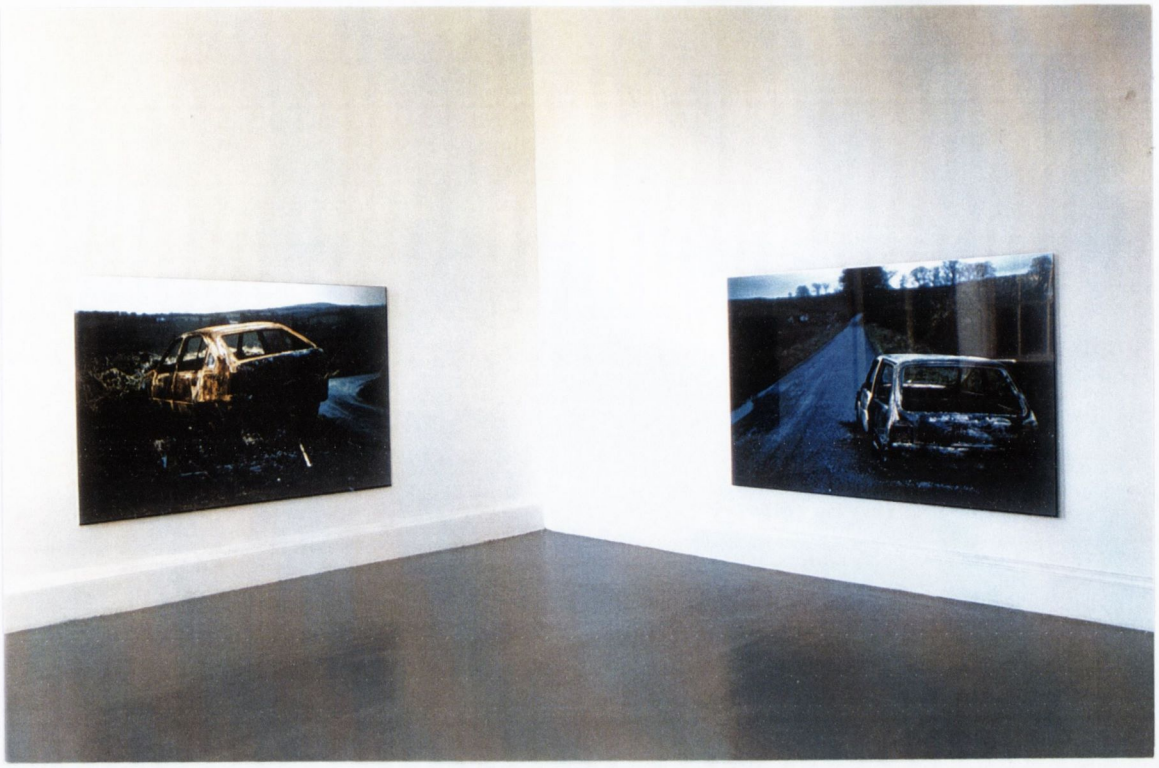

IMAGE 5. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 6. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 7. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 8. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 9. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 10. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 11. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 12. *Irish Art Now.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 13. *Art Unsolved*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 14. *Art Unsolved*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 15. *Art Unsolved.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 16. *Art Unsolved.* Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 17. *Art Unsolved*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 18. *Art Unsolved*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 19. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 20. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 21. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 22. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 23. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art



IMAGE 24. *Art Without Precedent. Nine Artists from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection*. Photo: Irish Museum of Modern Art

APPENDIX 2

List of Interviews

Dawson, Barbara. Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, 26th November 2001

Dolan, Louise, Hallward Gallery, 19th December 2000

Dunne, Kirsten. Kerlin Gallery, 19th January 2001

Gallagher, Josephine. Rubicon Gallery, 11th January 2001

Gibney, Anne. Dublin City Council, 30th August 2001. Phone conversation

Hutchinson, John. Douglas Hyde Gallery, 14th November 2000

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Kinley, Monika. Private Collector. 4th July 2001

MacParland, Brenda. Irish Museum of Modern Art. 20 June 2001

Marshall, Catherine. Irish Museum of Modern Art. 21st March 2000

Marshall, Catherine. Irish Museum of Modern Art, 25th June 2001

Murphy, Patrick. Royal Hibernian Academy, 12th April 2001

Murphy, Tara. Solomon Gallery, 8th February 2001

Murphy, Tara. Solomon Gallery, 13th July 2002

Ó Dirsceoil, Gerome. Green on Red Gallery, 25th January 2001

O'Donoghue, Helen. Irish Museum of Modern Art, 17th July 2001

O'Molloy, Marguerite. Irish Museum of Modern Art, 4th June 2002

Taylor, John. John Taylor Galleries, 26th April 2001

APPENDIX 3

Towards a Sociology of Art Collections

Irish Intellectuals, Modernity and the Making of a Modern Art Collection

Marta Herrero

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abstract: This article draws on Zygmunt Bauman's concept 'legislator' – the intellectual practice of modernity – to explore the relationship between Irish intellectuals and modernity. The case study selected for this purpose is the intellectual debate that took place around the making of Dublin's first modern art collection, which led to the opening of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in 1908. Its premise is that art collections are the outcome of intellectual practices, which legitimate and define their role. Overall, this example is used to investigate the complex ways in which Irish intellectuals sought to renegotiate Ireland's relation to modernity, a discourse that positioned it as a 'peripheral' country. The article concludes by saying that the making of a modern art collection was used as a means to renegotiate a more constructive view of Ireland, and suggests 'modernities' as a term that captures the various intellectual practices of modernity.

keywords: art collection ✦ intellectuals ✦ Ireland ✦ modern art ✦ modernity

Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between intellectuals, modernity and the making of art collections. The case study selected for this purpose is the intellectual debate around the making of Ireland's first modern art collection, that led to the foundation of Dublin's Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in 1908. My main concern here is to use this debate to assess the possibilities of the concept 'legislator' – the ideal type of intellectual of modernity – as presented by Zygmunt Bauman (1987, 1992,

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1995). Hence, rather than taking for granted the explanatory power of the category, I want to question its usefulness for a study of intellectual practices in one of the so-called 'peripheries' of modernity.

Bauman uses the term 'legislator' to designate the intellectual practice of modernity. It was through the practices of legislators that the worldview and social order of modernity came into being. In turn, their knowledge-making activities legitimated their role 'as spokesmen and guardians of society as a whole, as carriers/practitioners of society's supreme values and destiny' (Bauman, 1995: 227). Intellectuals cooperated with the modern state to create a body of knowledge that would produce and support a theory of social order: culture. This theory was based on the premise that men and women were unprepared to meet the demands of social life, and that these demands could only be met through education. To put this theory into practice, legislators classified and divided the world into an ordered totality (Bauman, 1987: 4). One of their projects was to render practices into superior – those that could be objectively classified – and inferior – those that resisted classification. In this way they articulated a hierarchy of knowledge with its own categories that established what was the 'norm' and what was 'different' from it. Legislators applied their knowledge in areas such as ethics, history and the arts, but the field of art and the practice of artistic judgement was the area in which their authority, power and control remained most ubiquitous and unchallenged (Bauman, 1987: 140). As Bauman explains:

> Being in control meant operating, without much challenge, the mechanisms transforming uncertainty into certainty; making decisions, pronouncing authoritative statements, segregating and classifying, imposing binding definitions upon reality. . . . In the case of aesthetics the power of intellectuals seemed particularly unchallenged, virtually monopolistic. In the West, at least, no other sites of power attempted to interfere with the verdicts proffered by those 'in the know'. (Bauman, 1987: 134)

This quote gives us an idea of the close relationship between the making of aesthetic judgements and the definition and classification of 'reality' through the grid of modernity's worldview. Even definitions that helped segregate 'art' from 'non-deserving', 'non-art' were built upon the division of social groups as superior/inferior, which corresponds to the opposition 'noble' (and hence with good taste) vs 'vulgar' (lacking in good taste). This article is based on the premise that the making of art collections was one of the ways whereby legislators carried out their taste-making judgements, classifying some works as 'art' and hence acceptable as part of a public collection.

Bauman's ideas provide a useful springboard for understanding the knowledge-constituting activities of the intellectuals of modernity and the

creation of concepts through which to understand this particular world-view. However, the term 'legislator' applies to those intellectuals situated in 'the West', in the '"leading" countries' of modernity (Bauman, 1995: 229). This becomes clear if we think that one of the tasks of legislators was the creation of a theory of history, which presented as 'natural' an ordered hierarchy of nations ranking from those most 'civilised' to those 'uncivilised' or 'lagging behind' (Bauman, 1987: 11). If a theory of history classified countries as more or less modern, arguably, intellectuals operating within these countries were positioned within asymmetrical relationships of power. Following from that, if intellectuals in 'core' countries such as Britain and France legislated a modernity that favoured their nations as the apex of western civilization, how can we situate and explain the activities of those intellectuals who were articulating value judgements *outside* these legislating centres of modernity? Were they able to legislate their own modernity? In *Life in Fragments*, Bauman (1995) argues that it was in the 'periphery' of civilization that the conditions for the estrangement of legislators from the ruling state and the 'self-assertion of intellectuals' (Bauman, 1995: 228) first appeared. In this new self-asserting position intellectuals became critics of their own society – as opposed to supporting the prevalent status quo. What we have here is an argument about *where* and *how* the legislator role came to its end, which still leaves unexplained their role in the making of modernity, while the legislating practice was still being carried out.

A study of the activities of Irish intellectuals in the field of visual arts is particularly relevant for a number of reasons. At the time, Ireland was in the paradoxical circumstance of being a European country and a British colony since the 17th century.[1] Moreover, a number of sociologists and art historians have investigated the changing power relations that legitimated and authorized new ways of consumption and production of the arts in the so-called modern era (see Bourdieu, 1993; Lorente, 1998); however, in the Irish context a sociological approach to the arts, both in its historically and contemporary context, is practically absent.[2] Added to this is the scarcity of sociological investigations of Irish intellectuals (O'Dowd, 1985: 6) and a need to redress the emphasis given to the study of literary, nationalist and clerical intellectuals (O'Dowd, 1988: 8).

I want to situate this discussion in the context of a sociology of arts. Although the term does not describe a clearly defined discipline or unitary methodology (Outhwaite and Bottomore, 1993: 28), sociologists justify their contribution to this field by treating the arts as a social construction (Wolff, 1981; Zolberg, 1990; Zolberg and Cherbo, 1997). This means investigating the relationship between the meanings and motivations involved in the production of art objects, and wider social processes and structures (Eyerman, 1998: 280). My specific purpose and contribution here are to

present a sociological approach to the making of art collections that places the definition and role of collections as the outcome of intellectual debate. In this case, Dublin's collection took place in a debate in which two visions emerged – introspective and internationalist. Drawing on Bauman's argument, the specific questions that I want to address are: how do the practices of Irish intellectuals relate to the making of modernity's worldview? How do Irish intellectuals legislate a particular definition of Irish art? Are they legislating a distinctive Irish modernity?

Modernity and the Arts: Situating Art Collections

Sociologists and art historians are among those who have investigated the changes that the advent of modernity brought to the art world, particularly in the ways art and artists achieved authority and legitimacy. We find particular examples of this approach in Bourdieu, who has observed how the challenge posed by Manet's work was the beginning of a distinct aesthetic mode of perception, a *symbolic revolution* that did away with the monopolistic power of the Academy and led to the emergence of a 'pure gaze' (Bourdieu, 1993: 239). Similarly, Fyfe has explored how 'artist' as a 'person endowed with extraordinary gifts and powers of imagination' is a distinct modern concept that goes back to the Renaissance, when some image-makers acquired an awareness of being different from the rest of society (Fyfe, 2000: 2). Closer to the topic of this article, art historian Lorente (1998) has made explicit the link between a cultural modernity and the emergence of museums of contemporary art. He argues that a study of the social relations of the first museums of contemporary art – the Luxembourg Gallery in Paris founded in 1818 was the first of its kind – must go beyond a simple analysis of the art scene that surrounded them. His study pays attention to both the sociopolitical agendas of those behind the museums of contemporary art and wider cultural changes (Lorente, 1998: 24–30). (For example, the marked tendency, in the 19th century, towards specialization in all fields of knowledge that led to the partition of art collections into different periods.)

Investigations of art collections have explored their role and position in the social order of modernity. According to this line of thought, modernity brought a change in the nature of power, and art collections reflected this distinction – namely, that between 'public' and 'princely' collections. Princely collections recreated a world vision around the central figure of the prince, a symbolic representation that stood for his dominion over reality, and justified his position as sovereign (Hooper-Greenhill, 1989: 64). Conversely, public collections came to represent not the power of the prince but the worldview of modernity;[3] an evolutionary narrative that validated the belief that modern man was the apex of

western civilisation (Bennett, 1995: 97).[4] Overall, there is a tendency to analyse collections as mediators between their material form and the realm of significance that they represent. In this sense, as Pomian says, collections articulate 'the opposition between the visible and the invisible' (Pomian, 1990: 24). A number of studies exemplify this approach. For example, Duncan and Wallach show how the display of art collections in the Louvre embodied the ideology of the state disguised in the form of artistic genius (Duncan and Wallach, 1980: 463). Similarly, Pearce refers to museum collections as providing 'the real objects' or material evidences that verify a modern narrative (Pearce, 1992: 4). Although these approaches theorize one important aspect of the relationship between collections and the social world that they represent, there is still room to explore collections as one of the knowledge-constituting activities of legislators, which contributed to *shaping* a particular worldview of modernity.

A Collection of Modern Art: An Intellectual Debate

The aim of this section is to explore a rather complex situation in which Ireland's first collection of modern art was given at least two functions: it became seen as a means to develop a national art tradition along Celtic lines, while also helping Ireland 'climb up' in modernity's hierarchy of nations (see Herrero, 2000). Let me put this debate in context.

Since the 1880s, the Celtic Revival had been seeking to construct a distinct Irish culture. In 1893, the Gaelic League led by Douglas Hyde and the Literary Theatre of William Butler Yeats were founded as the linguistic and literary institutions of the Revival. The whole movement was a form of 'cultural nationalism', which sought to recreate 'an authentic national identity by which to transform Irish society' (Hutchinson, 1987: 49).[5] For some the founding of the Municipal Gallery has been seen as a symptom of the Revival (Sheehy, 1980; Kennedy, 1991). Nonetheless, the visual arts were disadvantaged compared to the revival of the Irish language and a literary culture, which were the main targets of the Celtic Revival. The lack of cultural venues for the display of contemporary art was an important setback to the promotion of an interest in painting, for example. The Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) showed contemporary art but was suffering from a lack of patronage, and the National Gallery of Ireland continued to display old master paintings.[6] In this state of affairs, Hugh P. Lane, the art dealer behind the creation of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, arrived in Dublin in 1901.[7]

The category 'intellectuals' – as I use it in this article – encompasses those individuals who participated in and shaped a public debate about the state of the visual arts in Ireland. It is possible to distinguish those

who made their contributions as identifiable public intellectuals – this is the case of Lady Gregory, Hugh P. Lane, Edward Martyn, George Moore and William Murphy (see biographical details).[8] Added to these were a series of anonymous participants who spoke from their position as journalists or casual contributors to newspapers or journals. Given that both groups equally used the public press as a medium to represent their ideas, I have included a short introduction to the political divisions in the newspaper world in Dublin at the time.[9] However, the divisions of opinion in the following debate are not to be equalled to the political allegiances of the newspapers in which they were published. As we will see next, the debate brought together individuals of different religions and political allegiances in an effort to support the project of the country's first collection of modern art.

A School of Painting for Ireland

A crucial contribution to the debate was Hugh Lane's public announcement in a letter to *The Irish Times*, 15 January 1903, of his plans for the foundation of a gallery of modern painting in Dublin.[10] The benefits of this gallery lay in the opportunity it would provide for 'study, support, and encouragement' of the great moderns, which would lead to producing 'a school of painting equal in importance and profit to any in the world'. Importantly, Lane gave weight to his idea by arguing that the lack of an art education had kept Ireland in its 'backward state' but that a gallery could help overcome this situation because 'by nature' the Irish were one of the most artistic of peoples. Lane's initial statement, which prompts most of the ensuing intellectual debate, goes some way towards answering the question of how the making of an art collection and gallery can relate to the worldview of modernity. What seems to be articulated from the start is a discourse of modernization through nation building. In other words, a gallery would provide Irish painters with an opportunity to initiate its own school of painting and thus recreate Ireland as a better, or 'less backward' nation. My aim in the rest of this analysis is to show how I think this discourse of modernity is represented by two seemingly opposed views on the collection, which we could call introspective and internationalist.

Reactions to Lane's words did not take long. The following day William Murphy agreed with the need to improve the situation of the arts in Ireland. However, he did not endorse Lane's initiative to import foreign art for the gallery, which would make 'an Irish Art Gallery a kind of cross between a Theatre of Varieties and a Café Chantant'. For Murphy, 'modern art' was equal to national art, and if an Irish school of painting were to exist, it would have to be built upon the representation of Irish historical motifs. As he said:

> If by it is meant some of the more recent productions of certain British, French, German, and Italian masters, we entertain no burning desire to have them exhibited in Dublin. . . . The stones of Celtic legend and Celtic song, the dark but sometimes lightsome pages of the history of our country, afford many subjects for the brushes of skilful painters. . . . We believe that what Ireland needs for the creation of a genuine school of native art is not the wholesale importation of works of alien painters, but the development of Irish artistic taste and skill on distinctly Celtic lines.[11]

Although Murphy did not disagree with the idea of having an Irish school of painting he, nonetheless, wanted such a school to be introspective, or representative of a Celtic Ireland. Murphy's ideas stand in contrast to the views of those 'outward looking' intellectuals in this debate.

French Impressionism

In 1904, Lane organized an exhibition at the RHA with a collection that was to form the nucleus of the proposed gallery. The display included a considerable number of French works, and, in particular, French Impressionists such as Edgar Degas, Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro.[12] Although Lane owned some of the works, most of them had been borrowed and were on sale. He sought the financial support of those who could afford to make such expenditure or contribute with their donations to a purchase fund – a small elite, including members from various political and religious factions.[13] In the exhibition catalogue, Lane emphasized the possibilities of the collection on display, which if it was to become Dublin's collection would then rank among the greatest in the world.

Conversely, writing in *Claidheamh Solais*, Edward Martyn's main concern was to discuss the Irish works on display at the exhibition, as his title 'Irish Ireland at the Hibernian Academy' pointed out. He did not mention any of the non-Irish works in the collection, and devoted his whole discussion to the excellence of Irish painters in relation to 'an Irish Ireland standard' – a standard that included the representation of Irish subjects in portraiture, and of the Irish landscape. He hoped that, in the future, the development of a national art tradition would be inspired by religious subjects, and despised cosmopolitanism in art, 'with its attendant vices of vulgarity and ineptitude'.[14] Martyn's critique was probably addressed to the inclusion of non-Irish pictures in the collection.

Also writing in *Claidheamh Solais*, Lady Gregory provides an alternative viewpoint. She emphasized the benefits of French Impressionism and appealed for funds to buy some of these paintings. Of particular interest are her ideas about the benefits of French art to the 'dignity' of the Irish nation, and as a contribution to its heritage.[15] In an article in *The Irish Times*, she added that if French art was secured for Ireland 'London will

become a mere provincial town, and Dublin the capital of the British Isles as far as modern art goes. . . . Dublin will become a place of pilgrimage for devotees of modern art.' The 'dignifying' effect of French art stood here as a means to give the Irish capital an advantaged position from which to compete with its rival, colonial 'centre', London.[16] A month later, Lady Gregory would invoke the same internationalist rhetoric in an article in the *Freeman's Journal*.[17] Here the proposed collection would mean 'an advance in the dignity of our country in its place among nations', since the French art collection on display at the RHA was 'the best representation of art outside Paris'.

In 1906, George Moore also spoke with enthusiasm, at Lane's request, of the prestige and benefits of French art. For him, France and French Impressionism in particular were the source of modern art. Referring to the gallery and its collection as 'impressionist', he said:

> . . . no collection would help an Irish or American town as much as a collection of impressionist pictures. . . . I believe that a gallery of impressionist pictures would be more likely than any other pictures to send a man to France, and that is the great point. Everyone must go to France. France is the source of all the arts. (Moore, 1906: 42).[18]

So far, the responses to the collection seem to present at least two ways in which intellectuals deployed a discourse of modernization through modern painting, a discourse that was based on the premise that such a collection would benefit the Irish nation. For William Murphy, for example, modern, foreign art was not adequate for the development of an Irish school, although Irish themes and subjects were most adequate for this purpose. For Edward Martyn, the Irish works in the collection would help develop a national art tradition because they represented an Irish pictorial tradition or an Irish Ireland standard. Alongside these views, Hugh Lane, Lady Gregory and George Moore exemplified a more outward looking view of the collection, which was seen as a means to give Ireland international prestige and a distinct Irish school of art based on international French art.

1908. The Opening of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art

On 21 January 1908, the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art opened its doors to the public. On display was its collection of 300 works including Irish, British, Dutch, Italian and French schools and Impressionist masterpieces by Pierre Auguste Renoir and Camille Pissarro. *The Irish Times* praised the collection as one of the most representative and educative in the whole world, which would give Dublin a claim to international distinction.[19]

The international impetus of the collection was highlighted. The gallery 'had not been founded for the exhibition of modern Irish art only; there is no parochialism in art, and the aim of the Dublin gallery will be to illustrate modern art generally'.[20] Rather, the gallery and its collection repositioned Ireland's status as a nation, 'the Cinderella of the nations' had from that day something to be proud of, a 'jewel of singular beauty and distinction'[21] was hung about the image of the city. Lane's statement in the exhibition's catalogue echoed the view that the gallery meant a definite improvement to the Irish nation. As he said:

> 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.[22]

The catalogue supported this claim to international distinction by adding the following words by the then US president, Theodore Roosevelt: '[the gallery] would be an important step toward giving Dublin the position it by right should have'. [23]

The *Sinn Féin* magazine praised Lane's achievement of giving Dublin its gallery of modern art, adding that 'If every Irishman in his own sphere acted in the same spirit, Ireland ten years hence would be a country of self-reliant men and women.' From a rhetoric of self-reliance, of an Ireland that relied on the virtues of its inhabitants, the author continued to praise the advancement that the gallery would bring to the Irish nation in relation to other nations:

> 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.[24]

The complexity of this view is echoed in the English editorial of *Claidheamh Solais*, which referred to the gallery as a real manifestation of the new life 'commencing to surge through the veins of Ireland'. The author recalls the underlying theme of this debate, the detrimental situation of Irish art. The gallery seemed to be a remedy to this situation since it would help Ireland 'to put herself into communion with her own past'. Referring to Hugh Lane, the article explained:

> He has made it possible for young artists so to educate themselves here at home in Ireland that their message of beauty may be delivered to Irish ears in accents which they shall understand, their secrets whispered to Irish hearts in tones which shall stir their inmost chords . . . there will grow up in our midst a school of painters and sculptors whose work will be an authentic expression of the soul of Ireland, because it will be the creation of artists who are in a genuine sense Irish.

Although we are left without knowing how an 'authentic expression of the soul of Ireland' is to develop from Ireland's new international collection, the editorial shifted to the prevalent rhetoric of international prestige. That is, the collection could bring Dublin a prestige granted 'nowhere else in Europe save in Paris and (to a lesser extent) in London'.[25] These last views suggest a theme that shapes this debate, namely, that even where disagreement prevailed as to what type of school was a best model for Irish art, the gallery and its collection were a benefit for Ireland.

To write a conclusion to the history of the gallery is necessarily an incomplete project. The gallery still exists in Charlemont House, the permanent location that was found for it in 1933. The school of Irish art as Lane and his followers wanted it never emerged. Lane, tired of waiting to find an adequate building for the gallery, donated his collection of Impressionist paintings to the National Gallery in London. His death in 1915 meant that Ireland was left without its main patron. In these circumstances, those who wanted to adopt aspects of modernist art – for example, Jack B. Yeats, Mainie Jellett, Evie Hone, Harry Clarke – travelled to France, where Cubism and Fauvism had been replacing Impressionism. Dublin, however, continued to be dominated by the academicism of the RHA. When those artists who adopted modernist tendencies tried to exhibit in Ireland, they suffered the incomprehension of art critics and the RHA.

Conclusion

Let me start by making some connections between the previous analysis and the suggested theoretical approach to the study of art collections. My approach was based on the premise, first, that art collections were intellectual constructions, the result of intellectuals' struggles over their role and definition. Second, that the definition of collections was part of the work of legislators, the intellectuals of modernity, whose practices led to the constitution of this particular worldview. This framework aimed to explore the possibilities of the category 'legislators', which initially did not seem to qualify the activities of intellectuals situated outside modernity's main legislating centres. To conclude, I want to use the previous debate as a springboard to discuss the questions I set in this introduction: can we argue that the intellectuals in this article legislated a particular definition of modern Irish art? How do their practices relate to the making of modernity's worldview? Were they legislating a distinctive Irish modernity?

The intellectuals in this article made aesthetic judgements, distinguishing and classifying art, in the process 'Irish modern art' became a

contested category. For some good art was a form of Irish art inspired on Celtic motifs. For the majority, good art was to emerge from a combination of French Impressionism with Irish talent. However, I would not go as far as to say that the definition of Irish art by intellectuals is a legislative practice. What we have here is the establishment of a collection whose highlight was French Impressionism, a form of art that arrived in Dublin after having acquired prestige in the French art world. Hence those who supported the idea of an Irish school of painting following international lines relied on the aesthetic judgements made by some French intellectuals: Irish art could be 'good art' if it included foreign, innovative techniques. Similarly, the project of setting up a gallery of modern art – an initiative supported by all intellectuals in this article – was not originally Irish; it was following a European model which had started in 1818 when Paris became the first European capital to have a museum of contemporary art – the Luxembourg Gallery. It is possible to say that the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art was a pioneer in the field of contemporary art galleries for exhibiting a collection of foreign art, at a time when this type of museums had a nationalist emphasis becoming a showcase for the latest art by artists of each particular nation (Lorente, 1998). However, this argument does not have enough weight to qualify the making of modern Irish art as a legislative strategy. Although for some the inclusion of French art was a means for Dublin to rival the art scene in London, which at the time did not have such a collection, it was also a means to obtain an Irish school of renown. Finally, the establishment of a school of Irish painting never took place, although the gallery was set up, Irish artists still had to deal with the standards set up by the RHA. The study of those art intellectuals involved in the RHA is another chapter in the history of Irish art that demands close analysis.

If Irish intellectuals were not 'legislators', can we still argue that they legislated a distinctive Irish modernity? It is possible to say that the making of a modern art collection was an attempt by Irish intellectuals to negotiate Ireland's relationship with an intellectual project of modernity that defined Ireland as 'inferior', 'lagging behind' modernity's advantaged nations. This can be seen as a distinctive Irish modernity, a form of intellectual intervention, which attempted to elevate Ireland from its disadvantaged status in modernity's hierarchy of nations. Given the association of the term 'legislator' with the practices of those intellectuals in the 'centre', I suggest that Irish intellectuals were not legislating but in *competition* with their given position within modernity, and trying to reinvent a discourse that would position them in its centre (Eyerman, 1996: 47–8). If the term 'legislator' does not represent the practices of Irish intellectuals, maybe we can think about the different intellectual practices of modernity as particular 'modernit*ies*'.

Notes

I would like to thank Hilary Tovey, Philip McEvansoneya and the three anonymous reviewers of *International Sociology* for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

1. Although the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland goes back to the 12th century, Ireland first became a British colony in the 17th century with the British–Irish civil wars of 1640–91. It was in the late 18th century, when the term 'Empire' was used to describe the United Kingdom's possessions, that it became possible to think about Ireland as part of the British Empire (Howe, 2000: 13). A number of studies have revealed some of the strategies whereby the Irish were represented as an 'inferior' race, and a 'backward' nation. See, for example, Curtis (1971); Foster (1993); Douglas et al. (1998).
2. The lack of a sociology of arts in Ireland does not mean to suggest a similar lack in publications on the visual arts. Although scarce in comparison with studies of Ireland's literary culture, some important contributions to the field of contemporary/modern art are: Kennedy (1991) *Irish Art and Modernism* and Walker (1997) *Modern Art in Ireland*.
3. It is important to distinguish 'public collections', that is collections accessible to the public display, from 'public collections' as those collections that were publicly owned. Usually, the beginning of public displays in the 18th century did not immediately lead to a change in the ownership of collections from private to public hands (Lorente, 1998: 19).
4. See Hooper-Greenhill (1989) for an account of the shift from princely and scholarly collections prevalent throughout the Renaissance, to public collections.
5. The cultural nationalist movement has been subject of a number of studies (Lyons, 1982; Hutchinson, 1987), which, unfortunately, seem to be caught in a vicious circle. The common claim that the main areas of intellectuals' involvement were language and literature is followed by a failure to explore the arts as an area of intellectual debate. This is an important point because, as we see next, this new area of enquiry problematizes existing definitions of intellectuals as representing opposed views of culture, namely Anglo-Irish vs Irish-Ireland (Lyons, 1982).
6. For a historical view of the RHA, see de Courcy (1986).
7. Hugh P. Lane (1875–1915), Protestant. Although born in Ireland, he was reared in England. Due to ill health and family circumstances, Lane did not receive a formal education. This did not stop him from becoming a successful art dealer of old masters in London by 1901. Lane was the nephew of Lady Gregory and got first involved in the revival of the Irish art scene during a visit to his aunt in 1901. He helped gather a collection of contemporary British and European art for the Johannesburg Gallery first opened in 1910. For biographies of Hugh Lane see Bodkin (1956); Lady Gregory (1973); Dawson (1993); O'Byrne (2000).
8. My use of the term 'public intellectuals' does give cohesion to a rather complex situation in which individuals from different religious and political orientations supported Dublin's collection for a number of reasons.

George Moore (1852–1933): born a Catholic, he converted to Protestantism in 1903. He lived in London and Paris where he became a fervent admirer of Edgar Degas and Édouard Manet. Although initially a supporter of the Irish Revival and one of the founders of the Irish Literary Theatre, he would abandon the project for what he thought was the lack of value of nationalism and Irishness. He wrote poetry and fiction, and was also a playwright and an art critic (Frazier, 2000).

Lady Gregory (1852–1932), Protestant, Hugh Lane's aunt. She was a prolific playwright and very instrumental in the Gaelic League; she set up the Abbey Theatre together with J. B. Yeats, Edward Martyn and George Moore. She was one of the staunchest supporters of Lane's project (Kohfedt, 1985).

Edward Martyn (1859–1932), devout Catholic, a leading figure of the Irish Revival, and a supporter of the cause for an Irish-Ireland. He contributed financially to the promotion of Irish music, language and literature, and assisted Arthur Griffith when he was editor of the *United Irishman*, to republish his series of articles that were to become the ideology for the Sinn Féin movement (Gwynn, 1930).

William Martin Murphy (1845–1919), Catholic; his financial ventures included: the transport and construction sector, electricity generation, the ownership of Dublin gasworks and a number of hotels, and the newspaper industry. He first got involved in the newspaper industry through his political affiliation to the anti-Parnellite faction of the Irish Party. He opposed the *Freeman's Journal* – the organ of the Irish Party – by acquiring and relaunching the *Nation* and the *Irish Daily Independent* in 1900 and, in 1905, founded the *Irish Independent* (Morrissey, 1997).

9. The initial selection was based on the albums of newspaper cuttings, part of the Hugh Lane archive, held at the National Library of Ireland. Although the albums include, sometimes, articles from the British press, due to the nature of this study, the present sample only includes newspapers published in Ireland. My selection of articles has thus been based in accordance with the ideas being expressed, rather than with the ideology of the publication. However, given that the albums largely ignore the advanced-nationalist newspapers – namely, *Claidheamh Solais* (the official publication of the Gaelic League) and *Sinn Féin* – I have decided to include them to make the sample as representative as possible of the political climate at the time. Thus, the survey for this article includes, mainly, those newspapers from the unionist, nationalist and advanced-nationalist press, which engaged in a debate about the position of Irish culture and language. The difference between the divisions I have presented here lies in their political orientation. The advanced-nationalist press promoted a de-Anglicized Irish-Ireland in the belief that a separate Irish culture could provide evidence of a distinct nationality and could help guarantee it politically (Glandon, 1985: vii). The nationalist press – i.e. the *Freeman's Journal* – supported the Irish Parliamentary Party in its struggle for Irish Home Rule. In 1891, the newspaper abandoned the Parnell cause to promote the anti-Parnellite faction (Glandon, 1985: 2). The *Irish Daily Independent* was planned to support Parnell and counteract the *Freeman's* withdrawal from this cause. *The Irish Times*, the leading unionist newspaper, was

the organ of Protestant interests in Ireland, although it provided a platform for those Catholics and Protestants who supported the existing political order.

10. I use the term 'modern' here because this is the original term Lane deployed in his letter. In this case, Lane does not appeal to 'modernist' art but to contemporary art, or art by living artists. Throughout the debate the term 'modern art' seems to qualify a reference to the contemporary.
11. *Irish Daily Independent*, 16 January 1903.
12. The exhibition took place in the RHA and was put together through loans from the Staats Forbes collection and the French art dealer Durand-Ruel (RHA, 1904). This was the first time that Lane exhibited French Impressionism. It is only possible to suggest some reasons that might have led Lane to add French Impressionist paintings to the collection, given his lack of knowledge about this type of art. Several authors have suggested that the first time Lane saw Impressionist paintings was during a trip to Paris with his friend and painter William Orpen. There they visited the art dealer Durand-Ruel and, following Orpen's advice, bought works for Dublin's collection by Édouard Manet, Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro.
13. The financial running and supervision of the gallery were the responsibility of Dublin's Corporation. However, Lane was able to remain in charge of the gallery through his appointment as director by the Corporation. Among Lane's supporters we find Alderman Thomas Kelly, later a Sinn Féin MP, as well as important figures of the Celtic Revival such as W. B. Yeats, George Russell and Douglas Hyde. Lady Gregory herself was among those who signed a letter to *The Irish Times*, 5 January 1905, in support of a purchase fund for French works, in particular those by Édouard Manet and Claude Monet, which she deemed 'essential to a study of modern art'.
14. *Claidheamh Solais*, 9 April 1904.
15. *Claidheamh Solais*, 7 January 1905.
16. *The Irish Times*, 21 November 1904.
17. *Freeman's Journal*, 13 December 1904.
18. George Moore delivered this paper on 8 December 1904 at Lane's request. Moore's view articulated a form of proto-modernism, where Paris was seen as the main artistic centre at the time. His view, however, is rather unusual because for him the gallery was not valuable as a means to participate in the cultural nationalism propagated by Lady Gregory and other members of the Gaelic League. Rather, he favoured it for its supposed internationalism that would then encourage Irish men to go to France and bring nationalism to an end (for further reading see Moore's biography by Frazier, 2000).
19. *The Irish Times*, 21 January 1908.
20. *The Irish Times*, 2 January 1908.
21. *The Irish Times*, 20 January 1908.
22. Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (1908).
23. Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (1908).
24. *Sinn Féin*, 25 January 1908.
25. *Claidheamh Solais*, 25 January 1908.

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