

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ART INSTITUTE'S IRELAND: CROSSROADS OF ART AND DESIGN, 1690-1840

TO SHOWCASE THE COUNTRY'S DECORATIVE AND FINE ARTS

Exhibition of More Than 300 Objects From Public And Private Collections

Will Open With St. Patrick's Day Ribbon Cutting on Museum Steps

Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840, will open at the Art Institute of Chicago on **St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 2015**, with a special ribbon-cutting featuring bagpipes and local dignitaries. It will be the first major exhibition to showcase the decorative and fine arts of 18th century Ireland, bringing together more than 300 objects – many never before seen in public – lent by public and private collectors across North America. The exhibition, which continues through **June 7, 2015**, will provide an extraordinarily rich overview of Ireland's creative legacy. To add to the Gaelic atmosphere of the show, a temporary Irish pub will be created in the museum's Café Moderno where guests can hoist a beer after they visit the exhibition.

The seeds for the exhibition were first planted by historian Desmond FitzGerald, the Knight of Glin, who in his 2007 book *Irish Furniture* outlined his vision for "a major exhibition on Ireland's Decorative arts of the 18th century, which would include furniture [and] bring together the common threads of the different fields. ... A show of this stature would waken up the world to a staggering array of art that was manufactured in Ireland during this period."



Ireland expands on FitzGerald's vision to also include paintings, sculpture and architecture as well as ceramics, glass, furniture, metalwork, musical instruments, and textiles. Such an exhibition has never before been undertaken on either side of the Atlantic.

Organized thematically in 10 galleries – from portraiture to landscapes, from Dublin to the Irish country house – the exhibition celebrates the Irish as artists, collectors, and patrons. Through this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, these often little-known and mostly privately held objects will be shown together for the first time.



The exhibition begins in 1690, the year of the Battle of the Boyne, and ends in 1840, a few years before the onset of the Great Famine. Galleries will explore the harp as a symbol of Ireland; portraiture in Ireland; Dublin as a center of government, commerce, and education; Irish landscapes and tourism; and the material world of the Irish country house (with particular attention to Carton House, County Kildare, and Headfort House, County Meath). A series of “Made in Ireland” galleries will feature objects in all media highlighting Dublin, Belfast, Cork, and Waterford as centers of production and consumption, and will also include amateur arts such as needlework and cut paper. Objects representing more than 24 of Ireland's 32 counties will be on display.

The exhibition, organized by Christopher Monkhouse, Eloise W. Martin Chair and Curator, European Decorative Arts, was conceived with an American

audience in mind, so one curatorial goal was to identify potential loans from public and private collections in the U.S. The Art Institute's own important Irish holdings serve as the nucleus of the exhibition. Added to those works are important objects with an Irish provenance, many never seen in public, from private collectors, as well as from major institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the National Gallery of Art; and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection.

“We hope this exhibition will present Ireland as a multilayered mix of artistic cross-currents,” said Monkhouse, “and we are grateful to those collectors and institutions whose objects are enabling us to present a thorough view of this rich period of Irish creativity.”

Notable items in the exhibition represent the breadth of Irish decorative arts practiced during the 18th century. The image of the harp became a key symbol of Ireland during this period, and Dublin craftsman John Egan was well known for his gut-strung Portable Irish Harps, one of which appears in the exhibition. Other musical instruments on display include a cither viol, also called a Sultana, and an upright piano, an Irish invention.

A broad selection of paintings and works on paper are on display, including Irish landscapes, still lifes and portraiture. Examples range from Robert Fagan's titillating *Portrait of a Lady as Hibernia* to a rare group portrait of officers and Belfast literati, Joseph Wilson's *The Adelphi Club, Belfast*. Neoclassical artist Adam Buck is represented by a self-portrait with his family, which includes a poignant marble statue of a deceased child that presents a stark contrast to the elegant setting and Buck's fashionable clothing.



Two of the highlights of the exhibition are from the museum's own collection: One, a fine example of Irish furniture, is a marquetry desk and bookcase made by John Kirkhoffer. The other is an important piece of silver by Dublin silversmith Thomas Bolton, a large monteith, or bowl, used for cooling wine glasses or serving punch.

The exhibition catalogue features essays by leading scholars including Toby Barnard, Tom Dunne, Finola O'Kane, Kevin Mulligan and Brendan Rooney. Published in association with Yale University Press, it will create a lasting record of the Irish objects that have made their way to North America. Other media prepared for the exhibition include a special audio tour and a CD of Irish music by fiddlers Liz Knowles and Chicagoan Liz Carroll.

Exhibition-Related Events

Opening Gala: *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840*

March 14, 2015

6:30pm–12:00am

Join the Department of European Decorative Arts for an evening of Irish merriment, celebrating the opening of [Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840](http://www.artic.edu/event/opening-gala-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840).

6:30 Cocktails and Exhibition Viewing

8:00 Dinner

9:30 Irish Pub After-Party

We encourage you to take advantage of this festive opportunity to both celebrate this remarkable exhibition and to explore the show before it opens to the public.

Attire: Black Tie | Michigan Avenue Entrance | Complimentary Valet Parking

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Kara Shively at kshively@pjhchicago.com or (312) 553-2000, or visit the [event website](http://www.artic.edu/event/opening-gala-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840).

<http://www.artic.edu/event/opening-gala-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840>

Member Lecture: *Ireland–Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840*

March 15, 2015

2:00pm–3:00pm

Rubloff Auditorium

Free for members

Presenting 300 objects drawn from public and private collections across North America, [Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840](#) is the first exhibition to explore the rich and complex art and culture of Ireland during the long 18th century. Learn more about the new, fascinating exhibition at this special member-only overview lecture.

Registration required—[register today!](#)

<http://www.artic.edu/event/member-lecture-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840>

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

March 17, 2015

10:00am

Michigan Avenue Entrance

A bagpiper and special guests will mark the opening of *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840*.

Member Lecture: *The Book of Kells* and Medieval Irish Manuscripts

March 17, 2015

2:00pm–3:00pm

Rubloff Auditorium

Free for members

In celebration of the opening of [Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840](#), we're offering a special St. Patrick's Day lecture. *The Book of Kells* is one of the most celebrated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, written and illustrated by Celtic monks on the Scottish Isle of Iona. It was later moved to Ireland, probably to protect it from destruction by invading Vikings. This lecture examines the way in which the *Book of Kells* and other Irish manuscripts of the early medieval period blended new Christian imagery with intricate interlace motifs of Celtic and Germanic tribes—a synthesis that produced works of great power and beauty. Irish high crosses, distinguished by their circular forms and surface carving similar to manuscript motifs, will also be discussed.

Registration required—[register today!](#)

<http://www.artic.edu/event/member-lecture-book-kells-and-medieval-irish-manuscripts>

Member Lecture: Ireland—Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840

March 19, 2015

6:00pm–7:00pm

Rubloff Auditorium

Free for members

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Registration required—[register today!](#)

<http://www.artic.edu/event/member-lecture-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840-0>

Lecture: Collecting the World—How Global Art Came to Ireland in the 18th Century

March 20, 2015

6:00pm–7:00pm

Fullerton Hall

Free with museum admission

Author Stella Tillyard delivers the keynote address for the [symposium](#) held in conjunction with [Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840](#).

<http://www.artic.edu/event/lecture-collecting-world-how-global-art-came-ireland-18th-century>

Symposium – Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840

March 21, 2015

11:00am–4:30pm

Fullerton Hall

Free with museum admission

A free public symposium presenting scholarship related to the exhibition will take place at the Art Institute March 20-21. The program will continue on Saturday, with closing remarks to be given by the actor Julian Sands, a collector of Irish fine and decorative arts and a lender to the exhibition.

More information is available on the Art Institute website. <http://www.artic.edu/event/symposium-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840>

Family Festival: Ireland

March 21, 2015

10:30am–3:00pm

Ryan Education Center

Free

Visit the special exhibition [Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840](http://www.artic.edu/exhibition/ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840), on view in Regenstein Hall. Then, discover the culture of Ireland as you listen to folk tales with storytellers Timothy O’Sullivan and Brigid Duffy Gerace. Explore rhythm, movement, and more through art making in the Ryan Education Center. Don’t miss interactive workshops with dancers and educators from Trinity Academy of Irish Dance.

<http://www.artic.edu/event/family-festival-ireland>

Concert: Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chamber Music Series—The Golden Age on the Periphery

March 22, 2015

2:00pm–3:00pm

Fullerton Hall

\$29; For tickets, please call (312) 294-3000.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians perform chamber music works by composers who found inspiration both in local Irish folk tunes and through travel to Ireland. An introductory talk examining the exhibition opens the program. Ticket available through the CSO box office at (312) 294-3000.

<http://www.artic.edu/event/concert-cso-chamber-music-series-golden-age-periphery>

After Dark: Featuring Ireland—Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840

April 10, 2015

9:00pm–12:00am

Modern Wing

\$30 adults, \$20 members and students, \$15 Evening Associates

Explore the museum late night with After Dark in the Modern Wing. Check out special tours of *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840*, then rock out to DJs and performances by acclaimed theatrical ensemble Collaboraction. Complimentary appetizers will be available along with a cash bar.

This event, hosted by the Evening Associates, is 21+. Tickets go on sale here, the week of March 16th.

<http://www.artic.edu/event/after-dark-featuring-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840>

Meet Mr. Yeats

April 9, 2015

6:00pm

Fullerton Hall

Free with museum admission

A cast of well-known local actors brings to life the dramatic biography and gripping words of Irish poet William Butler Yeats on the occasion of the 150th anniversary year of his birth. Son of a well-known Irish painter, Yeats was one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. *Meet Mr. Yeats*, written by Bernard Sahlins, includes seminal poems, ranging from the serene “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” to the terrifying “The Second Coming.” The performers will delve into the details of his complex love life, follow his dabbling in the occult, and explore his founding of the Abbey Theatre. Presented with the Poetry Foundation and the Consulate General of Ireland.

Lecture: Exhibition Overview of *Ireland—Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840*

April 17, 2015

12:00pm–1:00pm

Fullerton Hall

Free with museum admission

Jeff Nigro, scholar, discusses the exhibition *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690—1840*. Registration is not required for this program.

<http://www.artic.edu/event/lecture-exhibition-overview-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840>

Lecture: Vanishing Ireland

April 18, 2015

2:00pm–3pm

Fullerton Hall

Free with museum admission

Best-selling Irish author, historian and television personality Turtle Bunbury offers an engaging reflection on Irish life, identity and personalities from the past to recreate a poignant and fascinating world of music, emigration, humor and resilience. The tale he weaves features many amazing photographs of old Ireland, as well as photographic portraits from the award-winning *Vanishing Ireland* series.

<http://www.artic.edu/event/lecture-vanishing-ireland>

Woman’s Board Lecture/Luncheon: *Ireland—Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840*

May 5, 2015

11:00am–1:00pm

Rubloff Auditorium and Stock Exchange Trading Room

\$150

For the 2015 annual lecture/luncheon program, the Woman's Board of the Art Institute of Chicago welcomes Christopher Monkhouse, Eloise W. Martin Chair and Curator of European Decorative Arts, for an insightful overview of [Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840](#).

Space is limited. Please contact the Woman's Board at (312) 443-3628 or oraicwomensboard@artic.edu for more information or to purchase tickets.

<http://www.artic.edu/event/womans-board-lectureluncheon-ireland-crossroads-art-and-design-1690-1840>

Emma Donoghue: Raising the Dead

May 28, 2015

6:00pm

Fullerton Hall

Free with museum admission

Born and reared in Dublin and now living in Canada, novelist and historian Emma Donoghue (*Room*; *Frog Music*) reflects on her Irish background and how it has informed her writing for more than two decades. She will talk in particular about the techniques and ethics of her fact-inspired fiction that draws on real Irish lives, at home and abroad, from the 14th century to the nineteenth.

Irish Music Concert

June 6, 2015

2:00pm

Fullerton Hall

Free with museum admission

Join us for a concert of traditional Irish music performed by an extraordinary group of musicians, including fiddlers Liz Knowles (*Riverdance*; *Michael Collins*), Chicago's own Liz Carroll, and others. The performance highlights music from the exhibition's companion CD, created to illuminate and celebrate the musical influences at work in the period of 1690-1840 in Ireland, and to sponsor new musical masterpieces inspired by the themes of the exhibition. Some of the music is from the ancient harp tradition, some carefully curated from the distant past by Liz Knowles, and some specially composed by Liz Carroll. Celebrate the Ireland of centuries past, where the crossroads was a meeting place, a place of frequent and vital social interactions: village dances (céilís), political speeches, sporting standoffs, and meetings large and small. Enjoy this afternoon at the crossroads with us.

Exhibition Sponsors

Lead funding has been generously provided by Kay and Fred Krehbiel, Jay Frederick Krehbiel, and the Krehbiel Family Foundation.

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Major support has been provided by Molex, Incorporated; Neville and John Bryan; Caryn and King Harris, The Harris Family Foundation; and the Eloise W. Martin Legacy Fund.

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M. Donnelley and Christopher M. Kelly, Ellen and Jim O'Connor, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Ronald and Rose Wanke, Gloria G. Gottlieb, and Steven J. Zick.

Annual support for Art Institute exhibitions is provided by the Exhibitions Trust: Kenneth and Anne Griffin, Robert M. and Diane v. S. Levy, Thomas and Margot Pritzker, and the Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation.

The exhibition gala for *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840* is sponsored by R. J. O'Brien & Associates LLC and Patricia and John O' Brien.

Celtic Circle: Neville and John Bryan, Linda and Vincent Buonanno, Peggy and Jack Crowe, Nancy and Steve Crown, Jamee and Marshall Field, Joseph P. Gromacki, Caryn and King Harris, Leslie S. Hindman, Pamela and Roger Hull, Ned Jannotta, Kay and Fred Krehbiel, Jay Frederick Krehbiel, Diane v. S. and Robert M. Levy, Margaret MacLean and Barry MacLean, Ann and Samuel M. Menco, Mike and Adele Murphy, Ellen and Jim O'Connor, Kay and Michael O'Halloran, Anne and Chris Reyes, Shirley and Patrick Ryan, Linda and Bob Sullivan, Melinda and Paul Sullivan, Tina and Byron Trott, and Beth and Bruce White.

Images:

John Egan. *Portable Harp*, c. 1820. The O'Brien Collection.

Robert Fagan. *Portrait of a Lady as Hibernia*, c. 1801. Private collection.

John Kirkhoffer. *Secretary Cabinet*, 1732. Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Robert Allerton.

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