



Press release 5/01/19

On February 15th Crawford Art Gallery unveils its renewed Sculpture Galleries to celebrate the works that began its collection 200 years ago.

The Canova Casts, a series of sculptures, were a gift to the City 200 years ago and now the much loved Sculpture Gallery where they are displayed, will be transformed. Work is underway on a contemporary colour scheme, revised display and new visitor interpretation to meet the demands of today's audiences. The exciting changes to the gallery space are in line with the current international revival of interest in sculpture casts, as seen by the recent reopening of the Cast Courts at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

Mary McCarthy, Director of Crawford Art Gallery invites the public "to visit and experience the works in their renewed setting. The works continue to be an inspiration and are a source of wonder. The exciting changes to the gallery space and the re presentation of the works is in line with the current international revival of interest in sculpture casts, as seen by the recent reopening of the Cast Courts at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Cork is a significant part of that international story "

Since the arrival of the Casts in Cork some of Irelands most prominent artists have benefited from studying and drawing them as students, from Daniel Maclise to Seamus Murphy to Dorothy Cross. In recent years, the casts have benefited from essential conservation treatment supported by the Heritage Council.

From pope to prince to the port of Cork, the Canova Casts have a rich and storied history. Born out of the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, the Canova Casts were a gift to the Prince regent of the time who in turn, gifted them to the people of Cork . The Casts are therefore both artistically significant and a curious footnote to international history.

Curator of the Exhibition Dr. Michael Waldron feels “ It is timely, at their bicentenary, to look upon the Canova Casts anew, to reconsider their vital history and legacy as a generative force in the arts, and to reveal the rich stories that surround the figures they depict and the people they have inspired”.

On a recent visit to Cork, Mary Beard, BBC presenter and Britain’s best known classicist commented “I’m a great fan of cast collections anyway, but the link with the Canova makes it extra special”.

Crawford Art Gallery, as one of the oldest collecting institutions in Ireland, is committed to presenting and caring for its national collection for this and future generations, and continue to conserve the works in the collection. On this occasion Pat Mc Donnell paints are supporting the refurbishment of the Sculpture Galleries which will be unveiled to the public on the 16th of February.

ENDS

Above Image Credit: Athendoros Laocoon and his Sons

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More about the Canova Casts

Created under the supervision of the great Italian sculptor Antonio Canova, the Casts are faithful plaster reproductions of some of the greatest works in the Vatican Museums, including *Apollo Belvedere* and *Laocoon and His Sons*, in addition to works by Canova himself. More

fascinating still, they were commissioned by Pope Pius VII as a gift to the Prince Regent (later King George IV) in thanks for Britain's role in the Napoleonic Wars. In October 1818, however, this gift was presented to Cork and stimulated the founding of a school of art and saloon of sculpture: today's CIT Crawford College of Art & Design and Crawford Art Gallery, respectively.

More about the 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.

Learn and Explore

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

With support from



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