



Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957), *Off the Donegal Coast*, Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1924 .CAG.72

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One act of Philanthropy leaves an amazing legacy and contributes to a national collection.

The Gibson Bequest 1919-2019: Selecting, Collecting and Philanthropy

3 May 2019 – 12 January 2020

This summer Crawford Art Gallery opens a new exhibition celebrating the centenary of a major act of philanthropy. *The Gibson Bequest 1919-2019* explores the history of this important gift, and its 100-year legacy, which secured the establishment of the gallery's collection of Irish and European artworks in the twentieth century.

The bequest was made by Joseph Stafford Gibson of Kilmurry and Cork city. Upon his death in February 1919, he left the gallery the large sum of £14,790 (approximately €750,000 today) 'for the furthering of art in the city of his boyhood.'

A committee to administer the fund was soon formed, with members including Daniel Corkery, Thomas Bodkin, and George Atkinson. Under their guiding hand, key works were acquired for the Crawford's collection, including the iconic *Men of the South* (1921-22) by Seán Keating, *Off the Donegal Coast* (1922) by Jack B. Yeats, *The Red Rose* (1923) by John Lavery, and Harry Clarke's celebrated *Eve of St Agnes* (1923) watercolours.

This significant exhibition features more than 80 works, rarely seen together and purchased through the Gibson Bequest, which today form the backbone of the gallery's collection. These include Muriel Brandt's *The Breadline*, 1916 and Gerard Dillon's *Island People* (both c.1950), and lesser-known works by Jacob Epstein, Gerda Frömel, Beatrice Gubbins, Patrick Hennessy, Grace Henry, Evie Hone, Norah McGuinness, Oliver Sheppard, and Leo Whelan.

A notable focal point of the exhibition is a large history painting by William Magrath (1838-1918) entitled *Tara's Halls*, one of the first works purchased through the Gibson Bequest. Displayed alongside William Orpen's *The Revolutionary* (1902) and a portrait of Sasha Kropotkin, daughter of a Russian anarchist, it reflects the intense, yet 'utopian' political context of the emergent Irish Free State.

There is also an international dimension to the exhibition. This is most apparent in a section on artistic influencers, which features works by established British artists Samuel John 'Lamorna' Birch, George Clausen, Stanley Cursiter, and Alfred J. Munnings.

The terms of the bequest also facilitated international scholarships for exceptional young local artists, including Seamus Murphy, Breda O'Donoghue-Lucci, John O'Leary, and William Sheehan. The exhibition will also draw together ephemera collected by Gibson himself, including Spanish decorative earthenware, military insignia from the Peninsular Wars, and miniature family portraits by Frederick Buck (1771-1840).

Through new research and thematic displays, the exhibition offers a fascinating snapshot of selecting, collecting, and philanthropy in Ireland from the 1920s to the 1980s.

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Joseph Stafford Gibson (1837-1919) has long been something of a mystery figure. He was the son of Ann Stafford and Captain William Gibson. His father, who came from a family of noted Cork silversmiths, served in the 68th Light Infantry during the Peninsular Wars. Joseph grew up at Curraclough House, Kilmurry but, following the death of his father in 1848, he moved to the home of his guardian aunt, Anne Ballard, at Academy Street, Cork. Here he was in close proximity to the Cork School of Design on Emmet Place (now Crawford Art Gallery). He would always maintain his connection to the institution, despite spending much of his life in Madrid (c.1878-1919). An amateur watercolourist himself, he often sought artistic advice from James Brenan (1837-1907), a fellow artist and headmaster of the school (1860-89). Gibson's watercolours demonstrate his extensive travels in the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Spain and the growth of his skill across 50 years. He died at Calle Aduana, Madrid on 3 February 1919, leaving a legacy of £14,790 'for the furthering of art in the city of his boyhood.'

The Gibson Bequest is among the most generous acts of philanthropy in Crawford Art Gallery's long history. This gift came a full century after the arrival of the Canova Casts and the formation of the Cork School of Art in 1819. It also complemented the support of benefactor William Horatio Crawford (1812-1888) who, in 1884, funded the expansion of the Crawford Art Gallery building and presented key works of sculpture to the collection. The Gibson Bequest was administered by a board of trustees and necessitated the formation of a committee. It supported scholarships for students 'of unusual talent and good habits [...] to travel on the Continent of Europe for a period not exceeding one year to study oil-painting or sculpture.' Gibson scholars included painter William Sheehan (1894-1923), woodworker Kathleen Murphy-O'Connor (1896-1959), sculptors Seamus Murphy (1907-1975) and Breda O'Donoghue-Lucci (b.1924), and painters John O'Leary (1929-1999) and Pat Murray (1938-2006). The majority of works collected were purchased between 1920 and 1960, with fewer works until 1980.

Press Images

Ambrose McEvoy (1878-1930)
Lillah McCarthy 1911
Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1930
CAG.2

George Clausen (1852-1944)
The Quiet Room n.d.
Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1929
CAG.5

Harry Clarke
The Pit and The Pendulum c.1919
Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1923
CAG.108

Mary Lloyd-Jones (*1934)
Hat Found in Venice c.1919
Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1976
CAG.510
© The Artist

Evie Hone (1894-1955)
Abstract
Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1942
CAG.495

Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957)
Off the Donegal Coast
Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1924
CAG.72

Johannes Zick (attributed to) (1702-1762)
Rebekah and Eliezer
Collection Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Gibson Bequest Fund Purchase, 1954
CAG.417

More about Crawford Art Gallery

Located in the heart of Cork city and free to enter, Crawford Art Gallery, is home to a collection of national importance and is a must see for locals and tourists alike. Welcoming over 230,000 visitors a year the Gallery is open seven days a week and delights in all visitors young and old.

Originally built in 1724 as the city's customs house, (when Cork was one of Europe's most important trading ports), the Gallery is described by many visitors as an "Oasis" offering the tranquillity and atmosphere only a building with such history and beauty can provide. As well as offering a stunning place for reflection, Crawford Art Gallery is right in the middle of a vibrant shopping, cultural and hospitality area. As well both historic and modern exhibition spaces, the Gallery boasts an award- winning Café in stunning surroundings serving fresh local produce for which cork is famous.

Crawford Art Gallery is home to an expansive collection featuring works from the 18th century to present which are of key national importance and tell a compelling story of place and history. It is also home to the famous 'Canova Casts', which were gifted to the city of Cork nearly two centuries ago. Well-known and loved works by 20th century Irish artists such as Seán Keating, Harry Clarke, John Lavery, Jack B. Yeats, Norah McGuinness, Mainie Jellet, Gerard Dillon and Muriel Brandt feature in the gallery's historic collection, while the modern collection features work by contemporary artists such as Eilis O'Connell, Gerard Byrne, Dorothy Cross, Maud Cotter and Hughie O'Donoghue. The Gallery hosts numerous temporary exhibitions by local, national and international artists showcasing visual art, film.

Monday–Saturday 10.00am–5.00pm

Late opening Thursdays until 8.00pm
(2nd floor closes at 16:45pm)

Sundays and Bank Holidays

Gallery: 11am - 4pm
Café: 11am - 4pm

Learn and Explore

For details on the Learn & Explore programme guided tours, access and education, please visit our website: www.crawfordartgallery.ie



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Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta
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