



# A Man for all Mediums



**Eamonn O'Doherty**  
**(1939-2011)**

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FRONT COVER:

*Study for Armoured Pram*, pencil and watercolour on paper, 1984.

BACK COVER:

*Self Portrait Earls Court - London*, pencil on paper, 1959.

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**Eamonn O'Doherty**  
**(1939-2011)**

at the  
**London Street Gallery**  
**5 London Street, Derry/Londonderry**  
**29.08.13 – 22.09.13**

**Curated by John Fitzgerald of Irish Art, Oslo.**



**Supported by**



# The Restoration of the Armoured Pram for Derry

## John Fitzgerald – Irish Art, Oslo

I met Eamonn quite by chance. In November 2007 I was home in Galway on a visit when I bumped into an old friend who happened to be a former student of Eamonn's. He introduced me to Eamonn and mentioned that he was due to visit Oslo. I gave Eamonn my business card and told him to look me up. In August 2008 we met up on a lazy Sunday in Oslo and I soon realized that he was a man after my own heart. I remember staggering home in the wee hours, after a marvellous day, thinking to myself that I had just met a great Irishman.

Some months later I visited Eamonn and Barbara in Ferns for the first time. Eamonn showed me his studio and several of his works stuck out in my mind especially some of his work relating to religion and its attires. He also showed me the matrix for three lithographs that he had done for the Joyce centenary in 1982. The following year he reinvented these by hand-colouring a limited edition of five of each for my *Re-Joyce* show in Oslo. When he showed me some early drawings for The Armoured Pram for Derry, I was immediately infatuated. He then brought me outside to the back of the studio to show me the remnants of the piece, forlorn and rusting away. I was smitten.

I can trace the early origins of Eamonn's vision to a pencil and wash version from 1984. It also features in Eamonn's contribution to *The Great Book of Ireland* alongside Belfast poet Michael Longley's poem *Font, for Manus Carson* (1990). It was an image of this double page spread that was used for a poster advertising an early exhibition of the book at IMMA in 1991.

In April 2012, when I got a chance to sit down with Barbara and ask her if I could work with Eamonn's legacy, the upcoming City of Culture in Derry/Londonderry was very much on my mind. Almost two decades after it was last exhibited I could not think of better place to re-launch the restored Armoured Pram than the city of its inspiration. On several occasions he had expressed the wish that he would like to see it end up in Derry and I am delighted to be fulfilling this wish, even if it is just for a short period of time.



As exhibited at the RHA in 1991.



Outside the artist's studio in Ferns, November 2012.



Arrives in Dublin for restoration, Cast Ltd, July 2013.



Mid-restoration at Anvil Engineering, August 2013.



Newly restored *Armoured Pram for Derry*, 1991 - 2013.

# The Future of Ireland is Certain; its Past is What is Uncertain.<sup>1</sup>

by Brian Lynch

Some weeks before he died Eamonn O'Doherty rang me to say hello and goodbye for the last time. The call was not sentimental or morose. It was something that needed to be done before it was too late, so he did it. It was typical of him, both as man and artist. His character was blunt, straightforward, as direct as Derry, the city of his birth.

But, of course, Northern directness is a stereotype and the closer one gets to it the more indirect and tangled it becomes, just like the city and its history. It is a fact of history, for instance, that in the town of Daire Coluim Chille, the oak-wood church of Saint Columba was burnt down in 1608 by a chief of Eamonn's tribe, Cahir O'Doherty, and rebuilt much later by donations from the Livery Companies of London. Now, for the sake of peaceful community relations, these ancient realities are reflected in the politically correct form of the city's name: Derry/Londonderry. That's a lot of syllables, but a mouthful of words is better than a mouthful of blood.

In his work Eamonn was similarly simple on the surface and complex underneath. The simplicity had something to do with his training as an architect and the many years he spent teaching what is at once an art, a craft and a business. Architecture can be romantic – the Peace Bridge designed by Wilkinson Eyre to connect the mainly Protestant Waterside to the rest of the largely Catholic city expresses a romantic ideal of civic fellowship – but the nuts, the bolts, the concrete and the steel have to be able to bear the stresses of the weather and of militants marching.

In architecture the visionary future is expressed in drawings. Its first truths are graphic. Eamonn drew lines. His qualities and quantities are contained within borders. He was, to adapt the Jimmy Webb song, 'a linesman for the country'. In his work, vaguenesses, shadows and 'grey areas' are few and far between. He was definite. By definition he was a sculptor; he sculpted space; he replaced volumes of air with solid materials. The drawings do the same thing on the flat. In his best work there is much clarity and little doubt.

With the exception of architecture, to which it is often married, sculpture is the most political of the arts. When it is monumental it occupies ground, and nowadays any such occupation is political: it requires not just planning permission but the cooperation of corporate bodies, not to mention a certificate from that two-headed busybody, Health and Safety. Eamonn had a feel for those sorts of politics. He had an architect's understanding of what was required of a designated public space and he had the visual imagination to fill it.

In an article for the Irish Arts Review in 2008 I described him as the creator of many of 'the most readily identifiable icons of late twentieth century Ireland'. The fact that he produced in his lifetime 'some thirty large-scale public sculptures both here and abroad amounts to evidence not just of superior technical or presentational skills, or of exceptional talents as a craftsman, but of a special kind of historical sensitivity, an instinct for materialising

the zeitgeist, a genius for making concrete objects out of inchoate contemporary concepts.'

And yet he managed 'to remain almost anonymous in the midst of his creation', to stay 'hidden in plain sight'. He was not 'a famous public man', like WB Yeats. Why was that? Some of the answer is to be found in his character. He wanted attention to be paid to his work, yet as an actor he avoided the limelight. But it was also partially, I think, a consequence of a political divide within himself and between himself and his time. That all those divides are now closed is a melancholy perception.

The pre-eminent art critic Brian Fallon in his book 'An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture 1930-1960' makes a persuasive argument for the vitality of the arts during the de Valera years, but the generation born during the war and in the post-war Baby Boom produced a cadre of artists who were impatient to reject that past and formulate their own view of what art should do. Doing was the operative word; they did not think of art as a decoration on the status quo. The urgency of their creativity was disruptive and, especially in Eamonn's case, anti-clerical. The rejection of Irish culture, except for traditional music, by these artists was almost total – it is curious, for instance, that the GAA, the most influential cultural institution in nationalist Ireland, figures hardly at all in the visual art of the post war period. Painters didn't go to Croke Park, or if they did they were not inspired by it. This was not surprising perhaps since the players in any final were expected not just to sing 'Faith of Our Fathers' but to kiss the ring of some bishop or another. Bending the knee was not an exercise that Eamonn went in for.

The rebellion of his generation was directed against academic respectability, principally in the National College of Art, which was under the thumb of two figures of genuine authority and ability, Sean Keating and Maurice MacGonigal. The rebels also opposed the Art Council establishment, piddlingly weak though it then was, which, when it came to 'modern' art, favoured a hard-edged but soft-centered international abstractionism. Abstraction, having no subject matter other than itself, did not annoy the powers-that-be. Rightly or wrongly, this style was perceived as being snobbish, bourgeois Catholic, Ascendancy Protestant, effeminate and sort of gay – most, but not all, of the rebels were heterosexual males and it took time for some of them to appreciate that queerness and femaleness are in the vanguard of the creative forces in contemporary culture.

As far as subject matter is concerned, Eamonn's generation was in revolt against the centrality of landscape, against an idealised peasantry, against 'the West' as mythologised by Jack Yeats. In literature they esteemed WB Yeats less than James Joyce. Their place was the city; they were alienated from the state; their attitude was often satirical; their politics were more or less socialist or anarchistic; and they looked beyond these islands to the European mainland, specifically to figurative expressionism, a style which 'doesn't shun the violently unpleasant effect'.<sup>2</sup>

This is a simplification. Expressionism was not the only vital movement in the renaissance of the 1960s, 70s and 80s; nor was it in any sense dominant. How could it be in a scene that included artists as diverse as Norah McGuinness, Louis Le Brocquy, Patrick Scott and Patrick Pye? There was also a strong Pop Art presence, but again with a radical political tinge, most notably represented in the figure of Robert Ballagh.

Nonetheless, Eamonn belonged by temperament and artistic inclination to a loose grouping that included Michael Kane, Brian Bourke, Patrick Graham, John Behan, Sean McSweeney, Charlie Cullen, Michael O'Sullivan, Patrick Hall, Mick Mulcahy, Michael Cullen, Alice Hanratty and Brian Maguire. Even to set down their names – and there are others – is to indicate the size of the space they occupy in the art of that period.

The melancholy thing is that Eamonn is the first of these artists to die.<sup>3</sup> His death marks the beginning of the passage of this generation into history. It sets down a first frontier between what was, or seemed to be, a continuous present and a certain future. In his song 'North Country Girl', Bob Dylan has a line that says, 'The wind hits heavy on the border line.' In his work Eamonn drew borders, but he didn't care for them in life. And they hit him hard.

Earlier I said that the rejection of Irish culture, except for traditional music, by these artists was almost total. Actually, this is untrue, even if one inserts the word 'official' as a qualification of culture. In reality, the vast majority of them were devoted to redefining what Ireland looked like and what those looks said about the country. Even an artist such as Sean McSweeney, whose paintings are almost totally abstracted from the man-made or artificial world, can be seen as a history painter.

In Eamonn's case the connections to Ireland are more obvious. Almost everything he did includes commentary on the way the country is, or sadly was, made. For instance, his 1976 print 'At the Pepperpot Church' in Mount Street Crescent in Dublin injects into its orderly Neo-Palladian elegance a sinister and yet airy intoxication: although it is, correctly, depicted as a place around which prostitutes do business, the building looks like it might be about to break into a jig at any moment.

His nudes are Irish too. Although they don't have any identifying native characteristics and the backgrounds are mostly non-specific, they are obviously made by someone in revolt against the puritanical sexual prohibitions that boys of Eamonn's generation were taught to obey on pain of hell-fire. These nudes deliberately attempt to be pictures of not-naughty girls looked at by a not-naughty man – but, in the Irish way, the naughtiness is tied up in knots.

Notions of nakedness also figure in the irreligious images. This is obvious in the picture of a prelate in his robes facing himself without his clothes. In this print and in other related works I can't help but be reminded of the portly figure of Cardinal William Conway, who was Primate of All Ireland from 1963 to 1977. It is noteworthy that the Cardinal's successors, Tomás Ó Fiaich, a rough-hewn countryman, and Cahal Daly, a scholar fine-boned to the point of transparency, not to mention the Polish Pope, a burly

cross-country skier, did not influence Eamonn's depiction of powerful clerics. He was not really interested in particular characters in the contemporary church: his weighty bishops and flighty priests are archetypes, representatives of old and new absurdities, what Eamonn called, quoting Jacques Derrida and Eric Santner, the 'sovereign and cringing beast'.<sup>4</sup>

And yet, for all the satire, they are attractive too. This can be put in a negative: Eamonn had to be not a Londonderry Protestant to be this anti-Catholic. It can also be said as a positive: a part of him was drawn to the gaudiness of being godly. It was admittedly a very small part, but when he mocks himself as a saint, in the portrait of 2007, the robes he is wearing and the suffering evident in his face are not wholly at odds with each other or with him being a man of god. This painting was used to illustrate the invitation to the present exhibition. The decision to juxtapose it with another self-portrait, done in Earls Court in London in 1959, offers a shrewd insight into the religious works and, indeed, into the best of Eamonn's art. It shows the artist as a semi-naked, rather weedy, bestubbled, but stubborn young man, with a difficult past and a doubtful future, far away from home. If his vulnerability has a religious or a spiritual side to it, it is of the Franciscan variety. But that was then and this is now. And anyway Eamonn was scornful of religious or personal posturing. He was not, except in one respect, to which I will refer later, an obvious romantic.

I've used the word 'obvious' a number of times. Far from being a fault, his obviousness was one of Eamonn's singular achievements. It is what his major monumental sculptures have in common and what makes them so successful as ideals. For instance, his simplified sails in Eyre Square, Galway, embody an idea of the city and the sea that could not be more obvious or more suitable. Then there is his 1988 Anna Livia fountain, which inserted into the daily life of Dublin a suitably literal and idealised version of James Joyce's vision of the river Liffey – that the piece did not survive the dirtiness of Dubliners and the incompetence of officialdom was not the fault of the clarity and coherence of the sculptor's basic concept.<sup>5</sup> Again, the golden tree, Crann an Óir, that Eamonn planted in front of the Central Bank in Dame Street has come to be symbolic of how Irish society idealises money – one can only hope when the Central Bank moves to its new headquarters on a site formerly, and ironically, owned by Anglo-Irish Bank, that Eamonn's tree will either stay where it is or survive the transplantation.

Another project, his famous and still homeless Armoured Pram, has been described by a critic as obvious in a negative sense, but apart from the fact that this fearsome object is inventively imaginative – the decorations, if that is the word for them, have a proper military look, but they are ersatz – it is an utterly simple and implacable statement of horrible truths about what happened in Ireland during the so-called Troubles. It unites terrorism, militarism and the cherishing of the nation's children in an unblinking trinity, but with a mildly comic surrealist touch that makes it almost endearing.

We have, in fact, an explanation of the piece from the artist himself that is worth reproducing here. In an email sent to Susan Keating of the Irish Arts Review in 2008, Eamonn wrote:

<sup>1</sup> This remark by Eamonn O'Doherty is quoted in 'Eamonn O'Doherty and the Gaze of Common Places' by Allen Feldman in the Field Day Review, August 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The Italian critic Alberto Arbasino, quoted in the Wikipedia entry on Expressionism.

<sup>3</sup> Although he was a solitary figure, the great sculptor James McKenna, who died at the age of 57 in 2000, could be said to have belonged to this grouping.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from a note written by Eamonn in June 2011.

<sup>5</sup> In 2011 the statue part of the monument was relocated to Croppies Acre Memorial Park near Heuston railway station where it currently floats above a pond, unsupported and forlorn.

Regarding the "Armoured Pram", it was not a commission. I made it for the big Sculptors' Society exhibition in the R.H.A. in 1991. It was something of a response to the violence in the North, particularly in Derry, the town where I grew up. I was quite involved in the politics of republicanism in the '70s, with "Official" Sinn Fein, also known as "The Stickies", a basically Marxist grouping as opposed to the Nationalist Republicanism of Provisional Sinn Fein. However, I always felt it difficult to bring that conflict into my artwork; on one level it would have been like exposing a "fight within the family", on another mere agit-prop, or, worst of all, it seemed to me that I could be exploiting the misery of the whole thing for artistic ends. (Seamus Heaney's similar apparent lack of engagement with "The Troubles" may have had the same basis.... I wonder).

The operative word in that last sentence is 'apparent'. Actually, as Heaney's engagement with his northern heritage is fundamental to his work, so was Eamonn's to his, and the engagement became particularly heart-rending following the murder of the teenage Ranger Best by the Official IRA in Derry in 1972 and of five cleaning women in the Aldershot bombing that same year.<sup>6</sup> But here again, as one attempts to situate Eamonn's work in relation to the Derry/Londonderry tragedy, the lower-case official and provisional borders around it resist being stuck down or pinned up on any intellectual map. What was crucial to his cartography was human sympathy – and it is in this respect that his contrary romanticism comes into the light.

At least two significant contemporaries of Eamonn's have been profoundly influenced by traditional music. The painter Brian Bourke and the poet Ciaran Carson have willingly allowed themselves to be led astray by its beauties and pleasures – the most entertaining and joyful book on the subject, 'Last Night's Fun', is by Carson, and Bourke was instrumental in having the Donegal musician, Tommy Peoples, elected to Aosdána in 2012. Eamonn had no time for that official body, set up by the Dublin government to honour artists, but the fact that Peoples sits there on equal terms with Seoirse Bodley, John Kinsella, Jerome De Bromhead, Louis Stewart and other eminent composers would surely have given him pause for thought had he lived to see it happen.

His own contribution to the music is twofold. First, he and Allen Feldman produced 'The Northern Fiddler', an important, contentious but now hard-to-find literary and photographic record of the work and the lives of musicians in and around the Inishowen peninsula. Secondly, as can be seen in this exhibition, he painted and drew the musicians and their surroundings.

On their own, the painted landscapes are not the most striking part of his output. In part this was perhaps because he had, in theory, turned his face against old-fashioned landscape painting. In part it was because, unlike painters of genius, like Jack Yeats and, say, Samuel Palmer, who, when they depicted the countryside, bent it to their will, Eamonn did landscapes as a straightforward record of places that he was fond of and that were, mostly, associated with the music of Donegal. When the paintings are seen in that personal light one can be touched by them.

However, when one gets up close to this subject, there are, yet again, masses of complications. These are scenes of happiness, but they are also tragic. And the tragedies are political.

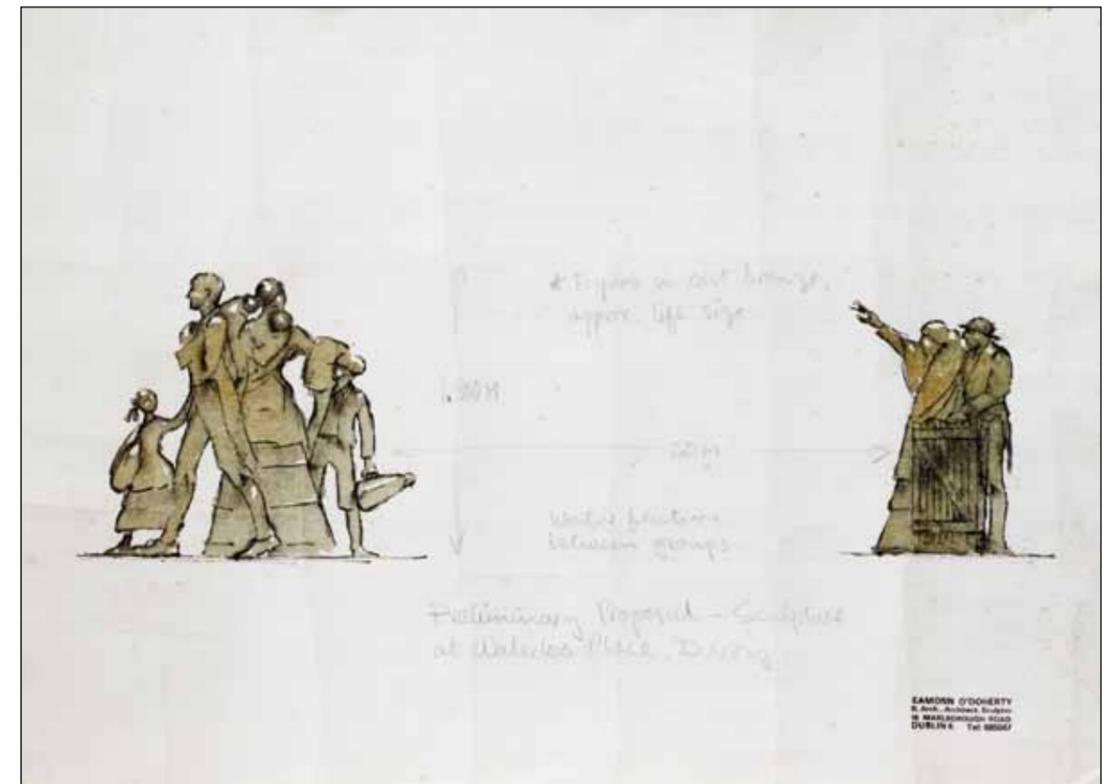
It could be said that the Border ruined the traditions of Inishowen. But the contrary may have been the case: that by an irony of history the political frontier imposed by London, which dislocated Derry from its natural hinterland, actually helped to preserve the music from modernity. Certainly, neither the music of Donegal nor of any other part of the 26 Counties got much encouragement from the Dublin government after independence: for instance, in 1935 the Dáil, prompted by the Catholic church, legislated to ban country house dances.<sup>7</sup> It is also, surely, the case that terrorism exacerbated existing sectarian divisions and created new ones, and it did so in a society that, despite its difficult history, was managing to allow neighbours to live together amicably. One of the reasons for that amity was the music and the tradition of magical storytelling – a wonderful example of the latter, where clergymen of all religions are driven into ecstatic dancing with each other, can be found in William Carleton's tale 'The Pudding Bewitched'.<sup>8</sup>

But in any event the taint of history spoiled what it is tempting to see as a kind of musical paradise suspended in the aspic of a hard but golden time. Eamonn's devotion to that tradition and the domestic architecture and artefacts associated with it, which he recorded in drawings and photographs, constitute a legacy as permanent as his public sculpture.

In this exhibition we see three examples of the portraits he drew of musicians. His 1978 depiction of Francie Quinn, for example, reveals, particularly in the isolation of the musician's head, an intensity of identification and fellow feeling that bears comparison to the work of a sculptor he learned much from, Alberto Giacometti. In these portraits Eamonn is at home, with his kin.

That last word brings to mind his enduring kinship with James Joyce. From Joyce he learned, I think, a way to negotiate the myriads of borders he was troubled by as an artist and a person. The Joycean path through the troubles is most clearly laid down in the scene in Barney Kiernan's pub in 'Ulysses' where Leopold Bloom, before he falls into an argument with the violently nationalistic Citizen, Michael Cusack, says: 'Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it's the very opposite of that that is really life.' Asked what the opposite is, Leopold says, 'Love'. That word leads to others and by the end of the chapter Bloom's insistence that Christ was a Jew provokes the Citizen to throw a biscuit-tin at his head, whereupon Leopold the Jew escapes, pursued by a mangy dog, and ascends into heaven in a fiery chariot.

Eamonn had a sense of that comedy, and in his own divided Derry/Londonderry way he was taken up with the love that is the cause of it.



Preliminary proposal - Sculpture at Waterloo Place, Derry, mixed media on paper.

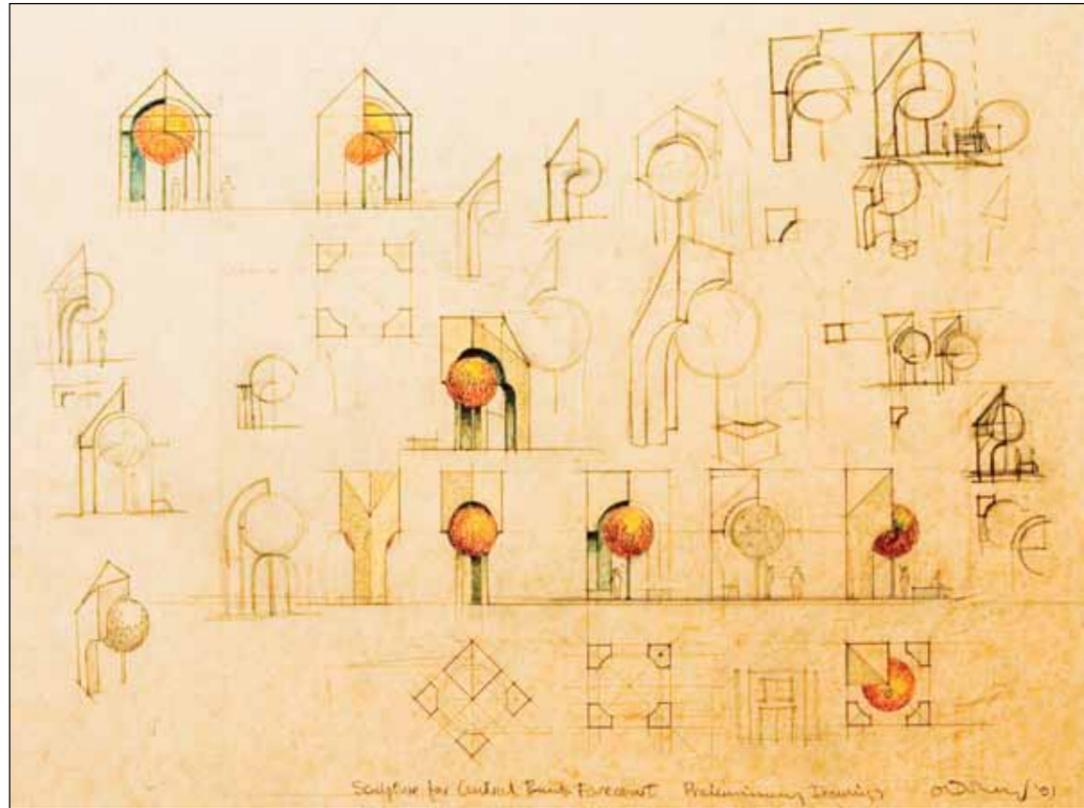


Bishops 2, lithograph, 1969.

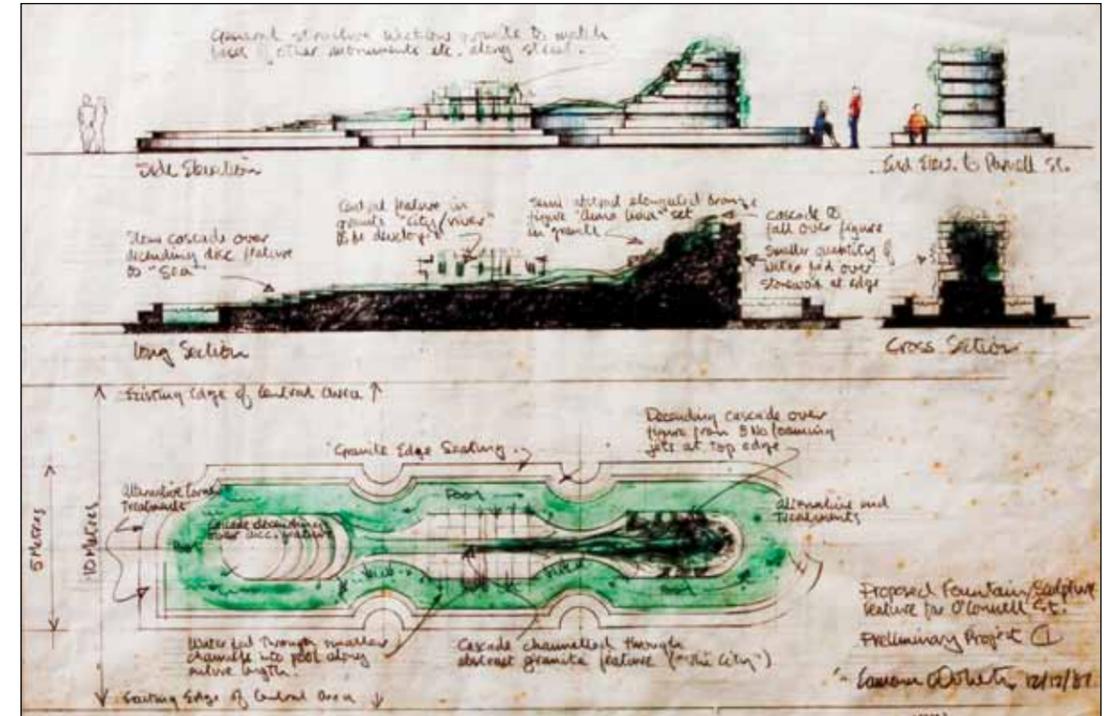
<sup>6</sup> Contemporary reaction to the Aldershot murders can be read in 'The Lost Revolution – the Story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party' by Brian Hanley and Scott Millar (Penguin, 2009). My own reaction is set out in the long poem 'Pity for the Wicked' (Duras Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> The legislative background and a moving comment on it by the great Clare fiddler Junior Crehan can be read online at <http://www.setdance.com/pdha/pdha.php>.

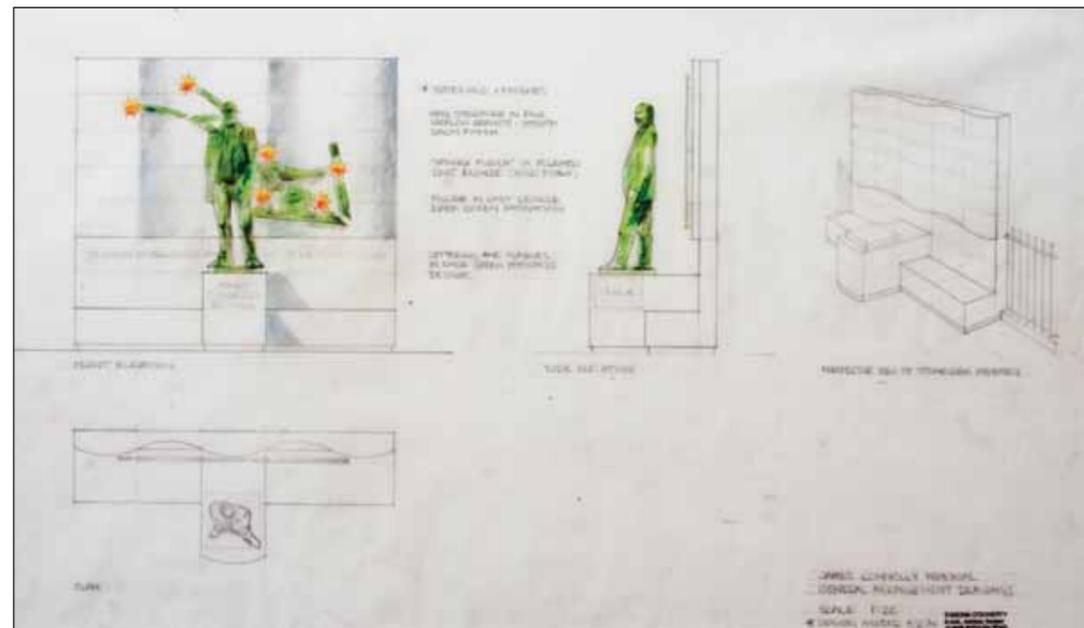
<sup>8</sup> It can be read online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/fip51.htm>.



Study for Central Bank Forecourt, Preliminary Drawing, mixed media on paper, 1991.



Study For Anna Livia 1, mixed media on paper, 1987.



James Connolly Memorial, General Arrangement Drawings, pencil on paper, 1996.



James Connolly, bronze, 1996.



Quincentennial Fountain, Galway, sheet bronze, 1984.

## Governor Walker

### A memoir of working with Eamonn O'Doherty on a restoration project.

by Séamus Dunbar

**E**amonn approached me to work with him on the restoration of the statue of Derry's Governor Walker sometime in the late summer of 1992. I'd gotten to know Eamonn the previous year on a symposium at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig, which I was co-ordinating for the Sculptors' Society of Ireland. Prior to that we'd had a humorous exchange in the letters page of the Society's newsletter in a simpler era when such levity was possible and before the journal had grown to the impressive organ it is today.

The figure of the Governor had stood, Nelson like, on a column overlooking Derry's city walls until the monument was blown up by the IRA in 1973, and the fragments of the figure had been collected and stored in a yard for the intervening 20 years. Eamonn called on me as, in addition to being a sculptor, I'd worked on the restoration of the Custom House in Dublin from 1989 to 1991 and had acquired a fair knowledge of the craft of the stone restorer. Eamonn was having the remains of the figure brought to Dublin, and I agreed to meet him at Cast Ltd. Bronze Foundry in South Brown Street, the initial drop off point for the stones and bones of the Governor.

The remains were in a far worse state than I had initially imagined they would be, a moss-covered jumble of rubble that bore more resemblance to a rockery than a figurative sculpture. I was truly daunted by the prospect, but after much discussion agreed to take it on. To seal the deal, Eamonn brought me for lunch in the National Gallery restaurant where I dined so well on stuffed trout that I was unable to eat the meal my wife Tina had prepared for me when I eventually returned home. In our household the expression "Stuffed Trout" was for years afterwards a synonym for living the high life. Although he was quick to point out that lunch at the National Gallery would not be a regular condition of my employment, that meal was by no means the end of his generosity. When working on the Custom House I'd been taking home about IR£175 per week, so given my greater responsibilities and other factors I decided to go for broke and plumb for a rate of IR£300. On hearing this Eamonn refused point blank and insisted on paying me IR£400.

How Eamonn came by the job I'm not quite sure, but I assume it was a combination of his Derry origins and his reputation as one of Ireland's most prolific producers of public artworks. Nonetheless this did not make it an easy choice for the statue's custodians and there would have been some opposition to having the work travel south of the Border for restoration. However our immediate contact, builder Craig Jefferson, was a good Northern pragmatist and not a man to let religious or political affiliation stand in the way of getting a job done. But bearing in mind that these events took place before the Good Friday Agreement or any of the paramilitary ceasefires they were quite significant in their own way and perhaps represented the shift in thinking that was taking place.

The anomaly of the situation was not lost on Eamonn and myself and was the basis of much humour and banter throughout the job. It was a source of considerable glee to Eamonn that during this same period he also completed a

gilded statue of Christ the King, which was spectacularly air lifted by helicopter to its lofty perch on the roof of Cobh Cathedral, and he would quip that between that and the Governor he was keeping all his bases covered.

Such joking apart, we set about the project with all seriousness. There were further connections with the Custom House, as the figure of Governor Walker had been carved in the first instance by John Smyth, son of Edward who had carved the famous riverine heads and other figurative works on Gandon's masterpiece. Edward Smyth displayed a phenomenal native talent for sculpture, the more so as he had never travelled outside Ireland and had no direct experience of the great European tradition. His ability greatly impressed Gandon who dubbed him "the Irish Michelangelo", and indeed the quality of his work surpassed that of the English and Italian sculptors brought over to work on the building. It is a fair criticism to say that John was not his father's equal as a sculptor, as was evident from the examples of his other works that Eamonn researched in order to complement the rather scant photographic record of the Governor. The Custom House also played a role in the very fabric of the project, as some of the original Portland stone from the building provided the material for elements of the statue that had to be completely replaced, including the outstretched left arm and hand which were completely missing, and the head which the effects of weathering had eroded to a hideous mask even before the monument's violent destruction. Eamonn modelled full sized maquettes of these missing parts in polystyrene and wax which I then rendered in stone, with Eamonn himself doing a good deal of the carving of the head.

To carry out the work, Eamonn hired a space in Church St., in a ramshackle complex of sheds where Cast Ltd. had formerly been located. The yard was much patronised during the week by the judges and lawyers of the nearby Four Courts and in order to maximise space the proprietors would pack them in bumper to bumper on a first come basis, retaining the keys so that if someone wanted to leave early, Gussie, the general factotum, would engage in an elaborate shuffling of the gilded chariots of the legal eagles until the desired vehicle was retrieved from the far recesses of the yard. Watching this ritual one afternoon, Eamonn laughed when I quoted a line from Joyce, "And no more turn aside and brood upon love's bitter mystery, for Fergus rules the Brazen Cars".

As our deadline approached, we sometimes worked Saturdays when the yard was empty and, without Gussie's authoritative presence, we would be disturbed by the occasional fusillade of stones from the kids in the adjoining flats. A colleague, Jackie McKenna, had also suffered at their hands a few years previously, when working on her commission of two large wooden figures for Moate. A football was kicked into the yard, and Jackie was asked to kick it back. This quickly developed into a deliberate ploy until Jackie, driven literally to distraction announced that on the next occasion she wouldn't be returning it. The ball duly appeared, and she made good her threat. A period of silence ensued, then a head appeared above the wall and the devastating blow was delivered. "Missus! Yer stachas is horribiddle!"

On one Saturday near Halloween, Tina called in with our nine year old, David, who had just bought himself a little devil costume consisting of a trident and two red plastic horns complete with suction pads. With great delight Eamonn stuck these to his bald pate and danced round brandishing the trident, while his goatee beard and the ever-present mischievous gleam in his eye made him utterly convincing as a gentleman of the devil class.

The larger than life-sized figure of the Governor had originally been made using three separate pieces of stone, mortared together and secured with bronze pins. The lower section included a base and extended to about mid-thigh, the middle section went from thighs to the chest, while the upper section comprised the head, chest and shoulders, including the outstretched left arm and hand. We were able to work on these pieces separately, before the final reassembly. Power washing revealed what we had and didn't have of the original figure. In addition to the arm and head, we had to replace the spine of the book, the bible I imagine, held in the right hand, and sections of the cloak which supported the figure. We recarved the detailing of the costume and drapery, which had been badly eroded. This was the express wish of the client, although by removing the outer surface we were exposing the stone to the possibility of more rapid erosion should it be exposed to the elements in the future. In that sense it would definitely be regarded as a restoration rather than a conservation project.

Eamonn's other projects and his teaching responsibilities at Bolton Street College meant he wasn't there every day, but I always looked forward to the times when he would show up in his big Volvo estate that had belonged to the Canadian Embassy. Then the working day would be shortened by puns and witty observations, and anecdotes of eating a roadkill badger during his days with Sweeney's Men, or a folk music collector's hunt for "the wee-eyed McCluskey". The latter story concerned a collector of folk music who was on the trail of a renowned musician by the name of McCluskey, somewhere in the wilds of Donegal. Let's say his name was Brendan for the sake of the story. Anyway, our collector, following some none too clear directions, eventually came upon a remote cottage and on asking if it was McCluskey's, was told it was and given admission. He spent an enjoyable evening listening to tunes and songs, and when it came time to leave he made some remark to the effect that he was delighted to have met the famous Brendan McCluskey, whereupon his host replied, "Sure that's not me. You'd be looking for the wee-eyed McCluskeys".

Eamonn told me how, in those pre-motorway days, on his trips to the West he would survive the interminable delays in Maynooth and Killcock by bringing a small G whistle which he could clip to a jacket pocket like a fountain pen, and he would use the traffic jams as an opportunity to practice his tunes in preparation for the weekend. His daughter Aisling would occasionally join us in the workshop and help out by doing a bit of surface texturing. Stone dust really does get everywhere. Leitrim quarryman Felix McManus used to say it would get into a corked bottle, and Aisling used to find dust and chippings in the feet of her tights in those days.



Eamonn and The Governor.

November progressed and winter was beginning to bite in the open fronted shed as the work neared completion. A chain block slung from an old hand-winch derrick served to hoist the sections of the figure into place. Stainless steel replaced bronze as the blocks were pinned and glued together. With about a week to go, the main outstanding task was the fixing of the left arm. I turned up for work one morning feeling dreadful, and I must have looked as bad as I felt, because when Eamonn arrived mid-morning he immediately sent me home. It turned out to be the onset of a virulent bout of glandular fever, which floored me and ensured that I missed the long awaited completion of the figure and its transport and subsequent siting in Derry. Tim Morris, stone carver and foundry man, was drafted in to finish the work. In the meantime, a doctor friend of Eamonn's arrived unbidden at my house and diagnosed and treated my condition. I never saw a bill.

### Epilogue

About a year later, Eamonn contacted me to say that the hand on the statue had been damaged and needed replacing. I was able to do this from my original drawings and measurements, and travelled to Derry to fit it. I met Craig Jefferson and got some inkling of the celebrations that had attended the installation of the Governor in the yard of the Apprentice Boys' hall. Later still, in about 2000, I was in Derry again and called around to see how the figure was doing. Although we had sealed the stone at the time, it had by now stained quite badly. In 2012, while on a site visit for another commission, I once again went to see the Governor, only to find his niche vacant. A man emerged from the Apprentice Boys' hall to explain that the statue was undergoing a complete restoration. Eamonn had been dead almost a year, and this time the Governor had gone to England.



*Icarus Rising*, sand cast bronze, 2008.



*Anna Livia Head*, bronze, 2011.



*Pikemen / Fauscalt*, bronze, 1998.



*Emigrants*, bronze, 1990.



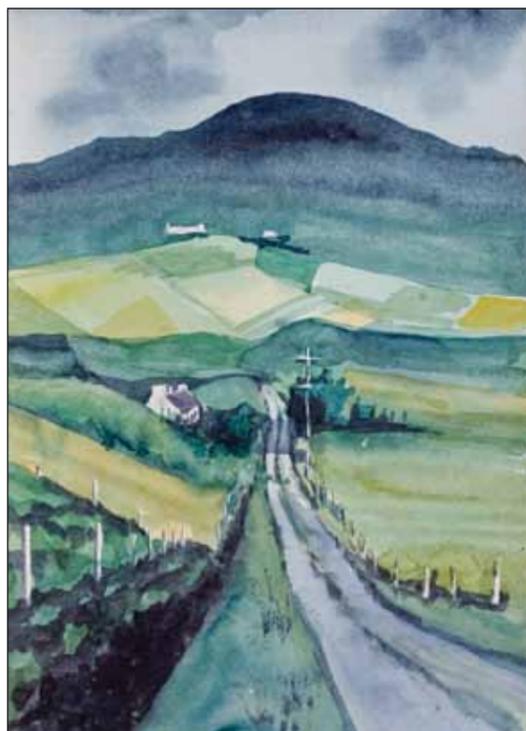
*The Thin Priest with the Fowling Net*, bronze, 2011.



Hill Farm near Fahan, Co. Donegal, ink and watercolour, 1976.



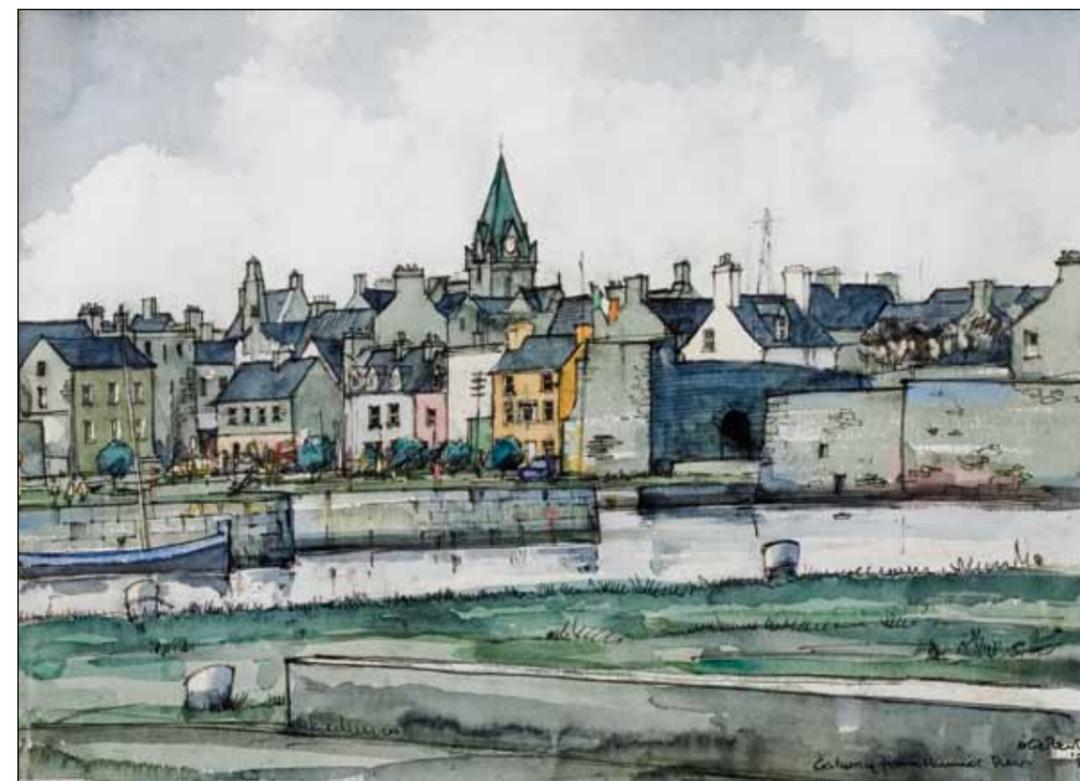
Snow - Slieve Buí, watercolour, 2010.



Road at Largybrack, watercolour.



John Doherty, lithograph, 1978.



Galway from Nimmo's Pier, ink and watercolour, 1976.



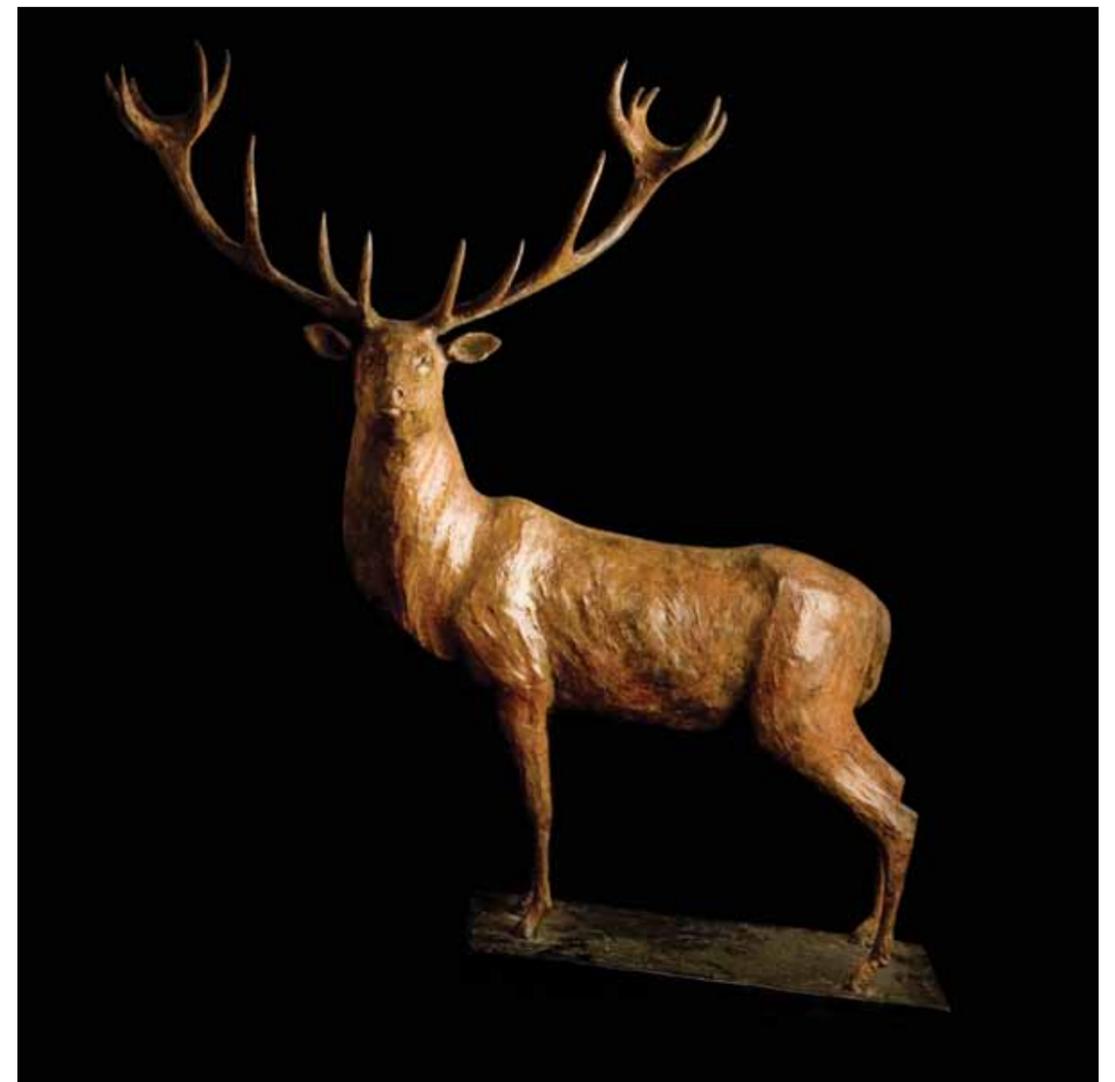
*Toirc*, bronze, 2006.



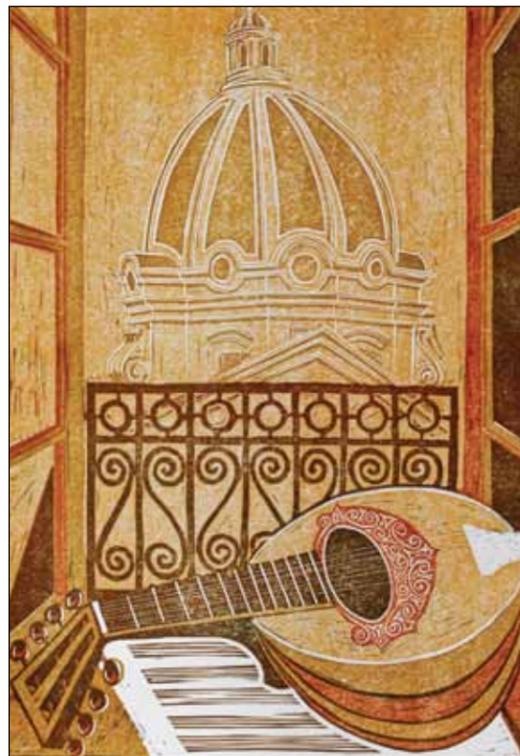
*Minerva*, bronze.



*Horse*, bronze.



*Irish Red Deer*, bronze, 2010.



Val de Grâce, woodcut, 1981.



Amergin, woodcut, 1980.



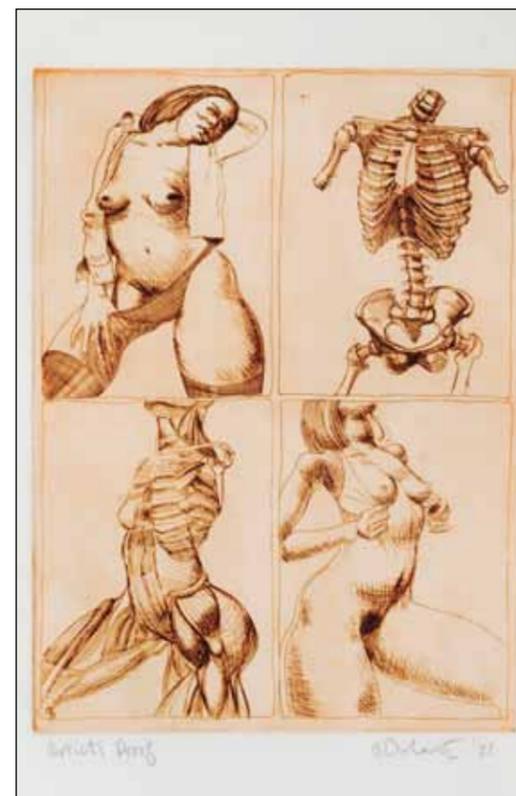
Summer, silkscreen, 1968.



Fields in Picardy, woodcut, 1981.



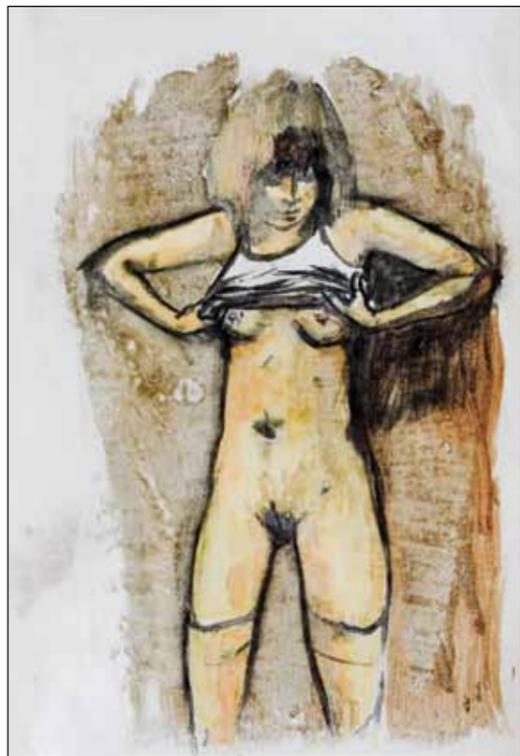
Vauretor, woodcut, 1981.



Untitled, etching, 1975.



Brass Bed, lithograph, 1968.



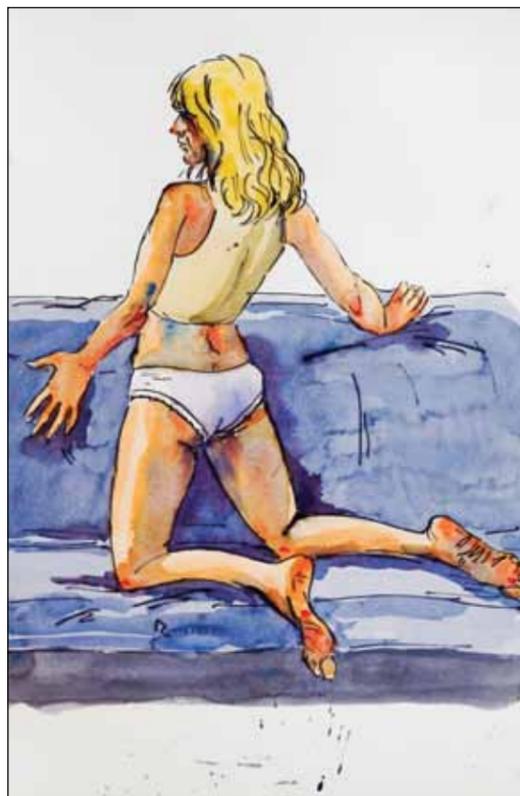
Untitled, monprint.



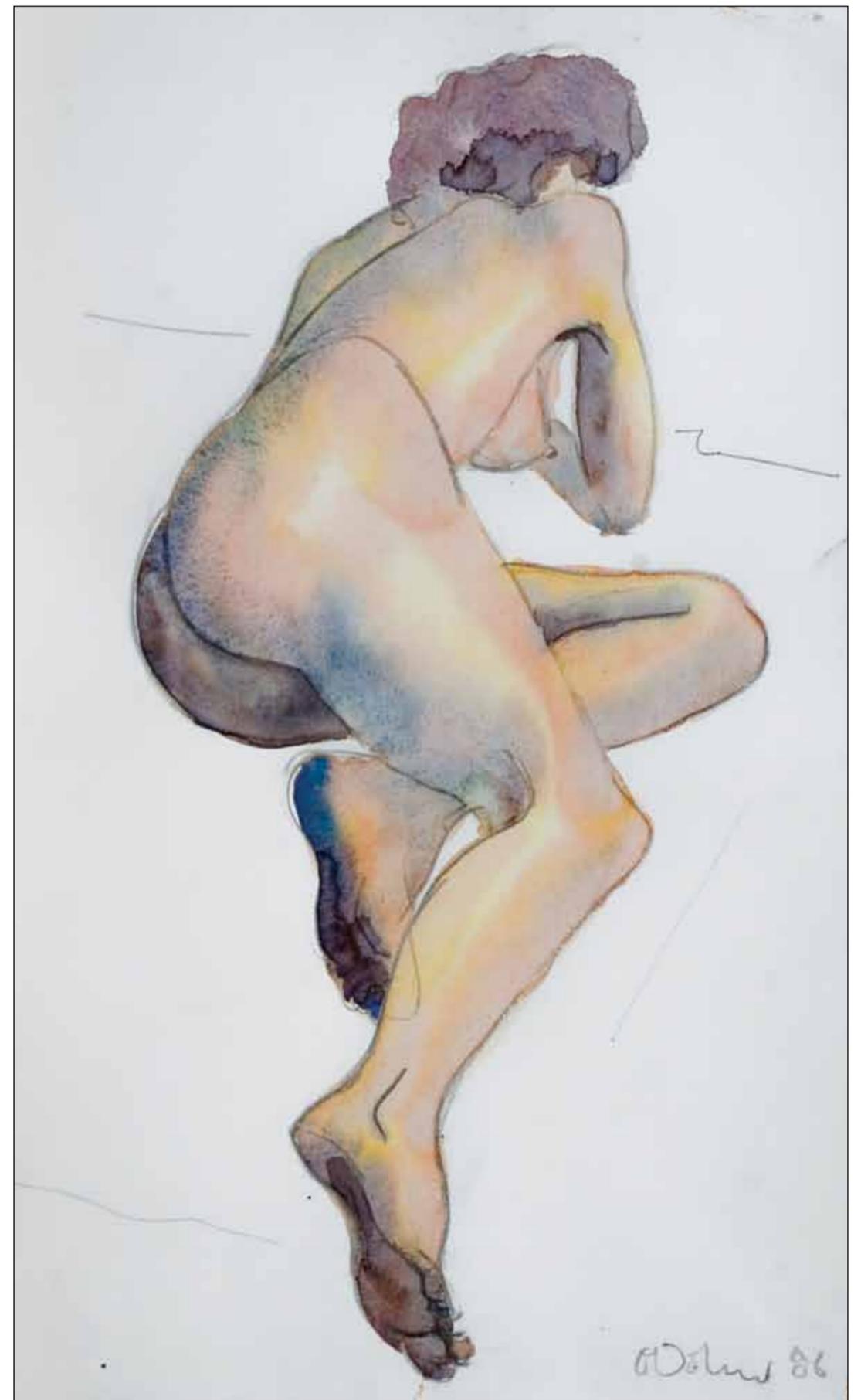
Barbara, London, watercolour, 1965.



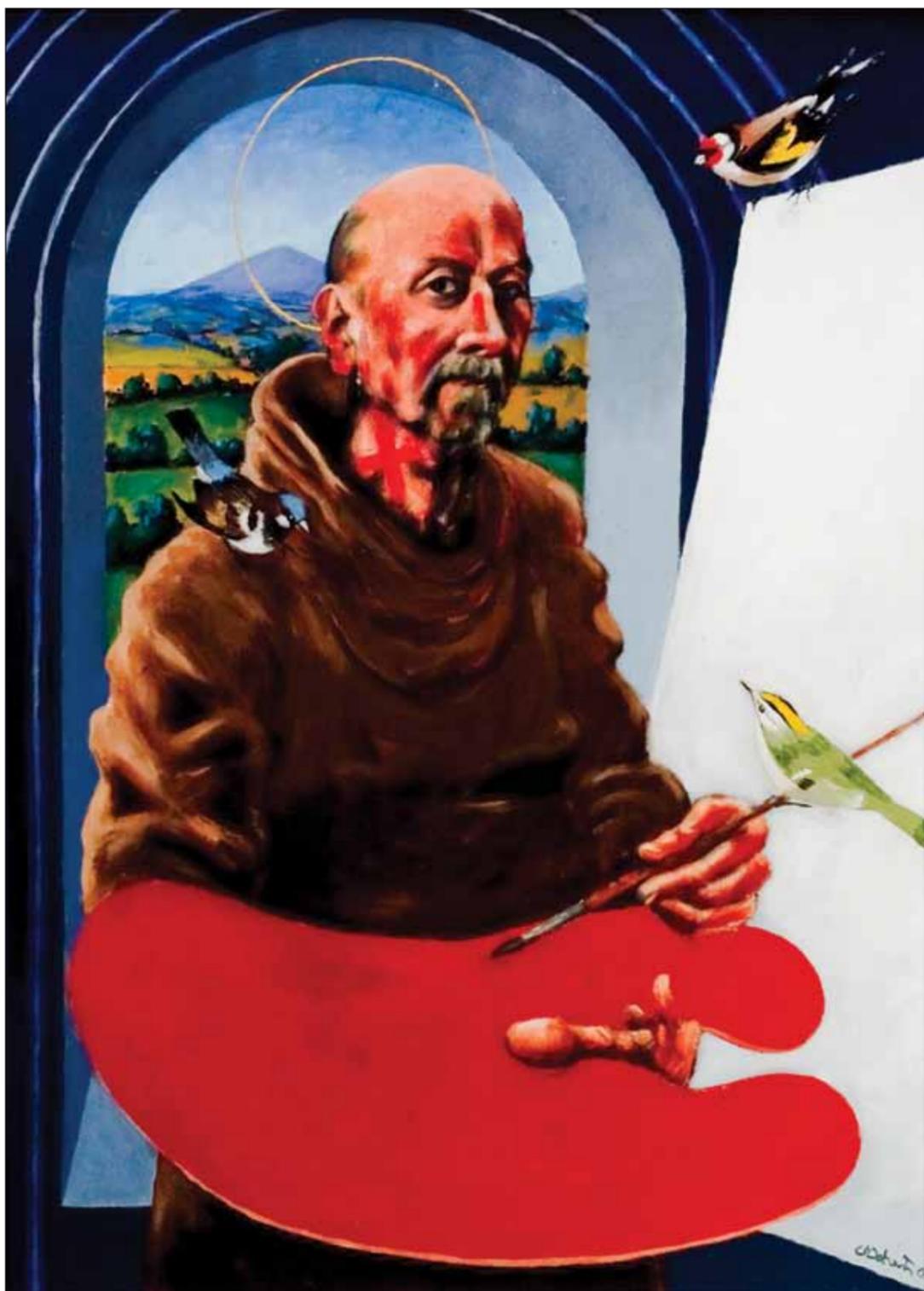
Male Nude 2, graphite and watercolour, 2009.



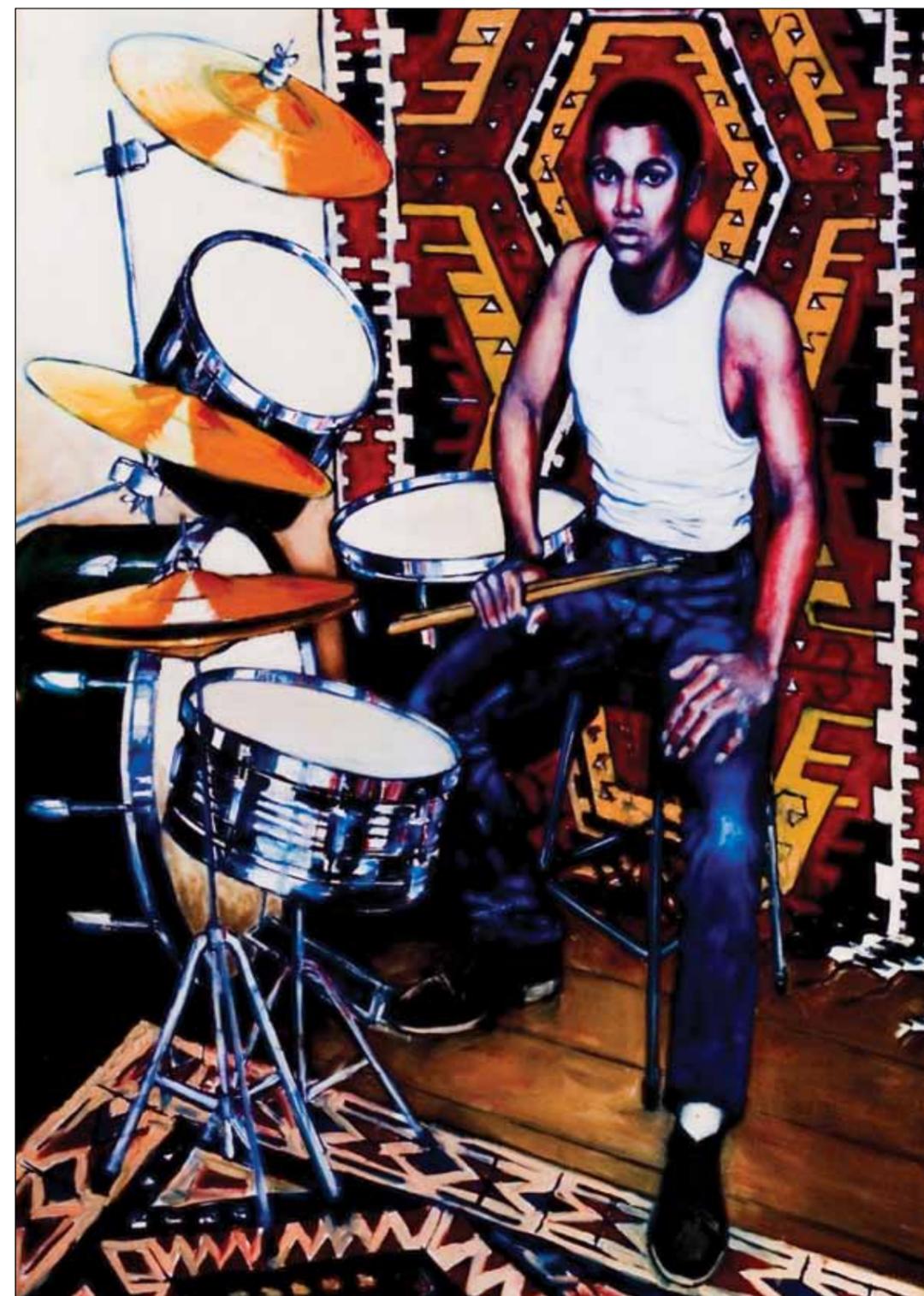
Untitled, watercolour.



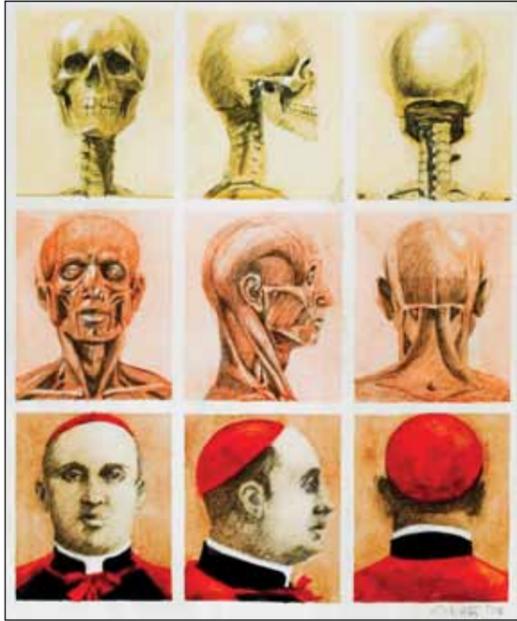
Untitled, watercolour, 1986.



*Self Portrait as St. Frances*, oil on canvas, 2007.



*Portrait of Eoin O'Doherty*, oil on canvas, 1986.



*Untitled*, mixed media, 1975.



*Rural Landscape, Ireland*, oil on canvas, 1986.



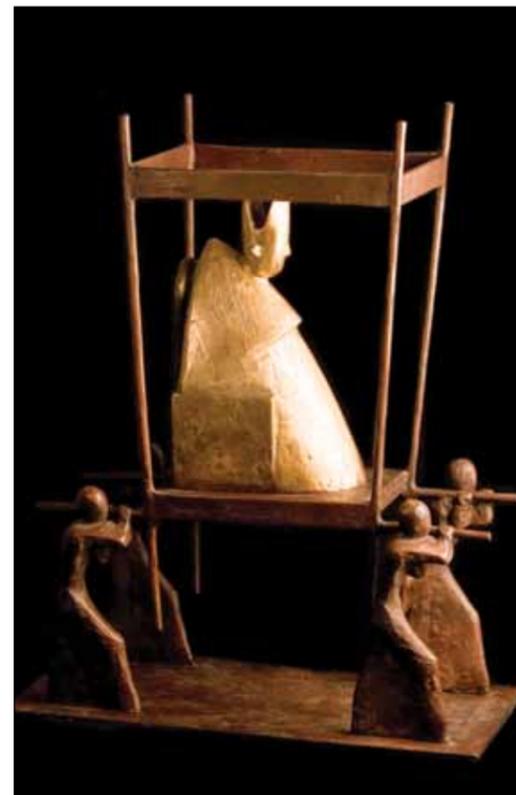
*Obsequies*, bronze and distressed paint, 2008.



*Pas de Dieu*, bronze.



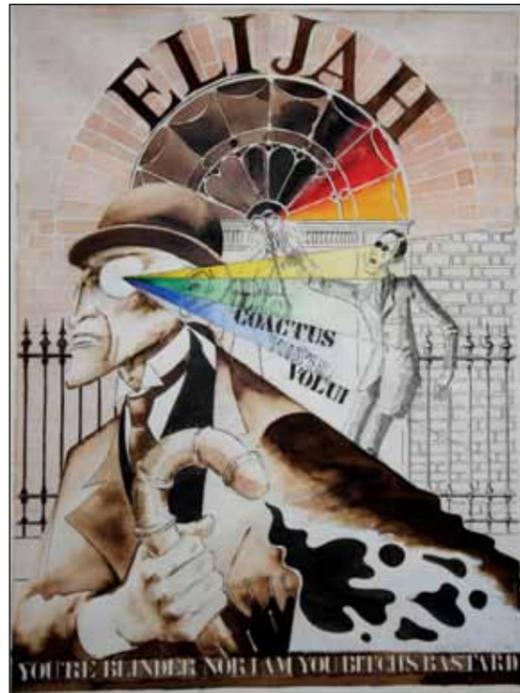
*Study for the Battle for Jerusalem*, oil on canvas, 2005.



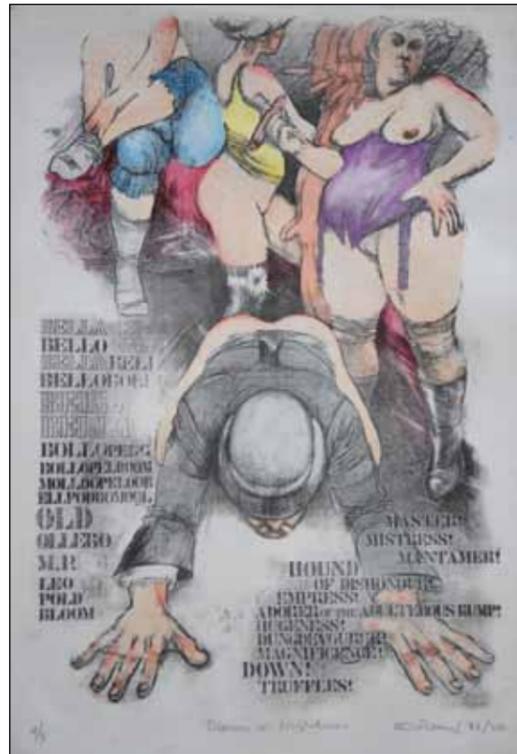
*Palanquin*, bronze and gold leaf.



*A Confirmation No. 2*, bronze and gold leaf.



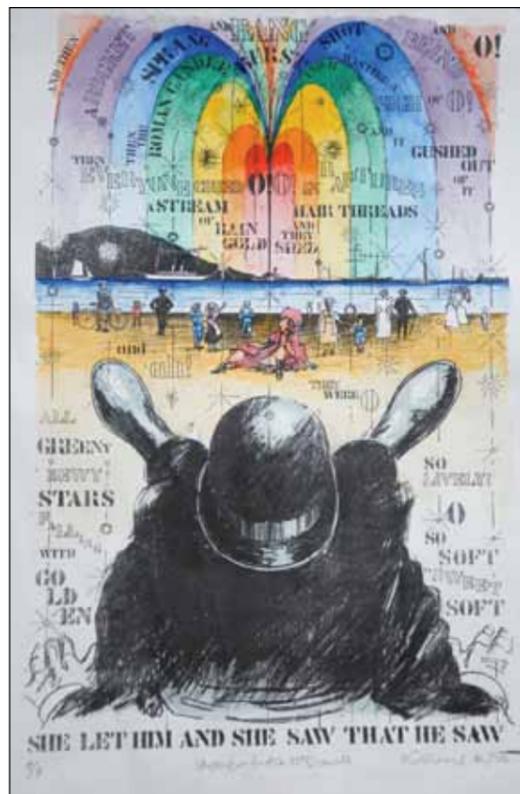
*You're Blinder nor I am,*  
ink and watercolour, 1982.



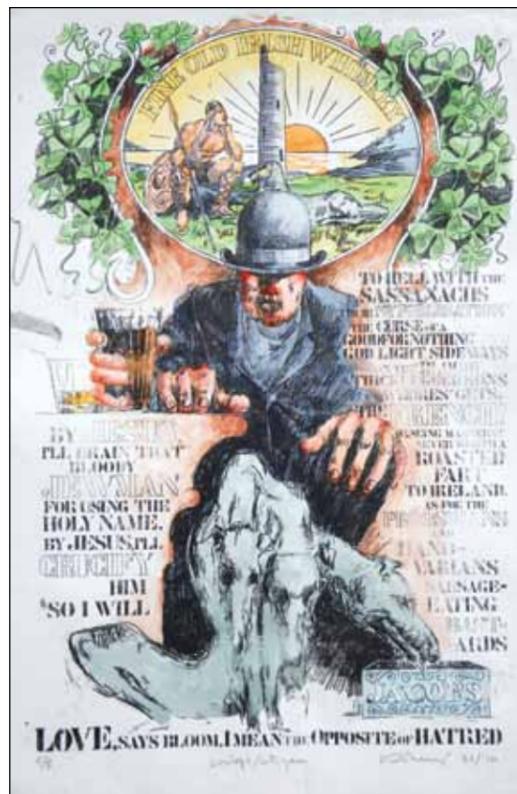
*Circe / Bloom in Nighttown,*  
hand-coloured lithograph, 1982/2010.



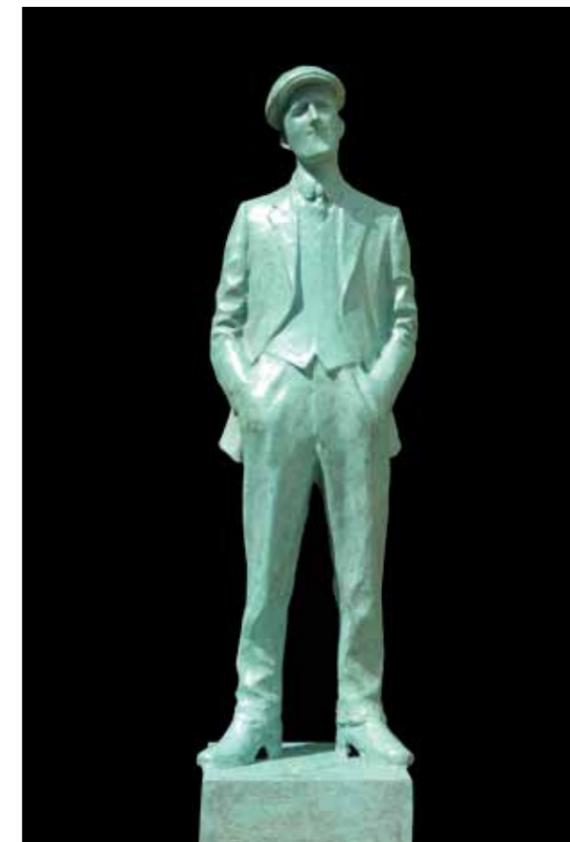
*Head of James Joyce,* bronze, 2010.



*Nausicaa / Gerty MacDowell,*  
hand-coloured lithograph, 1982/2010.



*Cyclops / Citizen,*  
hand-coloured lithograph, 1982/2010.



*James Joyce at Twenty (I was wondering if he would lend me five shillings),* bronze, 2010.

## A friend remembers

by Patrick MacEntee

**M**y late friend Eamonn O'Doherty was passionate about everything he did. He was passionate about his work, his wife, his family, his friends, his students, his music, his travels, his need to learn, and his need to teach. He was in every regard an exceptional person – willing, I believe, to turn his hand to anything, but always with style.

Eamonn was born in Derry on the 18th June 1939. His parents were both national school teachers from the Inishowen peninsula in Donegal. His father became Head Master of the Long Tower Primary School in Derry where Eamonn got his primary education. Then followed his secondary education at Saint Columb's College in Derry. There is clear evidence that the teaching in Saint Columb's was exceptional. The school produced out of the ordinary pupils, amongst them two of Eamonn's fellow pupils, John Hume and Seamus Heaney – both of whom went on to win (inter alia) Nobel prizes.

On the completion of his term at Saint Columb's Eamonn left secondary school with good drawing and painting skills and a mastery of English and French literature, including, it would appear, a lifelong love of Baudelaire. He also won a place in art at Belfast College of Art and a place in architecture at U.C.D. He opted for U.C.D.

He arrived in Dublin aged 18 years. At the School of Architecture in U.C.D. students were required to attend life classes at The National College of Arts. This meant that Eamonn could continue his painting and drawing. The requirement to attend both institutions put him in contact with young artists of the day studying at the College of Art who promptly became his lifelong friends. Amongst these new friends were Brian Bourke, James McKenna and Mick Kane – all sculptors and painters in the making.

At the School of Architecture Eamonn met and became a friend of Johnny Moynihan. Both were interested in traditional music. At that time Eamonn played the guitar and the mandolin a little but was better at the tin whistle and the traditional flute. He also had a good singing voice and had accumulated and sang a lot of traditional Irish ballads.

In 1962 Barbara O'Brolchain, who was to become Eamonn's wife, met Eamonn at O'Donogue's pub, which was then becoming a major centre for an Irish folk music revival. They met there frequently and shared the friendship of many people who were interested in traditional Irish music. On the 7th January 1966 Eamonn and Barbara got married. By way of honeymoon they hitch-hiked to Copenhagen where Eamonn found work in an architect's office and played Irish music at night.

Eamonn was summoned home from Denmark to act as driver/manager and sometimes backing musician for a new group called Sweeney's Men. Sweeney's Men was something new in Irish traditional music and they actually got paid for playing. So well did Sweeney's Men succeed that a professional manager took over the duties.

Eamonn took up work with Michael Scott and associates (architects) and then with An Foras Forbartha (the Irish Planning Institute). Around this time Eamonn began to use the Graphic Studio which had the facilities to produce etchings and lithographs – a medium that was to become a lifelong passion.

In the 1970's Eamonn started work as a lecturer in the Department of Architecture in Bolton Street. This remained his full time job until he retired in 2002. In the early 70's Eamonn got the position of visiting scholar at Harvard University. He chose to study architectural education. This was a research post where the visiting scholar is paid by his home institution and Harvard pays for everything else. The brief was to examine architectural education in the U.S. and to teach in Harvard's architectural school. In his spare time Eamonn also acted as backing musician for Bobby Clancy of The Clancy Brothers who was performing solo at that time.

While there, Eamonn and Barbara frequented a pub called the "Plough and the Stars". This was a music pub frequented by Harvard staff and students and this is where Eamonn and Barbara made the acquaintance of Allen Feldman who was the instigator and collaborator with Eamonn of a book called the "Northern Fiddler". Allen Feldman was not only a musician but also an academic. When they returned to Ireland Allen Feldman came to Ireland and stayed with Eamonn and Barbara. He secured funding from the Northern Ireland Arts Council to research and record the traditional musicians of the northwest. He brought Eamonn on board his venture to assist and to photograph and draw the musicians. For the research they travelled around Co. Donegal and Co. Tyrone. "Northern Fiddler" was published in 1979 by the Blackstaff press. Eamonn's contribution to the book is considerable and the book itself is a masterpiece.

In 1983 Eamonn entered a competition for a public artwork for Galway City's upcoming quincentennial celebrations. He won the competition and the Galway hooker sails in Eyre Square was the start of his career as a public sculptor. Eamonn has made a large number of public works ranging from the solemnity of James Connolly at Beresford Place in Dublin to Anna Livia which was in O'Connell Street and is now in the Croppy's Plot near Heuston station and the Great Hunger Memorial at Westchester, New York. Eamonn continued to make public sculptures until his last illness. To this day there is one large public sculpture still waiting to be installed in Co. Kildare.

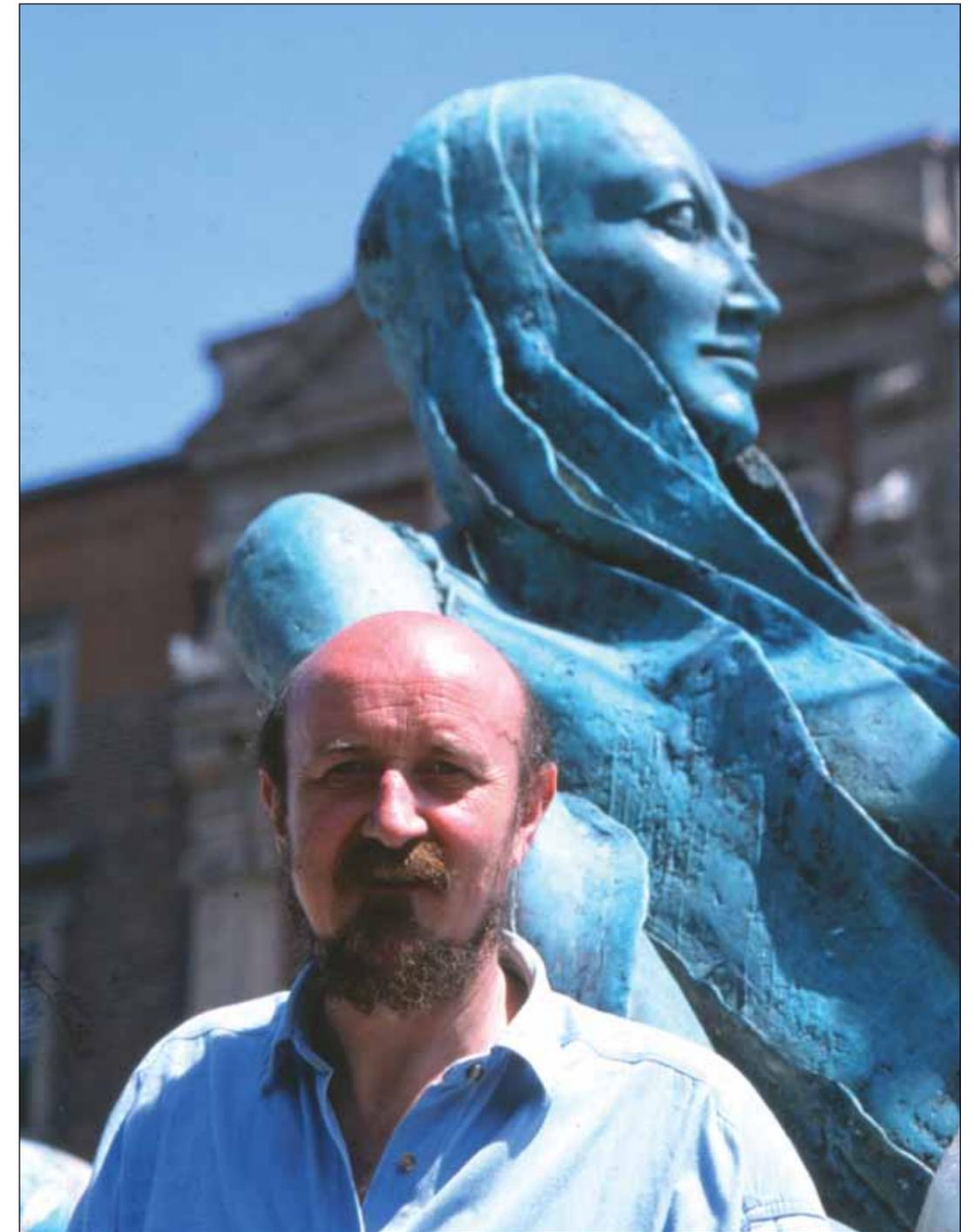
In 2002 Eamonn took retirement from Bolton Street. Despite being diagnosed with throat cancer in 2003, Eamonn and Barbara decided to give up their home in Dublin and go ahead with the purchase of a house at Milltown in Ferns in County Wexford. The house had the benefit of a large traditional stone barn which Eamonn converted into an artist's studio. Whilst in Ferns he produced a huge amount of painting and sculpture. He also travelled to Dublin regularly for "business and pleasure", the pleasure being mainly at Doheny and Nesbitts and the Arts Club.

Eamonn's work was exhibited twice in Norway in 2010 with John Fitzgerald of Irish Art. The first show, a group show titled *Re-Joyce*, was part of the Oslo Bloomsday Celebrations and Eamonn gave a lecture at the prestigious Henrik Ibsen Museum as part of this programme. Later in the year Eamonn visited the far north of Norway for the launch of the large group show *Europe's Edge*. After the launch Eamonn and a group of artists visited Alta to go husky dog sleighing, an activity that Eamonn excelled in.

Around this time it became obvious that Eamonn's health was deteriorating, and in spring 2011 Eamonn was

diagnosed with terminal cancer. He died in Gorey District Hospital on the 4th August 2011 aged 72 years. Eamonn had an enormous three day wake at Milltown House which friends, musicians and artists of all sorts attended. I believe that it is not without significance that at his funeral a Guard of Honour attended consisting of the members of the local gun club. Despite the shortness of his life in Milltown House his neighbours had come to accept and admire Eamonn. Such was the ability of Eamonn to befriend people and win their trust and so it had always been.

Eamonn was a heroic figure.



Eamonn O'Doherty pictured in front of his work; *Anna Livia*, O'Connell Street, Dublin.