

work of five delicate terracotta pieces, is seen alongside Ithell Colquhoun's painting *Tree anatomy* (1942), both of which capture natural forms in a state of metaphoric transformation, suggesting both male and female genitalia.

The overall impression given by the exhibition's great diversity of artists and works, across multiple periods of time and place, is one of an immeasurable *mélange*, which at times squares oddly with the show's theoretical framework of gender and identity politics. Greater consideration might have been given to the varied positions expressed by artists associated with Surrealism and with feminism, and the implications of an exhibition that excludes the work of male artists, particularly as many female Surrealists refused to allow gender to force a wedge

between themselves and their male counterparts. Nevertheless, this rich display almost overwhelmingly demonstrates the way Surrealism and its legacies have dealt with the problematic relationship between gender, sexuality and desire. The presence of lesser known Surrealists such as Rimmington and Pailthorpe, counterbalances the fact that key works by Carrington, Tanning and Fini are missing. The show both provides an excellent basis for future studies of the subject and offers female artists working in a Surrealist spirit ways to subvert gendered conventions.

¹ Catalogue: *Dreamers Awake*. Edited by Honey Luard, with contributions by Susanna Greeves and Alyce Mahon. 133 pp. incl. 62 col. + b. & w. ills. (White Cube, London, 2017), £25. ISBN 978-1-910844-21-2. The works are not numbered.



66. *Museum*, by Edith Rimmington. 1951. Gouache on paper, 32 by 23.5 cm. (The Murray Family Collection; exh. White Cube Bermondsey, London).

The National Gallery of Ireland

Dublin

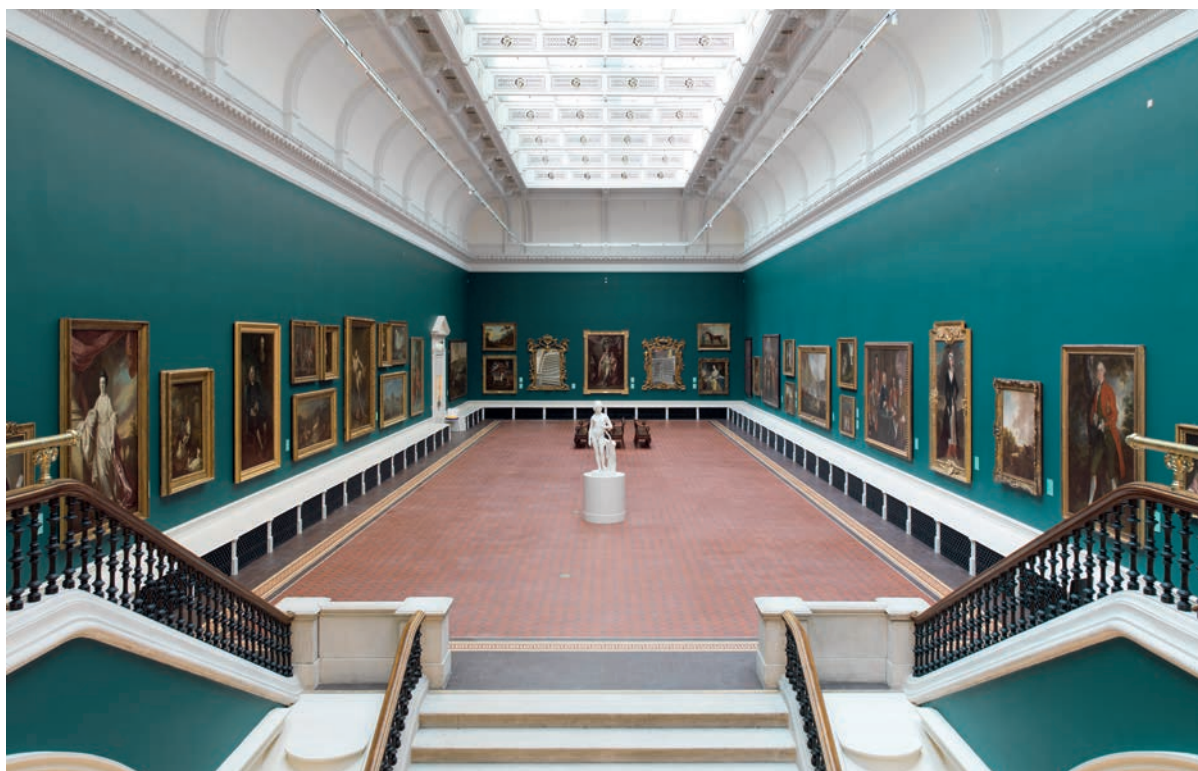
by MICHAEL HALL

ON 14TH JUNE the outgoing Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, opened the refurbished Dargan and Milltown wings of the National Gallery of Ireland. The bright sunshine that Dublin enjoyed that week was an appropriate symbol for a long-awaited moment of celebration after an exceptionally difficult period for Ireland's state-funded arts. The project, carried out by the Office of Public Works and expected to cost just under €30 million, was launched under the NGI's previous director, Raymond Keaveney, in 2011, a year before the European sovereign debt crisis sent Ireland into another recession. The museum's present director, Sean Rainbird, who succeeded Mr Keaveney in 2012, and his staff deserve unstinted praise for steering the refurbishment to completion in challenging circumstances, which included the decision to suspend work between 2012 and 2014. The two wings – which provide 80 per cent of the NGI's gallery space – have been closed to the public since 2011, yet during that time temporary exhibitions and displays of works from the permanent collection still attracted over 700,000 visitors a year.

Given its relative seniority among Europe's museums – it opened in 1864 – and the quality of its collection, the NGI lacks a clear public image outside Ireland, especially when compared to its equivalents in London and Edinburgh. The reason is architectural. Its original building, facing onto Merrion Square, and now known as the Dargan Wing, was designed to form part of an ensemble with the Natural History Museum. Neither of its two twentieth-century extensions, the Milltown Wing, built in 1903, and the Beit Wing of 1968, has a significant public façade. Internally, the soaring space of the most recent addition, the 2002 Millennium Wing – now a poignant monument to the Celtic Tiger – is so different from the rest of the NGI that it seems like a separate building, reinforced by the fact that it has its own narrow entrance on Clare Street.

The key to making these various parts cohere is the least appreciated part of the NGI, the Beit Wing, which links the Millennium Wing to the earlier parts of the building. This awaits its own refurbishment, and so the improvements unveiled in June have to be understood as part of a work in progress. Nonetheless, they have transformed the display of the old-master European and Irish paintings, shown in the Dargan Wing, and Irish painting between 1835 and 1965, displayed in the Milltown Wing.

The architects of the refurbishment – and of the NGI's overall master plan – Róisín



67. The Grand Gallery, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. (Photograph © Marie Louise Halpenny).

Heneghan and Shi-Fu Peng, are not known for working with historic buildings. Their modernist aesthetic is most evident in the conversion of a narrow and previously inaccessible space between the Dargan and Milltown wings into a courtyard with a glazed roof. This has allowed the windows that it shares with one side of the Shaw Room (Fig.68), the principal ground-floor gallery in the Dargan Wing, to be opened up. This ballroom-like interior, designed for a long-vanished collection of plaster casts, is not satisfactory for the

display of paintings, except for the very largest, as the walls are recessed behind columns. The opening of its windows reinforces what is now its primary purpose, a space for concerts and other events.

Complete renewal of the services in the two wings accounted for almost a third of the construction budget. Among the benefits is the way that additional natural light has been brought into the galleries by the Austrian lighting engineers Bartenbach. This has been impressively achieved in the

Dargan Wing's huge first-floor Grand Gallery (Fig.67), where the replacement skylight incorporates sun protection grids that allow the room to be flooded with light while protecting the paintings from direct exposure. The room has been hung by the Curator of British Art, Adrian Le Harivel, on the theme of the Enlightenment and, although international in scope, every work relates in some way to Ireland. Despite its relatively small size, Canova's marble *Amorino* – commissioned by an Irish patron, David La Touche,



68. The Shaw Room, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. (Photograph © Marie Louise Halpenny).



69. Detail of *The marriage of Strongbow and Aoife*, by Daniel Maclise. c.1854. Canvas, 315 by 513 cm. (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin; photograph © National Gallery of Ireland).

in 1789 – works well as a centerpiece.

The room's peacock-blue walls are typical of the confident way that colour has been employed throughout. The only slight failure of nerve is the greenish-grey chosen as a backdrop for the Irish paintings in the Milltown Wing, where a stronger colour might have made this long enfilade of small rooms a little more welcoming. Yet it could also be argued that the cool tone suits the spacious and unfussy display devised by Brendan Rooney, the Curator of Irish Art. Overall, the refurbished galleries emphasise the benefits of a clear chronological hang, eschewing complex curatorial interventions and thematic arrangements. The one big surprise is most welcome. Visitors following the unfolding sequence of Irish art pass from the Durgan to the Milltown wing through a room devoted to stained glass, dominated by Harry Clarke's *Mother of sorrows* (1926). Nobody can doubt that Irish Arts & Crafts stained glass is of international significance, but the implication that it is part of fine, not decorative, art is a long-overdue challenge to curatorial preconceptions.

The window was purchased in 2002, a reminder of a past when the NGI could buy on an ambitious scale. For the past seven years its acquisition fund has been diverted to the refurbishment. Nonetheless, much has been achieved during this period, including some major conservation projects, such as the cleaning of Daniel Maclise's enormous painting *The marriage of Strongbow and Aoife* (Fig.69), which fills an end wall of the Shaw Room. There have also been significant gifts, such as Rubens's *Head of a bearded man*, formerly in the Beit collection, which was bought for the NGI by the businessman Denis O'Brien in 2015. The Gallery has a long history of generous benefactions, a tradition that will surely be encouraged by the Irish state's impressive investment in its national collection.

André Breton

Villeneuve d'Ascq

by GAVIN PARKINSON

THE VERDICT THAT André Breton's intellectual authority waned to zero in the years following the Second World War aligns with an influential strand of art history that states that Surrealism, the movement he steered from the early 1920s, 'disappear[ed] off the map' after the Paris exhibition *Le Surréalisme en 1947*.¹ Yet elsewhere, studies of Breton and Surrealism focusing on the post-war period have thrived since 2000, and exhibitions such as the one under review speak less of an abandoned terrain or disappeared civilisation than of a barely explored continent.

The revisionist approach of *André Breton et L'Art magique* at LaM – Lille metropole musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain

et d'Art brut, Villeneuve d'Ascq (to 10th October), is pursued through several curatorial strategies in this small-scale, four room exhibition. One of these is to allow Breton's writings, art collection and his own lesser-known drawings and sculptures to create the organisational and conceptual logic of the show; another is to display many non-canonical paintings and objects; a third locates the key moments of the exhibition mainly in the years 1948–57, well into the period of Breton's and Surrealism's supposed obsolescence; and a fourth is its focus on the themes of Art brut and magic.

The first room derives its theme from Breton's essay 'Le message automatique', which appeared in the review *Minotaure* in 1933. Although the essay is usually thought to be a reflection on the failure of automatism, the display reveals that the method continued to be a preoccupation of Surrealism by including drawings and paintings of the 1940s and 1950s by Gerome Kamrowski, Yves



70. *Composition symbolique*, by Augustin Lesage. 1928. Canvas, 141 by 109 cm. (Lille metropole musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'Art brut, Villeneuve d'Ascq; photograph © ADAGP Paris).