The French Connection

Walter Frederick Osborne
Primary Education
Cat No. 28

The Ava Gallery
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The Hunt Museum
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The French Connection & The Rediscovery of Thomas Hovenden

The late 19th and early 20th centuries arguably constitute the most popular period in the history of Irish art. Household names such as Nathaniel Hone, Sir John Lavery, William John Leech, Roderic O’Conor and Walter Frederick Osborne as well as lesser known but equally talented artists including Nathaniel Hill, Thomas Hovenden and Maria Dorothy Webb all painted during this time. Often described as the “Irish Impressionists”, the artists represented in this exhibition worked in France at various stages of their careers. The label “Impressionist” is perhaps limiting, but identifies the fashionable movement that epitomised the avant garde in late 19th century France. Industrial France developed rapidly, and the art scene was affected accordingly, as it was by the invention of photography and its proliferation from the mid 1800s on. France was the centre of the 19th and early 20th century art world to which there was an international reaction, with artists flocking from abroad to live and learn.

Portraits and outdoor genre scenes feature strongly in this exhibition. Portraits of local Breton peasants by O’Kelly, O’Conor and William Scott, demonstrate a continuous fascination with the inhabitants of the French towns. Examples by all three artists in this show depict modest individuals in traditional attire. O’Conor’s *Head of a Breton Girl* is both an intimate depiction of a youth and a display of his innovative use of bold colour to evoke form and light. His *Breton Woman* is a more austere portrait, the model posed in a traditional three-quarter format, turned slightly to her left, in front of a floral patterned backdrop. This portrait makes for an interesting comparison with William Scott’s *Breton Woman* of almost forty years later. The women are posed similarly and wear traditional coiffe headdresses, and both have a modest demeanour, simultaneously suggesting continuing traditions in Brittany despite rapid modernisation, and continuity in terms of subject matter in Irish painting. Yet the styles of the two artists are entirely different, with O’Conor’s more painterly warm-toned work in contrast with Scott’s cool flattened approach. O’Kelly’s earlier portrait of a *Vendean of Finistère* uses a similar composition to O’Conor’s and Scott’s, but bears striking contrast to them in its unflattering realist rendering of a male sitter. Despite the differences of these four portraits, their subject matter seems to connect generations of artists.

Given the interest that the Irish artists who painted in Brittany had in the local people and their community as a whole, it is not surprising that outdoor genre scenes comprise a substantial proportion of this exhibition. The daily life of the society at work and at rest was captured by Irish painters in varying degrees of romanticism and realism. Stanhope Forbes’ *Fair Measures: A Shop in Quimperlé* is an idealised depiction of the daily life of the town’s women. Similarly, Osborne’s *Potato Gathering* sheds a rose tinted light on daily labour, while William John Leech’s *A French Quayside* is a serene view that suggests the hustle and bustle of the day is about to begin. Scenes of rest and play are represented by Moynan’s *Tug of War*, where a group of boys play in the street, Maria Dorothy Webb’s *Under the Apple Blossom*, where a young girl wanders thoughtfully, and Thomas Hovenden’s *A Wayside Chat*, where two youths chat at a gate. While these outdoor genre scenes are mainly inhabited by women and children, the question of where the men of these towns might be is answered by paintings such as Nathaniel Hone’s *Harbour Scene*, which shows a solitary boat on the water with a town in the distance, and Samuel C. Taylor’s *Girls at the Water’s Edge, Brittany*, where the return of the boats, and the men on board, is anxiously anticipated.
Detail of *The Story of the Hunt* by Hovenden, Cat. No. 11
While the exhibition includes work by some of Ireland’s favourite painters such as Sir John Lavery and Walter Osborne, Thomas Hovenden’s A Wayside Chat and The Story of the Hunt are an exciting addition to works by more familiar artists. During his lifetime, Thomas Hovenden (1840-1895) was a highly successful and respected artist on the east coast of America, his adopted home from 1863. Born in Dunmanway, Co. Cork in 1840 and orphaned during the Great Famine at the age of six, Hovenden went on to become a member of the Society of American Artists (1881), the American Watercolour Society (1882), the Philadelphia Society of Artists (1883), the New York Etching Club (1885), and an Associate member of the National Academy of Design (1881). He succeeded Thomas Eakins as Professor of Painting and Drawing at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1886-88), where his students included Alexander Calder and Robert Henri. Hovenden arrived in America at the end of the Civil War and rose to fame painting patriotic scenes in sympathy with the American version of Victorian values, and later became known for his paintings of African Americans during the Abolitionist movement. Yet it is the time he spent painting in Pont-Aven, that puts him into an Irish context, and while he is not known to have returned to Ireland, his influence is seen in the work of his contemporaries, in particular that of Aloysius O’Kelly.

Hovenden and O’Kelly first met at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1874 and shared accommodation at the Pension Gloanec in Pont-Aven. They found subjects for their work not only in the local Bretons but in each other, and a sketch inscribed ‘A O’Kelly’ was included in an exhibition of Hovenden’s work at the Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia in 1995. In her recent book on O’Kelly, Niamh O’Sullivan argues that it is a sketch of Hovenden by O’Kelly rather than the other way around as catalogued in for the exhibition. O’Sullivan also makes a direct comparison between O’Kelly’s work and that of Hugh Bolton Jones, the painter who had been one of Hovenden’s closest friends since 1867. O’Kelly and Hovenden’s friendship may have continued in the US, where O’Kelly is thought to have spent time from the early 1880s. It is somehow poignant that O’Kelly petitioned for naturalization in 1895, the year of Hovenden’s untimely death.

This may be the first time that Hovenden’s work has been exhibited in Ireland. He received little attention in America from the time of his death until the retrospective held at Woodmere Art Museum in 1995 and a monograph published in 2006 by University of Pennsylvania Press, despite his success during his lifetime. The fact that his work was long overlooked has been attributed to the timing of his tragic death. Hovenden was one of the most respected academic painters of his time, however modern art in the form of Impressionism was becoming fashionable in the States in the 1890s, and as time elapsed after his death, Hovenden’s legacy faded fast in the shadow of new styles. This exhibition gives us a chance to re-examine his work in the context of his contemporaries, and give him his rightful place among some of Ireland’s greatest painters.

Aoife Leach, July 2010
1. **MARY KATE BENSON (1842-1921)**
A Court, Quimper, Brittany
Oil on canvas, 60 x 44cm
Signed and dated 1891

Inscribed artist's label verso

Exhibited: Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 1892, catalogue no. 311

Mary Kate Benson was born in Dublin and studied in England under Herkomer and Calderon and in Paris under Lazare. Her sister Charlotte was also a painter. In 1891 she visited Brittany and was based in Quimper painting street scenes similar to this, and studies of local girls.
2. **Stanhope Alexander Forbes RA (1857-1947)**

Fair Measures: A Shop in Quimperlé
Oil on canvas, 100 x 80cm
Signed, inscribed Quimperlé and dated 1883

Inscribed on original label verso with title and artist’s London address: 11 Eglin Road, St. Peter’s Park.

Exhibited: Royal Academy, London, 1884, No. 726
*Exhibition of Irish Art*, Milmo Penny Fine Art, Dublin, 21st – 28th May, 1992 p 4-5, illustrated front cover
*Peintres Anglais en Bretagne*, Musée de Pont-Aven, June- September 2004, catalogue no. 13

Literature: Art Journal, 1892, p68, illustrated; C. Lewis Hind
Art Journal, 1911, Christmas issue, p31, illustrated
Caroline Fox and Francis Greencro, *Artists of the Newlyn School*, Newlyn Orion Galleries, 1979
Julian Campbell, *The Irish Impressionists*, National Gallery of Ireland, 1984, p59 & 125
Milmo-Penny Fine Art, *Exhibition of Irish Art*, 21st – 28th May, 1992, p 4-5, illustrated front cover
Julian Campbell, 1993 *Onlookers in France Irish Realist and Impressionist Painters*, Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork, p 19, illustrated
Eammon Mallie (ed.), (2000) *One Hundred Years of Irish Art*, p134, illustrated p135

Stanhope Forbes was born in Dublin. He started his art studies at Dulwich College of Art and The Royal Academy Schools. In 1880 he travelled to Paris to study under Bonnat at his atelier in Clichy. He went to Brittany in 1881 and one of his pieces from that trip was exhibited at the RA in 1882 and purchased by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. He returned to Brittany in 1883. In 1884 he went to Cornwall and became one of the central figures of the Newlyn School.

In comparison to his contemporaries, Stanhope Forbes’s Breton career was relatively short. Consequently, paintings from the period do not often appear and examples of his small output of major Breton pictures are even rarer.

His two pictures from 1883, *Preparations for the Market, Quimperlé* and *Fair Measures: A Shop in Quimperlé* were both exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1884. Both were similar in subject matter and treatment. *Preparations for the Market* is now in the Dunedin Art Gallery, New Zealand. It is illustrated in ‘Victorian Social Conscience’, an exhibition held in New South Wales in 1976.

Forbes himself was more pleased with *Fair Measures*. He refers to the picture originally as *The Vegetable Shop* in a letter and remarks that it was his best. After a private view held at his house in London in October 1883, he wrote that, “the picture is pronounced unique” and “the general verdict is satisfactory”.

*Fair Measures* is probably set in the narrow medieval street, the Rue Dom Morrice, near the markets. Forbes represents three figures, an elderly woman weighing potatoes, a pretty girl ladling milk for a child, symbolizing the three stages of women’s lives. Each part of the picture, from the crisp white bonnets to the baskets of vegetables is observed with still-life intensity.

Dominic Milmo-Penny
3. **Norman Garstin (1847-1926)**

Madonna Lilies

Oil on panel, 26.5 x 21.5cm

Signed

Provenance: Previously in the collection of the late John Chambers

Exhibited: *The Irish Impressionists Exhibition*, National Gallery of Ireland, Oct-Nov 1984, cat. no. 55

Ulster Museum, Belfast, Feb-March 1985, cat. no. 55

*Painting in Newlyn*, The Barbican Arts Centre, London, cat. no. 57

Literature: *The Irish Impressionists*, Julian Campbell, 1984

NGI p55 illustrated.


Norman Garstin was born at Cahirconlish, Co. Limerick. In 1880 Garstin travelled to Antwerp where he studied under Charles Verlat for two years before moving to Paris where he met Degas and studied under Carolus-Duran for three years at the same academy as Roderic O’Conor. He painted in both Brittany and Normandy and later went on to become one of the leading lights of the Newlyn School of painters along with Stanhope Forbes.
4. **William Crampton Gore RHA (1871-1946)**
The Circus Vans, Montreuil
Oil on canvas, 25.5 x 34cm, signed and dated 1909


From Enniskillen, Gore originally practiced medicine until 1901. In 1900 he had returned to the Slade, spending 5 years there where he counted Sir William Orpen among his friends, sharing a studio with him for a time.

Having also studied in Paris, by 1913 Gore was exhibiting at the Royal Academy, RHA and the Paris Salon from a Paris address. After marrying in France in 1923 he eventually settled in Montreuil-sur-mer where his relative the painter Dermod O’Brien went to stay with him on several occasions before he eventually moved to England in 1932.
Born in Dublin May Guinness travelled with Mildred Anne Butler to Newlyn to study under Norman Garstin. It is thought by Julian Campbell that she first went to study in Paris with perhaps Mary Swanzy in 1905 – 07. In 1911 she showed *A Breton Pardon* at the RHA and over the years scenes of life in Brittany included fairs and weddings. *A Religious Procession in Brittany* is in the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland. She joined the French Army as a Military nurse in WW1 and was awarded the “Medaille de la Reconnaissance Francaise”. After the war she returned to Paris most winters till 1931 studying with Lhote, Van Dongen, the Paris- American Edwin Scott and under the Spaniard Herman Anglanda. She held an exhibition in Galerie Visconti in Paris in 1925 and Andre Lhote wrote the introduction to the catalogue.

Under the Apple Tree, Normandy
Oil on canvas, 35.5 x 56cm, signed

William John Hennessy was born in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny but moved to the United States when he was only ten, following his father who had fled Ireland due to his participation in the Young Ireland Uprising. He studied at the National Academy of Design in New York and quickly achieved recognition. However in 1870 Hennessy and his wife moved to England.

It was in France, particularly the Calvados region of Normandy where Hennessy acquired much of his inspiration, spending each summer there. In 1875 he moved to France, renting a manor on the coast near Honfleur. He produced iconic works such as *Fete Day in a Cider Orchard, Normandy*, which is in the Ulster Museum Collection, and interestingly this same couple in similar pose feature as part of that work. Hugh Lane included him in the 1904 exhibition of Irish Painters at the Guildhall London, where he exhibited *Twixt Day and Night, Calvados.*
7. **Nathaniel Hill (1861-1934)**

Sunshine, Brittany
Oil on canvas, 45.75 x 30.5cm
Signed and dated 1884. Inscribed with title on artist’s label verso

Provenance: Private Collection courtesy of Milmo-Penny Fine Art, Dublin

Exhibited:
Royal Hibernian Academy, 1885, catalogue no. 257
*Onlookers in France*, Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork, 1993
*Peintres Irlandais en Bretagne*, Musée de Pont-Aven, France, 1999
*Nathaniel Hill & The Bretons*, Milmo-Penny Fine Art, Dublin, December 2007, catalogue no. 2

Literature:
Dublin University Review. Illustrated Art Supplement, London, 1885, p.14
Julian Campbell, *The Irish Impressionists*, National Gallery of Ireland, 1984, p.131

Nathaniel Hill was born in Drogheda and studied in Dublin before going to the Academy in Antwerp to study under Verlat at the same time (1881 – 1883) as Walter Osborne and Joseph Malachy Kavanagh. He was in Brittany during the autumn of 1883 and stayed at the famous artist’s inn Maison Gloanec, the same inn used by O’Kelly and Hovenden. The subject matter of his work is very similar to that of Osborne. It is thought they painted side-by-side on many occasions. The subject of this work is a house situated just behind the main square in Pont-Aven distinctive for its steps up to a double doorway and pigeon loft.
8. **NATHANIEL HILL (1861 – 1934)**
Breton Peasants at the Convent door
Oil on canvas, 38 x 52cm, signed with monogram

This is a smaller version of the work that was included in *The Irish Impressionists* exhibition at the National Gallery of Ireland in 1984, which won Nathaniel Hill the Taylor Scholarship in 1884. In the catalogue entry for that work Julian Campbell notes that “This is an unusual piece of social realism among Irish Artists. There is a sense of weariness and resignation in the poses of the peasants.”

*Exhibited at the Ava Gallery only*
Nathaniel Hone RHA (1831-1917)
Mediterranean Harbour Scene
Oil on canvas, 61 x 101.5cm, signed with initials

In this large, horizontal canvas by Nathaniel Hone, the sunlight falling upon the rough stonework of the buildings, the bare landscape, the calmness of the sea, and the line of snow capped mountains, conveyed with a restricted palette, evoke an unusual, ‘timeless’ mood, suggesting that this could be an Egyptian or North African subject. Hone brings together several much-loved features of his painting career: sailing vessels at sea, sunlit buildings, snow capped mountains, and a mood of airiness, to create a tranquil, element Mediterranean scene.

In his balance of simple shapes, contrast of sunlight and shadow, and restrained palette, Hone demonstrates a painterly breadth and mood of harmony. Being a yachtsman himself, Hone is unusual in that several of his Mediterranean coastal subjects were taken from the sea, on board ship, rather than from the shore. In spite of its ‘Eastern’ atmosphere, it is likely that the setting here is the French or Italian Riviera coast, for example, Villefranche, Menton or Bordighera, to which he made several excursions.

The broad, heavy, wooden fishing boats are similar to those depicted in paintings such as Villefranche from the East (NGI no. 1361) or Menton, Evening (RHA 1879 no. 109 (Sotheby’s ‘Irish Sale’ 16 May 1996, no 443), although the furled sails in the present picture are not nearly as tall. Villefranche, for example, just east of Nice, was notable for its old stone houses and sheltered, deep water harbour, with the Alpes Maritimes, often covered by snow, visible to the north.

Hone is at home with the subject of boats. He observes the furled sails, masts and rigging and hulls painted a cemlean blue, with evident pleasure. The small figures of fisherman or women, in the shadows, at work, are visible on board. Some wear blue smocks, white blouses or red scarves, which catch the sunlight. A rowing boat is moored alongside.

To the left, the harbour wall in shadow, and the reflections, which it casts, form simple abstract shapes. In the centre of the composition the pale stone houses and fort above the harbour catch golden sunlight at early morning (or perhaps evening). Behind, a line of snow capped mountains floats above smoky blue shadow like a frieze. A light haze of cloud covers the sky.

Close examination of the canvas reveals Hone’s natural painterly touches: the scuffed surface of the weathered sunlit buildings, which has an unusual expressiveness; the fluid line of paint which conveys the sunlit beach; and a little strip of creamy paint where the harbour wall meets the sea in the centre of the canvas, which could almost be a small white rowing boat in a pool of light.

Dr. Julian Campbell
10. **THOMAS HOVENDEN (1840-1895)**

A Wayside Chat  
Oil on canvas, 81 x 60cm.  
Signed, inscribed and dated Brittany 1875

Thomas Hovenden was sent from his home in Dunmanway to an orphanage in Cork City when his parents died during the Great Famine in 1847. Nine years later he was appren- ticed to the Cork carver and gilder George Tolerton who noted Hovenden’s skill at draughtsmanship and sent him to the Cork School of Design (later to become the Crawford) in 1858. Part of the South Kensington School (now Victoria and Albert Museum), the Cork school promoted the ideas of Aestheticism and the teachings of John Ruskin. Although the school focused on design, Hovenden subscribed to the notion of painting as a higher art with a social and moral purpose, and advanced his draughtsmanship by sketching the school’s collection of Antonio Canova’s plaster cast statuary as well as painting plein air watercolours.

In 1863, following his brother, Hovenden emigrated to New York. There he studied at the National Academy of Design under Charles Parsons, and managed to set up his own studio by running a framing business. Hovenden also lived in Baltimore, before being sent to Paris in 1874 with funding from the art collector John McCoy and his business partner William T. Walters. Hovenden studied at the École des Beaux Arts under Alexandre Cabanel before travelling to Pont-Aven where he was to meet Irish artists, as well as his future wife Helen Corson who he would settle with in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania on his return to America in 1881.

On 15th August 1895 the headline ARTIST HOVENDEN A HERO ran in The New York Times. Sadly it was the 54 year old’s obituary. Thomas Hovenden died when he was struck by a train, apparently in an attempt to save a young girl who had wandered onto the tracks. With the rise in popularity of modern rather than academic painting, Hovenden’s hard earned reputation was soon to be forgotten. It is thought that this is the first time his work has been shown in Ireland to date.
11. **Thomas Hovenden (1840-1895)**
The Story of the Hunt
Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 78.75cm
Signed and dated Brittany 1880

A smaller gouache version of the present work was included in the Hovenden Retrospective exhibition in 1995 at the Woodmere Art Museum Philadelphia.

Hovenden is the subject of an article commissioned by the Irish Arts Review by Lawrence William White in their autumn issue due out on 3rd September.
12. **JOSEPH MALACHY KAVANAGH RHA (1856-1918)**

A Breton Byeway
Oil on canvas, 66 x 43cm, signed

Exhibited: RHA Annual Exhibition, Dublin, 1886, catalogue no. 1
*Peintres Irlandais en Bretagne*, Musee de Pont Aven, June – Sept 1999, catalogue no. 15

Literature. Dublin University Review, RHA Art Supplement 1886 p.5 Illustrated.
*Joseph Malcaby Kavanagh* by Ethna Waldron
The Capuchin Annual 1968 p.314 – 327 Illustrated p320
*Peintres Irlandaise en Bretagne* Exhibition
Catalogue by Catherine Puget Musee de Pont-Aven 1999 p.50

Although older than Osborne, Kavanagh’s career seemed to run side by side with that of Walter Osborne even before they set off together with Nathaniel Hill to study at Antwerp under Verlat in 1881. He is thought to have come to Brittany with Osborne in late 1882/early 1883 and painted in Quimperlé, Dinan and Pont-Aven very similar subjects to those of Hill and Osborne.

When *A Breton Byeway* was first exhibited in 1886 it was described as “a very charming and competent work”. The critic of the Dublin University Review Art Supplement commented “This is an excellent example of Mr Kavanagh’s work. The expectant attitude of the kid tells of someone coming along the path and adds a point of human interest to the landscape which renders the picture particularly pleasing”.

*Exhibited at the Ava Gallery only*
13. **Georgina Moutray Kyle RUA**  
(1865-1950)  
Breton Village Scene  
Oil on board, 51 x 32cm, signed  

Provenance: From the collection of the artist Samuel Taylor  

Kyle was born in Craigavad in Co. Down. After being educated at home by a governess she went to study in Paris under Colarossi and exhibited at the Paris Salon. The Ulster Museum purchased *The Market, Concarneau* which had been exhibited in the Paris Salon in 1924. She also exhibited works of Concarneau and Quimperlé at the RHA and the Belfast Art Society.

It is likely that she met fellow Northern artist Samuel Taylor, in whose personal collection this work belonged although he appears to have discovered Brittany before her so perhaps it was he who influenced her to travel there.
Market Scene in Audierne, Brittany
Oil on board, 31 x 40cm
Signed

This is one of a number of works that Lamb executed of the Market at Audierne and both this and the painting below are thought to have been included in his 1927 Exhibition.

15. Charles Lamb RHA (1893 – 1964)
On the coast of Brittany
Oil on board, 30 x 40cm
Signed
Charles Lamb RHA (1893 - 1964)
The Breton Fisher Boy
Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 51cm

Charles Lamb was born in Portadown, Co. Armagh. He was to spend much of his life living in Carraroe in Galway painting local landscapes and peasant scenes of the area in a manner that combined social realism with academic tradition.

Lamb lived in Brittany in 1926/7 staying both at Pont-Aven and Audierne. As well as exhibiting four Breton subjects at the RHA in 1927, he held an exhibition of pictures painted on the Coast of Brittany, which included nearly 50 Breton works including figurative work such as An Old Breton Fisherman and A Breton Peasant Woman. One of the 1927 RHA exhibits Breton Peasants at Prayer is now in the Waterford Municipal Collection.

The backdrop of the sardine fleet, probably in Concarneau is reminiscent of later works by Lamb showing the Galway Hookers by the pier at Carraroe.
17. **Sir John Lavery RA RHA (1856-1941)**  
The Walnut Tree, St. Patrick’s Purgatory, Lough Derg  
Oil on canvas, 51 x 61cm  
Signed, inscribed with title and dedicated to “Father Leonard 1933”

Provenance: Previously in the collection of Miss Mor Murnaghan

*Sir John Lavery: A Painter and his World* by Kenneth Mc Conkey 2010 p179 – 183

Lavery was born in Belfast. He went to Paris in 1881 becoming a pupil of Bouguereau and Robert-Fleury at Académie Julian. Some of Lavery’s most popular works are those that he painted at the artist colony Grez-sur-Loing in 1883/4 where he became very friendly with Frank O’Meara (q.v.). He was to visit Brittany in 1903 and 1904 where he was to meet his future wife Hazel. Lavery had heard of the ancient Irish pilgrimage known as St. Patrick’s Purgatory, a small island in the centre of Lough Derg near Pettigo in Co. Donegal from Shane Leslie. Lavery went there in 1929 hoping to find picturesque peasants much like he would have seen at a French pardon many years earlier and was disappointed to find “everyday types one would see on the streets of Belfast or Dublin”. As he wrote to Thomas Bodkin “I wanted to paint the pilgrims in their devotions and above all plodding through the mud and rain but alas the rain has come after I left”.

This is one of three studies Lavery executed while on the island and from these he was to complete “St. Patrick’s Purgatory” which was exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1930 and now is in the Hugh Lane Gallery Collection.

A French Quayside  
Oil on canvas, 44.5 x 80cm, signed


Exhibited: The Frederick Gallery, *Spring Exhibition*, April 2002, catalogue no. 1

*A French Quayside* captures a typical summers evening scene along the dock of the fishing village of Concarneau, with similar subject matter to *A Sunny Afternoon, Concarneau*, dated 1907 (illustrated p.121 Leech: An Irish Painter Abroad).

Thomas Bodkin in his review of the 1909 RHA exhibition wrote: “*A Sunny Afternoon in Concarneau*, is charming for its atmospheric clearness, good perspective and other artistic points, which almost make the spectator think he is looking at a real scene instead of a picture…” Leech proudly recalled in later years that Nathaniel Hone bought his works from the RHA.

Similar qualities are embraced in *A French Quayside* but here the sails are down in the tuna fishing boat and the fishermen have departed, but the main group on the quayside are included in similar poses in front of the row of shops, the coiffeur and the bar. A similar evening light bathes the harbour and the water is painted in Leech’s freer brushstrokes, in a manner of Monet. From 1903 when Leech left Paris to paint in Brittany he focussed on painting the sunlight of the Breton port and his work progressed from the darker tones of Boats at Concarneau (ibid. illus. P.129) to the confidence of *A French Quayside*. Although a slightly smaller work than *A Sunny Afternoon in Concarneau*, *A French Quayside* is not a study for *A Sunny Afternoon, Concarneau* but a different version of a theme and may indeed have been a sequel to *A Sunny Afternoon, Concarneau*. Like his contemporaries Leech used postcards which depicted scenes of the fishing town for his paintings, and he also used photographs, so it is conceivable that these two paintings are derived from the same source.

*A French Quayside* is a complete work with the boat in the foreground expanse of water diagonally drawing the viewer to the calm horizontal of the sunlit quayside. In this work Leech has omitted the two moored boats, which he included on the left of *A Sunny Afternoon in Concarneau* and the extended shop frontage, but undoubtedly both paintings date from the same period, 1907, when Leech was at his most confident with his subject matter and paint handling.

Dr. Denise Ferran
A contemporary and friend of Roderic O’Conor, Katherine McCausland was a portraitist who exhibited at the Paris Salon, yet her name is all but forgotten in Ireland.

Born in Dublin in the 1860s, she was painting in England in the 1880s, where she exhibited regularly at the RA, London between 1886 and 1904. She moved to Paris in the mid-1880s, where she studied with Carolus-Duran and Henner, and with Robert Fleury, Lefebvre and Boulanger at the Academie Julian.

She moved to the artists’ colony of Grez-sur-Loing c.1890 with her companion Guy Maynard, and they became a well-known couple in the expatriate community of artists at Grez, Pont Aven and Concarneau. It was probably at this time that she became a friend of Roderic O’Conor, and some say his influence can be seen in the use of dappled backgrounds in her portraits.

Her work is still exhibited in the town halls of Grez and Bouron-Marlotte, and several of her portraits are in private collections in Brittany and Grez.

*Serving Dinner* is a rare and important re-discovery: a rare, key work by one of the major figures in the group of artists who left Ireland for France in the 1880s, and which included Walter Osborne, Frank O’Meara and Sir John Lavery. It was painted in Grez-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau, where the artist settled in company with artists as varied as Lavery and John Singer Sargent, the author Robert Louis Stevenson and the composer Frederick Delius. Although she initially stayed at the Hotel Chevillon, she eventually bought a house in the town and became a well-known figure among the townsfolk - she was known as ‘Miss Mac’ and one of her paintings, *La Mère Moreau*, still hangs in the town hall.

This rediscovered picture is typical of MacCausland’s work, which was often set in shadowy interiors of the peasants’ houses and depended on her sensitive eye for human relationships and her command of portraiture. At the same time, it demonstrates her kinship with the other British and Irish artists who went to France in the 1880s such as Walter Osborne and Stanhope Forbes. An interesting story, told by the son of one of her sitters and possibly relevant in the case of this picture, is that a Dutch painter who lived in nearby St. Leger would visit MacCausland to criticize her work.

MacCausland’s work is all too scarce now, but *Serving Dinner* is a vivid illustration of her talent and importance. She was a member of the key group of British and Irish painters who trained in France and applied the lessons they learnt there to the modern art of their own countries. Katherine died in 1930, and was buried at the cemetery at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris.
20. Richard Thomas Moynan RHA (1856-1906)

Tug of War
Oil on canvas, 43 x 119.5cm, signed

Exhibited: RHA Annual Exhibition, Dublin, 1891 catalogue no. 135

Moynan was born in Dublin, where he spent six years studying at the Royal College of Surgeons, before commencing his artistic training at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, and the Royal Hibernian Academy Schools in Dublin and in Antwerp. Moynan was a contemporary of Walter Osborne and Roderic O’Conor. All three studied under Augustus Burke in the RHA Schools and under Karl Verlat in the Academy Royal in Antwerp. Vincent Van Gogh also studied in the Academie Royale in the same year as Moynan. He shared lodgings with Henry Allan from Dundalk and Edwin Hill from Dublin. In 1885 Moynan moved to Paris where he studied under W.A. Bouguereau.

*Tug of War* was one of six works the artist exhibited in the annual RHA exhibition of 1891. It was painted at the height of Moynan’s career, as he had been ratified as a full member of the Royal Hibernian Academy in July of the previous year. *Military Manoeuvres* (National Gallery of Ireland Cat. No. 4364), a work shown in the same exhibition was subsequently displayed at the Chicago World Fair and in San Francisco, where it was sold for £210.

In *Tug of War*, two teams of three boys strive to drag their opponents into their own territory to secure victory. The action takes place against the backdrop of a village street, where two smaller children, a girl in white pinafore and a younger child, observe the competition from an open doorway. The contestants are well matched in terms of height and size. All are barefoot and with their clothes in various states of disrepair. The boy on the extreme left has fallen over, he has lost his cap but is staunchly maintaining his position as anchorman, while being dragged along the ground by the efforts of the opposing team. Above him, a hen and a bushytailed rooster flee the discord, balanced, on the far side of the composition by a curious goose that stretches his neck to gain a better view. The spirit of the game is light heated rather than aggressive, yet the intense expressions of the children on the right demonstrate how seriously they regard their task.

There is a preparatory sketch for *Tug of War* in the National Gallery of Ireland (Sketchbook No. 19.171,12 verso). Moynan adhered closely to the composition of the sketch, replacing the two girls in the doorway with a single girl and a toddler, and embellishing the painting with the addition of the poultry.

Influenced by overcast, Irish skies, the artist employed a restricted palette of browns, moss greens, and blacks for the clothes of the protagonists, balanced by the pearl-coloured surface of the village street and the darker hues of the exposed stonework on the house behind. Moynan applied a variety of handling techniques in the execution of the painting. The children are characterised by careful, academic drawing, which contrasts with the looser treatment of their clothing. This method is juxtaposed with the immediacy of the ‘wet on wet’ technique used for the tail end on the rooster. Two of the boys in *Tug of War* – the child looking down in the centre and the team-mate immediately behind him are familiar as they also appear as band members in *Military Manoeuvres*. The youngest member of the team on the right of the painting is wearing a bright red scarf. This use of red is a feature of the artist’s work, as he liked to enliven an earthy palette with a splash of vermillion. *Tug of War* provides the spectator with a sense of theatre. The dramatic nature of the action lures the viewer into the narrative and invites speculation in the outcome of the contest.

Maebh O’Regan
21. **Roderic O’Conor RHA (1860-1940)**
French Wooded Landscape
Oil on board, 86.5 x 116.25cm, atelier stamp verso

Exhibited: *Shades of a Master: Roderic O’Conor*, The Hunt Museum, Limerick, June – August 2003 catalogue no. 20 (illustrated)


O’Conor was born in Castleplunkett, Co. Roscommon. In 1883 he and Richard Thomas Moynan arrived in Antwerp where Walter Osborne had already been. O’Conor enrolled at the Académie Royale des Beaux Arts under Charles Verlat. In 1890 O’Conor moved to Pont-Aven where he introduced what has become a hallmark of his work at that period – parallel stripes of pure colour. He only returned to Ireland once.

He exhibited at the Barc de Bouttevilles Gallery, Paris in 1894 and 1895 and in 1923 at the Salon des Tuileries. In 1933 he married Henrietta Honta, a painter who had been his model. Retrospectives of O’Conor’s work have been held in Paris, London, Belfast and Dublin including, the Ulster Museum, and the National Gallery of Ireland.

In the 1920s O’Conor worked in a style known as Expressive Realism, which was linked to the School of Paris. *French Wooded Landscape* incorporates the rich textures and the energetic handling of paint, which were characteristic of this style. The monumentality of the landscape with a lone trees set against a background of billowing clouds adds to the overall impression of a very confidently executed work.

*Exhibited at the Ava Gallery only*
22. **RODERIC O’CONOR RHA (1860-1940)**

Head of a Breton Peasant Girl, c.1893
Oil on board, 30 x 19cm
Atelier stamp verso

Provenance: Vente O’Conor, Hotel Drouot, Paris, 7 February 1956
Roland, Browse and Delbanco, London

Exhibited: *Two Masters of Colour, Mathew Smith & Roderic O’Connor*, Roland, Browse and Delbanco, London 1956 cat n.26
Denver Art Museum, Colorado, 1983/84, catalogue no. 20
*Roderic O’Connor: 1860-1940* touring exhibition catalogue no. 16
The Barbican Art Gallery, London Sept/Nov 1985
The Ulster Museum Belfast, Nov 1985/Jan 1986
National Gallery of Ireland Feb/March 1986
Whitworth Art Gallery Manchester March/May 1986
*Irish Painters in Brittany*, The Crawford Gallery, Cork, summer 2001
*Shades of a Master: Roderic O’Conor Exhibition*, The Hunt Museum, Limerick, June - September 2003
*Collectors’ Eye*, The Model Arts and Niland Gallery, Sligo, catalogue no. 21, January – February 2004

Jonathan Bennington, *Roderic O’Conor* Biography and catalogue of his work, cat. no. 34, illustration full page in colour, no. 15
23. **RODERIC O’CONOR RHA (1860-1940)**  
Breton Woman  
Oil on canvas, 61 x 51cm  
Atelier Studio Stamp verso

Provenance. The Mc Clelland Collection and on loan to IMMA from 1999-2004


In *The Hunter Gatherer* Catherine Marshall wrote:  
“Portrait of a Young Breton Woman is a particularly fine example of O’Conor’s work from around 1900-1905. The simple conventional pose and the traditional Breton costume give a sense of timelessness to the picture but the artist’s obvious delight in her clear skin and warm colouring ensure that it will also be pleasing. The lack of condescension between artist and sitter is a clear indication of the modernity of this piece although stylistically it is not as challenging as some of O’Conor’s earlier land and seascapes.”

*Exhibited at the Ava Gallery only*
24. **Aloysius O’Kelly RHA (1853-1892)**  
Head of a Vendean of Finistère  
Oil on canvas, 61 x 51cm  
Signed  

Exhibited: RHA, Dublin, 1885, no. 49, as *Head of a Breton of Finistère* costing 25.0.0.  
Irish Artisan’s Exhibition, 1885, South City Markets, Dublin, catalogue no. 56, catalogued as *Un Breton de Finistère* priced at 25.0.0.  
The Royal Academy, London, 1886, catalogue no. 17 as *A Vendean of Finistère, Brittany*  
The Irish Exhibition, London, 1888 at Olympia, June-Oct. as *Head of Vendean of Finistère*.  
The Frederick Gallery, Dublin, June 1998, cat. no. 2, illustrated.  
*Peintres Irlandais en Bretagne*, Musée de Pont-Aven, Summer 1999  
*Irish Painters in Brittany*, Crawford Gallery, Cork, June-July 2001  

Literature: Dublin University Review, 1885  
Dominic Milmo-Penny in *The Irish Arts Review*, 1996, p95, illustrated  
*Ireland Painters 1600-1940* by Anne Crookshank and The Knight of Glin, Illustrated page 260, no. 352  
*Aloysius O’Kelly: Art, Nation, Empire*, Niamh O’Sullivan, fig 2.5, p.26, catalogue no. 73, p.294  

O’Kelly’s painting depicts a Vendean (a native of the Vendée region in Finistère, France). The painting was described in the Dublin University Review (1885) as ‘a truthful and careful study’
25. **ALOYSIUS O’KELLY RHA (1853–1892)**

Harbour and Fort, Concarneau
Oil on panel, 23.5 x 33cm, signed, inscribed with title verso


Aloysius O’Kelly first arrived in Brittany in the mid 1970s as the region, and particularly the coastal areas around Pont Aven and Concarneau, became increasingly popular with artists from around the globe. O’Kelly regularly spent the summer in the area but also appears to have spent extended periods of time there in 1877 and 1878.

It is difficult to date these Concarneau paintings and it is quite possible that the present work comes from the early years of the 20th Century when O’Kelly is known to have worked in this port town. Concarneau was a vibrant fishing port with an extensive sardine fishing fleet and a significant fish processing and canning industry. The ‘Vielle Close’ with its Vauban designed fortress is visible through the myriad of masts of the moored sardine boats in the harbour, the clock tower giving the scene its topographical accuracy.

O’Kelly’s painting is assured and confident with a sparkling spontaneity particularly in the treatment of the ultramarine and emerald waters reflecting in zigzags, the bobbing masts. The massive granite walls of the fort are softened by an almost translucent treatment and with flecks of off white impasto highlighting the ramparts creating a very accomplished piece of painting.
26. ALOYSIUS O’KELLY RHA (1853-1892)
Sailing Boats in Concarneau Harbour
Oil on panel, 23 x 33cm, signed

Exhibited: *Peintres Irlandais en Bretagne*, Musée du Pont-Aven, June - Sept 1999

Literature: *Peintres Irlandais en Bretagne*, Catherine Puget et al, illustrated p.76
*Aloysius O’Kelly: Art, Nation, Empire*, Niamh O’Sullivan, catalogue no.133, p.307
Frank O’Meara (1853-1888)

Old Mill at Grez
Oil on canvas, 46 x 56cm

Inscribed verso Frank O’Meara-Carlow-Ireland

Exhibited: Old Mill at Grez may be the picture entitled Rest at Evening, which Frank’s eldest sister Sara loaned to the Exhibition of Irish Art at the Guildhall, London in 1904.

America’s Eye: Irish Paintings from the Collection of Brian P. Burns, Hugh Lane Gallery, June - August 1996
Island - Art from Ireland, John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts, May 2000

Literature: J. Campbell, Frank O’Meara and his Contemporaries, Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1989, Appendix 1, no. 5 (entitled Landscape with Mill).

Frank O’Meara was born into a medical family in Carlow in 1853, the fifth of seven children of Dr. Thomas O’Meara and Sarah (née Isbourne). Medicine had been the O’Meara family profession since the sixteenth century. The artist’s grandfather, Dr. Barry Edward O’Meara, was Napoleon’s doctor and confidante during the latter’s imprisonment in St. Helena. Ironically, the young Frank suffered the early loss of many of his immediate family, including his eldest brother Charles, aged sixteen, and sister Madeline, when she was twenty-four. The artist’s mother died a year after Madeline.

Although the artist developed an early interest in art, it is not known whether he took private lessons in Dublin, or attended the Dublin Metropolitan School. In the early 1870’s, O’Meara went to Paris to study art, perhaps also as a means of recovering from the deaths of his sister and mother. In about 1874, Frank O’Meara entered the atelier Carolus-Duran, where fellow students included Will Low, John Singer-Sargent, Arthur Heseltine and Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson. The following summer the group visited the artists’ colonies of Barbizon and Grez-sur-Loing, near the forest of Fontainbleau.

While at Grez, O’Meara absorbed the lessons of French “plein-airists” and their concern for evocation of mood. He was also inspired by the flattened forms and symbolism of Puvis de Chavannes, in particular his still, religious figures in sparse landscapes and tilted perspectives. O’Meara’s mature style, which coincided with an increased tendency towards solitariness, is characterised by a preference for isolated figures, usually young or elderly women, who move along the water’s edge, shrouded in mist and dim grey light, alone with their thoughts. The artist’s use of seeping, autumnal hues and quiet greens imbue his works with a profound sense of poetry and sadness. For eleven years, O’Meara made Grez the location of most of his mature work, becoming more and more solitary as his friends dispersed. Having fallen into increasingly bad health while at Grez, O’Meara contracted malarial fever. He returned to Ireland in 1888 to visit his mother and died in Carlow on 15th October at the age of thirty-five.

Old Mill at Grez is unusual among this artist’s known oeuvre as it lacks the presence of a figure. According to Dr. Julian Campbell, this painting may be an early work, probably painted in the late 1870’s, and contemporary with Autumnal Sorrows, 1878 (Ulster Museum, Belfast), a poetic composition with two figures. Both his handling of paint and his use of impasto suggest an early date.

O’Meara gravitated towards river scenes. Here, he captures that time of day when light fades and colour drains from the landscape. His use of silvery greens, greys and browns, to portray the trees, riverbank foliage, and their reflection in the still, deep water, evokes a silence and melancholic mood that infuses all of his paintings at Grez. The general “greyness” of Grez’s streets and stone houses was observed by all who visited the village during this period. Its sleepy character, medieval church, ruined castle, slow flowing river and old stone bridge seems to have well suited O’Meara’s temperament.

The bridge at Grez was probably the most portrayed in France in the late 19th Century. Of his works O’Meara seems to have included the bridge in only two paintings, Old Bridge at Grez and Autumnal Sorrows. His fellow countryman John Lavery, on whose artistic development he exerted much influence, also portrayed the bridge on several occasions, and in one painting entitled On the Bridge at Grez, of 1884, the figure leaning against the parapet of the bridge in beret and knee-breeches is thought to be that of O’Meara.

Christina Kennedy
28. **WALTER FREDERICK OSBORNE RHA ROI (1859-1903)**

Primary Education
Oil on canvas, 49.5 x 70cm, signed

Exhibited: RHA exhibition, Dublin, 1886 catalogue no. 58.

Literature: *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Thomas Bodkin, Dublin 1920 appendix XI p119
*Walter Osborne*, Jeanne Sheehy 1974 cat. no. 133

Walter Osborne was the son of painter William Osborne and was born in Dublin. He attended the RHA schools where he won many prizes. He attended the Academy in Antwerp to study under Charles Verlat. In 1881 Osborne accompanied by J.M. Kavanagh and Nathaniel Hill travelled to France. Their decision to go to Brittany may have been influenced by his friend and classmate Blandford Fletcher who had painted there in the 1870’s as well as spending the summer there in 1881 before going to the Academy. Henry Jones Thaddeus described Pont-Aven as resembling “a gigantic studio with its picturesque streets full of painters at work, whilst the villagers, from long practice, were excellent models and posed anywhere and everywhere” in their native Breton costumes.

In the spring of 1883 Osborne was in Dinan. By summertime they were all working side-by-side in Pont-Aven, painting village and farmyard subjects before moving to Quimperlé in the autumn to join Blandford Fletcher.

Although *Primary Education* was painted after his return from Brittany it is a good example of the influence of his time there. It is thought to have been painted in 1885 when Osborne was painting with Edward Stott in one of the many rural communities in England, which he found his inspiration. The boy in this work also features in another work exhibited at the RHA in 1886 called *Spoilt Pets.*
29. **Walter Frederick Osborne RHA ROI (1859-1903)**

On the Grand Place, Quimperlé, Finistère
Oil on board, 21.75 x 13cm
Signed with initials

Provenance: From the collection of the painter William Blandford Fletcher, a gift from the artist January 1884.

Painted in December 1883. The artist Blandford Fletcher was a friend and painting companion of Osborne’s and has added his own signature, title and date to the reverse. They met at the Antwerp Academy where they were in class together before they moved together to Brittany and lived amongst the artistic communities at Pont-Aven, Dinan and the location of the present work Quimperlé.
30. **WALTER FREDERICK OSBORNE RHA ROI (1859-1903)**

Potato Gathering  
Oil on board, 32 x 38cm, signed and dated 1888

Exhibited: Dublin Art Club 1889, no. 30, 30 Guineas  
*Walter Osborne Exhibition*, The National Gallery of Ireland  
and The Ulster Museum Belfast 1983/4 catalogue no. 33  
The Frederick Gallery, Dublin June 1998 catalogue no. 1

Literature: The Express, 14th January 1889  
*Walter Osborne*, Jeanne Sheehy 1974 catalogue no. 180  
*Walter Osborne*, NGI exhibition catalogue 1983 p85 (illus)

Jeanne Sheehy wrote “The theme of this work is reminiscent of Bastien-Lepage’s *Saison d’Octobre* though the comparison underlines the difference between Osborne and the French Naturalist tradition. Bastien-Lepage is concerned, in a way that recalls Millet, with the condition of the labourer, whereas Osborne is more interested in the rural activity as part of the landscape.”
Sarah Purser studied at the Academie Julian 1878-79 which was unusual for an Irish woman at the time. There she met and became friends with artists of many nationalities including Swiss student Louise Breslav with whom she became a life long friend. She was to return regularly to Paris visiting artist friends and exhibitions.

“Seeing *A Visitor* once more and experiencing its mystique are pleasures in themselves, and at the same time this is an opportunity to unravel facets of Sarah Purser’s early career. This sitter is Mary Maud, daughter of Colonel Marcus de la Poer Beresford, and a relative of Archbishop Marcus Beresford of Armagh at whose cathedral she and Julian had married in 1883. Glimpses of the artist emerged when Mary Maud wrote that “…I found some specs and said at once they were yours, there is an outward bend of the sticks that I well remember gave your veil a peculiar cock at each side - I will send them to you tomorrow. We all missed you very much and now we frequently quote you”. Sarah habitually wore pince-nez, but no doubt a veil required more stable spectacles. Whatever about specs and quotable bon-mots, what Sarah did not leave behind was a second picture for which Mary Maud had posed, in the same chic hat and walking-dress, and this was shown as *A Visitor* at the annual exhibition of the Dublin Sketching Club in December 1885. One press reviewer found the picture “remarkably cleverly painted with a firm yet pliable brush. A young lady, dressed in a light gown, is seated in the shadow of a window on a sofa, the light falling on her dress. The position is easy, yet very much foreshortened, and the tone that pervades the penumbra of the room is exceedingly true, if a little bleak and cold.” He made no mention of the brilliant handling of the palette-knife to create the three-dimensional effect of the skirt, nor did he note the verve with which the parasol and striped sofa are swept onto the canvas, nor the able and economic rendering of details from a ring to scarlet boot-buttons. And the fact that a “subject” exhibit by a professional bore no price escaped comment too. Not offering *A Visitor* for sale was, to judge by Sarah’s like treatment of *Le Petit Déjeuner*, surely a mark of the painter’s affection for their models, and her lasting regard for both pictures, which remained in her possession all her life. *A Visitor* was hanging over a doorway in Mespil House when Sarah Purser’s goods were auctioned after her death. As it was unsigned, and black with age, the auctioneer used it to re-focus attention, distracted by the selling of some notable item. As recalled in 1974 by the purchaser, Mrs. V. Ganley, he put the picture up, asked what he was bid, and when she immediately bid £1 he as quickly knocked it down to her.”

Dr. John O’Grady, UCD, National University of Ireland, Dublin
32. **William Scott RA (1913-1989)**

Breton Woman
Oil on canvas, 34.25 x 28cm
Signed and dated ‘39

(Artist’s ref no. 769)

*Irish Painters in Brittany*, The Crawford Gallery, Cork, June-July 2001 (ex cat)  
*Peintres Anglais en Bretagne*, Musée de Pont-Aven, 26th June – 27th September 2004  

*Peintres Anglais en Bretagne*, Musée de Pont-Aven 26th June – 27th September 2004,  
p.90-full colour page illustration p.91  
*William Scott in Ireland, Paintings, Drawings, Gouaches and Lithographs 1938-1979*  
by Denise Ferran, illustrated pg. 14.

In 1938 Scott moved with his wife, Mary, to Pont-Aven in Brittany, to run the Pont-Aven School of Painting with Geoffrey Nelson. Scott was particularly interested in the association of the place with Gauguin and his followers, and among his models was an old woman, Marie Henry, who had sat in her youth for Gauguin at Le Pouldu. She is thought to be the subject of the present portrait.
33. **Estella Solomons HRHA (1882-1968)**

Children Rockpooling on the Beach
Oil on board, 68 x 90cm

Provenance: The artist’s estate


There is a sketch for this work included in the Solomons Papers, Trinity College Dublin.

Solomons was taught at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin by Walter Osborne and Sir William Orpen. Although more influenced by Dutch painting, especially that of Rembrandt, Solomons went to Paris in 1903 with the Elvery sisters, Beatrice and Dorothy and Frances Beckett. They studied from life at Colarossi’s staying in “a rather grim Hotel in the Boulevard Montparnasse” (as Beatrice Glenavy put it). She went again in May 1905, after which she stayed in Boulogne.

*Exhibited at the Ava Gallery only*
34. **Samuel C. Taylor (1870-1944)**
Girls at the Waters Edge, Brittany
Oil on canvas laid on board, 25.5 x 32cm

Exhibited: *Peintres Irlandais en Bretagne*, Musée de Pont Aven, Pont-Aven, 26 June – 27 September 1999, catalogue no. 51, illustrated p.91.


Samuel Taylor was born in Belfast. He attended the Belfast School of art in the 1890’s winning several prizes before he moved to London in 1902 Brittany became of great importance to his work after he made his first summer visit to Concarneau in 1911. The majority of pictures which he exhibited at the RHA in 1912, 1915 and 1918, and at the Oireachtas Art Exhibition in 1920, were of Breton subjects. He went to Brittany again in 1912 where he joined Norman Garstin’s summer class at Guemene-sur-Scorff. He became very friendly with English artist Joseph Milner-Kite and American artist Henry Dearth whom he went painting with at Le Pouldu.

Working at the artists’ colony of Concarneau where Leech and O’Kelly were also based was plainly of importance to the development of Taylor’s painting. In his series of sunny market and harbour scenes, and brightly coloured sardine fishing boats, we see his vigorous use of the palette knife showing a boldness and a desire to experiment.
35. **Maria Dorothy Webb (1850-1900)**

Girl in an Orchard (Under the Apple Blossom)
Oil on panel, 34.25 x 25.5cm
Signed and dated

Exhibited: *Irish Painters in Brittany*,

Maria Webb was probably a student at the RDS Schools. She started exhibiting at the RHA in 1873, and won several prizes at the Amateur Artists’ Society in 1877. She went to Paris in 1880, becoming a pupil of Robert-Fleury at the Academie Julian. She made regular summer visits to Brittany (c.1881-1885) initially to Pont-Aven, then becoming one of the early foreign members of the artist colony at Concarneau. There she stayed at the Hotel des Voyageurs. She became a close friend of Finnish artist Maria Wilk. She is thought to have met her future husband at Concarneau and they were to later become central figures in the artists’ colony at St. Ives, Cornwall. Their house provided studios for friends and visiting artists.

Maria exhibited a large number of her Breton paintings, of fishermen and peasant women, of street, market and woodland scenes, at venues in Dublin, London and Liverpool (1881-87) and significantly at the Paris Salon (1883-84). Today her works are extremely rare. The present small picture is a charming plein air scene of a Breton girl in an orchard, a popular subject in the period. The presence of blossom on the trees and the sprinkling of bluebells and other flowers in the grass indicate that it is springtime.

The painting has a distinctive intensity of colouring in the greens of the orchard, the heightened painting of the girl’s face, the red of her scarf and the blue of her apron. Indeed Webb’s use of broken brushstrokes and her interest in dappled sunlight and shadow, suggest an interest in Impressionism at this time, particularly in Pissarro’s evocative pictures of peasant girls, dating from the early 1880’s.

Dr. Julian Campbell
Acknowledgments

The Directors of Adam’s would like to thank all the private lenders of the paintings included in this exhibition. We would especially like to thank Karen Reihill for facilitating a number of the loans and also Dominic Milmo-Penny for his help and information. Dr Julian Campbell stands out among the many writers who have worked and written in this area of Irish art but also Dr Denise Ferran, Dr Niamh O’Sullivan, Dr John O’Grady, Christina Kennedy, Maebh O’Regan, Roy Johnston, Kenneth McConkey, Jonathan Benington and Catherine Puget all deserve our thanks for their pioneering work and commitment to research on this subject over many years and we acknowledge the work of both the late Jeanne Sheehy and Anne Gregory Terhune. All of their publications were an invaluable reference source in the preparation of this catalogue.

Our thanks also goes to our new team at The AVA Gallery Sara Thompson and Jan Wheeler, to the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava and all her staff at Clandeboye who have made us so welcome at our new home, to Hugh Maguire the new Director of the Hunt Museum for his enthusiasm for the project, to his board and all the staff at The Hunt Museum especially Naomi O’Nolan and to our Adams team in Dublin especially Aoife Leach, Caroline Keavney and Kieran O’Boyle. We also wish to thank Robert Scott and The William Scott Foundation, John and Rose Lamb and Ian Whyte amongst others for copyright permission.

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