



(Left) Harry Clarke's *The Consecration of St Mel, Bishop of Longford, by St Patrick* (1910) being assessed for conservation. Photos: Michael Waldron and (Right) Philip Crook.

**Press Release 11/08/23**

## **Heritage Week Lecture: 'Harry Clarke, Work and Legacy: Conserving Crawford Art Gallery's Stained Glass Panels'**

**1pm Wednesday 16 August 2023, Lecture Theatre**

A special event focusing on the conservation of stained-glass panels by Harry Clarke will take place at Crawford Art Gallery during National Heritage Week.

Crawford Art Gallery is thrilled to have received a Heritage Stewardship Fund grant from The Heritage Council to carry out essential conservation and reframing of three early stained-glass panels by Ireland's greatest stained glass artist Harry Clarke.

The three panels in question, *The Godhead Enthroned*, *The Meeting of St Brendan with the Unhappy Judas*, and *The Consecration of St. Mel, Bishop of Longford, by St Patrick* are rare examples of the artist's early work and demonstrate his remarkable originality.

Acquired directly from the artist in 1924 through the Gibson Bequest Fund, they date from 1910-11 and were made while Clarke was still a student at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. He was awarded the highly coveted gold medal for these panels at the South Kensington National Competitions in 1911, competing against students from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

Over the past hundred years the panels have deteriorated through natural aging, as well as constant exhibition display.

Now this Heritage Stewardship Fund project is facilitating essential conservation to be carried out by stained-glass conservator, Philip Crook of Vitrail Studios and is divided into two phases.

The first phase took place in March/April 2023 and involved the three panels being carefully removed from their existing lightboxes which were back-lit by heat-generating fluorescent bulbs. The panels were then carefully secured, cleaned, and condition reported. At this time, Philip also carried out immediate consolidation measures to secure any cracks and losses and took detailed measurements of each panel.

The second phase will take place 14-18 August during National Heritage Week when members of the public are invited to watch Philip at work. During these dates, visitors to Floor 2 of Crawford Art Gallery will be able to view Philip carrying out the final consolidation of lead and glass sections and fitting the panels into their bespoke frames. Created by Martlet Ltd. – who have worked with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London to design frames for stained-glass works – these will be illuminated by a custom-made APPLELEC LED panel system. This lighting system produces simulated natural light wavelengths to prevent heat build-up, which will preserve these treasures into the future as well as enhancing their display.

Mary McCarthy, Director of Crawford Art Gallery, says: "This is a rare opportunity to see an expert such as Philip at work and hear him talk about the Vitrail Studio's work. Conservation is a vital element of our work, to ensure the Collection can be seen by future generations."

The highlight of the week will be a lecture by Philip which, in addition to discussing Harry Clarke's fascinating techniques – such as his mastery of 'flashed glass' – will place these three panels within the context of his wider oeuvre. Philip will also discuss Clarke's well-known later works, *The Eve of St Agnes* (Hugh Lane Gallery) and *The Song of the Mad Prince* (National

Gallery of Ireland) and explain the development of his approach to stained-glass making and use of materials.

Philip Crook says: "It is always a privilege to work on the glass of Harry Clarke ; the most technically accomplished and imaginative of all twentieth century stained glass artists. The three Crawford Art Gallery stained glass panels are his earliest known works in this medium. They were produced in the years 1910 to 1911 yet reveal in this short space of time the development of the techniques which make his work so individual."

Philip's lecture is a free, ticketed event at 1pm on Wednesday 16 August in the Lecture Theatre of Crawford Art Gallery. Tickets can be reserved in advance on [Eventbrite](#).

**This project is supported by The Heritage Council through the Heritage Stewardship Fund.**

## **ENDS**

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## **More about Philip Crook**

Philip Crook graduated in 1973 from Newcastle upon Tyne University with an Honours degree in Fine Arts, having spent three years studying stained glass under Professor Leonard Evetts. In 1980 he began trading as Vitrail Studios, offering a design, manufacture and repair service, both secular and ecclesiastical. He has acquired his conservation skills over a thirty-year period, since 1985, when he was first employed to work on the large stained glass collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. He has conserved Harry Clarke's works in the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane collection and the National Gallery of Ireland collection.

## **More about Crawford Art Gallery**

Crawford Art Gallery is an Irish national cultural institution, dedicated to contemporary and historic visual art, located in a significant heritage building in the heart of Cork city. Home to a collection of national importance, it tells a compelling story of Cork and Ireland over the last three centuries, while also offering a vibrant and dynamic programme of temporary exhibitions.

Originally built in 1724 as the city's Custom House, the Gallery is home to the famous Canova Casts, gifted to Cork two centuries ago. Featured in the gallery's collection of over 3,000 objects are well-known and much-loved works by Irish artists James Barry, Harry Clarke, Mainie Jellett, Seán Keating, Daniel Maclise, Norah McGuinness, Edith Somerville, and Jack B. Yeats, as well as contemporary artists Gerard Byrne, Maud Cotter, Dorothy Cross, Eilis O'Connell, and Hughie O'Donoghue.

An oasis of calm and tranquillity, Crawford Art Gallery is open seven days a week, free to enter, and a must-see for locals and tourists alike. Welcoming over 265,000 visitors annually, the Gallery boasts an award-winning indoor and outdoor Café in stunning surroundings, serving fresh local produce for which Cork is famous.

### **Opening Hours**

Monday–Saturday 10.00am–5.00pm

Late opening Thursdays until 8.00pm

Sundays and Bank Holidays

Gallery: 11am - 4pm

Entry Free

Free Public Tours

Sunday & Bank Holiday Mondays 2pm

### **Crawford Gallery Café & Garden Café**

The Gallery boasts an award-winning Café in stunning surroundings, serving fresh local produce for which Cork is famous.

For opening hours

[www.crawfordgallerycafe.com](http://www.crawfordgallerycafe.com)



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