

‘Designing Modern Ireland: The Role  
of Graphic Design in the  
Construction of Modern Ireland at  
Home and Abroad (1949-1979).’

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## **Abstract**

Designing Modern Ireland: The negotiation of tradition and modernity in Irish graphic design (1949-1979)

As the modernising Irish state sought to project a positive image of post-war Ireland, a paradox emerged: how could the symbolism of national distinctiveness (heretofore synonymous with the past) be reconciled with modernity? This thesis outlines the role which graphic design played in attempts to resolve tensions between the national and the modern.

The thesis examines how design was mobilised as a symbol and agent of modernisation in Ireland in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the 1958 'Programme for Economic Expansion', widely considered to be the manifestation of an explicit state-led programme of modernisation. It examines the gradual replacement of the outward symbols of Republican Nationalism with a pervasive symbolism of modern efficiency, suggesting that this was a visual manifestation of the drive towards 'organisation' and rational management that gripped the civil service.

It examines the paradoxical situation whereby designers in Ireland sought to present themselves and the nation as modern and professional, while the Irish Trade Board (charged with both design and export promotion) looked to professional designers abroad to present Ireland and her exports as traditional. Central to this discussion is the critique by designers (particularly those associated with Ireland's first professional body, the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design) of so-called 'Stage Irish' versions of national image-making. An examination of their work and writings provides evidence for a series of alternative visual strategies for being Irish and modern —often quoting Celtic and early-Christian artefacts in otherwise modernist settings— which I have termed 'Celtic modernism.'

From the early 1950s onwards, debates over 'tradition' and 'modernisation' were given visible form in the contentious issue of which letterform to use for the Irish

language: 'roman' or 'Gaelic'. This culminated in 1965 in the decommissioning of the Irish alphabet – at which point typography, that most everyday and habitually overlooked of visual material, became briefly visible and highly charged. The final section of the thesis focuses on the relationship between language, typography and identity. It argues that the debates about language reform in the mid twentieth-century led to a reconsideration of the variety of ways of 'being Irish' typographically and that the 'Celtic' associations of the uncial letter in particular offered potential for the negotiation of tradition and modernity.

The thesis concludes that design in Ireland was presented as a means and a metaphor of modernisation. It attempts through an examination of a range of design examples, to follow Roland Barthes's injunction to 'track down in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*' the ideological constructions hidden in plain sight.

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## Author's declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared, the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.

The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Small sections of the research for this thesis have been published in other formats while a work-in-progress: 'Redesigning the Rising: Typographic Commemorations of 1916' in *Making 1916: The Visual and Material Culture of the Easter Rising*, edited by Lisa Godson and Joanna Brück (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015); 'Patrick Scott's Work for Signa Design Consultants' in *Patrick Scott: Image Space Light*, edited by Christina Kennedy (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2014); 'Campaign's Campaign: A History of the Journal of the Institute of Advertising and Design' in *Campaign: Journal of the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design* No. 12 (May, 2016) and 'Buttering Up the British: Irish Exports and the Tourist Gaze' *In/Print* (Vol.1, No.1, January 2012). In addition, Ian McClaren's recent essay on Peter Wildbur for *Baseline* No. 63 (2017) acknowledges my unpublished research as a key source.



Signature

Date 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2017.

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Many thanks are due to my colleague Clare Bell, with whom I have discussed many of the ideas in the thesis and whose insight into matters typographical has been enriching my understanding of the way design impacts society for over a decade.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Eithne Bolger (1932-2010) and Bill Bolger (1938-2013), and to my long-suffering and much-loved family, Ed and Billy.

## Introduction

‘But will the gentleman who parked his emerald Round Tower in a window in St Stephen’s Green please move it on? It’s in the way of progress.’<sup>1</sup>

This thesis argues that from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s, design in Ireland was increasingly understood, by a modernising elite, as both a means towards, and a metaphor of, modernisation. The newly-modernising Irish state faced a paradox in projecting an image of post-war Ireland<sup>2</sup>: how to reconcile the symbolism of national distinctiveness (heretofore synonymous with the past) with modernity. In the absence of large-scale manufacturing, ‘industrial’ design in Ireland in the post-war years largely constituted design for print: advertising, packaging, ‘house-style’, currency, philately, exhibition design, publication design and typography.<sup>3</sup> The thesis thus uses the term ‘graphic design’ primarily as a description of the graphic objects themselves, but it also examines the emergence of a discourse of professionalisation as designers working in advertising agencies and newly-established design consultancies sought to transform from ‘commercial artists’ to graphic designers.<sup>4</sup> Informed by Michael Billig’s ‘banal’ and Tim Edensor’s ‘everyday’ nationalism, this thesis emphasises the role of everyday or overlooked design as a vehicle of ideological mediation.<sup>5</sup> Through an examination of a range of designed examples, it follows Roland Barthes’s injunction to ‘track down in the decorative display of *what-*

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Our Man with a Spanner’ *Campaign* Vol. 1, No.3 (Spring 1960), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis I use the phrase ‘post-war’ as a shorthand to describe the three decades covered by this research. This could, rightly, be criticised as an Anglo-centric approach to periodisation, as the official Irish designation for the period of World War II was ‘The Emergency’, but ‘post-war’ serves a purpose of connecting the Irish case with international research on the new phase of modernism in design that responded to the changed circumstances after 1945.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Ireland’s absence of large-scale industrial manufacturing ensured that attempts to fix meaning often found expression in popular print media (including currency, philately, illustration and advertising) and in infrastructural projects including architecture.’ Linda King and Elaine Sisson, ‘Materiality, Modernity and the Shaping of Identity: An Overview’ in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 33.

<sup>4</sup> The changing nomenclature is examined in Chapter Two. The shift was complete by the mid-1960s.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2005); Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

*goes-without-saying*' the ideological constructions hidden in plain sight.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the transparency assumed for typography and layout is examined as an illustration of what Barthes termed the 'falsely obvious' — the ideal conduit for mythological and ideological constructions. This has particular relevance in the context of post-war Ireland, where language was a highly charged symbol of national distinctiveness. For the nation-builders of the early twentieth-century, the Irish language was the 'final sign'<sup>7</sup> of authentic Irish national identity. However, by mid-century, it was evident that dreams of an 'Irish-Ireland' as the inevitable consequence of independence remained worryingly unrealised. From the early 1950s onwards, debates over 'tradition' and 'modernisation' were given visible form in the contentious issue of which letterform to use for the Irish language: 'roman' or 'Gaelic'.<sup>8</sup> In 1965, this ended in the decommissioning of the Irish alphabet<sup>9</sup> — at which point typography, that most everyday and habitually overlooked aspect of visual culture, became briefly visible and highly charged.

Initially, the aim of this thesis was to examine the impact of the debates about the Romanisation of the Irish alphabet on graphic design in Ireland in the period of modernisation, but this question is now only dealt with in detail within the final chapter. There were several reasons for this shift in emphasis. A number of writers had already made substantial inroads into exploring the impact of the Romanisation debates on publishing,<sup>10</sup> while Dermot McGuinne's magisterial *Irish Type Design* comprehensively documented the history of typeface design in the Irish character for

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<sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Introduction,' *Mythologies*. (London: Vintage, 1993), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Poet Michael Hartnett wrote 'For Gaelic is our final sign that; we are human, therefore not a herd'. Michael Hartnett, 'A Farewell to English' (1974) quoted in Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, (London: Profile, 2004), 540. However, Ferriter misattributes the poem to Hartnett's contemporary, John Montague.

<sup>8</sup> Originally I had intended to follow the convention established in Dermot McGuinne's definitive book on Irish type design which spells 'gaelic' and 'irish' with a small 'g' or 'i' in the same way as 'roman' is used when referring to a category of typefaces. However, this proved distracting to readers and I have reverted to the conventional capitalisation. Otherwise, I have used lower case for 'uncial and 'roman'; Romanisation, however, takes a capital R, in keeping with the usage in the contemporary sources.

<sup>9</sup> In the 1965 Government White Paper, 'Athbheochan na Gaeilge. The Restoration of the Irish Language' (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, January 1965).

<sup>10</sup> See for example the essays in *The Irish Book in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Clare Hutton (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004).

letterpress.<sup>11</sup> Other writers, often literature scholars, had begun to address the symbolic dimension of Gaelic typography as part of national identity formation.<sup>12</sup> New research continues to be carried out in ethno-linguistic and semiotic analyses of Gaelic lettering, most notably in relation to the contested nature of contemporary linguistic and typographic identities in the North of Ireland.<sup>13</sup> Given the status of literature in Irish history and cultural studies, it not surprising that a good deal has been written about the publishing industry in the post-war period, some of which touches on editorial design.<sup>14</sup> But I discovered that no one had yet examined the typographic debates in a wider design historical context, or linked them to the exciting new work emerging in Irish design history on the visualisation of modernisation in the mid-twentieth century, such as Linda King's pioneering work on the design of state airline Aer Lingus, and on graphic modernism in Ireland more generally.<sup>15</sup> The arguments over the so-called 'modernisation' of the language and its visual form were articulated in rhetorical terms analogous to those used about modernisation and modernism in design.<sup>16</sup> Thus, I began to investigate the connection between modernism and modernisation in post-war design in Ireland and how that echoed and informed typographic debates. This investigation raised a series of critical questions that inform the discussion in this thesis, such as: How were

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<sup>11</sup> Dermot McGuinne, *Irish Type Design: A history of printing types in the Irish character* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992). McGuinne limits his investigation to metal types and does not deal with the faces designed for 'rub-down' dry-transfer lettering in the 1970s that I discuss in Chapter Four.

<sup>12</sup> Notably Mathew D. Staunton, 'Types of Irishness: Irish Gaelic Typography and National Identity', in *The Book in Ireland*, edited by Jacqueline Genet, Sylvie Mikowski and Fabienne Garcier (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006) and Brian Ó Conchubhair, 'The Gaelic Font Controversy: The Gaelic League's (Post-Colonial) Crux', *Irish University Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2003, pp. 46-63. Bharain Mac An Bhreithiun has also presented on the topic at Irish Studies conferences.

<sup>13</sup> This is the subject of Clare Bell's PhD research at Dublin Institute of Technology. Researchers at the University of Ulster are also pursuing parallel research. See for example the following papers presented at the Face Forward International Typography Conference, (held at the Dublin Institute of Technology, December 11-12, 2015) Richard McElveen and Pauline Clancy 'Typographic DNA of Place', Ian Montgomery, Liam McComish and Ruth Brolly 'Graphic de:re:generation'. While not dealing with Ireland, the articles in the special issue of *Social Semiotics* edited by Johan Järlehed and Adam Jaworski present parallel cases, 'Typographic Landscaping: Creativity, Ideology, Movement' *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 25 No. 2, (April, 2015): 117-125.

<sup>14</sup> See for example, *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English, 1891-2000*, edited by Clare Hutton and Patrick Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Thomas Dillon Redshaw has written extensively about the Dolmen Press.

<sup>15</sup> Based on her PhD, *Traditions and Modernities: Aer Lingus and the Visualisation of Irish Identities 1950-1961* (Dublin City University, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> See for example Brian Ó Cuív (ed), *A View of the Irish Language* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969). On Gaelic typography: see the numerous articles by Dermot McGuinne, and his *Irish Type Design* (1992).

continuity and change to be negotiated through design? What was the role of design in modernisation? What kind of images of the modernising nation was design called upon to project? How could the past be used to suggest modernity?

The following introduction attempts to contextualise these questions. It situates the project in the context of contemporary Irish design history, the historiography of modernity, modernisation and modern design in Ireland; it defends a 'nation-bound' focus, introduces the important distinction made in the thesis between 'Celtic' and 'Gaelic' in constructions of Irish identity and relates the research to existing scholarship that questions the assumed binary of 'tradition and modernism'. After introducing an overview of sources and methods, I will consider three questions: 1: Why write a history of Irish design? 2: What (and when) was modernism in Ireland? 3: Is 'Irish' modernist design an oxymoron?

## **Overview of structure, sources and methods**

### **Chapter overview**

The thesis is structured into four chapters, each of which addresses aspects of the visualisation of 'Modern' Ireland through design. Chapter One examines how design was mobilised as a symbol and an agent of modernisation in Ireland in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the 1958 'Programme for Economic Expansion', widely considered to be the manifestation of an explicit state-led programme of modernisation. It examines the gradual replacement of the outward symbols of Republican Nationalism with the pervasive symbolism of modern efficiency and suggests that this could be seen as the visual manifestation of a drive towards 'organisation' and rational management that gripped the civil service. I argue, following the work of cultural geographer J. C. Scott, that an increasingly powerful civil service and management elite in Ireland strove to make the Irish state 'legible': that is, rationally ordered and visually comprehensible as such.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998), discussed below.

Chapter Two traces another paradox. While modernisation at home increasingly called for modernist design,<sup>18</sup> and designers in Ireland sought to present themselves and the nation as modern and professional, the design and promotion of Irish goods for export often invoked stereotypical images of Ireland as quintessentially *not-modern*. C oras Tr acht ala Teoranta (CTT), the Irish trade board, was charged with increasing exports and from 1960, also had responsibility for ‘design promotion’. I argue that the emphasis on exports which dictated the CTT agenda had a material impact on the organisation of design patronage and on the construction of an image of modern Irish design, and that it trumped any commitment to fostering the development of an indigenous design industry. CTT’s goal was to increase the export saleability of Irish goods by any means necessary, even if those goods, their packaging or promotion were actually designed abroad or by designers imported into Ireland for that purpose. Chapter Two also examines how designers associated with the industry’s first professional organisation, the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD), including European  migr s as well as Irish-born designers, decried both ‘hackneyed’ symbols of national identity (shamrocks, harps and Celtic interlace) and the outsourcing of export design and promotion abroad.

ICAD members were equally critical of the establishment of Kilkenny Design Workshops (KDW) in 1963, on foot of the 1961 *Report on Design in Ireland* (usually known as the Scandinavian Report) commissioned by CTT. One of the aims of the thesis is to decentre the position of the Scandinavian Report and KDW in the narrative of Irish design history. In Chapter Three, I demonstrate that many of the innovations ascribed to the graphic design department of KDW in the early 1970s had been pioneered up to a decade earlier by Irish design consultancies, notably Signa Design Consultants (1953-c.1970) and Verbiage (1961-c.1978). More significantly, I argue that the tendency to view the graphic design production at KDW (and by implication, these predecessors) as ‘vernacular’ modernism creates a false distinction between

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<sup>18</sup> Notably in graphic design, including annual reports and periodicals for organisations such as the Irish Management Institute and the various state-run boards such as the Industrial Development Authority established in the early 1950s.

those designs that utilised heritage sources as content and those that did not, by suggesting that only the latter were ‘international’.

The last two chapters demonstrate how so-called Celtic design was increasingly understood as a kind of local primitivism: inherently abstract and therefore, potentially, modern. From the late 1950s on, designers argued that ‘Celtic’ visual culture (often conflated with that of the early Christian church) represented a time when Ireland had established a vast scholarly network across Europe and was understood to have preserved civilisation through Europe’s Dark Ages. In the context of an impending Common Market, the image of Ireland as already central to European identity proved compelling. Chapter Four focuses on the relationship between language, typography and identity. It argues that the debates about language reform in the mid twentieth-century led to a reconsideration of the variety of ways of ‘being Irish’ typographically, and that the ‘Celtic’ associations of the uncial letter in particular offered potential for the negotiation of tradition and modernity. Finally, I argue in relation to the contested commemorations of the 1916 Rising, that uncial typography also allowed for an apparently ‘abstract’, and therefore distinctly modern, form of commemoration that resisted the reductive certainties of Civil War positions.

The thesis thus charts a variety of ways of designing a ‘modern Ireland’: from the rejection of ‘hackneyed’ representational symbolism of shamrocks and harps, through various modernist graphic strategies, such as abstraction and ‘quotation’ of Celtic sources, to a purely typographic, hybrid form.

### **Sources and methods**

As is evident from the summary above, the thesis is case-study led and generally object-focused. Originally, I intended an ethnographic element to the methodology, collecting the oral history accounts of designers active in 1950s and 1960s Ireland. However, while the recollections of many designers have informed and contextualised discussion of archival material or contemporary texts, the interviews

themselves were not given a central role within the analysis.<sup>19</sup> Instead, echoing recent work by Paul Jobling<sup>20</sup>, I use a mixture of approaches to unpack design and advertising in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily an examination of the objects themselves informed by contemporary discourse around design and modernisation in Ireland.

The archival records of a profession caught up with novelty are unsurprisingly scant. The primary sources used here include the archives of design promotion agencies within the civil service, company archives, the limited records and publications of design organisations, as well as national collections such as the National Archives of Ireland, the National Library of Ireland, the Irish Architectural Archive and the National Visual Arts Library.<sup>21</sup> I have also benefitted from the generosity of designers and their families who granted access to private collections.<sup>22</sup> The vast majority of the material was thus largely unmediated.<sup>23</sup> This made categorisation, selection and evaluation a challenge: there was no route map, little or no existing canon to challenge or expand. Instead, I attempted to interpret the objects in relation to what I could find of contemporary discourse on design in Ireland in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. I examined government archives and records of debates in the two chambers of the Oireachtas (the Irish legislature), the Dáil (lower house) and the Seanad (upper

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<sup>19</sup> In part, this was because I was unable to collect a really representative cross-section of formal interviews before the generation that defined the profession in the 1960s began to pass on. There were five respondents who I did manage to interview at length and on several different occasions: graphic designers Peter Wildbur, Bill Bolger, and Bill Murphy, copywriter Bernard Share, and publisher Seán O'Boyle. I also had extensive correspondence with the family of ICAD founder, designer and typographer, Jarlath Hayes and shorter or less formal conversations with copywriter and film maker, Norman Mongon, designers Jan de Fouw, Damien Harrington, Patrick Scott, and Ruth Hecht, daughter of Hermann. Louis le Brocq, co-founder of Signa Design Consultants became ill and passed away as I was in the process of arranging an interview. A common criticism of oral history is that interviewees take the opportunity to invent a coherent narrative for their history; some engage in myth-making. Rather than seeing this as a 'distortion' of the 'truth', I have viewed designer's constructions of the past, like their omissions, as part of the story. See the contributions to Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson *The Oral History Reader* (Second ed) (London: Routledge, 2006), in particular Part III 'Interpreting Memories'.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Jobling *Advertising Menswear: Masculinity and Fashion In The British Media Since 1945* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Full details in bibliography.

<sup>22</sup> I have spent happy hours in attics, garden sheds and, on one memorable occasion, a walk-in freezer.

<sup>23</sup> Lack of funding meant that even many of the donations to NIVAL are still awaiting cataloguing. These include the archive of the art critic and manager of Signa Design Consultants, Dorothy Walker (née Cole) and that of the Institute of Designers in Ireland (formerly the Society of Designers in Ireland), established in 1972. The latter was particularly unmediated: the cardboard boxes that housed it also contained a set of cutlery and an impressive collection of insect life.



house) as well as civil service publications, annual reports and journals of pro-modernisation bodies such as the Irish Management Institute. There were few outlets for design criticism or for designers themselves to publish: newspapers and journals occasionally invited articles but more often the debates happened on the letters pages. In addition to the trade journals, the *Irish Architect and Contractor* and the *Irish Printer*, which both carried opinion pieces, two design-led journals emerged (and folded) in the period and provide valuable insights into the views of designers in Ireland who were predominantly pro-modernism and pro-modernisation. These were *Campaign*, the journal of the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (1959-1963), and *Forgnán*, the journal of the Building Design Centre (1962-4), the latter having been established in 1959 by the modernist architect and founder of Signa Design Consultants, Michael Scott. Thus, the analysis is of the relationship between designed objects and the discourse of design in the context of a state-supported (even state-led) modernising drive in post-war Ireland.

Over the last twenty years, the dominant methodological emphasis in design history has seen two shifts,<sup>24</sup> initially away from production-centred accounts towards a consideration of consumption, and more recently towards ‘mediation’: the dissemination, advertising and critique of objects.<sup>25</sup> While all three areas of the ‘design cycle’<sup>26</sup> are considered in this thesis, there is more focus on production (designers and clients) and mediation, largely due to the fact that the objects under scrutiny were themselves often mediating modernity.

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<sup>24</sup> For a recent overview of the historiography of Design History, see ‘Historiography’ in Kjetil Fallan *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method* (Oxford: Berg, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> See Grace Lees-Maffei, ‘The Production–Consumption–Mediation Paradigm,’ *Journal of Design History* Vol. 22, No. 4 (2009): 351-376. Her model is an elaboration of John A. Walker’s approach in his *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989.) A comparable model is Paul du Gay’s ‘Circuit of Culture’ in *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, edited by Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> The term used by both Walker and Lees-Maffei to describe the processes of production–consumption–mediation/dissemination.

Given the importance of Irish Studies<sup>27</sup> as a site of scholarship on cultural constructions of Irishness, it is perhaps fitting that my approach in the thesis is informed by an early example of design history within cultural studies: Dick Hebdige's 1988 anthology, *Hiding in the Light*.<sup>28</sup> Hebdige situated his analysis of design *between* signs and things, arguing for a mixed methodology that incorporated those strategies commonly used to interrogate either objects or images, such as object analysis, archival research and semiotics. Hebdige argued that attention to 'unimportant', everyday objects, revealed the 'absurdity' of both 'nominalism' and 'realism'.<sup>29</sup> A Vespa scooter is *simultaneously* a solid, serviceable transportation device and a rich and emotive symbol of youthful rebellion.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, for designers in the 1960s, Victor Hammer's Uncial typeface was both a readily available approximation of Gaelic type and an ideologically resonant compromise between roman and Gaelic, European and national identity, modernity and tradition.

### **Irish design historiography**

The relatively recent emergence of Irish design history means that most writers, myself included, are more concerned with documenting aspects of the history of design than overhauling existing narratives. One exception is the desire to provide a corrective to the dominant narrative of Kilkenny Design Workshops having 'brought' modernism to Ireland. The apparent self-evidence of KDW's constituting axiomatically modern Irish design is exemplified in the title of the self-published *Kilkenny Design: Twenty-One Years of Design in Ireland* (1985) written by KDW chairman Nick

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<sup>27</sup> A nationally-inflected variety of cultural studies that emerged in the 1970s from English Literature. Two of the better overviews of the historiography of Irish Studies are by academics with the same name: Professor Michael Cronin of Dublin City University, an expert on translation and tourism, and Michael G. Cronin of the English Department at Maynooth University: Michael Cronin, 'Minding Ourselves: A New Face for Irish Studies,' *Field Day Review* Vol. 4 (2008): 174-185; Michael G. Cronin 'Irish Studies Between the Past and the Future' in *Are the Irish Different?* edited by Tom Inglis. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

To add further confusion, a third academic, Professor Mike Cronin of Boston College Ireland, who writes on the material culture of spectacle in Ireland, is also cited in this thesis.

<sup>28</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*, (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> Hebdige, 'Introduction' *Hiding in the Light*, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Hebdige, 'Object as Image: The Italian Scooter Cycle', *Hiding in the Light*: 77-115.

Marchant with journalist Jeremy Addis.<sup>31</sup> This was reinforced in John Turpin's Pevsnerian approach to what he called 'The Irish Design Reform Movement of the 1960s,'<sup>32</sup> in which KDW was presented as the 'high point' of Irish design. This presented modernism as something which was brought to Ireland (a 'gift' rather than an imposition) by foreign designers – Scandinavian, Dutch, British – invited in by a few far-seeing members of C oras Tr acht ala or the ad agencies. It reiterated an underlying narrative of 'salvation' in writing on modernity in Ireland, where the nation was rescued from backward traditionalism and kitsch nationalism by the arrival of modernisation.

For many years Turpin's was the only widely available account of modern design in Ireland and thus exerted a powerful influence, at least within design education.<sup>33</sup> The last decade has seen an increase in the quantity and scope of writing about Irish design, much of it focused on rethinking the relationship between design and modernity in Ireland.<sup>34</sup> Three important publications have provided a sound basis for developing this research. The most recent, co-authored by Lisa Godson and Linda King, 'Design History and Material Culture' for the Royal Irish Academy's *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (2015), is an indication of the increasing academic standing of the discipline in Ireland.<sup>35</sup> *Making 1916: Material and*

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<sup>31</sup> Nick Marchant and Jeremy Addis *Kilkenny Design: Twenty-One Years of Design in Ireland* (London: Lund Humphries, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> John Turpin 'The Irish Design Reform Movement of the 1960s' *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 1. (Spring, 1986): 4-21.

<sup>33</sup> The fortieth anniversary of the opening of KDW in 2005 saw the publication of a new, more nuanced, account of KDW, accompanied by an exhibition, both of which questioned the idea of KDW as 'the Irish Bauhaus'. Joanna Quinn, *Designing Ireland: A Retrospective Exhibition of Kilkenny Design Workshops 1963-1988* (Dublin: Crafts Council of Ireland, 2005), 51. This was followed by Una Walker's reframing of the Scandinavian Report and KDW based on her research as principal investigator on the KDW archive digitization project at NIVAL. Walker drew attention to the fact that KDW was never one of the recommendations of the 1961 'Design in Ireland' report; Una Walker, 'The Scandinavian Report: Its Origins and Impact on the Kilkenny Design Workshops,' *Journal of Art Historiography* Vol. 9 (December, 2013). (online)

<sup>34</sup> These include Sorcha O'Brien's work on the Shannon Hydro Electric Scheme of 1928, *Powering the Nation: Images of the Shannon Scheme and Electricity in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, forthcoming); Lisa Godson's *'How the Crowd Felt': Religion, Ritual and Material Culture in the Irish Free State* (Liverpool University Press, forthcoming), and Linda King's on Aer Lingus, already mentioned.

<sup>35</sup> Lisa Godson and Linda King, 'Design and Material Culture' in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015): 120-52.

*Visual Culture of the Easter Rising*, edited by Godson and Joanna Brück, provides a reinterpretation of the myth-making of 1916 through a series of object-histories and is emblematic of interdisciplinary tendencies in contemporary Irish design history.<sup>36</sup> The same is also true of *Ireland: Design and Material Culture*, (2011) edited by King and Elaine Sisson. The book provided much needed scholarly overviews of the visualisation of the Irish State and the emergence of modernist design in Ireland,<sup>37</sup> as well as offering important reconsiderations of canonical topics, including KDW.<sup>38</sup>

Although the editors eloquently problematise national identity in an Irish context, drawing on postcolonial studies and anthropology, significantly, they do not question the idea of framing the book in national terms: as *Irish* design history. This may reflect the dominance of the Irish Studies model in Irish history and cultural studies where 'Ireland' is self-evidently the object of study. By contrast, writing this thesis in a British institution with an international student-base exposed the ideological, taken-for-granted 'naturalness' of 'Ireland' as a defining and bounding term.<sup>39</sup> I still believe it is a useful one, but it needs to be defended and expanded.

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<sup>36</sup> *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising*, edited by Lisa Godson and Joanna Brück (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Modalities of the Visible,' and Linda King and Elaine Sisson 'Materiality, Modernity and the Shaping of Identity: An Overview' in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 19-25 and 29-35.

<sup>38</sup> Anna Moran, 'Tradition in the service of modernity', in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 191-210. It also provided an opportunity for scholars to publish academic articles based on ground-breaking postgraduate research that redefined Irish design history: Sorcha O'Brien and Ciaran Swan's essays are good examples of this.

<sup>39</sup> The scope of the thesis only takes in the twenty-six counties of the Republic of Ireland, and reflects the contemporary graphic design and advertising field in Ireland, in that it is Dublin-centric. The regrettable decision to omit Northern Ireland was taken largely for reasons of space. In addition, while ostensibly about projecting a *national* identity, the subject of many of the chapters is actually the relationship between designers and the *State*, that partial and limited political entity, the Republic of Ireland (declared in 1949), as against the imagined community of 'Ireland' from which it derives its legitimacy.

## 1. Why write a history of Irish design?

While the nation-state (or to a lesser extent, a supranational grouping such as 'Scandinavia') was for many years the traditional 'unit of analysis'<sup>40</sup> of design history, the naturalness of this category has been called into question. In keeping with broader reconsideration of the validity of the term 'nationalism', writers on recent design and architectural history have stressed the limitations of the nation state as a framing device for understanding what is increasingly a global practice.<sup>41</sup> Architectural historian Jill Traganou argues against 'nation-bound' histories and quotes Arjun Appadurai, arguing that 'the nation state has become obsolete and other formations of allegiance and identity have taken its place.'<sup>42</sup> Most recently, Maggie Taft has criticised Kjetil Fallan's *Designing Modern Norway* for failing to defend his national focus, asking 'why write a history of Norwegian design?'<sup>43</sup> As she points out, Fallan himself suggests that the mesh of cultural and political forces that he documents, 'would be true of any nation, be it Norway or Namibia'.<sup>44</sup> In fact, his conclusion, that 'design discourse was central to the articulation of community and identity as this politically young, but culturally old, nation state consolidated and found its place in the modern world order',<sup>45</sup> is equally true of this thesis. Fallan's book is useful because of its particularity: because of the detailed specificity of the Norwegian experience, it can complicate existing narratives of modernism and modernisation, particularly in relation to the simplification 'Scandinavian Design'.

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<sup>40</sup> Grace Lees Maffei and Kjetil Fallan 'Introduction', *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design* edited by Grace Lees-Maffei, Kjetil Fallan (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Billig summarises various theses about 'the end of nationalism', the majority of which do not consider the post-USSR states to be 'proper' nations, and in which the 'European Union is often seen to be the model of the supra-national organization, which is eroding statehood. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*: 130-143.

<sup>42</sup> Jill Traganou, 'From Nation-Bound Histories to Global Narratives of Architecture', in *Global Design History*, edited by Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello and Sarah Teasley (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 169. The quote is from 'Patriotism and its Futures' in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (1996).

<sup>43</sup> Maggie Taft 'Book Review: *Designing Modern Norway*' *Journal of Design History*, epx029, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epx029>, August 21, 2017, (online).

<sup>44</sup> Maggie Taft 'Book Review: *Designing Modern Norway*' *Journal of Design History*, epx029, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epx029>, August 21, 2017, (online).

<sup>45</sup> Kjetil Fallan, *Designing Modern Norway: A History of Design Discourse* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 187.

One might ask whether Cheryl Buckley's equally useful *Designing Modern Britain* encountered the same question: why write a history of British design?<sup>46</sup> Fallan's work can be seen as part of a concurrent trend in design history, also animated by an awareness of the global nature of design, which seeks to bring previously marginal regions into the discourse.<sup>47</sup> It is in this context that contemporary Irish design history may best be understood.<sup>48</sup> Javier Gimeno-Martínez points out that national histories of design 'have been seen as reproducing dominant visions of the nation but also as an antidote against reductive histories of design.'<sup>49</sup> Like King's work, this thesis started from the second position, a desire to 'insert' Ireland into the increasingly global history of design. Lees Maffei and Fallan argue that the advantage of focusing research on a single region is that it is 'perhaps less prone to generalizing about the commonality of huge international regions than the project of world history.'<sup>50</sup> In addition, rather than reproducing dominant visions of the nation, my research joins other critics who have challenged essentialist or fixed ('primordialist'<sup>51</sup>) ideas of Irish national identity.

Even in the years of isolationism and economic protectionism, Ireland was never fully insulated from international influences and, certainly in the post-war years, was subject to the globalising impetus of modern capitalism, as Chapter Two

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<sup>46</sup> Cheryl Buckley, *Designing Modern Britain* (London: Reaktion, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> See for example, *Global Design History*, edited by Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello and Sarah Teasley (London & New York: Routledge, 2011); Victor Margolin, *World History of Design* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015); Anna Calvera, 'Local, Regional, National, Global and Feedback: Several Issues to be Faced with Constructing Regional Narratives', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, (2005): 371-383.

<sup>48</sup> Indeed, King has elsewhere argued strongly for Irish design history to be understood in a post-colonial context. See for example, her Exhibition Review: 'Designing Ireland: A Retrospective of Kilkenny Design Workshops, 1963-1988, Lavitt's Quay, Cork & National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny, November-December 2005 & February-April 2006' in *Circa* No. 115, (2006), 94-95

<sup>49</sup> Javier Gimeno-Martínez, 'Introduction', *Design and National Identity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 3. He cites as an example of the first position, John A. Walker's account of national histories of design in the chapter 'Varieties of Design History' in *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Arnold, 1989) and Tony Fry's *Design History Australia* (1988) as an example of the second although there are many more recent accounts that adhere to that position, notably Victor Margolin's ambitious *World History of Design* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei, 'Real Imagined Communities: National Narratives and the Globalization of Design History', *Design Issues*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (2016), 10.

<sup>51</sup> See Part 1 'Primordialism: Nations as Perennial Entities' in Gimeno-Martínez, *Design and National Identity*.

demonstrates. The United States' post-war Marshall Aid funding was a good example of the kind of American-led economic control that characterises contemporary definitions of globalisation.<sup>52</sup> In addition, modernism itself was fundamentally an international and internationalist movement, with practitioners, as well as styles, crossing borders (the former not always of their own volition).<sup>53</sup> As King, Turpin and Joanna Quinn have demonstrated, Irish design in the mid-twentieth century was greatly energised by an influx of designers from Europe who practised in Ireland.<sup>54</sup> Unusually, then, instead of the insularity and chauvinism which John A. Walker has pointed to as a problem in national histories of design,<sup>55</sup> Irish design history has tended to *emphasise* the story of international influences. This has led one reviewer of King and Sisson's book to suggest that 'external influences were decisive in determining the timing and depth of the engagement of Ireland's design culture with the currents of modernity', and that on the evidence provided in the anthology, 'the indigenous energies available for ensuring that Irish visual and design culture would

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<sup>52</sup> Despite being neutral in World War II, Ireland received Marshall Aid. Its most significant impact on design was the influence of the European Productivity Agency's packaging seminars which led to the establishment of the Irish Packaging Institute (discussed in Chapter One).

<sup>53</sup> Paul Greenhalgh summarises the 'Internationalism and universality' of the Modernists: 'If barriers between disciplines and classes of consumer were to be eliminated, and if historical styles as indicators of chronological divides were to be proscribed, then inevitably national differences had to go. The Modern Movement was therefore unavoidably internationalist in outlook, this being part of the quest for a universal human consciousness...', 'Introduction' in *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990), 12. The exodus of Modernists from Europe to the United States is well documented (see for example R. Roger Remington and Lisa Bodenstedt *American Modernism: Graphic Design 1920-1960*, (London, Laurence King, 2003). Among the most significant were Alexey Brodovitch and Herbert Bayer. Robin Kinross and Cheryl Buckley have demonstrated the impact on British design of Jewish and leftist émigré designers from Nazi Germany. Robin Kinross, 'Émigré Graphic Designers in Britain: Around the Second World War and Afterwards', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 3 No. 1, (1990): 35-57; Cheryl Buckley and Tobias Hochscherf, 'Introduction: From German "Invasion" to Transnationalism: Continental European Émigrés and Visual Culture in Britain, 1933-56', *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol. 13 No. 2, (2012): 157-168.

<sup>54</sup> Notable among these were the group of Dutch graphic designers who were invited over by Tim O'Neill of Sun Advertising to work on the Aer Lingus account from 1951 onwards and of whom Linda King has made an extensive study. Initially lured from war-ravaged Holland by the promise of cheap housing and plentiful food, they integrated well into the small Irish art and design world. They became leading members of a professionalising industry, occupying positions as teachers and on the boards of newly established organisations such as ICAD. Other émigrés who influenced the direction of Irish design included the waves of craftspeople and designers who CTT brought over to staff the Kilkenny Design Workshops.

<sup>55</sup> John A. Walker, 'Varieties of Design History' in *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Arnold, 1989).

respond creatively to the challenges of modernity should not be exaggerated.<sup>56</sup> This thesis aims to address the question of both the ‘indigenous energies’ in design in Ireland and the problematic, and overlooked, relationship with Britain and British design. A related area that has received little attention in Irish design history — addressed in Chapter Two— is the role of advertising agencies based in Britain and America in designing an image of Ireland for export markets.

In the context of Irish Studies, Richard Kearney’s 1996 argument for a ‘post-nationalist’ Ireland might appear to be another rejection of the usefulness of the national as an analytic or descriptive category.<sup>57</sup> However, his thesis turns out to echo that of designers like Liam Miller, who in the 1960s and ‘70s, argued that the future for Ireland was to recognise her place as part of a pan-European federation of nations.<sup>58</sup> In order to make sense of the re-imagined narrative, these designers reworked the meaning of the past, emphasising the extra-national dimension of Celtic and early-Christian heritage.

The objects that I focus upon in this research are generally engaged in a process of national projection, whether everyday-banal or spectacularly patriotic. This in itself suggests that the category of national design is a relevant ‘unit of analysis’, at least in attempting to understand the intended use and reception of a particular design in the period. For example, in Chapter Three, it is relevant to examine the change in design of Irish stamps in the context of a programme of Irish modernisation and the concomitant change in the ‘style’ of imagining the nation, while also acknowledging that an almost identical process was taking place in the early 1960s in Britain. Such an approach does not imply that there was something ‘essentially Irish’ about that process in Ireland, but rather explores a design commission in the terms in which it

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<sup>56</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, Book Review ‘Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922–1992, ed. Linda King and Elaine Sisson,’ *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 128, No. 530, (February 2013), 220.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> Liam Miller, ‘The heirs of Saint Columba: Publishing in Ireland’, *Times Literary Supplement*, March 17, 1972. See also Liam Miller, *The Easter Proclamation of the Irish Republic, 1916* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1975).



was understood at the time, as ‘updating’ the national image. Unsurprisingly, given the internationalist dimension of Irish design history, the ‘Irish exceptionalism’ common in some strands of Irish Studies carries little weight.<sup>59</sup> However, there is one aspect of the current research where the Irish experience is not paralleled in other instances of nationalism and modernity. The peculiar status of Irish as a national language which few of the population could speak, let alone read, but which carried a powerful semantic charge, meant that the typographic landscape in Ireland was quite distinctive.<sup>60</sup> While there were obvious parallels with other European *regions*, Ireland was the only independent *nation* to have to negotiate this duality in the projection of a national image, particularly at home.

To return to the question introduced above: given the extensive network of international influences and markets discussed in this thesis, how useful is the specific term ‘Irish’ or ‘Ireland’ in defining the object of study? Defining (or re-defining) ‘Ireland’ is in fact the problem that unites my case studies. Whether in the local design profession’s desire to ‘update’ the image of Irish packaging,<sup>61</sup> or the international advertising agency’s construction of an ‘authentic’ object correlative for Irish butter or whiskey, ‘Ireland’ was both the client *and* the brief. The thesis is concerned with the interplay between economic and cultural definitions of nation, and the role of modernism in negotiating between the modernising agenda exemplified in the ‘Programme for Economic Expansion’ and the long-standing cultural commitment to a decolonisation discourse that drew on a mythical pre-national past. Thus, I argue that it is the contested nature of the nation in modernity, not its self-evidence, which charges it as an analytical category.

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<sup>59</sup> I should also acknowledge a limitation of the scope of this thesis: it deals almost entirely with activities in or commissioned from Dublin, rather than the Republic as a whole. In part this is because design activity, especially advertising, tended to be centralised in the capital, but it was not entirely limited to that city. Tom Spalding’s PhD research on modernism in Cork (*A Sense of Place: Quotidian Design in Modern Ireland*, Dublin Institute of Technology, in progress) is a positive step towards a much-needed broadening out of regional focus within Irish visual cultural studies.

<sup>60</sup> Tony Crowley, ‘The Languages of the Island of Ireland, 1922–2004’ in *Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland 1537-2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 164-206.

<sup>61</sup> See for example, Bernard Share’s editorials in ICAD’s *Campaign* publication and Giles Talbot Kelly’s articles on Irish packaging design, discussed in Chapter 2, such as ‘Design for Selling: The Shape of Things to Come’, *Irish Times*, March 24, 1961.

## National identity

The approach to the question of national identity in the thesis is informed by the ‘constructivist’ approaches of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and, especially, Benedict Anderson whose linking of national identity and print culture in part informs the way that typography runs like a thread through this thesis. Anderson writes that ‘Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.’<sup>62</sup> This thesis documents how, between 1950 and 1970, the *style* in which Ireland had hitherto been imagined was first contested and, ultimately, re-designed.<sup>63</sup> One of the concerns of the thesis is how the grand-narrative of Ireland’s antiquity, the legitimating factor that animated calls for independence throughout the nineteenth century, was re-imagined in the context of modernisation. The change is best exemplified visually by the distinction between interpretation and quotation of so-called Celtic sources.

Given the focus on both everyday objects and on state construction of national image through design, Michael Billig’s concept of Banal Nationalism is also apposite. Billig argues that nationalism is daily invoked in established, Western nations. Nationalism, he argues is, in fact, ‘the endemic norm’. He uses the term ‘banal nationalism’ to distinguish this ‘endemic’ form and to differentiate it from what might be termed ‘spectacular’ nationalism, an active struggle for national recognition or reorganization, where nationalism ‘directs attention to itself’.<sup>64</sup> In Ireland, the struggle for independence from Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could be characterised by such spectacular nationalism; by contrast, post-

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<sup>62</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, originally published 1983 (Revised Edition, London: Verso, 2006), 6.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Copley, drawing on Anthony D. Smith, usefully reminds us that ‘what underpins the concept of nation is narrative’, and that it is the stories about the past, the myths or traditions, that allow the nation to function in the present. ‘Myth and history, then, despite other feelings about their relative veracity, are inescapably conceived in the same form.’ Paul Copley, ‘Marketing the “Glocal” in Narratives of National Identity’, *Semiotica: Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies/Revue De l’Association Internationale De Sémiotique*, Vol. 150, No. 1-4, (2004), 199.

<sup>64</sup> These terms were used by Hebdige, following Barthes, to distinguish between conventional dress and subcultural dress. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 101.

war designers had little patience with the romantic imagery of harps and shamrocks.<sup>65</sup> Billig has been criticised by Tim Edensor and Michael Skey, among others, for deploying a ‘top-down’ model, focusing on ‘high’ culture and state-initiated projects.<sup>66</sup> However, the everyday objects I investigate do fall properly within Billig’s banal nationalism: stamps, butter labels, annual reports are all commissioned by the state or state agents. They are not generally presented as overtly patriotic, but subtly reinforce nationalism as ‘endemic norm’.

I agree with Umut Özkırmılı, quoted by Lees-Maffei and Fallan, that the national is ‘neither illusory nor artificial, but... socially constituted and institutional, hence “real” in its consequences and a very “real” part of our everyday lives.’<sup>67</sup> From an economic-materialist point of view, the Irish Free State, in a time of civil war, obviously considered that there was a commensurate (‘real’) return to be derived from the considerable energy and expense expended on ‘mere symbols’: painting green the (imperial) red post boxes, commissioning and printing new stamps, erecting new (green) street signs which showed the names both in English (in roman letters) and in Irish (in the Irish alphabet).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> See the extensive criticism in *Campaign*, the ICAD publication, 1959-63.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Skey, ‘The National in Everyday Life: A Critical Engagement with Michael Billig’s Thesis of *Banal Nationalism*,’ *The Sociological Review*, Vol 57, No. 2 (May, 2009): 331 - 346

<sup>67</sup> Umut Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism* (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 217, cited in Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei ‘Introduction’ to *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization*, edited by Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 4. The defining concept of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, is often (mis)understood as suggesting that national identity is ‘not real’, and therefore unimportant. This, in Hebdige’s terms, serves as an example of the ‘absurdity’ of both ‘nominalism’ and ‘realism’. As Anthony D. Smith argued, ‘whatever the elements of imagination that go into making of nations the result is much more than a construct and a discursive formation... They are also “real” sociological communities’. Anthony D. Smith *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2009), 13. However, the emphasis that Smith places on ‘real’ ethnicity in the make-up of national identity is less appropriate, especially in post-war Irish design, where a national image is in part constructed abroad for foreign markets.

<sup>68</sup> See Brian P. Kennedy, ‘The Irish Free State 1922-49: A Visual Perspective’ in *Ireland: Art Into History*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, and Brian P. Kennedy (Dublin: Town House, 1994): 132-152 and King and Sisson, *Ireland: Design and Visual Culture*, 30.

## 2. When (and what) was modernism in Ireland?

This thesis is primarily concerned with objects which, although not always conforming to the dictates of the Modern movement, are conditioned by responses to modernisation. It is appropriate therefore to outline the definitions and chronology of modernism, modernity and modernisation in an Irish context.

Modernism in Irish Studies is usually located at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, associated with writers including Wilde, Yeats and Joyce.<sup>69</sup> This concurs with Raymond Williams's definition of 'modernism' as the 'experimental art and writing of c.1890-c.1940.'<sup>70</sup> However, a slightly different chronology applies in modernist design and architecture. Design historian Paul Greenhalgh points to two phases: 'pioneer' circa 1914-1933 and 'international' circa 1932-1979.<sup>71</sup> In addition, King notes that while literary modernism had reached its 'apogee by the beginning of World War II', modernism in design continued to evolve. modernism is a term, according to design historian Christopher Wilk, whose 'ubiquity hides a surprising vagueness and ambiguity of meaning.'<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless he gives a summary of some of the characteristics that united modernist designers in Europe:

...an espousal of the new, and, often, an equally vociferous rejection of history and tradition; a utopian desire to create a better world, to reinvent the world from scratch; an almost messianic belief in the power and potential of the machine and industrial technology; a rejection of applied ornament and decoration; an embrace of abstraction and a belief in the unity of the arts... All of these principles were frequently combined with social and political beliefs (largely left-leaning) which held that design and art could, and should, transform society.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> However, the inclusion of Beckett's oeuvre sometimes stretches the chronology to the 1950s and 60s. *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Modernism* edited by Joe Cleary (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), offers a chronology of 'Developments in Irish Modernism' that covers 1845-1969; yet, in fact, only two of the thirteen essays in the volume examine post-war objects or events. Significantly for the justification of my periodisation, both deal with subjects covered in this thesis. They are Luke Gibbons's essay on 'Visual Modernisms', which includes the Rosc exhibition of 1967, and 'Irish Language Modernisms' by Louis de Paor, which provides an overview that reaches to the 1980s.

<sup>70</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (revised edition) (Oxford & New York: OUP, 1983): 208-9.

<sup>71</sup> Greenhalgh, 'Introduction', *Modernism in Design*: 2-3.

<sup>72</sup> Christopher Wilk, 'Introduction: What was Modernism?' in *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939* (London: V&A, 2006), 12.

<sup>73</sup> Wilk, 'Introduction: What was Modernism?', 14.

On this evidence, many of the examples discussed in this thesis would not qualify as modernist. For that, we need to expand the definition of 'modernism' and distinguish it from the closely related terms 'modernity' and 'modernisation'. These are tightly interconnected, as Svetlana Boym explains:

It is crucial to distinguish modernity as a critical project from modernization as a social practice and state policy that usually refers to industrialisation and technological progress. Modernity and modernisms are responses to the condition of modernization and the consequences of progress.<sup>74</sup>

Greenhalgh concurs: 'modernity is the cultural response to modernization, manifesting itself in our individual and collective attempts to deal with the modern life... [while]... modernisms are the specific movements in the arts that addressed issues to do with living in the modernised world.'<sup>75</sup> Thus, if modernism is the cultural and aesthetic response to modernisation, then I can confidently argue that all of the designed objects examined here are 'modernist', though not all are 'Modernist,' in the sense of conforming to the ideological and aesthetic conventions of the Modern Movement.

Marshall Berman, like Greenhalgh and Boym, suggests that modernity is brought about by modernisation, by which he means 'the process of scientific, technological and societal change'.<sup>76</sup> Hence modernism in the arts is seen to be attendant on modernisation, which Jurgen Habermas famously summarised as a 'bundle of processes that are cumulative and mutually reinforcing' including 'the formation of capital and the mobilization of resources; ... the development of the forces of production and the increase in the productivity of labor; ... the establishment of a centralized political power and the formation of national identities; ... the secularization of values and norms...'<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 22.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, *The Modern Ideal: The Rise and Collapse of Idealism in the Visual Arts from the Enlightenment to Postmodernism* (London: V&A, 2005), 23.

<sup>76</sup> Paraphrased in Wilk, 'Introduction: What was Modernism?', 17.

<sup>77</sup> Jurgen Habermas, 'Modernity's Consciousness of Time and its Need for Reassurance' in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 2.

In Ireland, as many writers have noted, modernity (and its literary form, modernism) predates industrialisation or secularisation. Nevertheless, as Gibbons has pointed out, pre-Independence Ireland, on the margins of industrial Britain, experienced the negative effects of modernisation (taking place at the centre) without the benefits.<sup>78</sup> Because of the dominance of the literary paradigm in Irish cultural studies, the discourse around modernism in Ireland tends to focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was the era of the Celtic Revival, a time when the past was vital for legitimising the claim to nationhood and independence from Britain.<sup>79</sup> In this period, and again under Éamon de Valera's leadership<sup>80</sup>, modernisation was suspect at least at the level of the national imaginary, not least because of its supposed 'Britishness'. By contrast, modernisation in the post-war years was less contested. Nevertheless, it is more accurate to see modernism as the visual parallel of a self-conscious *project of modernisation*, rather than an inevitable aesthetic phase attendant on the 'arrival' of modernity on the island. This thesis, then, defines Irish modernisation in terms of its popularly recognised appearance in contemporary discourse from the late 1950s onwards.<sup>81</sup>

### Modernisation in Ireland

'With revisionist hindsight, 1959 is taken as the *annus mirabilis* of modern Ireland, the year in which God said "Let Lemass be!" – and there was light, dispelling the mists of traditionalism which had obscured the path to progress and industrialization.'<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Luke Gibbons 'Introduction', *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>79</sup> A good example is Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic revival* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>80</sup> De Valera was one of the most senior leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising to have survived the revolution and its immediate aftermath. He led the anti-Treaty side in the Irish Civil War (1922-23) and went on to establish and lead the Fianna Fáil party from 1926. He became President of the Executive Council (the precursor to the title of Taoiseach, Prime Minister, which was introduced in 1937) in 1932 and remained in power until 1948. He returned as Taoiseach in 1951-54 and 1957-59. In 1959, he retired from the Dáil to become President of Ireland, a position he held until his death in 1973.

<sup>81</sup> Habermas dates the term 'modernization' itself to the 1950s. Much has been written about Taoiseach Seán Lemass's project of modernisation, but J.J. Lee's 'Seán Lemass' in J.J. Lee (ed.) *Ireland 1945-70* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1979) is perhaps the clearest, while Tom Garvin's, *Judging Lemass* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009) is the most recent monograph.

<sup>82</sup> Luke Gibbons 'Coming out of Hibernation? The Myth of Modernization in Irish Culture', *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 82.

Luke Gibbons's wry comment draws attention to the generally held view that modernisation appeared in Ireland as a result of the efforts of Seán Lemass, aided by the civil servant T.K. Whitaker. Lemass was Minister for Industry and Commerce from 1932-1948 and 1951-54 and again from 1957-9, becoming Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in 1959.<sup>83</sup> The key shift in economic policy during Lemass's tenure as Taoiseach was a rejection of the 'protectionist' policy of his predecessor Éamon de Valera, which had 'protected' indigenous industries from foreign competition by high tariffs on imports. From its establishment in 1922, the Irish Free State, under the Cumann na nGaedheal party, followed a free trade line, based on agricultural export.<sup>84</sup> When De Valera, leader of Fianna Fáil, became Taoiseach in 1932 he favoured cultural and economic isolationism. This was embodied in the Control of Manufactures Act, which required that the majority of any company operating in Ireland must be Irish-owned.<sup>85</sup> Heavy import duties were imposed on both goods and material imported from abroad, which curtailed, for example, fine printing, as the printer George Hetherington frequently lamented.<sup>86</sup> The effect of Protectionism most reviled by the post-war generation, however, was the tendency of Irish manufactures to produce imitations of familiar, now prohibited, British commodities.<sup>87</sup> This meant that 'Irish companies did not initially have to develop distinctive packaging or sophisticated advertising campaigns to showcase their goods and services.'<sup>88</sup> In fact, the two most profitable

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<sup>83</sup> See Bew and Patterson *Sean Lemass and the Making of Modern Ireland, 1945-1966* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1982) and R.F. Foster "'Modern' Ireland?" in *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989): 569-598.

<sup>84</sup> Paul Donnelly and John Horgan, 'The Move from Protectionism to Outward-looking Industrial Development: A Critical Juncture in Irish Industrial Policy?', *Administration*, Vol. 58, No. 3, (2011): 107-129.

<sup>85</sup> Mary E. Daly, "'An Irish-Ireland for Business?' The Control of Manufactures Acts, 1932 and 1934,' *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 94 (1984): 246-272. Bryan Fanning 'Tales of Two Tigers' in *Irish Adventures in Nation Building*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). As Sorcha O'Brien has demonstrated, this led to the establishment of many 'shell' companies, such as the Irish version of the Dutch company FAM which manufactured 'Irish' washing machines. "'Made in Ireland": National Narratives and Global Networks in Irish Design History', paper delivered to 'Making and Unmaking the Environment', the Design History Society Annual Conference, University of Oslo, December 7-9, (2017).

<sup>86</sup> George Hetherington, *Words: A Review 1953-54* (Dublin: Hely's Limited, 1954), 13.

<sup>87</sup> Bernard Share draws attention to several of these, including 'TD Sauce (i.e. Teachta Dála, or Member of Parliament) appeared as the native equivalent of HP Sauce (Houses of Parliament)'. One of the few brands that survives from this period is Irel chicory, a war-time coffee replacement. Bernard Share, 'In Our Own Image: The Branding of Industrial Ireland', *History Ireland* Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), 34.

<sup>88</sup> King and Sisson 'Materiality, Modernity and the Shaping of Identity: An Overview', 33.

strategies for Irish manufacturers —imitation of the packaging of the British original, or deployment of unequivocally patriotic, long-established symbols of Irish national identity (shamrocks, wolfhounds, round towers)— were anathema to the modernists' idea of good design.

Lemass's modernisation agenda also incorporated improvements to infrastructure, development of tourism and the establishment or development of many 'semi-state' bodies (government owned companies which generally had a monopoly in a sector), including Aer Lingus (the national airline) Bord na Mona (the turf and peat agency) and Bord Báisne (the Irish dairy board); as well as supporting the establishment of Ireland's first television station, Teilifís Éireann, in 1962 (also a hybrid form, funded by state subvention and commercial revenue).<sup>89</sup> The attendant boom in packaging design, tourist advertising, design for semi-state bodies and so on created by this programme of economic development offered unprecedented opportunities for graphic design and for projecting an image of modern Ireland.

### **The Britishness of modernity.**

The legacy of the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland also coloured the interpretation of modernism, modernisation and modernity. Several Irish writers have pointed to the 'identification of ... modernity as a peculiarly British phenomenon'.<sup>90</sup> The uncoupling of modernisation, colonisation and Britishness in the popular discourse seems to have been on-going from the 1950s. Among the many differences between De Valera and his successor was, according to J.J. Lee, Lemass's 'capacity to

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<sup>89</sup> Brendan Walsh 'Economic Growth and Development, 1945-70' in *Ireland 1945-70*, edited by J.J. Lee. (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1979): 27-37.

<sup>90</sup> Seamus Deane, 'Control of Types, Types of Control: The Gothic, the Occult, the Crowd', *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 119-20. Joe Cleary argues that 'Modernisation in such accounts is coterminous with the Anglicisation of the island: Gaelic culture by that same move is aligned with the medieval, with the pre-modern, the archaic and the maladapted; with all those things whose inevitable fate it was to be vanquished by modernity.' Joe Cleary, 'Introduction: Ireland and Modernity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, edited by Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3. Critics of Modernist design in the post-war years sometimes equated modernism with Englishness. Bairtíle O'Bradaigh's complaints about Peter Wildbur's design of *Facts about Ireland*, discussed in Chapter One, is typical.



distinguish modernisation from Anglicisation.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless the fact that the British state was ‘thought to be the exemplary incarnation of modernity’<sup>92</sup> led Irish authorities to over-estimate the success of British design and modernisation more generally. In design history, this has tended to over-simplify or ignore Britain’s own struggles with modernisation,<sup>93</sup> to present the neighbouring country as the apotheosis of modernity and modern design and, by extension, Irish design as not, or not-yet, modern. It also ignores the ordinariness of British-Irish design relations: designers in Ireland were members of British design organisations, they trained and worked in the UK, while Irish advertising agencies and design consultancies employed many more British designers than they did Swedish or Dutch. Unlike the recognition afforded to Dutch and Scandinavian designers, there still seems to be a reluctance to acknowledge the close connection between British and Irish modernism.<sup>94</sup> These nationalist associations of modernity, modernisation and modernism, raise another question: surely modernism is, by definition, concerned with internationalism and with the present, not the past?

### 3. Is ‘Irish modernist design’ an oxymoron?

‘... why do nations celebrate their hoariness, not their astonishing youth?’<sup>95</sup>

Wilk identifies certain characteristics as *not* modernist: ‘Historicism, academicism, that which eschews the new and embraces tradition.’<sup>96</sup> Greenhalgh offers ‘anti-

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<sup>91</sup> J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-85* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 242.

<sup>92</sup> Cleary, ‘Introduction: Ireland and Modernity’, 2.

<sup>93</sup> For example, Michael Saler writes of post-war England: ‘Government officials were forced to realize that England was severely behind the Continent and America in two respects: England’s designs were, as one official put it, twenty-five years out of date, and English design education and practice remained craft-based.’ Michael Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1999), 166.

<sup>94</sup> As well as King’s extensive writing on the Dutch connection, it was celebrated in a book by Conor Clarke *Oranje and Green: Holland & Ireland Design Connections 1951-2002* (Amsterdam: BIS, 2002), and a documentary of the same name, directed by Norman Mongon, and researched by Bernard Share, both of whom had worked with the Dutch émigrés in advertising agencies in Dublin. The Scandinavian influence is emphasised in writing on the report ‘Design in Ireland’ (‘The Scandinavian Report’), discussed in Chapters Two and Three, and KDW.

<sup>95</sup> Benedict Anderson, quoted in Homi Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation’ in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 293.

<sup>96</sup> Wilk, ‘Introduction: What was Modernism?’, 12.

historicism' and 'internationalism/universality' as defining traits of modernist design.<sup>97</sup> How then, can one reconcile modernism with nationalism, and its attendant requirement to evoke a 'common past'? Several attempts have been made to theorise 'national modernisms' in design<sup>98</sup> while Jeremy Aynsley, Penny Sparke and John Heskett have used 'Conservative Modernity' to describe designs that 'attempt to maintain continuity with the past while simultaneously being contemporary.'<sup>99</sup> In this we can see an echo of Walter Benjamin's 'Angel of History', who is driven by a storm, 'irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm.'<sup>100</sup> The idea of the interdependent nature of past and future, tradition and modernity is significant in understanding how the past was mobilised by a modernising state and how modernism in Ireland has been framed and critiqued. Boym argues that modernity itself is 'contradictory, critical, ambivalent and reflective of the nature of time; it combines fascination for the present with longing for another time.'<sup>101</sup> In his powerful critique of 'The Myth of Modernisation in Irish Culture,' Gibbons makes clear that the appearance of 'traditional' images (such as John Hynde's 1960s postcards of romantic rural scenes) does not signal *continuity* with the past but a *break*.<sup>102</sup> This is discussed in Chapter Two in relation to the simultaneous representations of Ireland as 'modern' or 'traditional', depending on the market.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Greenhalgh, 'Introduction', *Modernism in Design*, 8, 11-12.

<sup>98</sup> See for example, David Crowley 'National Modernisms' in *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939*, edited by Christopher Wilk (London: V&A, 2006): 341-373 and Jeremy Aynsley *Nationalism and Internationalism* (London: V&A, 1993).

<sup>99</sup> John Heskett 'Design in Inter-War Germany' in *Designing Modernity: The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* edited by Wendy Kaplan (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 261. Heskett cites Julius Posener as the source, while Penny Sparke in *As Long As It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995) takes the term from literary historian Alison Light's 'Forever England': *Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>100</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), in *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999): 245-255.

<sup>101</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 22.

<sup>102</sup> Gibbons, 'Coming out of Hibernation?', 85 and passim.

<sup>103</sup> Gwendolyn Wright makes the cogent point that both sides of the debate over the 'traditional world', whether praising it 'as wonderfully stable and harmonious' or criticising it 'as tedious and backward', 'elide the fact that their past is a pseudo-historical fabrication.' Gwendolyn Wright, 'On Modern Vernaculars and J. B. Jackson,' *Geographical Review* 88, no. 4 (October 1998), 575.

Echoing Benjamin, Tom Nairn has pointed to the apparent paradox of modern national identity: it is 'a modernising form of discourse that progresses forward through time by focusing on the past, on tradition.'<sup>104</sup> In his essay on the Irish 'Archaic Avant-Garde', literary critic Terry Eagleton also draws on Benjamin and Nairn, writing that it is 'a commonplace that revolutionary nationalism unites the archaic and the avant-garde, inflecting what is in fact a modernising project in the rhetoric of ancient rights and pieties.'<sup>105</sup> It is a common feature of otherwise conflicting theories of national identity to suggest that the modern nation requires a 'common past.'<sup>106</sup> Anthony D. Smith has argued that where a suitable past was not available, nationalists 'even suppl[ied] "missing links" where needed to reveal a "usable past", one that was also "convincing" and "distinctive" in the eyes of the educated classes.'<sup>107</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger's classic text on the invention of tradition, explains:

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.<sup>108</sup>

In the case of building or maintaining a national identity, these invented traditions help to mask the recentness of the individual state and, indeed, the modernity of nations in general. At different times, different pasts will be mobilised to suit the political or social necessities of the present. As John Berger cautioned, 'the past is never [just] there waiting to be discovered'.<sup>109</sup> The 'past', like 'history' is always a construction of the present: the mobilisation in Ireland of different versions of the 'Celtic' past is a particular focus of Chapters Three and Four. By the time the Free

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<sup>104</sup> Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London: Verso, 1997).

<sup>105</sup> He argues that the dominance of the past, where 'the archaic triumphs over the contemporary', meant that Irish modernism was 'mandarin', bourgeois, rather than radical: 'There is no Irish Dada or Constructivism', Terry Eagleton, 'The Archaic Avant-Garde' in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London & New York: Verso, 1995), 299.

<sup>106</sup> 'By "nation", I refer to a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, *having a common past* and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself.' Montserrat Guibernau, 'Anthony D. Smith on Nations and National Identity: A Critical Assessment,' *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 10, No. 1/2, (2004), 132. Emphasis added.

<sup>107</sup> Anthony D. Smith, 'National Identity and Vernacular Mobilisation in Europe', *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 17, No. 2, (2011): 232-233.

<sup>108</sup> Eric Hobsbawm 'Introduction' in *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

<sup>109</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin/BBC, 1972), 11.

State was established in 1922 history not only legitimised the new state, but helped to create a myth of unbroken sovereignty by linking past and present – pre-colonial Celticism and post-colonial present, abolishing the oft-invoked ‘800 years of oppression.’

### **Vernacular or Celtic modernism**

King relates the recent work on modernist design in Ireland to what David Crowley has called ‘multiple modernisms’: ‘national’ or ‘regional’ modernisms, an approach that she connects to ‘the recent acknowledgement of a distinct *Irish or vernacular* modernism, a negotiated form of expression closely aligned with nation-building and state-sponsored projects.’<sup>110</sup> However, I am cautious of the equivalence King makes between ‘Irish’ and ‘vernacular’, as I demonstrate in Chapters One and Two, modernism in Ireland could pursue a nationalist agenda without invoking the vernacular, and, especially in the use of Celtic sources, apparently vernacular modernism could aim at a supranational identity, as demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four.

The difficulty raised by the terms ‘vernacular’, ‘regional’ or ‘national’ is that each assumes a *standard or high* modernism from which the local design deviates. In the context of design vernaculars, as Ellen Lupton has pointed out in her critical examination of the appropriation and re-use of vernacular or ‘low’ cultural material by professional graphic designers, the relationship between the vernacular and the ‘standard language’ is always an unequal one.<sup>111</sup> In the case of architecture, Fernando Luiz Lara has highlighted a parallel imbalance in what he calls the ‘misuse’ of Kenneth Frampton’s famous argument in favour of a ‘critical regionalism’, one where the influence ‘operates in only one direction – from the center to the periphery – with

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<sup>110</sup> Linda King, “‘Particles of Meaning’: The Modernist Afterlife in Irish Design’ in *Modernist Afterlives in Irish Literature and Culture*, edited by Paige Reynolds (London: Anthem Press, 2016), 126.

<sup>111</sup> Ellen Lupton, informed by a critique of Venturi’s *Learning from Las Vegas*, takes equal aim at the nostalgic and popularist forms of vernacular appropriation which were becoming the dominant form of post modern commercial graphics in the early 1990s. ‘Low and High: Design in Everyday life’ in Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller *Design, Writing, Research* (London & New York: Phaidon, 1999).

little or no possibility for peripheral issues to influence the centers in return.<sup>112</sup> A similar objection is raised by Joe Cleary in relation to standard historiographical approaches to Ireland and modernity where ‘...modernity is always one-way traffic, with the modern invariably disseminated outwards from a given centre – England, France, Europe or America – to the retarded margins.’<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, the vernacular is an important concept in this thesis. King’s use of the term as disruptive links to contemporary writing about national trends in the supposedly universalising project of modernist architecture.<sup>114</sup> The term ‘vernacular modernity’, meanwhile has been used by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha to re-imagine cultural (and national) identity in the postcolonial state.<sup>115</sup> Vernacular modernism, as understood by film critic Miriam Hansen and by cultural theorist Luke Gibbons (after Bhabha) offers what Lupton calls the ‘worm’s eye view’, in other words, it focuses on the transformative potential of the everyday. Hansen preferred ‘vernacular’ to the ‘ideologically over-determined term “popular”’ and argued that vernacular modernism ‘combines the dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability’.<sup>116</sup> This relates to the more commonplace linguistic meaning of ‘the vernacular’ and connects to my examination of the visual representation of the Irish

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<sup>112</sup> Fernando Luiz Lara, ‘Modernism Made Vernacular: The Brazilian Case’, *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 63, no. 1 (2009), 42. In the Irish case, the location of that ‘centre’, the place of modernity, was imagined to be Britain. Seamus Deane notes that in the early years of the State, modernity was identified ‘as a peculiarly British phenomenon’; Deane, ‘Control of Types’ 119-20. Cleary explains that ‘Ireland’s long colonial connection to a British state thought to be the exemplary incarnation of modernity has meant that the historically subordinate country’s relationship to the modern has always been much vexed, much disputed.’ Cleary, ‘Introduction: Ireland and Modernity’, 2. The discussion of Irish modernity (and by extension, modernism) often unquestioningly assumes that the power dynamics of colonialism are repeated culturally. Yet, as discussed extensively in Chapter One, British modernisers, such as the Council of Industrial Design, feared that Britain was worryingly un-modern.

<sup>113</sup> Cleary, ‘Introduction: Ireland and Modernity’ 5.

<sup>114</sup> See for example the essays in *Back from Utopia: The Challenge of the Modern Movement*, edited by Hubert-Jan Henket and Heynen Hilde (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002).

<sup>115</sup> Homi Bhabha ‘“Race”, Time and the Revision of Modernity’ in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). See also Anthony D. Smith ‘National Identity and Vernacular Mobilisation in Europe’ *Nations & Nationalism* Vol. 17, No. 2, (April 2011): 223-256.

<sup>116</sup> Miriam Hansen, ‘The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism’, *Modernism/Modernity* Vol. 6, No. 2, (April 1999), 60.

language, which was symbolically –if not statistically– the ‘language of the people’.<sup>117</sup> Gibbons develops the linguistic idea of the vernacular as ‘dialect’ in his discussion of language in the modernist work of James Joyce and moves the vernacular away from nostalgic, nationalist associations: ‘Vernacular in this sense does not mean native or indigenous but the demotic: language as practiced in its most unstable, everyday settings.’<sup>118</sup> In writing English in a Gaelic script, it could be argued, designers in Ireland were echoing the strategy of Irish writers who had countered the hegemony of English through the linguistic vehicle of Hiberno-English.<sup>119</sup>

Rather than vernacular modernism, I use the term *Celtic* modernism because it can encompass both high and vernacular modernism, while also alluding to the specific use of Celtic motifs and historical references to negotiate national distinctiveness and modernity in the post-war Irish graphic design. In this case, *Celtic* modernism is not simply a catchy synonym for ‘Irish’ modernism’ or ‘Gaelic’ modernism: I argue that the *Celtic* carried connotations of internationalism, novelty and radicalism that were not implied by other nationalist self-designations.

*Celtic* modernism is a term broad enough to cover the two distinct design strategies discussed in this thesis: the presentation of ‘traditional’ content (the Irish language, traditional music, archaeological sources, etc.) in canonically international modernist forms (objective photography, grid-based dynamic layouts, sans serif typography, an emphasis on contrast and use of white space), and the presentation of contemporary content (images of industry, business documentation, modern art, etc.) in vernacular or conservative forms (Gaelic or calligraphic typography, functional but historicist ‘conservative modernist’ design, references to craft, some stylised historical decoration or illustration). ‘Celtic modernism’ also admits of the fact that many

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<sup>117</sup> In the 1961 census, the percentage of Irish speakers of the Irish language increased by a very small margin, 3.5% (27.2% of total) on 1936 (23.7%), despite the introduction of compulsory Irish into primary and secondary schools among other measures. Statistics from CSO.

[http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1961results/volume9/C\\_1961\\_VOL\\_9\\_T3.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1961results/volume9/C_1961_VOL_9_T3.pdf) See also Crowley, ‘The Languages of the Island of Ireland, 1922–2004’.

<sup>118</sup> Luke Gibbons, *Joyce's Ghosts: Ireland, Modernism, and Memory* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>119</sup> See Declan Kiberd on Hiberno-English in ‘The National Longing for Form’ in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern nation* (London: Vintage, 1996): 115-135.

designers easily swapped between the two modes (sometimes in the same document).

The argument in Chapters Three and Four depends upon problematising the use of the past in Irish design, demonstrating that the particular 'past' that is utilised is significant, and that aesthetic treatment ('style') can change the associations of historical motifs. I attempt to distinguish first between the meanings of 'Celtic' and 'Gaelic' in Irish cultural discourse and secondly to argue that there is a distinction between the Romantic Nationalist and Protection-era use of 'Celtic style' and what I call 'Celtic modernist' uses of Celtic sources in post-war Irish graphic design.

### Defining the 'Celtic'

Recourse to the well-established field of critical enquiry on the Irish literary Renaissance at the end of the nineteenth century helps unpack the use of the past in Irish cultural nationalism.<sup>120</sup> This moment is usually referred to in the literature as either a Celtic Revival or a Gaelic Revival.<sup>121</sup> Both terms were used by revivalists, though not quite interchangeably, with writers including W.B. Yeats favouring 'Celtic', while various cultural organisations used 'Gaelic': the Gaelic League was founded in 1893 to promote the Gaelic language, the following year the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was established. Thus, Trisha Cusack has noted, 'a more exclusive "Gaelic nationalism" was promoted alongside a broader-based "Celtic nationalism" each looking to Ireland's pre-colonial past.'<sup>122</sup> In design terms, this largely meant design that evoked pre-Christian and early Christian Ireland.

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<sup>120</sup> See for example, Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* and Terry Eagleton *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*.

<sup>121</sup> See for example, Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past: The Celtic Revival 1830-1930*. (London, Thames & Hudson, 1980) and John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987). A recent text on the writing of the revival avoids both, opting for 'Irish' instead: *Handbook of the Irish Revival: An Anthology of Irish Cultural and Political Writings 1891-1922* edited by Declan Kiberd, and P. J. Mathews (Dublin: Abbey Theatre Press, 2015)

<sup>122</sup> Trisha Cusack, 'A "Countryside Bright with Cosy Homesteads": Irish Nationalism and the Cottage Landscape', *National Identities*, Vol. 3 No. 3, (2001), 223.

The more expansive 'Celtic' was not exclusive to Ireland, indeed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 'Celtic' was used in constructing both central and peripheral national identities in Britain.<sup>123</sup> The lack of historical specificity about 'the Celts' made the Celtic a usefully open-ended signifier of identity.<sup>124</sup> The modern idea of the Celts can be traced to eighteenth century European romanticism— itself a response to modernisation. The most important figure in the self-constitution of Irish identity as Celtic was the English writer Matthew Arnold. In his seminal *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) Arnold gave us the abiding pen-picture of the emotional, sensitive, romantic Celt. Many writers on twentieth century Irish art point to the Arnoldian stereotype as the origin of the 'idea of the Irish artist as intuitive and Celtic....'<sup>125</sup> In *Inventing Ireland* literary critic Declan Kiberd suggested that 'Celtic' was understood in both Britain and Ireland as 'that which is not English' and particularly as the basis for the British colonial view of Ireland as 'England's Other.'<sup>126</sup> Thus he sees Irish self-identification with the Celt not as liberating, but as colluding in England's role as creator of Irish identity.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The war-like Celts provided a historical precedent for British (English) military prowess, while nation-builders in Wales and Scotland utilised the 'Celts' as a suitably distant and mystical past with which to legitimise various invented traditions. See for example, Paul-Yves Pezron's *The Antiquities of Nations, More Particularly of the Celtae or Gauls, Taken to be Originally the Same People as our Ancient Britains* (1706). Discussed in Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992). See also Angela Piccini, 'Filming Through the Mists of Time: Celtic Constructions and the Documentary', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Supplement: Special Issue: Anthropology in Public (Feb., 1996): S87-S111.

<sup>124</sup> Anthropologist Malcolm Chapman entitles the first chapter of his book *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*, 'Who Are The Celts?' and notes that there is no objective answer to be found in anthropology, history or even linguistics. Joep Leerssen is interested in how the sign 'Celtic' means at particular points in history: 'By [the term Celticism] is meant, not the study of "the" Celts and their history, but rather the study of the reputation and of the meanings and connotations ascribed to the term "Celtic", ... the history of what people wanted that term to mean.' Joep Leerssen 'Celticism' in *Celticism*, edited by Terence Brown, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 3.

<sup>125</sup> Róisín Kennedy, 'Made in England: The Critical Reception of Louis le Brocquy's *A Family*,' *Third Text*, Vol. 19, No. 5, (September, 2005), 486.

<sup>126</sup> Kiberd *Inventing Ireland*, 29-32. Kiberd's use of the term 'Other' is informed, as are other ideas in the text, by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

<sup>127</sup> 'The modern English, seeing themselves as secular, progressive and rational, had deemed the neighbouring islanders to be superstitious, backward and irrational. The strategy of the revivalists [in the early 20th century] thus became clear: for bad words substitute good, for superstitious use religious, for backwards say traditional, for irrational suggest emotional.' Kiberd *Inventing Ireland*, 30. 'The negative aspect was painfully obvious in that the process left the English with the power of description and the Irish succumbing to the picture which they had constructed.' Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 32.



However, the Celtic offered disruptive possibilities. For the romantic nationalists it could suggest a return to a pre-colonial time of national integrity. In this formulation, tradition ceases to be an expression of 'cultural conformity based on notions of a homogenous, uninterrupted past'<sup>128</sup> and becomes available for anti-colonial meaning. Equally, it could be ecumenical: Jeanne Sheehy argued that the early- or pre-Christian sources used first by the middle-class Protestant antiquarians in the 1830s and '40s, and again by Anglo-Irish Protestants including W.B. Yeats at the turn of the twentieth century, allowed for a 'non-sectarian' version of Irish national identity. Such 'Celtic' artefacts dated either from pagan times or from a time before division in the Christian Church: thus they could provide an authentic Irish symbolism that was free from Catholic associations.<sup>129</sup>

Sheehy's *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past: the Celtic Revival, 1830-1930* is the most significant contribution to thinking about the Revival as a visual as well as literary phenomenon and a foundation text of Irish design history.<sup>130</sup> Among the book's strengths is the breadth of visual source material included, ranging from academic painting to gravestones and shop-fronts. Such wide-ranging analysis allowed the author to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the symbolism of the 'Celtic' in nineteenth century Ireland. However, Sheehy failed to define 'Celtic', using the term interchangeably with 'antiquarian' to refer to that 'heritage' which was utilised to

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<sup>128</sup> Gibbons 'Introduction', *Transformations in Irish Culture*, 5.

<sup>129</sup> This aspect of the Celtic is often overlooked and the Celtic references in the first Irish definitive stamps, for example, have been described by John Turpin as showing 'the Catholic ethos of the state unequivocally' in 'Modernism, Tradition and Debates on Church Art in Ireland 1920-1950', *Studies* Vol. 91, No. 363 (Autumn, 2002), 57. Likewise, the next generation of Revivalists, the Young Irelanders, 'aimed to develop a sense of national identity which would draw together the various sections of Irish society, emphasizing a common cultural heritage. "On the neutral ground of ancient history and native art, Unionists and Nationalists could meet without alarm."' Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past*, 29. Her quote is from *The Nation*, newspaper of the Young Irelanders.

<sup>130</sup> Sheehy's book was, according to Toby Barnard, instrumental in encouraging widespread research into the Irish Arts and Crafts movement, as well as Irish vernacular heritage more generally. Toby Barnard *A Guide to Sources for the History of Material Culture in Ireland, 1500-2000* (Dublin & Portland, Oregon: Four Courts Press, 2005), 22.

restore 'Ireland's self-respect by drawing attention to her great cultural achievements of the past.'<sup>131</sup>

As Sheehy and Nicola Gordon-Bowe – another pioneer in the field of Irish design— have shown, the Celtic Revival or the Irish Arts and Crafts movement was a highpoint of Irish design and visual culture.<sup>132</sup> The romantic, historicist ideals of Morris and Ruskin chimed with the political and cultural nationalist evocation of a 'common heritage'. Craft production suited a non-industrial workforce and what might otherwise have been seen as a limitation was turned into a virtue by Arts and Crafts organisations such as the Yeats sisters' Cuala Press.<sup>133</sup> Even in more industrial ventures, such as the Three Candles Press, tradition and craft values were highly valued. This Press was established by 1916 Volunteer Colm Ó Lochlainn,<sup>134</sup> a follower of William Morris<sup>135</sup> who designed the Gaelic typeface Colum Cille (sometimes called Colmcille) for Monotype in the 1930s.<sup>136</sup>

By the early twentieth century, in part because of the legacy of romantic nationalism, as King writes,

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<sup>131</sup> Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past*, 19.

<sup>132</sup> Nicola Gordon-Bowe, 'The Book in the Irish Arts and Crafts Movement' in *The Irish Book in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Claire Hutton, (Dublin & Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004): 16-35. *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), edited by Gordon Bowe, situated Irish design as part of a wider international network of romantic nationalism, including Finland and Belgium. Paul Greenhalgh uses the term 'subject nations' in his review of *Art and the National Dream* in the *Journal of Design History* Vol. 8, No. 2. (1995): 152-153.

<sup>133</sup> Nicola Gordon-Bowe and Elizabeth Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movements in Dublin and Edinburgh, 1885–1925* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>134</sup> First set up as the Candles Press in 1916. In 1926, Ó Lochlainn renamed it in the archaic manner 'At the Sign of the Three Candles', after painting a large sign at his new premises. Shane Mawe, 'At The Sign Of The Three Candles', *Changed Utterly* [blog], Department of Early Printed Books and Special Collections, Trinity College Dublin (December 23, 2015). <https://www.tcd.ie/library/1916/at-the-sign-of-the-three-candles/>

No doubt in part because of his Republican credentials, Ó Lochlainn received many government printing commissions, including annual reports for the Arts Council from 1951. He also published books for the Department of Foreign Affairs' Cultural Relations Committee.

<sup>135</sup> He was the founder of the Craftworkers' Guild in 1919. Mike Cronin, 'The State on Display: The 1924 Tailteann Art Competition', *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua* Vol. 9 No. 3 (2005), 69. See also John Turpin, 'Modernism, Tradition and Debates on Church Art in Ireland 1920-1950'.

<sup>136</sup> On the variable spelling of the name of the face, see Dermot McGuinne, 'From Colum Cille to Colmcille', paper delivered to The Printing Historical Society conference, Dublin (30-31 March, 2017). In this thesis, I have followed the spelling used in the source cited.

Ireland was certainly far from the cutting edge of the modernist avant-garde. Much of what could be considered design production was dominated by the Irish Arts and Crafts movement... [which] was used as a means to materialize cultural difference in the pursuit of independence.<sup>137</sup>

Olivia Fitzpatrick has argued that, as late as the 1950s, Irish printing 'still looked back to the tired symbolism of the Celtic Revival, the worst of nineteenth-century religious iconography and debased variations of Celtic knotwork.'<sup>138</sup>

### Gael and Gaelic

Meanwhile, over the course of the first decades of independence, the term 'Gael' gradually began to replace 'Celt' as the personification of the 'common past' that animated Irish nationalism. The rural, masculine, Irish-speaking, Catholic Gael epitomised the Irishman as imagined in the newly independent Ireland.<sup>139</sup> Catherine Nash has explained that the Gael offered a corrective to the perceived sentimentality and effeminacy of the Arnoldian, romantic Celt. Both 'Gaelic' and 'Celtic' were used as linguistic categories: in those terms, the Celtic was more inclusive. The Celtic language group is divided into two parts, p-Celtic (Welsh, Cornish and Breton) and q-Celtic (usually called Gaelic or Goidelic, comprising Manx, Irish and Scots Gaelic).<sup>140</sup> Thus all Gaels were Celts, but not all Celts were Gaels.

By the 1940s, some critics were beginning to see in the 'purity' of the 'Gael' worrying echoes of National Socialism. The writer Seán Ó Faoláin equated what he called 'the Gaelic cult'— a drive for a standardised, Irish-speaking, Catholic, agrarian populace - with Nazi Germany: 'In sum the mystique has tried to discover in the old Gaelic world a model, or master- type —rather like the National Socialist mythology of the Pure Aryan— to which we must all conform.'<sup>141</sup> In addition, the idea of 'Gaelic' as old-

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<sup>137</sup> King, "'Particles of Meaning'", 128.

<sup>138</sup> Olivia Fitzpatrick *The Dolmen Press 1951-1987: catalogue of an exhibition at the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Ulster at Belfast, 11-22 March 1991*. (Belfast: Library, University of Ulster, 1991), 2.

<sup>139</sup> Catherine Nash, 'Gender and Landscape in Ireland' (1993) reproduced in *Sources in Irish Art: A Reader*, edited by Fintan Cullen (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), 307.

<sup>140</sup> Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*, 8.

<sup>141</sup> Seán Ó Faoláin, 'The Gaelic Cult,' *The Bell* Vol. 9, No. 3 (December, 1944), 187 quoted in Kelly Matthews "'The Bell" Magazine and the "Gaelic Question": Debates over Language and Literature in the Mid-Twentieth Century', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 30 (2010): 127-137.

fashioned and reactionary would have resonance for typographers as 'Gaelic' was the generic term used to describe the very limited, and typographically undistinguished, set of faces available to set Irish in the Irish character.

In the post-war years, designers sought to challenge what they saw as the out-of-date style of the Arts and Crafts and the insularity of De Valera's Protectionist 'Gaelic' vision of Ireland. This is pithily summarised by the illustrator and ICAD member, Eamonn Costelloe: 'In the past forty years of our glorious independence won for us by our martyred dead, efforts to produce a native visual art expression have been bedevilled ... by the G.A.A. approach – death by ritual strangulation with regurgitated interlacing from the Book of Kells...'.<sup>142</sup> It is significant that he cites the Gaelic Athletic Association, emblem of Gaelic cultural nationalism, in his indictment. In this context, the Celtic was returned to the discourse by designers such as Liam Miller, as a more inclusive, international context for Irish national identity.

### Styles of Celticism in design

A final distinction can be made between the Romantic Nationalist and Protection-era use of 'Celtic style' and what I call 'Celtic modernist' uses of Celtic sources in post-war Irish graphic design. Fredric Jameson's distinction between pastiche and parody is useful here. In contrast to pastiche, 'the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language', Jameson considers parody to be radical and expressive of the modernist faith in a universal, as opposed to individual, language. He writes that while both pastiche and parody depend on mimicry, there is 'behind all parody the feeling that there is a linguistic norm... ordinary speech...'.<sup>143</sup> Parody is satirical while also sympathetic to its sources, unlike pastiche, it *calls attention* to the original context.<sup>144</sup> Jeffery Keedy summarises Jameson's distinction for the designer suggesting that there are two ways of quoting, or appropriating, a design source: 'without reference to its

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<sup>142</sup> Eamonn Costelloe 'Amongst Me Souvenirs' *Campaign* Vol. 3, No.9 (March 1962), 3.

<sup>143</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Culture' in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), 114.

<sup>144</sup> Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Culture', 113.

original context (pastiche), or in a way that calls attention to its original context (parody/irony).'<sup>145</sup>

The earlier 'Celtic style' from the era of de-Anglicisation suggested continuity with the past, bridging, or even healing-over, the chasm caused by colonisation. This continuity was to some extent expressed in the direct reproduction of historical motifs or objects, the Tara Brooch, for example, being a popular nationalist ornament and decorative motif.<sup>146</sup> But more often, 'continuity' was expressed, in keeping with broader Victorian ideas about the originality of ornament, by creating *new* designs in the 'spirit' of the Celtic past. Through the study of authentic historical examples, the designer might develop such a fluency in the 'Celtic line' as to be able to create 'original' examples in the Celtic manner, echoing Rick Poynor's summary of Jameson's pastiche: 'a wholly new image in the style of' the original.<sup>147</sup> This is evident in the work of the illuminator Art O'Murnaghan, whose 1932 cover of the *Free State Handbook* (Fig. 1) has been described by John Turpin as the 'culmination of state-sponsored revivalist visual imagery ... an elaborate exercise in Celtic revivalism inspired by early Christian manuscripts.'<sup>148</sup> Brian P. Kennedy writes that to 'leaf through this publication is to be offered a window into the philosophy underlying the Irish Free State, the philosophy of an Irish Ireland uncontaminated by its colonial past.'<sup>149</sup> This is an exuberant celebration of interlace and manuscript references, with lettering that strongly evoked the post-counter reformation Gaelic typefaces rather than uncial or Irish miniscule letterforms found in the manuscripts of the early Irish Church. There is also a strongly art deco quality to the choice of colour used, especially in the orange outline of the word 'Saorstát' (Free State).<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Jeffery Keedy, 'I Like the Vernacular ... Not' in *Looking Closer: Critical Writings on Graphic Design*, edited by Michael Bierut, William Drenttel, Steven Heller and DK Holland (New York: Allworth, 1993): 101-2.

<sup>146</sup> Jewellery was a notable exception to this and a brisk trade existed in the reproduction of specific archaeological finds, such as the Tara Brooch.

<sup>147</sup> Rick Poynor, *No More Rules: Graphic Design and Postmodernism* (London: Laurence King, 2003), 80.

<sup>148</sup> John Turpin, 'Visual Culture and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1949,' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Vol. 57, No. 1 (January, 2006), 57.

<sup>149</sup> Brian P. Kennedy, 'The Irish Free State 1922-49: A Visual Perspective', 145.

<sup>150</sup> The fada on the second a is missing. The book was printed by Hely, a well established firm who were renowned for the quality of their finishing. See Peter Figgis, 'Remembering Art O'Murnaghan', *Irish Arts Review* Vol. 2, No. 4, (Winter, 1985): 41-44.

By contrast, the Celtic modernism of the post-war years uses specific, original, usually recognisable motifs, but it creates a graphic distance from the archaeological source material, which is ‘quoted’, objectively mobilised. It simultaneously draws attention to the original, —often emphasising through lighting and layout, the aesthetic modernity of the archaic— while also suggesting a *discontinuity* with the past.

Ultimately, this thesis shows how ideological assumptions about the nation and modernisation are embodied in design, all the more so in everyday design, and most forcefully in typography, whose apparent self-evidence or ‘transparency’<sup>151</sup> makes it the perfect vehicle for mythological constructions. The first chapter will now examine these key ideas with a particular focus on the ‘banal’ graphics of modernisation.

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<sup>151</sup> The idea of transparency in typography is based on Beatrice Warde’s famous lecture of 1932, ‘The Crystal Goblet or, Printing Should Be Invisible’, in *Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design*, edited by Michael Beirut, Jessica Helfand, Stephen Heller and Rick Poyner, (New York: Allworth, 1999), 56-59.

## **Visualising Ireland: how design was mobilised as a symbol and agent of modernisation in Ireland 1951-1960.**

‘The absolute rejection of style becomes itself a form of style.’ T. W. Adorno<sup>152</sup>

### **Introduction**

The central paradox that this thesis examines is the one faced by Irish modernisers:<sup>153</sup> how to reconcile through design the symbolism of national distinctiveness (heretofore synonymous with the past) with *modernity*. As the introduction has demonstrated, the visual identity of the new Irish nation was based on romantic and historical symbolism and mythology, while De Valera’s policy of so-called ‘Protectionism’, meant there was no need to project externally a coherent image of the nation through designed goods or advertising. This chapter examines how, in the context of a state-led programme of economic modernisation in the 1950s that emphasised export, free trade and foreign direct investment, design became understood as an agent of modernisation and a means by which a modern, international Ireland could be projected. This is taken up in the following chapter, which focuses on the symbolic vocabularies used in local and international presentations of Irish goods and services.

Chapter 1 is concerned with the visual coherence of the Irish state and the visibility of design as an agent of modernisation in Ireland in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the 1958 ‘Programme for Economic Expansion’, widely considered to be the manifestation of an explicit state-led programme of modernisation. I argue, following the work of cultural geographer J. C. Scott, that an increasingly powerful civil service and management elite in Ireland strove to make the Irish state ‘legible’: that is, rationally ordered and —crucially— visually comprehensible as such.<sup>154</sup> The

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<sup>152</sup> ‘Functionalism Today,’ quoted in ‘Theodor W. Adorno’ in *Rethinking Architecture*, edited by Neil Leach (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 4.

<sup>153</sup> A certain section of the government and civil service, a large proportion of the emerging Irish design profession and a handful of industrialists. What united these individuals was a belief that economic modernisation would be beneficial to the nation.

<sup>154</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998).

everyday visual culture of the modernisation discourse has not yet been examined by design historians, probably because it does not conform to expectations of national identity design, having little or no recourse to nationalist symbolism. Drawing on work by Michael Billig on 'banal' nationalism, and with reference to modernist attitudes to neutrality and transparency as aesthetic and moral values, I present this not as a neutral *absence* of symbolism, but as a motivated and symbolic statement of modernity. As Theodore Adorno wrote of the modernist outlawing of decoration as untruthful, 'the absolute rejection of style becomes style.'<sup>155</sup> Likewise, In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes considered the rhetorical power of the 'matter-of-fact', the apparently 'innocent' or unmediated image which in its 'naturalness' is a highly charged sign of the dominant ideology.<sup>156</sup>

There are international parallels in Ireland's rejection of national symbolism in order to signal the state's modernity. The elimination of decoration or symbolism and the embrace of 'transparency' were characteristically endorsed by modernists as both aesthetic and moral values.<sup>157</sup> Kjetil Fallan has written about the adoption of an international, 'scientific' vocabulary of design by the Norwegian ceramics industry in the 1950s, and has pointed out the centrality of the post-war German Hochschule fur Gestaltung at Ulm in disseminating a rhetoric of design-as-engineering.<sup>158</sup> Likewise, Robin Kinross traces to Ulm and ultimately back to the Bauhaus, an approach that he calls 'the rhetoric of neutrality', in which an aesthetic of functionality in typography and layout conveys a message about the modernity of the content.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Adorno, 'Functionalism Today,' 4. He was referring to modernist architect Adolf Loos's 1908 lecture, 'Ornament and Crime', published by Le Corbusier in *L'Esprit Nouveau* in 1920. Adolf Loos, 'Ornament and Crime' in *The Design History Reader* edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Rebecca Houze, (Oxford & New York: Berg Publishers, 2010): 98-100.

<sup>156</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies*, (London: Vintage, 1993).

<sup>157</sup> Tim Benton refers to the modernist architects' desire to 'strip' architecture, not just of decoration but of anything which conceals the 'repressed truth'. Tim Benton, 'Building Utopia' in *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939*, edited by Christopher Wilk, (London: V&A, 2006), 159. Paul Greenhalgh writes, 'truth as a moral value was transposed into being simultaneously an aesthetic quality.' Paul Greenhalgh, 'Introduction' in *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990), 9.

<sup>158</sup> Kjetil Fallan, 'Form, Function, Fiction: Translations of Technology and Design in Product Development,' *History and Technology*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2008): 61-87.

<sup>159</sup> Robin Kinross, 'The Rhetoric of Neutrality' *Design Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (1985): 18-30. There are parallels here with the critique postmodern architect Robert Venturi levelled against modernist architects' ignorance of their own modes of communication and the modernist refusal to acknowledge the iconography of power which underpins it, for example the reliance on the language of industrial buildings. 'Functionality' can also be a style. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in*



In 1950s Ireland, it was neither science nor engineering per se that was the dominant modernist discourse, but ‘organisation’ and ‘scientific management’ – primarily because of centrality of the civil service in modernisation. Following Zygmunt Bauman, Jim MacLaughlin suggests that a modernising middle class made up of ‘organization men’ had ‘a strongly-held *mission civilatrice* which caused them to look upon their social subordinates, not least the rural and urban poor, as a people who literally had to be reformed in order to ‘fit in’ as model citizens and subjects, to the Irish nation-state’.<sup>160</sup> For the design reformers, it was not just the taste of the poor and the non-metropolitans that needed civilising, but that of the entire nationalist majority. Michael Billig has written that nationalism ‘[i]n both popular and academic writing, ... is associated with those who struggle to create new states or with extreme right-wing politics.’<sup>161</sup> But he suggests that despite such popular perceptions, nationalism is not something which occurs only “‘there” on the periphery’, a ‘problem’ of the ‘separatists, the fascists and the guerrillas’<sup>162</sup> but is daily invoked in established, Western nations. Nationalism, he argues is, in fact, ‘the endemic norm’. He uses the term ‘banal nationalism’ to distinguish this ‘endemic’ form and to differentiate it from what might be termed ‘spectacular’ nationalism, an active struggle for national recognition or reorganisation, where nationalism ‘draws attention to itself’<sup>163</sup>. In Ireland, the struggle for independence from Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could be characterized by such spectacular nationalism, and the Free State (as noted in the Introduction) made triumphant use of

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*Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966). This is also discussed in Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1977). Ellen Lupton has noted how by the 1970s in the United States modernism itself had become a ‘vernacular idiom ripe for quotation’ in reference to a motel sign which appropriates Massimo Vignelli’s Knoll identity to convey its USP: ‘clean, courteous, convenient’. Ellen Lupton, ‘Low and High: Design in Everyday Life’ in Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller *Design, Writing, Research* (London & New York: Phaidon, 1999), 159. It is significant that the sign is in the typeface Helvetica. In an early exploration of its sematic potential, Leslie Savan wrote, ‘Helvetica skims across all categories of products and places to stamp them “sanitized”, “neutralized”, and “authorized”.’ No wonder, she observed, that it was the face chosen by the New York Department of Sanitation. Leslie Savan, ‘This Typeface is Changing Your Life.’ (1976) in *Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design*, edited by Michael Beirut, Jessica Helfand, Stephen Heller and Rick Poynor (New York: Allworth, 1999), 259.

<sup>160</sup> Jim Mac Laughlin, ‘The “New” Intelligentsia,’ *Irish Review*, No. 24 (1999), 57.

<sup>161</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2005), 5.

<sup>162</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 6.

<sup>163</sup> These terms were used by Hebdige, following Barthes, to distinguish between conventional dress and subcultural dress. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 101. 49

nationalist symbolism. By contrast, the post-war state had little patience with the romantic imagery of harps and shamrocks. Instead it adopted the more apparently pragmatic, rational, economically progressive rhetoric which rejected symbols, but was, in its transparency and apparent banality, highly symbolic. This was not a *denial* of nationalism, then, but the embodiment of a new kind of hopeful patriotism – a faith in a Modern Ireland.

The chapter examines printed objects and exhibition design, but particularly the discourse of design itself: the government debates and the statements about design in civil service publications, the promotional statements by the emerging design consultancies and the rhetoric that surrounded two state-sponsored design exhibitions, in 1954 and 1956. I argue two interconnected points: firstly, that in Ireland in the 1950s, aesthetic and economic or ideological factors of modernisation were often elided and that the modernising elite demonstrated a faith in the visual ordering of society as proof of its orderliness, often employing design as a mark of modernity. Secondly, I establish a correspondence between economic and design reform agendas in Ireland, arguing that in Ireland in the 1950s the labour of design was constructed as a separate and distinct activity, made visible, and presented as an agent of modernisation.<sup>164</sup>

### **Visualising a nation in crisis: *The Vanishing Irish***

Design for export was a central tenet of the design promotion agenda of many European countries in the post-war years. As early as 1934, the British critic Herbert Read had summarised the opinion of British politicians and industrialists: ‘We must

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<sup>164</sup> James Gardener’s ‘Design Man’ motif at the BCMI exhibition whose giant eye for a head represented the ‘seeing eye of the designer’ is a useful metaphor for these twin processes: it literally embodied (made visible) the concept of the designer, and presented him as an agent of visualisation. As in Britain, design itself was being invented as an agent of modernisation. Jonathan Woodham ‘Putting the Industrial into Design: Early Problems Facing the Council of Industrial Design,’ in *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain: The ‘Britain Can Make It’ Exhibition of 1946*, edited by Patrick Maguire and Jonathan Woodham, (London & Washington: Leicester University Press, 1997), 123. As we will see later in the chapter, the relationship between the BCMI exhibition and design promotion in Ireland was a direct one, with the British exhibition providing an explicit model for Irish design exhibitions, which were also designed by the same company, the Design Research Unit.

export or die...'<sup>165</sup> Ireland in the 1950s was quite adept at exporting – unfortunately not manufactured goods, but the very workforce itself. In the German writer Heinrich Böll's 1957 *Irish Journal*, a young Connemara woman working as a waitress in London tells a priest to visit her home: 'and don't forget on your way back in the port of Dublin to notice what's exported from Ireland: children and priests, nuns and biscuits, whiskey and horses, beer and dogs...'<sup>166</sup> The term 'The Vanishing Irish' was coined by Father John O'Brien as the title for a collection of essays that he edited in 1953. The book attempted to explain the decline in Irish population from the pre-famine high-point of over 8.2 million to a figure of 2,960,593 in 1951. This was an increase on the census of 1946, the first improvement in over 100 years, but was followed by another substantial drop in 1956, to 2,898,264 (more than 58,000 lower than the 1946 figure). The downward trend would continue for another decade (Fig. 2).<sup>167</sup>

The plight of emigration, as with so many economic ills, had traditionally been blamed on British occupation. In 1949, the Department of Foreign Affairs published a book entitled *Working with Europe ... Ireland's part in European Co-operation*. This, published in connection with the European Productivity Agency, was presumably aimed at Ireland's potential investors and export markets. The section on 'Industry' opens with a full-page map of the island of Ireland, populated by silhouettes representing indigenous industry (Fig. 3). Animal husbandry predominates: black silhouettes of various farm animals are scattered about the country: sheep in Galway and Kerry; beef cattle in Tipperary; pigs in Waterford; cows in the north Midlands. White silhouettes are used for other forms of industry, including large-scale agricultural projects such as the manufacture of industrial alcohol: these silhouettes show factories in Dublin, Cork and Limerick; sheaves of wheat in the Laois area and

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<sup>165</sup> Herbert Read, *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design* (3rd ed), (London: Faber, 1966) 15. The first edition was published in 1934 and the second ten years later. As David Crowley has pointed out this later became 'the mantra of the [British] post-war government facing national bankruptcy.' David Crowley 'The Designers Who Helped Rebuild Britain,' *Creative Review*, (December, 2010), 58

<sup>166</sup> Heinrich Böll 'Arrival' (1957) *Irish Journal*, Translated by Leila Vennewitz, (London: Abacus, 1984), 4.

<sup>167</sup> See Brian Gurrin, 'Population and Emigration', in *The Cambridge History of Ireland: Vol. 3, 1730-1880*, edited by James Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 51. Figures from the Central Statistics Office record the population in 1841 as 6.5 million, but this appears to have been adjusted to exclude the six counties of Northern Ireland, to allow for comparison with later figures from the Republic of Ireland. <http://www.census.ie/-in-History/Population-of-Ireland-1841-2006.151.1.aspx>).

sugar beet in the Midlands (the location of the Irish Sugar Company's factories). The distribution of silhouettes all over the country could be seen as an attempt to demonstrate the success of the policy of decentralisation, shared by De Valera's Fianna Fáil party and its successor, the first 'Inter-party' or coalition government, made up of the centre-right Fine Gael, the left-wing Clann na Poblachta and a number of independents.<sup>168</sup>

A more explicit political statement comes in the use of the map to offer an excuse for economic underdevelopment. The visual claim by the 26-county state to the 32 counties of the island was a commonplace in the post independence years.<sup>169</sup> The map in *Working with Europe*, however marks a departure from a graphic treatment which traditionally made no distinction between the north eastern section of the island and the remainder. Here, Northern Ireland is starkly blank, except for an arrow that reads: "The industrial area of our country has been amputated by partition." Sean Mac Bride'. Sean Mac Bride was the leader of Clann na Poblachta and Minister for External Affairs. The caption reads: 'Ireland's greatest economic drawback – the loss by partition of her main industrial area – still continues after nearly thirty years. Handicapped in this way, Ireland had to face, in 1947 real and grave problems.'<sup>170</sup> The unfairness of such an amputation is made even more evident by the graphic use of white space penetrated by an accusatory arrow.

The 'grave problems' alluded to stemmed from the so-called 'dollar gap', where dollar imports greatly exceeded exports from Ireland to dollar markets. This was a problem that was common in post-war Europe and was the reason for the establishment of the European Productivity Agency (EPA). However, Ireland's collaboration with the EPA is here presented as the answer to an economic crisis which had not been caused

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<sup>168</sup> The leader of the 1948 coalition government was John A. Costello. Fianna Fáil were in power, under De Valera from 1932-1948 and again from 1951-1954. Fianna Fáil were reelected in 1954 and De Valera served as Taoiseach until June 1959 when Sean Lemass took over from him. Fianna Fáil remained in power until 1973, with Jack Lynch becoming Taoiseach on Lemass's retirement in 1966.

<sup>169</sup> One of the first definitive Irish stamps from 1922, shows a map with no indication of the border, for example. See Ciarán Swan, 'Vanishing Borders: The Representation of Political Partition in the Free State 1922-1949', in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 133-147.

<sup>170</sup> Swan, 'Vanishing Borders', 144.

by international upheaval, local incompetence or by the policy of 'Protectionism'<sup>171</sup>, but – as ever – by the old enemy, the British. As the historian Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh has observed:

The revolutionary generation which established the Irish Free State shared a very strong faith in the creative possibilities of political sovereignty. This faith, ... rested securely on the assumption that Ireland's economic and social difficulties (notably demographic decline through heavy emigration and general economic retardation), together with the inexorable erosion of cultural distinctiveness, were, in the last analysis, a function of the country's constitutional and political subjugation.<sup>172</sup>

By the early 1950s, that faith was being severely tested by a steep and persistent decline in population, caused mainly by emigration. The nationalist utopian vision of a frugal, independent republic of cosy homesteads 'came to grief' wrote Liam De Paor 'largely on the simple failure to provide employment and on the consequent scandal of mass emigration.'<sup>173</sup> Through the 1950s, the 'problem' of emigration rapidly became the 'crisis' of emigration. O'Brien described Ireland as '...a dwindling nation, teetering on the brink of near extinction...'<sup>174</sup> 1957 was the crisis year, when the Irish economy almost went bankrupt. That the very existence of the state was in jeopardy is clear in statements of the time. The Minister for Industry and Commerce, Sean Lemass claimed 'it is the survival of the nation that is involved now',<sup>175</sup> while the Central Bank Annual Report of 1957 warned of '...the end of financial independence.'<sup>176</sup> The former Fine Gael Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald recalled that:

By 1956-57 these failures had led to a crisis of confidence not merely in politics but even in the State itself, which many Irish people had started to see as a failed entity, some of them with jobs here abandoning it physically by emigrant ship or plane.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Discussed below.

<sup>172</sup> M. A. G. Ó Tuathaigh 'Review: *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* by J. J. Lee', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1: 107-109

<sup>173</sup> Liam De Paor, 'Ireland's Identities', *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 3, No. 1, The Question of Tradition (1979): 22-29.

<sup>174</sup> J.A. O'Brien, *The Vanishing Irish* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 3.

<sup>175</sup> *Sunday Press*, June 16, 1957.

<sup>176</sup> Central Bank Annual Report, (1956-7), 36. The printer George Hetherington remarked sardonically in early 1957, 'Perhaps the outstanding feature of the past year in the Republic was the emergence of a financial and national crisis of a sufficiently sensational nature to furnish the theme for a serial in a cross-channel Sunday newspaper.' *The Tantalus: A Review 1956-7*, (Dublin: Hely's Limited, 1956), 1.

<sup>177</sup> Garret Fitzgerald 'Review Article: *Ireland in the Coming Times: Essays to Celebrate T. K. Whitaker's 80 Years.*' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 87, No. 347 (Autumn, 1998), 297. In the 1950s, Fitzgerald was working in Aer Lingus and writing on economics. He later became a lecturer in Economics in University College Dublin before being elected to the Seanad in 1965 and subsequently the Dáil in 1969.

It was relatively easy for Irish people to find work in Britain as, even after the declaration of the Republic, they were granted special non-foreign status. Historian Diarmaid Ferriter notes that the 1951 census records 537,709 people living in Britain who were born in the Irish Republic.<sup>178</sup> That was equal to more than one sixth of the population then resident in the Republic. The progressive Catholic Bishop of Clonfert, William Philbin, cautioned in 1957 that:

Our version of history has tended to make us think of freedom as an end in itself and of independent government – like marriage in a fairy story – as the solution of all ills.<sup>179</sup>

He explicitly linked romantic nationalism with economic decline and wrote disparagingly of the writers who ‘gained currency for the notion that we live in a Celtic twilight ... We live in a mechanical and scientific age and the community that failed to come to terms with age in which it lived would shortly be subsisting in a primitive economy.’<sup>180</sup> Such a romantic view had led to ‘Our greatest failure of all – the capital sin of our young Irish State is our failure to provide for our people an acceptable alternative to emigration.’<sup>181</sup>

## **The First Programme for Economic Expansion: a roadmap for modernisation**

The Bishop’s final statement provided the inspiration for the great landmark of modernisation in the 1950s.<sup>182</sup> This was the publication in November 1958 of a government white paper, the first ‘Programme for Economic Expansion,’ written by the young economist T.K. Whitaker, Secretary of the Department of Finance. The programme was based on a paper by Whitaker called ‘Economic Development’ and was popularly called ‘the Grey Book’. In it Whitaker outlined a strategy to address the economic crisis. This included an end to so-called ‘Protectionism’, whereby

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<sup>178</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, (London: Profile, 2004), 473.

<sup>179</sup> The Bishop of Clonfert in 1957, quoted in R.F. Foster ‘“Modern” Ireland?’ in *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 567.

<sup>180</sup> Philbin quoted in Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, 473. Ferriter cites the source as an article in the *Irish Times*, February 4, 1958.

<sup>181</sup> Quoted in Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism Since 1950* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2004), 80. Fuller cites Philbin’s article ‘A City on a Hill’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 46, No. 183 (Autumn, 1957), as the source of these comments, however that essay is largely an argument for the continuation of a close relationship between Church and State and does not include the statements referred to here.

<sup>182</sup> T.K. Whitaker, ‘Economic Development’, (Dublin: Department of Finance, November 1958), 9. See also Fuller, *Irish Catholicism Since 1950*, 79-81.

indigenous industries were 'protected' from foreign competition by high tariffs on imports, and to 'decentralisation', where industries had to be located in under-developed areas to counteract rural unemployment. It also sought to encourage inward investment of foreign owned industry, primarily through tax breaks. Finally, and crucially for design promotion, it stressed the importance of increasing Irish exports. The novelty of these strategies was that they looked outside of Ireland for solutions. The agencies charged with achieving these twin aims were, respectively, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), established in 1949 and The Irish Trade Board, *Córas Tráchtála Teoranta* (CTT), founded in 1951. While design was not explicitly mentioned in the report, export promotion, tourism and the promotion of Ireland as an industrial base for foreign investment were key issues with distinct implications for design.

While signalling official sanction of economic 'modernisation', in fact 'Economic Development' enshrined in policy ideas that had already been gaining currency throughout the decade among a modernising elite, including both the civil service and the emerging design profession. Thus the rapid modernisation of the 1960s had its roots in the 'lost decade' of the 1950s.<sup>183</sup> 'Economic Development' is often taken as the cue for the change in political ideology occasioned in 1959 by Eamon de Valera's replacement as Taoiseach by his protégé Sean Lemass. It could be seen to mark a move from the romantic nationalism and economic protectionism of the patrician De Valera to the free-market economics of Lemass. 'Economic Development' promised economic progress as a source of rational, rather than sentimental, national pride. Whitaker was strongly supported by Lemass who, even before becoming Taoiseach, was a uniquely influential Minister for Industry and Commerce in successive Fianna Fáil governments.<sup>184</sup> But it would be wrong to see 'Economic Development' as

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<sup>183</sup> As the journalist Brian Fallon pointed out in a memoir of the 1950s 'Underneath the surface apathy and even disillusionment, there was a new relentless, modernising spirit, which was eventually to make itself felt in many spheres, public and private.' Brian Fallon, 'Reflecting on Ireland in the 1950s.' *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s* edited by Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea & Carmel Quinlan (Cork: Mercier, 2004), 46.

<sup>184</sup> Lemass was Minister for Industry and Commerce from 1932-1948 and 1951-54 and again from 1957-9. See Bew and Patterson *Sean Lemass and the Making of Modern Ireland* and Foster "'Modern' Ireland?": 569-598.

exclusively a reflection of a Lemassian vision of Ireland. It was rather the rallying cry of the modernising bureaucrats, with whom Lemass happened to be in agreement.

Historian Roy Foster locates the origins of Ireland's 'demarche into Keynesian expansionism' in the late 1940s with Ireland's application for Marshall Aid.<sup>185</sup> Although Ireland's involvement in the Marshall Plan was short-lived, ending in 1952,<sup>186</sup> it inevitably meant 'forced internationalization' and an 'admission of interdependence with the British economy.'<sup>187</sup> At the same time, the requirements for receipt of aid demanded a degree of long-term economic planning, bringing the civil service directly into contact with modern economic theory. Foster states that it was 'a "modernising" and according to some, unaccountable bureaucracy [which] steered through initiatives that, by the 1960s, had brought an international dimension into Irish affairs.'<sup>188</sup> As the driving force in modernisation, an examination of the bureaucracy's engagement with design illuminates the relationship between design promotion and modernisation.

### **Protectionism: the easy-going manufacturer's diabolical presentation**

For most writers, on the left and right, the policy of Protectionism introduced in the 1930s distorted Irish attitudes to international relations and served to confuse nationalism with isolationism, economic conservatism with patriotic nationalism.<sup>189</sup>

Tom Garvin in his controversial account of the failure, or delayed success, of Ireland's programme of modernisation, *Preventing the Future: Why Was Ireland so Poor for so*

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<sup>185</sup> Foster "'Modern' Ireland?", 578-9.

<sup>186</sup> When Ireland refused to adhere to the conditions attached to its provision by the US Mutual Security Act. Peter Murray, 'Americanisation and Irish Industrial Development, 1948-2008,' *National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis Working Paper Series*. No.42 (2008), 2.

<sup>187</sup> Foster "'Modern' Ireland?", 578-9.

<sup>188</sup> Foster "'Modern' Ireland?", 569.

<sup>189</sup> 'The Control of Manufactures Acts' of 1932 and 1934 are generally seen as the key elements of this programme, instituted as part of the so-called 'economic war' with the United Kingdom. See J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-85* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), particularly pages 190-192, and Mary E. Daly, 'An Irish Ireland for Business'. Ironically, it was Lemass who was responsible for introducing the Control of Manufactures Acts. Tom Garvin reproduces Lee's comment on Lemass from a 1970 newspaper article on the preliminary pages of his book, *Preventing the Future: Why Was Ireland so Poor for so Long?* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2004): 'It must always stand to Mr Lemass's credit that, even if it took him thirty years to grasp the real nature of the economy, he devoted his last decade in public life to repairing the damage he had inflicted as Mr De Valera's Minister for Industry and Commerce.' All parties in the Dáil had supported Protectionism since the 1930s.



*Long?*, lays the blame for lack of progress on the continuity of a conservative agenda among powerful cultural elites, including the civil service and the Catholic Church.<sup>190</sup> Protectionism, he argues, ended up protecting just those vested interests and led to economic, as well as cultural, stagnation. This attitude favoured continuity above all, 'the notion of a static and unchanging order that was to be regarded as ideal was quietly accepted, gladly or fatalistically, by much of the population.'<sup>191</sup> Examination of the discourse of design promotion in the 1950s suggests instead that continuity, and especially Protectionism, was being subjected to a serious critique – not least by those with an interest in industrial design. From 1956 onwards even government ministers would begin to question the policy, but in the early part of the decade it was already a concern among those involved in industrial design. The apparent lack of taste and quality in Irish design was cited by some commentators as evidence of the pernicious influence of Protectionism.

By mid-decade the idea that the 'easy-going'<sup>192</sup> Irish manufacturer was supported at the detriment of the hardworking entrepreneur or the disenfranchised consumer was becoming more widespread. Even in government, such concerns were being raised. A speech in June 1956 by the Labour Party Minister for Industry and Commerce, William Norton, noted that the need for protection was 'fully recognised by the Government,' but that manufacturers did not appear to feel the 'obligation' imposed on them by 'the grant of protection', suggesting a tendency among them to 'rely on protection to force the public to buy whatever he sees fit to produce.'<sup>193</sup> Norton went on to introduce a corollary: such manufacturers, sheltered by Protectionist tariffs, would see no reason to improve the design of goods or their packaging. They thus shared in the responsibility for the debilitating balance of payments occasioned by dependence on foreign imports, by having 'failed or neglected to make their products so attractive in quality, design, finish and variety that the public when purchasing will

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<sup>190</sup> Garvin, *Preventing the Future*.

<sup>191</sup> Garvin, *Preventing the Future*, 4.

<sup>192</sup> See below, Desmond O'Kennedy 'Design and the Advertising Agency,' *Irish Management*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January-February, 1958), 15.

<sup>193</sup> William Norton, 'Committee on Finance, Vote 50: Industry and Commerce,' *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 158 (20 June, 1956).

ask for Irish goods in preference to any others.<sup>194</sup> He put the case against the manufacturer who neglected design very strongly:

... I do not recognise the right of any manufacturer, operating in a sheltered economy, to surrender to the temptation to apply less critical standards to the design, finish and presentation of his products than he would be compelled to adopt if exposed to full competition...<sup>195</sup>

Earlier in 1956, the *Irish Architect and Contractor* (a broadly Republican-nationalist periodical) had held a forum on Industrial Design, where the question of Protectionism had again been raised. Kevin Fox, architect in the practice of the well-known modernist Michael Scott, suggested that because 'the Irish product ... met less competition inside this country, as a result – from a design point of view – almost anything was saleable. The competition incentive was lacking.'<sup>196</sup> In 1958 *Irish Management*,<sup>197</sup> published a special issue on industrial design where Leslie Luke, press officer with Arthur Guinness, was forthright in his criticism of Irish design.<sup>198</sup> He peppered his text with pithy quotes from leading lights of architecture, design and the civil service. One from Kevin C. McCourt, former chief executive of the Federation of Irish Manufacturers and founder member of the IDA is typical: 'The presentation of some goods here is diabolical.'<sup>199</sup> By 1958 there seemed to be a consensus that Irish design was poor and that Protection was to blame, but what it was that was *specifically* 'diabolical' about Irish design was not so universally agreed upon.

For William H. Walsh, general manager of CTT it was 'the same time-worn designs based upon out-of-date English patterns ... copied faithfully.'<sup>200</sup> On the other hand, Desmond O'Kennedy, chairman of O'Kennedy Brindley advertising agency cited *nationalist* imagery as the Protectionist problem:

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> 'Industrial Design in Ireland: Forum', *Irish Architect and Contractor*, (January, 1956), 24.

<sup>197</sup> The journal of the Irish Management Institute, established in 1952.

<sup>198</sup> As discussed below, the publication of this special issue was in itself an important departure and marked the coming together of the 'modernisers' and the 'modernists'.

<sup>199</sup> Leslie Luke, 'Some Thoughts on Design for Exporters,' *Irish Management*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January-February, 1958), 34.

<sup>200</sup> Quoted in Luke, 'Some Thoughts on Design for Exporters,' 36.

But while an easy-going manufacturer may get by in our relatively easy-going market with his harps-and-shamrocks package, he certainly won't get anywhere in the great big cut-throat world markets.<sup>201</sup> While plenty of evidence could be found for Walsh's diagnosis, it needed a degree of sophistication to be able to tell what was an out-of-date, English pattern – the kind of connoisseurship, in fact, which only a man with Walsh's experience could employ. O'Kennedy's diagnosis was easier to recognise, easier to remedy (eliminate shamrocks) and in keeping with the tone of the 'coming times' – the end of the backward look. O'Kennedy directly linked old-fashionedness with nationalist symbols: 'Instead of the nice homely packs with which he has grown up (shamrocks, Victorian lettering and all), [the Irish industrialist] is now faced with a smooth, well-tailored design which incorporates only vestigial traces of familiarity.'<sup>202</sup>

External views of Irish design confirmed the nation's own judgement. Luke quoted a 'reliable source' among the European Productivity Agency consultants who surveyed Irish packaging in 1957.<sup>203</sup> 'Their general impression was far from favourable. ... Irish manufacturers showed the least evidence of contact with the outside markets of any European group that had been visited.'<sup>204</sup> The EPA report on standards of packaging in Ireland criticized Ireland's 'isolation', echoing the idea of Protectionism as the root cause of poor design. The American author, John Bolter, warned Ireland of the shameful fate in store for a nation incapable of modernising. 'The longer this situation

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<sup>201</sup> O'Kennedy, 'Design and the Advertising Agency,' 15.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Luke, 'Some Thoughts on Design for Exporters', 34.

<sup>204</sup> See also Arts Council file, 33642/1956/1 'Irish Packaging'. As the body responsible for design promotion in the 1950s, it fell to the Arts Council to host the European Productivity Agency's visit and the attendant course in Packaging Design. The EPA was established in 1953 as part of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). It represented for Ireland, according to Peter Murray, a way to access the Industrial Technical Assistance and Productivity programmes which had been cut off along with Marshall Aid funding in 1952. Like the Marshall Aid Plan, the EPA sought to inculcate the values of American capitalism in post-war Europe. Among the vehicles for this were seminars on packaging and design, often led by American experts. The consultant sent to Ireland, for example, was one John Bolter, former head of packaging at the homeware and radio division of General Electric. An article in the *Irish Times*, September 4, 1957 described B.J. Bolter as 'formerly of the Institute of Design, Chicago.' The main result of the packaging seminar, held in October 1957, was the establishment of an Irish Packaging Institute. The first IPI committee included the designer Thurloe Conolly, who was probably responsible for its logo.

[isolation] prevails the more difficult it is going to become to catch up and unless Ireland sensibly wants to be the “Hillbillies of Europe”, catch up you must!<sup>205</sup>

Such sentiments chimed with those of the new generation of civil servants who refused the backward look, encapsulated in the final lines of Whitaker’s introduction to ‘Economic Development’: ‘It would be well to shut the door on the past and to move forward energetically, intelligently and with the will to succeed, but without expecting miracles of progress in a short time.’<sup>206</sup> The demise of faith in the certainties of the Free State and/or De Valerian ideology was paralleled by a corresponding demise of faith in their symbols. As modernisation replaced economic nationalism as the banal nationalism of the state, so the *removal* of symbolism would eventually be recognised by some among the modernisers as the appropriate basis for the symbolism of modern Ireland.<sup>207</sup>

Indeed, there was a very close connection between aesthetic and ideological concerns among the proponents of both design and economic modernisation. One such individual whose writing illustrates this connection was the printer and

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<sup>205</sup> Draft report forwarded to the Arts Council, August 19, 1957. Arts Council file, 33642/1956/1. Understandably, both the Arts Council and Lemass’s Department of Industry and Commerce were uncomfortable with publishing the highly critical report. A memo from the Council’s new secretary, the writer Mervyn Wall, records his meeting with John Murray, principal officer in Industry and Commerce in late 1957. They discussed the recent seminar in Packaging and the proposed Irish Institute of Packaging, the draft report reads:

[Murray] said that the Minister for Industry and Commerce was extremely keen on the improvement of industrial design. He said that it was not for his Department to make recommendations with regard to the possible publication of the EPA report, but his own opinion was that dissemination of the first part of it might do more harm than good, and he did not see that any good would be done by releasing any part of it to the press. He thought however that the recommendations of the visiting consultant might be profitably circulated to the Federation of Irish Manufacturers, the Irish Management Institute and CTT.

The report does not, in fact, seem to have been circulated beyond the bodies named, who themselves in effect constituted the administrative elite concerned with design promotion. Instead the Irish Packaging Institute was publicized in the press and a packaging competition was sponsored by the Arts Council. Partially as a result of this publicity drive, packaging became, along with ‘house-style’ or branding, virtually synonymous with industrial design in late 1950s Ireland.

<sup>206</sup> T.K. Whitaker, ‘Economic Development’ (Dublin: Department of Finance, November 1958), 9.

<sup>207</sup> As Declan Kiberd writes of Samuel Beckett: ‘...the protagonist of his early stories comes to conclude that his true home is “no where I can see”. Yet such a nowhere would, in time, be revealed as an artistic blessing. It would make of Beckett the first truly Irish playwright, because the first utterly free of factitious elements of Irishness.’ Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 531. Beckett was one of the great modernist writers, and turned to French as a language in which he ‘could write without style’. The necessity of eliminating ‘style’ was of course equally a credo of modernist designers and architects.

industrialist, George Hetherington, managing director of Hely's printers and board member of *The Irish Times* newspaper<sup>208</sup>. Hetherington was a tireless advocate for 'modern design', utilising his position as a director of the *Irish Times* from 1954 to promote his views on typography and printing.<sup>209</sup> After the appointment of his friend, the writer Sean Ó Faoláin, as Director of the Arts Council in 1957, he attempted to motivate that body to do more in the way of raising the standard of Irish bookwork. He was also instrumental in encouraging Ó Faoláin's sponsorship of an International Book Design Exhibition in November 1957.<sup>210</sup> Hetherington gave a lecture at University College Dublin in connection with the exhibition.<sup>211</sup> He used the opportunity to criticise the general acceptance of low standards of printing in Ireland. He remarked on the poor quality of the design and layout of telegraph forms, dog licences and income tax demands, and so took aim at government printing. He linked poor standards in book design, printing and binding to a general neglect of design and the visual arts, but cited as examples of good design the work of two designers discussed below, Patrick Scott and Thurloe Conolly.<sup>212</sup> Hetherington and Ó Faolain both emphasised the importance of printing as a fundamental component of what we would now call visual culture. The ubiquity of printing meant that it set the tone for all other design experience. Ó Faolain said in his opening speech that 'The public had an unconscious interest in printing; about 95% of the impact printing made on the human eye was represented by whiskey bottle labels and entrance tickets to the cinema...'<sup>213</sup>

Ireland had no equivalent of the *Monotype Recorder*, though that publication was probably the inspiration for the series of annual booklets produced by Hely's (later

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<sup>208</sup> Hetherington would later be appointed to the board of Signa Design Consultants.

<sup>209</sup> Hetherington was appointed to the board in 1954. Another board member was Philip Walker. (<http://www.irishtimes.com/150/articles/newspaper-business.html>) Walker later commissioned Design Research Unit to design equipment for his pram company. These were featured in the 1958 *Irish Management* issue on industrial design. Earlier Walker designs appeared in the 1956 exhibition.

<sup>210</sup> This was held in Bolton Street Technical Institute, where printers were trained. The entire content of the exhibition was sent by the National Book League's London Headquarters. Following a great deal of difficulty with Customs over attempts to import books that had been censored, including Zola's *Nana* and Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the exhibition was not repeated in subsequent years. Arts Council File 32261/1957/21.

<sup>211</sup> 'Exhibition of Book Design.' *Irish Times*, October 31, 1957.

<sup>212</sup> 'Poor quality of Irish design criticised,' *Irish Times*, November 8, 1957.

<sup>213</sup> '21 nations in exhibition of book design,' *Irish Times*, November 8, 1957

Hely Thom) from 1940 to 1965. (Figs 4 and 5) These were beautifully produced, having an illustrated cover or dust jacket and elegant, classical typography within. The texts, all by Hetherington, are engaging and articulate and, as might be expected in a promotional brochure, often cover topics pertaining to the running of the printing firm. The majority of the texts, however, were given over to wider issues to do with Irish book history, contemporary book and packaging design and, in 1954, discourses on economics.<sup>214</sup> Hetherington's comments in the Hely booklet of 1953-4, *Words*, marked him out as being on the side of the economic modernisers. Under the heading of 'Indignation Corner' he wrote a scathing attack on Protectionism and, in particular, the tariffs imposed on the import of foreign paper and cardboard, especially as 'nothing of quality' was available at home.<sup>215</sup> He criticised the way in which the requirement for 'protection' of a particular home industry was assessed, based only on the inevitably biased advice of the Irish manufacturer. He noted the absurdity of this situation whereby the standard of quality of replacement goods was judged not by the end-user of home-produced materials but by the substitute supplier. However, he was wary of open criticism of Protectionism *per se*, as it was still the political orthodoxy, writing: 'Against the general policy of protection by tariff we have no case to make, industrial revival and development depend upon it.'<sup>216</sup> His criticism, he wrote, was of protectionism in the matter of raw material: 'the essential food of another industry'.<sup>217</sup>

## Visualising Modern Ireland

### 'Rampant pictorialisation'

In another of the Hely pamphlets in 1954, George Hetherington cautioned against 'the rampant process of pictorialisation' he believed was then taking place in Ireland. 'Even the financial papers' he remarked, 'now find it impossible to present a "picture" of the state of the markets without printing little symbols, each to represent millions

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<sup>214</sup> While it was generally known that Hetherington, who was also a published poet, was the author of the booklets, he was only publicly revealed as such in 1993 in an entry in 'Bibliophile's Diary' in the Irish book history journal *Long Room*, No. 38 (1993), 15-16.

<sup>215</sup> George Hetherington, *Words: A Review 1953-54* (Dublin: Hely's Limited, 1954), 13.

<sup>216</sup> Hetherington, *Words: A Review 1953-54*, 13.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

of units of this or that.’<sup>218</sup> The same year, writing in *Administration*, William A. Honohan, a senior civil servant, professed himself ‘reluctant ... to follow the craze for pictorial representations and other such devices; .... Nevertheless, I think we must not close our minds to the fact that the public at large do grasp things in some degree by such aids as armies of little men and so forth.’<sup>219</sup> The embrace of a modernist visual language of order —the proliferation of graphs and tables, information graphics, typographic regulation and the widespread commissioning of ‘house-styles’ by various state or ‘semi-state’ bodies and industries in the 1950s— point to an attempt to impose by visual means the semblance of order on a state that was in danger of economic collapse. This is evidence of the mythological value of information or typographic design that I noted in the introduction.

Joanna Drucker noted of contemporary graphic design, ‘[e]ach of the many schematic conventions in daily use and the frequently unquestioned appearance in our documents and websites replicate ideologies in graphics.’<sup>220</sup> It is instructive to turn here to the work of social geographer J.C. Scott.<sup>221</sup> In his 1998 book *Seeing Like A State*, Scott set out to account for the failure of many large-scale social engineering exercises. He attributes this in part to the ideology of modern state-craft and particularly to what he calls ‘authoritarian high modernism’.<sup>222</sup> While his definition is necessarily of the extreme version of an attitude common to modernist state-builders, it nevertheless usefully enumerates some of the characteristics of that

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<sup>218</sup> Hetherington, *Words: A Review 1953-54*, 3. He argued that ‘jobbing printing has suffered less’ from the spread of pictorialisation, stating that the ‘tendency, for example, to replace the words telephone number by a small picture of a telephone instrument has not gained great support, possibly because directors suspect that sooner or later they may be compelled to print on their letter-headings not only their names but their photographs.’

<sup>219</sup> W. A. Honohan ‘Statistics and the Civil Servant’ *Administration*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1954), 101. Another example might be the interest in visual communication among the management elite, *Irish Management* published an article on Basic Psychological Factors of Communication in 1957 and the following year presented a paper by the British film maker and psychologist Langton Gould-Marks on ‘Tools for Communication’. Gould-Marks ran seminars on communication for the European Productivity Agency.

<sup>220</sup> Johanna Drucker, *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 65.

<sup>221</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>222</sup> ‘What has proved to be truly dangerous to us and to our environment, I think, is the combination of the universalist pretensions of epistemic knowledge and authoritarian social engineering.’ Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 340.

attitude. Hetherington's 'rampant process of pictorialisation' could itself be seen as evidence of and a catalyst for, modernisation in Scott's terms.

... high modernism, ... is best conceived as a strong (one might even say muscle-bound) version of the beliefs in scientific and technical progress ... At its center was a supreme self-confidence about continued linear progress, the development of scientific and technical knowledge, the expansion of production, the rational design of social order, the growing satisfaction of human needs, and, not least, an increasing control over nature (including human nature) commensurate with scientific understanding of natural laws.<sup>223</sup> [...] High modernism is thus a particularly sweeping vision of how the benefits of technical and scientific progress might be applied —usually through the state— in every field of human activity.<sup>224</sup>

Scott's initial research attempted to account for, among other things, modern states' desire to settle nomads.

The more I examined these efforts at sedentarization, the more I came to see them as a state's attempt to make a society legible, to arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion. Having begun to think in these terms, I began to see legibility as a central problem in statecraft.<sup>225</sup>

Scott's idea that the aim of the modernising state is ultimately 'to make a society legible' has immediate resonance when one examines the efforts of the modernising elite in the 1950s Ireland. High modernism in Scott's terms is not simply an ideology of progress, or even scientific management on a grand scale, it is a faith in the *visual ordering of society as proof of its orderliness*.

The carriers of high modernism tended to see rational order in remarkably visual aesthetic terms. For them, an efficient, rationally organized city, village, or farm was a city that looked regimented and orderly in a geometrical sense.<sup>226</sup>

A new concern with the visual appearance of such publications of the Irish state as annual reports, administrative journals and statistics is evident from the early 1950s. Rather than an unproblematic urge to help the 'public at large' to 'grasp' complex information, a key hypothesis of this chapter, following Scott, is that the 'rampant process of pictorialisation' was instead an attempt on the part of a modernising elite to 'make the state legible' and more susceptible to control.

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<sup>223</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 89.

<sup>224</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 90.

<sup>225</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 2.

<sup>226</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 4.



We need to be wary of imagining *any* 'state' as a coherent and homogenous body – and the Irish population was, in the 1950s, still deeply divided by the experience of the Civil War and its aftermath.<sup>227</sup> However, when we talk about the 'state', even more than when we talk of a 'nation', we are usually discussing the aims and motivations of a very small elite – though even this small group may not be of like mind. In Ireland the state-which-acts was made up of an elite, largely drawn from the civil service.<sup>228</sup> They were not working exclusively to achieve power or to fulfil bureaucratic goals. The very real and pressing problem of national viability was the problem to which this elite offered the remedy of 'organisation'. In Ireland in the 1950s, there was an almost total correlation between those individuals, groups and institutions who sought to impose a degree of visual order on that portion of society within their control and those who were in a position to determine the course of political and economic events. In many cases, this was achieved by virtue of sharing an ideology of progress with the most influential politician of the day, Sean Lemass.

By the time Lemass returned to his role as Minister for Industry and Commerce in 1951, a change was beginning to manifest itself in the personnel and ideology of the civil service. Historian J.J. Lee writes that Lemass 'now found a more receptive attitude towards change in key sectors of the public service.'<sup>229</sup> This was evident in the establishment of the Association of Higher Civil Servants in 1952 and the launch in the following year of the Association's periodical *Administration*. The readership of the journal was largely drawn from the civil service and from officials in nationalised industries and advisory bodies. It was concerned primarily with efficiency, 'organization and methods'.<sup>230</sup> According to Lee, *Administration* was influential

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<sup>227</sup> As Jane Caplan has noted in her review of Scott's book, there is a need to consider other kinds of state and to complicate his one-way vision of state-as-actor, society-as-subject model. Jane Caplan, 'The State in the Field: Official Knowledge and Truant Practices', *The American Historical Review* Vol. 106, No. 1 (February, 2001): 107-113.

<sup>228</sup> Lionel Pilkington 'Irish Theatre and Modernisation' in *Theatre and the State in Twentieth-Century Ireland*. (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>229</sup> J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 341.

<sup>230</sup> For example, the Winter 1956 edition was dedicated to 'Scientific Management', and included essays on Frederick Winslow Taylor, Frank Bunker Gilbreth and Henri Fayol's 'Management from the top'. *Administration* Vol. 4, No. 4. (Winter 1956).

beyond the small number who read and contributed to it: 'The numbers [of readers] were not large. They did not have to be. In a small country a small number can make a big difference – in the civil service, as in academia or in business – if only they have the class.'<sup>231</sup> Class is an odd word to use here, though it is probably more telling than Lee intends. Sean Lemass could be seen as the leader, or at least the figure-head, of what we could term a new political class, led by civil servants and politicians who demonstrated a faith in economic action as a solution for national difficulties.

### Visualising the (semi) State

The peculiar model of 'semi-state' industry promoted by Whitaker and Lemass would have definite implications for the desire to make the state legible: as an odd hybrid of socialist and capitalist enterprise, it was always in danger of being only 'semi-legible'. Historians on the left and right have speculated about Lemass's move from Protectionism in the 1930s and 40s to an embrace of internationalism and free trade by the 1960s. Lee quotes a 1954 profile of Lemass 'He does not disbelieve in private enterprise, nor does he believe in state socialism'.<sup>232</sup> Explaining this paradox he writes: 'Always we return to his nationalism. He was basically neither capitalist nor socialist, but nationalist.'<sup>233</sup> This attitude is exemplified in Lemass's pragmatic answer to being asked in 1963 by the American *Time* magazine whether he was a socialist. In reply he quoted the reforming Pope John XXIII: 'no political system is undesirable if it benefits the people'.<sup>234</sup> In the article, *Time* tried to explain the idea of 'public corporations' or semi-states.

The very word socialism terrifies Fianna Fáil supporters, who are not only overwhelmingly Catholic but include many small landowners. Yet one-third of all industrial enterprises in Ireland today are bankrolled by the government, which has gone farther toward nationalization than even Britain's Socialists advocate.<sup>235</sup>

In an essay on 'Public Control of Public Enterprise' in *Administration* in 1954, the political scientist, Basil Chubb cited welfare-state Britain as the model for the Irish

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<sup>231</sup> Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 581.

<sup>232</sup> Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 399.

<sup>233</sup> Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 399.

<sup>234</sup> 'Lifting the Green Curtain,' *Time*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (July 12, 1963), 39. This issue featured Lemass on the cover and was one of the most famous celebrations of the Lemass regime.

<sup>235</sup> 'Lifting the Green Curtain,' 28-40.

semi-state.<sup>236</sup> What was unusual in the Irish case, Chubb wrote, was the use made of publicity-owned or mixed ownership company incorporated under the Companies Acts as a private or public company.<sup>237</sup> Such 'semi-state' bodies were sources of anxiety as they operated *between* rather than within established modes of regulation: state or private ownership. The most pressing problem for Chubb was that there was not enough *accountability*, with Ministers and others exerting a great deal of unacknowledged power over the running of these bodies, and over their patronage. Due to the close-knit nature of Irish politics, civil service and industry, he worried that members of this elite, including ministers, 'may refuse to answer at the dispatch box for the influence they exercise over the dinner table.'<sup>238</sup> His solution was to suggest a greater 'transparency', (a visual metaphor) through the standardisation of the annual report. More than any other document, the annual report embodied the emerging idea of the visual form of modernity as expressed by the modernising elite.

Throughout the 1950s, the annual report gained currency in civil service and business discourse (as represented by the journals *Administration* and *Irish Management*) as evidence of a company's (especially a *state* company's) commitment to rational, modern commerce. There was a concurrent development of interest in the visual form of the report itself. A good example of the convergence of these two themes was the exhibition held at the Annual Conference of the Irish Management Institute in 1958. The theme of the conference was 'Management and Financial Control', and the inclusion of an 'Exhibition of Financial Information in the shape of reports and accounts', seems to provide evidence that the IMI were beginning to see the visual ordering of their financial data as vital to the overall desire for 'control'.

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<sup>236</sup> 'The extent of socialism in Ireland (if our type of state ownership and control of these bodies merits the name socialism) is perhaps hardly appreciated even by the more instructed and thoughtful citizen. Yet there exist no fewer than four 'public corporations' of the British type, two of which are giants, and some two dozen state-owned or mixed ownership companies, not to speak of supervisory bodies of a non-trading nature which exist in great profusion in all spheres of economic and social activity.' Basil Chubb 'Public Enterprise Problems 2: Public Control of Public Enterprise.' *Administration* Vol.2, No. 1 (Spring, 1954), 21.

<sup>237</sup> Chubb 'Public Enterprise Problems 2', 22.

<sup>238</sup> Chubb 'Public Enterprise Problems 2', 24.

The case of the Annual Report of the Irish Central Bank is particularly telling in this regard and echoes observations made by Kinross in 'The Rhetoric of Neutrality'. In this, Kinross argued against Gui Bonsieppe's assertion that certain kinds of representation, such as a train timetables or logarithm tables, are 'innocent of all taint of rhetoric'<sup>239</sup>. Kinross comprehensively demonstrated that at least in the case of the London North-Eastern Region timetables of 1928 and 1933, the change of typeface (to Gill Sans) was rhetorically loaded in order to suggest modernity and efficiency – efficient table implied efficient train service. Similar implications appear to be intended in the Irish Central Bank's decision in its Annual Report of 1952 to change typeface from a cramped, bold version of the eighteenth-century serif face, Caslon, to Monotype's Gill Sans. The change of face gave the page a much lighter colour while the thinner line of Gill Sans also lent itself to clearer-*looking* tables, though the potential for confusion between the sans serif numeral 1 and letter l suggests that the *appearance* of clarity might have been achieved at the expense of functional legibility.

J.J. Lee is highly critical of the prevailing conservatism of the Central Bank in the 1940s and early 50s under governors Joseph Brennan and later J.J. McElligott who, he writes, 'clung to existing economic orthodoxy' even in the face of its obvious failure. Lee appears to see an echo of Brennan's supposed economic incompetence in the incoherent layout of the Central Bank's annual reports published during his tenure.

The presentation of the annual Central Bank reports greatly improved when McElligott succeeded Brennan. The 1954 report, the first for which McElligott was directly responsible, went so far as to introduce an analytically coherent list of contents in place of Brennan's jumble.<sup>240</sup>

In fact, Central Bank annual reports had always included a list of contents; what was added to reports under McElligott's governorship (from the 1953 report, rather than 1954) was an additional list of newly included *figures and tables*. The analytical coherence that Lee notes was a visual one. This innovation should be seen in light of the other typographic changes the reports were subjected to in the early 1950s as evidence of a desire to present a *visual ordering of financial data as proof of its orderliness*.

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<sup>239</sup> Kinross, 'The Rhetoric of Neutrality', 19.

<sup>240</sup> Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, 347.

J.C. Scott suggests that the 'production of statistical knowledge' is key to the establishment of his idea of authoritarian high modernism as it 'allowed state officials to characterize the population in elaborate new ways, much as scientific forestry permitted the forester to carefully describe the forest.'<sup>241</sup> In the case of Ireland, the production of such statistical knowledge as the 1954 *Report on the Commission on Emigration and Other Problems* and the 1951 census *visualised* the Irish economic crisis and so provided both a catalyst and a justification for modernisation (Fig. 6). For Scott, the ultimate tool and symbol of the state's desire to impose order is the map – the visualisation of order, not just a representation of an already existing 'fact', but a visualisation which *creates* as it records.<sup>242</sup> Likewise, the graph or table, information graphics, which organise and document society as a controlled and organised set of *data* could be seen as another form of map, a map of society. The illustrations in the *Report on Emigration* combined statistical and geographical information in a bleak visualisation of the crisis. At first, then, such visual maps of data were used as evidence of the need for change. Soon, they would be adopted by the modernising elite as a means of bringing about change through administrative organisation (*Administration*), and eventually these graphs and tables would demonstrate the magnificence of the success of modernisation, measured in numerical terms (as the extensive graphs in CTT annual reports). In *Administration*, Honohan noted the difficulty of 'presenting and disseminating statistics, getting them across to the public', cautioning against following 'the craze for pictorial representations and other such devices; we prefer to see the figures because we can read more from them.'<sup>243</sup> By contrast, his fellow higher civil servant, E. T. Ceannt<sup>244</sup> placed his faith in the power of visualisation to educate on the subject of 'Formal Organisation', alluding to his

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<sup>241</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 91.

<sup>242</sup> 'These state simplifications, the basic givens of modern statecraft, were, I began to realize, rather like abridged maps. They did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer. They were, moreover, not just maps. Rather, they were maps that, when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade. Thus a state cadastral map created to designate taxable property-holders does not merely describe a system of land tenure; it creates such a system through its ability to give its categories the force of law.' Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 3.

<sup>243</sup> Honohan 'Statistics and the Civil Servant,' 101.

<sup>244</sup> Later director of Bord Failte, the Irish Tourist Board.

diagrams as ‘maps’.<sup>245</sup> Significantly, Ceannt referred to himself and his readers in *Administration* as ‘we moderns’.<sup>246</sup> This suggests the idea of an avant-garde, leading the way for the rest of the citizens: ‘they’, ‘not-moderns’.

Referring again to the specific case of the semi-state body, Chubb explicitly linked aesthetic and ideological concerns: visual presentation and modernisation. In his essay on ‘Public Control of Public Enterprise’ he also criticised the lack of standardisation in the presentation of reports and accounts, and wrote:

The accounts and reports that are presented to Oireachtas vary considerably in form and adequacy from single stencilled sheets which tell virtually nothing to the detailed and lengthy explanations of the Electricity Supply Board. ... In almost all cases the minister’s view of what constitutes adequate accounting and reporting is final.<sup>247</sup>

Chubb believed that in the case of the semi-state company *annual reports* (as against simply a statement of accounts<sup>248</sup>) were vital, not just because of his concerns about transparency, but because in their case, ‘profits are by no means the only aim.’<sup>249</sup>

### **Annual Report design**

In the 1950s, the responsibility for presenting this important evidence of modernisation did not fall to design consultants. None of the state bodies’ annual reports were designed by consultants, all were in-house jobs by various printers. The Arts Council used Colm Ó Lochlainn’s Three Candles Press<sup>250</sup> while CTT engaged the services of Irish Printers, a large firm with modern equipment. With these exceptions, the annual reports of most government and semi-state bodies in the 1950s, from the Central Bank to the Cultural Relations Committee were not terribly well printed (Fig.

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<sup>245</sup> E.T. Ceannt, ‘Formal Organisation’, *Administration* Vol. 4, No 4. (Winter, 56), 66.

<sup>246</sup> Ceannt, ‘Formal Organisation’, 67.

<sup>247</sup> ‘The position in respect of the presentation of information ... cannot but be accounted unsatisfactory. Some, but not all, state companies and corporations are required to present accounts and reports via the minister to the Dáil or to both Houses. In some cases where they are apparently not required by law to do so, ministers in fact cause accounts or reports to be presented. In other cases it seems that neither the minister nor the company were required to present report or accounts to the Oireachtas they did not in fact do so.’ Chubb ‘Public Enterprise Problems 2,’ 24-5.

<sup>248</sup> ‘Following the practice of the private sector, state enterprises have been required to present annual accounts and there has been a tendency to regard such accounts as the main source of information. Chubb ‘Public Enterprise Problems 2,’ 25.

<sup>249</sup> Chubb ‘Public Enterprise Problems 2,’ 29.

<sup>250</sup> Until 1961 when Liam Miller’s Dolmen Press took over. (Fig. 11)

7). They probably deserved Hetherington's criticism of government printing in a 1957 letter to the Director of the Arts Council where he suggested that 'if the Arts Council is concerned to raise the standard of taste in printing, the setting up of a commission of experts in various fields to carry out the restyling of all Government publication to uniform standards' would be the best solution<sup>251</sup>. The importance of *everyday* printing in the formation of public taste is something Hetherington would return to. He concluded his observations on the state of government printing by referring to Thomas Bodkin's 1949 'Report on the Arts In Ireland', which had led to the establishment of the Arts Council:

Professor Bodkin's report on the state of the arts in Ireland as set, printed and published by the Stationery Office is an excellent example of the sort of standard with which we are content in this country. I doubt if they would have allowed it to be issued in Albania.<sup>252</sup>

The annual reports of the Arts Council (Figs 8-11) and CTT (Figs 12-16) were the exceptions to the general rule, exploiting visual communication in their annual reports. Throughout the 1950s, they were the only bodies to use colour on the covers of their reports, and like the Central Bank, they were early adopters of spot colour to enhance the graphs and diagrams that began to proliferate. From the outset, including their choice of printer, the Arts Council seem to have been using design and typography to make a statement about their commitment to an Irish-Ireland form of national culture. Unlike all the other bodies, who favoured Gill Sans or Caslon for both English and what little Irish text might be included, the first Arts Council reports, presumably designed in-house at Three Candles, used Colm Ó Lochlainn's Gaelic Colum Cille typeface. While the first two reports use the face in a conventional manner, i.e. for setting the limited amount of Irish used in the report, the third (1954-55) (Figs 8 & 9) took the most unusual step of setting all of the text in Colum Cille, including the English. This is a good example of how the symbolic power of uncial type could be mobilised to 'translate' English statements into Irish.<sup>253</sup> The colour-ways chosen for the simple covers of these early reports also conformed to conventional nationalist iconography with ink, paper, or both, being various shades of green. Even

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<sup>251</sup> Arts Council file 322610/20 CE597. Letter from George Hetherington to Sean Ó Faolain, who had asked for his comments on contemporary book design. (June 19, 1957)

<sup>252</sup> Arts Council file 322610/20 CE597. Letter from George Hetherington to Sean Ó Faolain, (June 19, 1957).

<sup>253</sup> Discussed in more depth in Chapter Four.

when, after 1957, the typography reverted to roman, the Arts Council maintained a commitment to using brightly coloured covers and what might be termed ‘conservative modern’ typography which favoured centred, monumental, display type and a focus on legible, restrained body-text (Fig. 10).<sup>254</sup> In short, what Monotype’s Beatrice Warde had termed ‘invisible’ typography: so unassuming as to be unnoticed by the reader.<sup>255</sup>

Córas Tráchtála’s reports of the early 1950s, by contrast, do not announce their Irishness – which is in itself a powerful statement. From the outset, CTT used Gill Sans in all their publications for information graphics, graphs and tables. The body text was usually Times, though headings were also often in Gill. They also used spot colour extensively in their reports, usually highlighting successes in export trade. By the 1960s, the graphs had moved from the body of the reports onto their covers. Figures 14 to 16 show a range of examples where the idea of the upward-slanting graph – the great symbol of progress – is mapped onto CTT’s headquarters: a materialisation of economic progress.

An ad for Irish Printers in the *Irish Exporter’s Review* of 1960 mentions their ‘designers and layout men’. This is rather unusual for an Irish printer and may be evidence of the emergence of a belief in the ‘value’ of design around this time. As the following section will demonstrate, the idea of a designer as one of the ‘experts’, the professionals of modernisation, the ‘consultants’, ‘managers’ and ‘organisers’, was beginning to appear in Ireland in the second half of the 1950s. Design promoters actively sought to make visible the practice of design and to present the figure of the ‘design consultant’ as an essential adviser to modern industry and administration.

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<sup>254</sup> Jeremy Aynsley, *20th Century Graphic Design*, (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2001), 30.

<sup>255</sup> Beatrice Warde, ‘The Crystal Goblet, or Printing Should Be Invisible’, in *Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design*, edited by Michael Beirut, Jessica Helfand, Stephen Heller and Rick Poynor, (New York: Allworth, 1999): 56-59.



## Design Promotion: Visualising Organisation

Hetherington had begun the 1959-60 Hely pamphlet by stating that design was ‘a national preoccupation’.<sup>256</sup> Certainly, by 1958, design was coming to the attention of the business and civil service elite (not just CTT). In that year, both *Administration* and *Irish Management*, ran articles on industrial design, indeed *Irish Management* dedicated a full issue to it.<sup>257</sup> An article in the *Irish Times* described the January-February 1958 issue of *Irish Management* as being ‘entirely devoted to design in industry’<sup>258</sup>, but it would be more correct to say that the issue was entirely devoted to ‘house-style’.<sup>259</sup> This was presented as the design equivalent of the ‘scientific’ management aspired to by the members of the IMI and the readers of *Administration*. For example, Jasper G. Grinling, design and packaging director for the wine and spirit merchants W & A Gilbey, presented a case study of the design of a house-style (Gilbey’s), which he termed ‘Design Control’. It was also the area of design which would presumably appeal to all the journal’s readers, whether civil servants, manufacturers or in the service industries, as the implementation of house-style was likely to take place at a managerial level. Like annual reports, ‘house-style’, was an area where design and management overlapped. Annual reports were usually designed by their printers, but house-style appeared to warrant the engagement of ‘design consultants’, specialists in a new field of visual management.<sup>260</sup> The Irish interest in house-style, which ultimately originated in the United States, had parallels in Britain where consultancies such the Design Research Unit (DRU) engaged in the

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<sup>256</sup> George Hetherington, *The Emblem: A Review 1959-60*, (Dublin: Hely’s Limited, 1959), 1.

<sup>257</sup> Michael Flannery, ‘Utility with Beauty,’ *Administration* Vol. 6, No.3 (Autumn 1958): 231-239.

<sup>258</sup> ‘Good design essential to industry’, *The Irish Times*, February 11, 1958.

<sup>259</sup> A similar interest in the idea of house-style was current in Britain, as David Preston has highlighted. In 1956, for example the COID’s journal *Design* ran a special issue on the subject (No. 95). David Preston, ‘Co-ordinated Design Policy and the Shift from One-Off designs to Comprehensive Design Systems,’ in *Design Frontiers: Territories, Concepts, Technologies; Proceedings of the 8th Conference of the International Committee for Design History & Design Studies* edited by Priscila Lena Farias and Anna Calvera, (São Paulo: ICDHS, 2012).

<sup>260</sup> Hetherington explained the two options in *The Merger: A Review 1961-62* favouring the ‘establishment of relations with a group or cadre of creative artists who become in course of time familiar with the firm’s equipment, methods, standards of quality and other requirements.... [this system] allows the artist the necessary degree of authority and confers on the firm freedom of choice of artist....’ *The Merger: A Review 1961-62* (Dublin: Hely’s Limited, 1961), 13.

imposition of house-style on public corporations, including British Rail.<sup>261</sup> Indeed, there was a direct relationship between the two, as the catalyst for the decision to devote this issue to design was *Irish Management's* own 1958 redesign by Thurloe Conolly, who constituted the Design Research Unit's Irish office (discussed below) (Fig. 17).<sup>262</sup> In fact, the issue as whole provides an impressive advertisement for the DRU, both London and Dublin branches. As well as the article on the packaging and house style for Gilbey's, carried out by Milner Gray and W. A. de Majo at the Design Research Unit in London (Fig. 18), there was another on packaging design by Conolly himself, plus a feature on the DRU's work for the nursery furniture distributors, Walkers, (Fig. 19) and the Cork-based paint manufactures, Harrington & Goodlass Wall (Fig. 20). All but two of the seven articles had illustrations exclusively of work by the DRU.

Given the editorial bias towards the DRU, it is difficult to estimate how representative of the firm's penetration into Irish industry these examples are. It is probably more noteworthy that the bulk of the examples reproduced are English, rather than Irish, commissions. *Irish Management* was clearly putting forward the British DRU as the model for modern Irish design. In his editorial P. Dillon Malone wrote:

...we have brought together the views of some of the men whose ideas and actions in this field are setting the pace of progress in this country and in England. Their example cannot be ignored by the rest of Irish industry if it is to survive in years to come against the competition of traditionally gifted continental designers.<sup>263</sup>

Malone saw the importance of a coherent house-style in gaining the attention of the 'hard-pressed executive'. 'Words and ideas,' he wrote, 'must be presented attractively, no less than biscuits and liquor and detergents.'<sup>264</sup> However, he implicitly rejected the idea that such presentation would be purely for display. Instead, he echoed Beatrice Warde's famous injunction that modern typography should be 'invisible' and 'reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to

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<sup>261</sup> See Preston, 'Co-ordinated Design Policy'; Michelle Cotton, *Design Research Unit, 1942-72* (Cologne: Koenig Books, 2011); David Lawrence, *British Rail Designed 1948-97*. (London: Ian Allan Publishing, 2016).

<sup>262</sup> The Irish branch of the firm had been established in 1953 and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>263</sup> P. Dillon Malone, 'Editorial,' *Irish Management*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January-February, 1958), 6.

<sup>264</sup> Malone, 'Editorial,' *Irish Management*, 6.

contain,<sup>265</sup> concluding his editorial: 'It is our earnest hope that the journal's new clothes, like those of the Emperor, will serve to reveal rather than to cloak the anatomy of Management in Ireland.'<sup>266</sup> This is a peculiarly modernist reversal of the moral – where the Emperor's nakedness is a sign of truth, not the hypocrisy of power. Like the Central Bank Report's adoption of Gill Sans, the metaphor of transparency signalled modernity.

Sir Stephen Tallents, former president of the British Design in Industries Association, in his article in the special issue of *Irish Management* entitled 'Towards Forming a Design Policy' provided an introduction for managers to the principles of house-style, based on a summary of 'The Management of Design', published by the British Council of Industrial Design. Tallents stressed the importance of 'unity' and presented an argument that could be summarised by the CoID view that 'Good design is good business'.<sup>267</sup>

Design should nowadays enter into every aspect of a firm's presentation of itself to the public, from the styling of its products to comely letter-heads for its correspondence and a courteous handling of its telephone calls. This implies a well-planned, long range and continuous scheme, each element of which is combined in a unified presentation. Such a unity, I note in passing, yields a bonus not secured by a like expenditure upon unrelated efforts of equal cost.<sup>268</sup>

Such a definition of house style recalls J.C. Scott's idea of the modern state's imperative to impose order. As in Britain, a push for design reform was closely associated with the establishment of an official trade promotion organisation and there are parallels between the CoID and the Irish Trade Board, CTT. Unlike the British Board of Trade, CTT initially did not have responsibility for design in industry, instead this was one of the roles of the Arts Council. Throughout the 1950s, CTT would petition to be put in charge of design promotion, finally achieving that goal in late 1959. Nevertheless, CTT's influence on design in the 1950s was extensive, notably in

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<sup>265</sup> Beatrice Warde 'The Crystal Goblet', 56.

<sup>266</sup> Malone, 'Editorial,' *Irish Management*, 6.

<sup>267</sup> See for example, Stephen Hayward, "'Good Design is Largely a Matter of Common Sense": Questioning the Meaning and Ownership of a Twentieth-Century Orthodoxy,' *Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, No. 3 (1998): 217-233.

<sup>268</sup> Sir Stephen Tallents, 'Towards Forming a Design Policy', *Irish Management*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January-February, 1958), 9.

the gradual acceptance through the 1950s of a relationship between Protectionism and 'poor' design.

### **International exemplars: making visible what Irish design was lacking.**

According to T.K. Whitaker the main impetus for the setting up of CTT was the 'dollar deficit' of 1951 – made all the more alarming as there was a general awareness that Marshall Aid was about to cease.<sup>269</sup> CTT was set up to provide advice to exporters hoping to enter dollar markets. The idea of an export advisory board had been proposed by the IDA in 1949, just as they were commissioning a group of American consultants to assess the dollar export potential of Irish goods. This report, published in 1952, provided CTT's first guidelines. In order to help the balance of payments, CTT's initial focus was on dollar, and principally upon North American, markets. CTT's exposure to American business consultants probably influenced its anti-Protection policy and its support of the model of the design consultant in industry.

What would become the familiar refrain of Irish underdevelopment in design was introduced in the Arts Council's first Annual Report (1951-3): 'As the commercial value of Design in Industry is not fully appreciated here [in Ireland] as in other countries, it is proposed to pay special attention to it and to the applied arts.'<sup>270</sup> Despite their good intentions, for the first eighteen months, the Council appeared rather at a loss as to how to pursue design promotion. In the first report, under the heading 'Industrial and Applied Arts' (the briefest of six entries), consideration is given to 'education in art metal casting' and stained glass.<sup>271</sup> The Arts Council seemed to understand design in an Arts and Crafts context of applied art, rather than the more internationally prevalent post-war view of 'design in industry'. The Arts Council, under its director, Patrick Little, was more at home with the development of national taste, writing in the Council's second Annual Report that 'evidence so far points to the need of developing a general understanding, sound taste and judgement in our youth...'<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> T.K. Whitaker, 'Why We Need to Export Overseas' *Administration*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1955):37-39. See also T.J. O'Driscoll 'Córas Tráchtála Teo,' in the same issue, 29-36.

<sup>270</sup> Arts Council, First Annual Report, (1951-3), 6.

<sup>271</sup> Arts Council, First Annual Report, (1951-3), 9.

<sup>272</sup> Arts Council, Second Annual Report, (1953-4), 5.

Economic considerations of design in industry were clearly secondary: ‘while the main purpose of the Arts Act is to foster high artistic standards on a nation-wide basis, its effective operation must enhance the value of the country’s tourist traffic and assist considerably our export trade’.<sup>273</sup> Meanwhile, a 1952 report on industrial design prepared by the Department of Industry and Commerce for the new Arts Council sounded an urgent note:

The situation demands that some practical steps be taken immediately to stimulate interest in industrial design – not only practical interest on the part of these actively associated with industry, but a more general appreciation of the value of design on the part of the purchasing public.<sup>274</sup>

The short-lived Committee on Design in Industry of the 1930s had been the Department’s responsibility, and the Arts Council appear to have asked for advice on whether they should reinstate it.<sup>275</sup> Industry and Commerce did not recommend this course of action, as so much time had passed and because there was a ‘lack of enthusiasm’ for the kind of ‘lengthy investigations’ typical of such committees.<sup>276</sup> Instead of reviving the committee, the Department suggested an exhibition of design in industry. The Britain Can Make It exhibition of 1946 was invoked as a model of successful design promotion that Ireland could emulate. No doubt the writer of the report also had in mind the various ‘good design’ exhibitions supported by Marshall Aid currently travelling Europe.<sup>277</sup> That such an exhibition would inevitably be of products manufactured outside of Ireland was never in question. The Department wrote that while

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Arts Council file CE57 (31386/1952/1).

<sup>275</sup> Brian P. Kennedy writes, ‘...in 1937 ... the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Seán Lemass, agreed to appoint a Committee on Design in Industry “to advise on matters affecting the design and decoration of articles manufactured in Saorstát Éireann”. The Committee met on 42 occasions before its work was suspended during the so-called emergency (1939-45) “as it was felt that supply difficulties during the war period would make matters relating to design in industry of subsidiary importance”. Investigations were conducted by the Committee into design matters in a number of selected industries: aluminium hollow-ware, carpets, furniture, pottery, silver and electro-plated ware, and wallpapers. Unfortunately, because the Committee had advisory powers only, its reports quickly gathered dust in the Department of Industry and Commerce.’ *Dreams and Responsibilities*, 28-29.

<sup>276</sup> Kennedy, *Dreams and Responsibilities*, 29.

<sup>277</sup> On these exhibitions see for example, Gay McDonald ‘The “Advance” of American Post-War Design in Europe: MoMA and the Design for Use, USA Exhibition 1951–1953’, *Design Issues*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (March 2008): 15-27.

[t]here is the risk of criticism on the score of undue emphasis on 'foreign' design, ... even a violent controversy on this score would be preferable to a continuance of the general lack of interest which is characteristic of industrial design in this country for many years past.<sup>278</sup>

The 1954 Exhibition of Design in Industry held in Dublin and Cork, generated a certain amount of controversy, and almost exclusively on the grounds outlined above.

Nonetheless, it paved the way for two innovations: the establishment of the first Irish design consultancies and the plans for an exhibition in 1956 of Irish design. An examination of these factors demonstrates, among other things, the success of British design promotion in the 1940s and early 1950s. In stark contrast to opinions being expressed in Britain at the time, in Irish modernist circles Britain *had* 'made it'.<sup>279</sup> It was thus to the British designers endorsed by the CoID that the Irish state turned for help, particularly the Design Research Unit, which had produced the Britain Can Make It Exhibition in 1946.

### **Design Research Unit (of Ireland) and the International Design Exhibition**

Robin Kinross has seen DRU as an attempt, sometimes 'rather literal' to put in to practice the synthesis of *Art and Industry*, suggested in Herbert Read's 1934 book of that name.<sup>280</sup> The group was founded in 1942 by Read and Marcus Brumwell, who had worked in advertising. They were later joined by other partners including Misha Black and Milner Gray, who had been working on exhibition designs for the British Ministry of Information. This experience in propaganda should not be overlooked, as it served them well in the DRU's campaign for modern design. As Penny Sparke has noted, the DRU 'was formed ... as part of the general reaction to Britain's urgent need to increase its exports and to the recognition that design was an important aspect of sales where manufactured consumer goods were concerned.'<sup>281</sup> As well as BCMI, DRU members had played a leading role in the 1951 Festival of Britain; it was therefore well placed to offer advice to the Arts Council who sought to follow the English design

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<sup>278</sup> Arts Council file CE57 (31386/1952/1).

<sup>279</sup> For the contemporary British anxiety about insufficient modernity see for example, *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain: The 'Britain Can Make It' Exhibition of 1946*, edited by Patrick Maguire and Jonathan Woodham, (London & Washington: Leicester University Press, 1997).

<sup>280</sup> Robin Kinross 'Herbert Read and Design' in *Herbert Read Reassessed*, edited by David Goodway (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 151,

<sup>281</sup> Penny Sparke, *Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 103.

promotion exemplar. Kinross suggests that ‘Each of the three words of the name of this outfit – design, research, unit – was loaded with the promise of something modern, rational, scientific.’<sup>282</sup> This approach, then, was surely the cure for the malaise of ‘shamrocks and harps’?

In late 1953, the DRU was recommended to the Arts Council by C oras Tr acht ala, who had used their services for exhibitions in London, as DRU were about to open an Irish office.<sup>283</sup> On October 14, 1953 a meeting took place in Dublin between CTT’s Dermot O’Regan, Senator Edward A. McGuire of the Arts Council and DRU’s Marcus Brumwell and Misha Black.<sup>284</sup> Subsequently McGuire and O’Regan’s names would appear as directors on the letterhead of the Design Research Unit of Ireland (DRUI), along with the publisher Alan Nolan. The minutes of the Arts Council meeting of November 10, 1953 record that:

It was decided to communicate with CTT, informing them that the Council would be very pleased to co-operate in every way with the Design Research Unit when its offices had been established in Dublin, and the Secretary was also instructed to make enquiries as to the possibility of holding an exhibition of Design in Industry in Dublin during the Spring of 1954 in co-operation with the Design Research Unit.<sup>285</sup>

The Secretary was assured by Senator McGuire that there was no question of putting any Irish firm out of business by employing an English concern; the only design consultants in Ireland were ‘in it in an amateur way’.<sup>286</sup> The reference is probably to the firm then called simply ‘Design Consultants’ —itself an indication that they were the only such enterprise— later renamed Signa Design Consultants.

The Design Research Unit of Ireland was established by late 1953 at least in as much as it had a letterhead (with the DRU’s London address). However, the promised

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<sup>282</sup> Robin Kinross, ‘Herbert Read and Design,’ 134.

<sup>283</sup> T.J. O’Driscoll, chairman of CTT, took full responsibility for introducing the firm to Ireland. ‘In connection with one of our own projects we got in touch with the London firm, Design Research Unit, as a result of this association, the firm, which has continental associations, decided to open a Company in Ireland – the Design Research Unit of Ireland. This development and the growing interest already being shown by various Irish artists, architects and others, should result in Irish firms having available a comprehensive design service which will be Irish and contemporary and at the same time will meet international standards.’ C oras Tr acht ala, Second Annual Report, (1953-4), 20.

<sup>284</sup> Arts Council file CE 57 (33186/1953/1) Industrial Design Exhibition, Dublin.

<sup>285</sup> Arts Council file CE57 (31386/1952/1) Industrial Design Exhibition, Dublin.

<sup>286</sup> Arts Council file CE57 (33186/1953/1) Industrial Design Exhibition, Dublin.

Dublin office did not open until March 1955, when the *Sunday Independent* newspaper reported that

Mr Misha Black ... Mr Big in the world of design in England ... was in Dublin to help introduce the first, fully fledged Irish designer of the Irish branch of the firm, Mr Thurloe Conolly, an artist of wide repute and now in charge of designing projects in Ireland.<sup>287</sup>

The Dublin exhibition seems to have been entirely designed by London-based designers. The catalogue listed Misha Black as 'Consultant', John Diamond as 'Architect', while the poster, catalogue and exhibition typography were all designed by Jock Kinneir (Fig. 21). *The Irish Architect and Contractor* was, with justification, suspicious of the Irishness of the Design Research Unit of Ireland. The *IAC*, unlike its rival the *Irish Builder*, took a strong nationalist line. Its editor was Aodhagán Brioscú,<sup>288</sup> who, as well as being an exponent of the International Style in architecture, was a passionate Irish language activist, conservationist and one of the founders of Gael Linn.<sup>289</sup> The *IAC* review of the 1954 exhibition was broadly positive, welcoming the boost it gave to the status of industrial design (Brioscú suggested that those with an interest in modern design had been 'crying in the wilderness until now'). However, he was concerned about the awarding of such an important contract to an unknown firm.

This eloquent title [Design Research Unit of Ireland] immediately raises many questions. Who constitutes the unit, when was it formed and what are its objectives? Many people will be excused if they say that they were unaware of its existence. The fact is, as far as we can ascertain, that the Design Research Unit of Ireland was formed just in time to present the exhibition. It is apparently associated with the Design Research Unit in London. We are not in a position to state whether the latter organisation was first asked to produce an exhibition for An Chomhairle Ealaíon and then proceeded to open an office

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<sup>287</sup> 'Contemporary? Just 5 p.c. of us use it' *Sunday Independent*, March 13, 1955. An interview with Thurloe Conolly in *The Irish Times* noted: 'Last year he joined the Design Research Unit of Ireland as senior executive designer.' 'Portrait Gallery: Thurloe Conolly,' *Irish Times*, March 24, 1956. In a letter from Dorothy Goslett to William O'Sullivan, of February 7, 1953, she notes that Thurloe Conolly is 'to be introduced' in May 1955. 'He is with us in London at the moment but will be returning at the end of February.' Arts Council File 33186/194/4.

<sup>288</sup> In a letter to the *Irish Times* in 2000, Anna Brioscú attested to the small-scale production of the journal: 'My husband, Aodhagan Brioscú, BArch, was then [1954] editor of the magazine *The Irish Architect and Contractor*. [...] Aodhagan and I worked into the small hours; he wrote the editorial and edited submissions; I was the typist.' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, February 25, 2000.

<sup>289</sup> The modernising Irish language group, discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Brioscú later joined the architectural office of Michael Scott, whose modernist work he had defended in print. His articles on the 'new architecture' featured regularly in *Comhar*, the Irish language magazine. 'Ní Faisiún Í' (It's Not a Fashion [Style]), a 1952 essay on the International Style, is typical Aodhagán Brioscú. 'Ní Faisiún Í: An Ailtireacht Nua.' *Comhar*, lml. 11, Uimh 5 (May, 1952): 3-6.



in Dublin, or whether they opened an office here and were immediately commissioned to produce an exhibition. In either case, they certainly found themselves in a favourable position.<sup>290</sup>

Later in the article Brioscú made his point more directly: 'there should be no need to go outside of Ireland for our designers'<sup>291</sup> Further complaint came from the Federation of Irish Manufacturers. On 11 May the Arts Council secretary, William O'Sullivan reported to Dorothy Goslett the 'intimation that the Federation of Irish Manufacturers will boycott [the exhibition]', based on an objection to the absence of Irish products.<sup>292</sup> This appears to have come to nothing, as there was no mention of this in the press and there are no further mentions in the file.

Robin Kinross probably intended a criticism when he called the DRU the 'British Design establishment'<sup>293</sup>, but such was certainly the impression that the visitor to the 1954 International Design Exhibition was given. The 'internationalism' of the exhibition was almost as questionable as the Irishness of its designers. Of the 259 exhibits, 160 were designed in England and Wales.<sup>294</sup> Britain dominated all categories and dwarfed the figures for the other nine countries represented. Only Sweden could claim a substantial representation with 47 items, mainly ceramics, glass and textiles. Italy had 14 entries, including designs by Arteluce and Olivetti. The six entries from the United States included two chairs by Charles Eames. The other countries represented were Canada (11 exhibits), Denmark (seven), Germany (three), Switzerland (two) and Finland (one). Among the British designs, work by Design Research Unit vastly outnumbered all others, with 41 exhibits explicitly credited to DRU, with many other designs by its members also included. Looked at in these terms (as no doubt Brioscú did) the bias towards a private, British firm in a state-run Irish exhibition is quite conspicuous. However, the Arts Council and DRU were probably in agreement that the 'best' examples of design were ones that embodied the DRU's 'good design' agenda, which inevitably would be those carried out by the DRU members themselves. (Figs 22 & 23).

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<sup>290</sup> *Irish Architect and Contractor*, June, Vol. 5 (1954), 17.

<sup>291</sup> *Irish Architect and Contractor*, June, Vol. 5 (1954), 17.

<sup>292</sup> Arts Council file CE 57 (33186/1953/1) Industrial Design Exhibition, Dublin.

<sup>293</sup> Robin Kinross 'Herbert Read and Design' in *Herbert Read Reassessed*, edited by David Goodway (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 151.

<sup>294</sup> Of which only two were Welsh.

The exhibition was opened on June 11, 1954 (two months late<sup>295</sup>) by the Labour Minister for Industry and Commerce, William Norton, only nine days after the second Inter-Party government had swept to power, ousting Fianna Fáil. It must have galled Lemass that a project which so reflected his agenda at Industry and Commerce should have come to fruition under a rival administration. Norton's speech was anodyne, and heavily influenced by the Arts Council's agenda. The catalogue, containing three essays, is more enlightening in relation to the state's emerging design-promotion discourse. The purpose of the exhibition was, according to Patrick Little's Introduction, 'to impress upon our people the vital importance of attractive craftsmanship in our industrial products'.<sup>296</sup> The use of the terms 'attractive' and 'craftsmanship' suggest that the exhibition was a continuation of the 'artistic' endeavours more common to the kind of activities carried out by an Arts Council. Little's commitment to a de Valerian ideology is evident as he continued to explain that attractive design was important '...first because it helps to raise the standards of good taste and artistic judgement at home, a contribution if you like, to the dignity and happiness of family life.'<sup>297</sup> Here artistic craftsmanship was folded into the embrace of an Irish nationalist utopia. The dignified, self-sufficient Irish family was the cornerstone of the nationalist Imaginary. Little was a member of the Fianna Fáil old guard and a close ally of De Valera's.<sup>298</sup> Given this connection, the concerns his essay highlighted are not unexpected. Inculcating 'good taste' among Irish consumers, and especially Irish manufacturers, was not in conflict with the de Valerian ethos of Protectionism. Promoting exports was more controversial. For Little the second (and no doubt secondary) importance of design was 'because without it our exports cannot compete in world markets'. It was this latter imperative which had first spurred CTT to encourage the Arts Council to hold such an exhibition. No doubt they were frustrated by the reframing of an export agenda in such Protectionist terms.

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<sup>295</sup> This was mainly due to problems of scheduling at the Mansion House.

<sup>296</sup> Patrick Little, 'The Purpose of the Exhibition, *International Design Exhibition*, Catalogue (Dublin: Arts Council, 1954), 3.

<sup>297</sup> Little, 'The Purpose of the Exhibition, 3.

<sup>298</sup> He was Chief Whip 1933-39 and subsequently the longest serving Irish Minister for Posts and Telegraphs (1939-48).

Little went on to quote from ‘the president of a very distinguished firm in Italy, Adriano Olivetti’, ‘apropos of getting a proper balance between art and engineering, between the artist as designer and the executive, “if a top executive does not understand this, we are lost”.’ Little, then, saw design as occupying a place between artist and engineer, but tellingly, in an Irish context, he understood the ‘designer’ to be merely a role played by an artist, rather than a profession in itself, such as engineering. This is less ‘old-fashioned’ than politically canny. The term ‘design in industry’ is conspicuous by its absence, and the emphasis on design as a facet of art is noticeable. It may be that Little was subtly defending the Arts Council’s right to look after the artistic ‘attractive craftsmanship of our industrial products’ in the face of lobbying by CTT to take control of the whole area of design in industry.<sup>299</sup>

Senator McGuire, the Arts Council’s design expert<sup>300</sup>, also had an essay in the catalogue, entitled ‘Art in Industry’, suggesting that he was aware of Herbert Read’s book. It began with a discussion of aesthetics, but went on to distinguish fine art from ‘functional’ art – design: ‘Industrial art, as distinct from the fine arts, must not only please the senses and the intellect, but it must in addition perform a definite utilitarian function.’<sup>301</sup> Again, one could see this as a strategy of putting forward the broadest definition of art, and therefore the widest remit for the Arts Council: ‘We must not think of art as being only pictures and such.’<sup>302</sup> He echoed Read in his call for abstract art to inform design and in his discussion of decoration which, he wrote, ‘must be related to and naturally part of the article decorated.’<sup>303</sup> Finally, McGuire returned to the central agenda of the early Arts Council: ‘Taste can be acquired and the purpose of this exhibition is to help in this matter.’ He wrote as if the cultural value of design was a given, but the commercial side was now in need of promotion: ‘Industrial enterprise is primarily a business proposition, and if we want to see aesthetically good products, it is important to convince the industrialists that good

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<sup>299</sup> Little, ‘The Purpose of the Exhibition’: 3-4.

<sup>300</sup> He had been on the Committee on Design in Industry and was always deferred to by the Secretary on matters relating to design.

<sup>301</sup> Edward A. McGuire, ‘Art in Industry,’ *International Design Exhibition Catalogue*, (Dublin: Arts Council, 1954), 5.

<sup>302</sup> McGuire, ‘Art in Industry’, 5.

<sup>303</sup> McGuire, ‘Art in Industry’, 6.

design is not merely culturally desirable, but is good business as well.<sup>304</sup> Such sentiments were very much in tune with the rhetoric of the British design reformers, including the CoID but, as Stephen Hayward has pointed out, whether ‘good design’ actually meant ‘good business’ was very hard to prove.<sup>305</sup> McGuire at least appears to have taken his own advice on the commercial potential of good design, as most of the British and much of the European furniture displayed at the International Design Exhibition was subsequently bought by Brown Thomas, his department store.<sup>306</sup>

The final essay, by Herbert Read, almost didn’t make it into the catalogue. A letter from the Arts Council Secretary reported that the Council were concerned that Read was ‘not well enough known’ and Senator McGuire was suggested instead. A copy of the article was sent to McGuire who telegraphed from Cannes to say ‘Fully approve of article’<sup>307</sup> Read’s essay introduced the paradox of ‘Irish and contemporary’<sup>308</sup>, and he was one of the first writers to explicitly suggest to Ireland the Scandinavian exemplar to Ireland:

The extraordinary prestige which small countries like Sweden, Finland and Denmark have gained in the field of industrial design should be within the reach of a comparable country like Ireland. ... If we enquire into the origins of a good standard of design in the Scandinavian countries, we find no big money, no big industries, and not even the paternal direction of a government but rather a few intelligent and resolute men who, in the fields of education and industry, were resolved to put their ideas to the test.<sup>309</sup>

On the Irish case, Read tried to square the circle of national modernism:

Ireland has a great tradition – Dublin is its witness. But that tradition has been lost, as it was in England and Scotland and in Europe generally, but there is no reason why it should not be recovered. It will wear a different face, for it will be a new tradition, the tradition of a new Ireland, independent in its spiritual and economic aspirations. It will be Irish, and it will be contemporary, and it

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<sup>304</sup> McGuire, ‘Art and Industry’, 6.

<sup>305</sup> Hayward, “‘Good Design is Largely a Matter of Common Sense’”, 225.

<sup>306</sup> Letter to the Arts Council from Customs Office, January 11, 1955. Arts Council File CE 57 (33186/1953/1) Industrial Design Exhibition, Dublin.

<sup>307</sup> Telegram, April 5, 1954. Arts Council File CE 57 (33186/1953/1) Industrial Design Exhibition, Dublin.

<sup>308</sup> This was something he had touched on in relation to Irish abstract art in his essay for the White Stag exhibition. Luke Gibbons has described the allusion to Ireland’s delayed modernisation as ‘critical condescension.’ Luke Gibbons, ‘Peripheral Visions: Revisiting Irish Modernism,’ in *The Moderns*, edited by Enrique Juncosa and Christina Kennedy (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 97.

<sup>309</sup> Herbert Read, ‘Initiative in Design — A New Trend,’ *International Design Exhibition Catalogue* (Dublin: Arts Council, 1954), 7.

will illustrate principles that are neither contemporary nor Irish, but universal and eternal, because they are the principles of beauty and harmony.<sup>310</sup> Read implied a contradiction between 'Irish' and 'Contemporary,' but also suggested that such a contradiction could be resolved outside of temporal or geographical boundaries by operating instead within universal, eternal modernism. This was in keeping with the Modern Movement's interest in the idea of the Primitive and the archaic as a 'new' kind of tradition from which to draw.<sup>311</sup> This is explored in detail in Chapter Three. In parallel, by concentrating on abstract form, the Irish Moderns recognised in ancient Irish artefacts not the worn out symbolism of the Celtic Revival but rather fresh source material for visualising a modern Ireland. This is something that the designers at Signa would eventually demonstrate.

### **Irish design consultancies: DRUI and Signa.**

The origins of the two Irish design consultancies established on the lines of the DRU (Signa/Design Consultants and Design Research Unit of Ireland) are interlinked, with both E. A. McGuire and Herbert Read playing a part in their formation. Design Consultants, the group which the Senator had dismissed as 'rather amateurish', seemed to have been inspired to form as a result of a commission by McGuire's son, John. In 1953 John McGuire, manager of Brown Thomas Department Store and himself a London-trained furniture designer,<sup>312</sup> commissioned four of Dublin's leading abstract painters to design linen fabrics for the firm. These were Louis le Brocqy, who was then teaching painting in London, Patrick Scott, who worked in Michael Scott's architectural practice, Nevill Johnson and Thurloe Conolly. Both Patrick Scott and Thurloe Conolly were members of the White Stag Group, founded by émigré

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<sup>310</sup> Read, 'Initiative in Design', 8.

<sup>311</sup> According to Guy Davenport, the Modern Movement's fascination with the primitive, and especially with new discoveries of prehistoric artwork such as the caves of Lascaux, was that they promised a past that was new, in that no one had known of its existence before. Guy Davenport 'The Symbol of the Archaic' in *The Geography of the Imagination* (London: Picador, 1984): 16-28. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>312</sup> Brown Thomas, centrally located on Dublin's most fashionable thoroughfare, Grafton Street, was one of the two largest department stores in the city. It is likely that John McGuire, a well-known furniture designer in his own right, was familiar with the DRU through his connections with contemporary British furniture which was stocked by the store.

artists during the 1940s who were interested in subjectivity in art.<sup>313</sup> Read wrote the forward to the catalogue of the White Stag exhibition 'Subjective Art' in 1944 which had featured the work of Scott and Conolly. In 1953, Michael Scott's practice was completing Busáras, the central bus station, one of Dublin's (and Europe's) first post-war modernist projects and a matter of great public controversy.<sup>314</sup> Patrick Scott was responsible for the striking mosaic decoration on the building. Interviewed in 2002, Patrick Scott was asked whether he had gone to work for Michael Scott because he was regarded as a progressive architect, Scott replied: 'I opted for him because he was regarded as an architect who had a lot of work going through his office.'<sup>315</sup> As well as being a successful architect, Michael Scott was a patron of modern art and sat on several state boards.<sup>316</sup> It was this combination of interests that led to his commissioning both Conolly and Scott to do design work for the Cultural Relations Committee in 1950-1. Unlike the Arts Council, which looked after artistic affairs at home, the Cultural Relations Committee (CRC) was under the auspices of the Department of External Affairs, and was therefore concerned with the export and promotion of Irish culture abroad. Michael Scott was 'involved in the visual side all those years, and, indeed, was chairman of the little sub-committee dealing with the visual world...' He commissioned Patrick Scott to 'do a very nice logo' (Fig. 24). He also secured commissions for Le Brocquy and Thurloe Conolly:

I got Louis le Brocquy to do the illustrations for [a CRC booklet] on poetry. We always tried to produce pleasant art work in each booklet... Pat [Scott] also designed a superb map of the antiquities of Ireland, and Thurloe Conolly designed another one on the monastic influence of Ireland in Europe from the fifth century to the twelfth.<sup>317</sup>

In later interviews, Conolly dated his involvement in design to Scott's commission.<sup>318</sup>

Kinross has written that 'design in Britain – the kind of conscious design that got

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<sup>313</sup> As was Robert Dawson, who would go onto be a founder member of the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design, discussed in Chapter Two. Peter Murray 'A White Stag in France' *Irish Arts Review* Vol. 24, No.4 (Winter 2007): 96-101.

<sup>314</sup> Dorothy Walker, *Michael Scott: Architect* (Kinsale: Gandon Editions, 1995).

<sup>315</sup> Aidan Dunne 'Art built on firm foundations,' *Irish Times*, February 6, 2002.

<sup>316</sup> Scott, who was on the CRC for 24 years, remembered the appointments to these bodies as very political: 'The Cultural Relations Committee and the Arts Council were on the books to be put into operation by De Valera. However, the government changed to a coalition government [in 1948] and I understand that there were only two of us left of De Valera's list —I was one...' Walker, *Michael Scott*, 170.

<sup>317</sup> Walker, *Michael Scott*, 170.

<sup>318</sup> 'In 1950, he undertook his first commission as a designer, a map for the CRC to illustrate Ireland's contributions to European learning.' 'Portrait Gallery: Thurloe Conolly,' *The Irish Times*, 24 March, 1956.

officially backed and which was discussed in magazines – seems like a not very large family of people, working together, employing each other, occasionally writing about each other.’ The same was true of middle-class Dublin, a situation perhaps best exemplified by the fact that Thurloe Conolly and Louis le Brocquy had grown up next-door to each other in the affluent Dublin suburb of Rathgar.

In his early graphic design work for the CRC, Patrick Scott was already experimenting with a new visual vocabulary for rather hackneyed themes of Irish representation, such as Irish antiquities. His cartoon-like map has none of the plodding reverence of Celtic Revival images, it even takes liberties with Ireland’s coastline, rigid accuracy giving way to an expressive line (Fig. 25). The lozenge shapes that flutter like bunting across the map are a recurring theme in Scott’s early industrial design. They occur in his mosaics in Busáras, as well as in a textile designed for John McGuire of Brown Thomas in 1953 (Figs 26 & 27).<sup>319</sup> The ‘Pub Wall’ motif is taken from vernacular Dublin architecture and the tradition of painting the exterior (and, less often, the interior) of pubs and shops in tromp l’oeil stonework. Scott also used it for a series of illustrated brochures about Ireland he designed for the CRC; there, it provides an architectural frame to the images, and thus acknowledges its inspiration (Fig. 28). This form of decoration had recently been the subject of a feature on Dublin in the British periodical *Architectural Review*.<sup>320</sup> Several of the newspaper reports about the McGuire textiles cite the article, suggesting that the reference had been included in the publicity. The Irish ‘distinctiveness’ of this pattern was also emphasised by writers such as Candida in ‘An Irishwoman’s Diary’ in the *Irish Times*:

...each of them has taken his inspiration from the contemporary scene. For instance, Patrick Scott had gone inside the public houses of Ireland for one of his designs. Those who are familiar with the peculiar characteristics of some such places will tell you that some of them have walls painted in relief to look like brickwork. So characteristic of Irish public houses in this particular relief painting on the walls that Osbert Lancaster has written about it, and has said that it is peculiar to this country. In any case, Patrick Scott has done something

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<sup>319</sup> See Raymond Ryan ‘Design as Communication, Pleasure, Knowledge’ in *Patrick Scott: A Retrospective*, edited by Yvonne Scott, (Dublin: Hugh Lane, 2002): 103-110 and Christina Kennedy ‘An Intellectual Nature: Patrick Scott’s Tapestries, Screens and Tables for Mediation’ in the same volume, 89-96.

<sup>320</sup> Osbert Lancaster, ‘Celtic Highlights’, *Architectural Review*, Vol. CIII, No. 613, (January, 1948).

like it for one of his designs on the new fabrics. He has also studied Ogham writing, one of the oldest forms of script, for another design.<sup>321</sup> That 'Candida' saw both traditional pub painting and Ogham as coming from 'the contemporary scene' is interesting. It seems to have been their novelty as symbols that she noted, they were, to coin a phrase, a new kind of traditional.<sup>322</sup> The *Irish Times'* English correspondent was equally struck by the 'novelty' of the designs when they were displayed in Hille of London in April 1954:

Suffice it to say that, while all were fresh to alien eyes, which have feasted for too long on a limited range of contemporary design, the most striking were Louise de (sic) Brocquy's 'Irish Megalithic', derived from an ancient Irish stone carving at New Grange, and Patrick Scott's 'Irish Pubwall' a version of the painting on Irish pubs which Mr Osbert Lancaster has called 'lozenge work,' and 'mock rustication' and which he used to excellent effect on buildings in the Festival Pleasure Gardens.<sup>323</sup>

As befitted the DRU protégé, Conolly's fabric designs were more straightforwardly 'contemporary'. His commitment to progressive symbolism could be seen in the 'up' arrow of progress in 'Signum' (Fig. 29). Conolly later recalled that it was 'In 1953, at the request of Herbert Read, and with support from the Irish Arts Council, [that he] set up a "Design Unit for Ireland" office in Dublin'.<sup>324</sup> As noted earlier, the Dublin office was not operational until two years later. It may be that the textiles project brought Conolly to DRU's notice at a time when they were working for two Irish bodies, the Arts Council and CTT. Design Consultants certainly seem to have been established around this time. Patrick Scott later recalled that 'The agency was Louis le Brocquy's idea, and Dorothy Walker [née Cole] was manager for the first couple of years. I was part of the stable of designers.'<sup>325</sup> Le Brocquy and Michael Scott remembered it as being a joint idea on both their parts. The group was called 'Design Consultants' in the 1956 catalogue, but in Dorothy Cole's June review of the exhibition, work by Patrick Scott and Louis le Brocquy was credited to 'Eidos'

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<sup>321</sup> 'Candida', 'An Irishwoman's Diary', *Irish Times*, September 18, 1953. As noted below, efforts at design promotion were most often reported on in the 'women's' pages of the Irish press.

<sup>322</sup> On February 12 1954, Candida described the textiles as 'a series of modern designs in contemporary manner'. In Chapter Three, I return to the same series of textiles, examining Louis le Brocquy's contribution 'Irish Megalithic' based on carving from the Neolithic burial mound at Newgrange, Co. Meath.

<sup>323</sup> 'London Letter' *Irish Times*, April 12, 1954.

<sup>324</sup> Peter Murray, 'A White Stag in France', 101.

<sup>325</sup> Aidan Dunne 'Art built on firm foundations' *Irish Times*, February 6, 2002.



consultants. Cole was general manager of the design consultancy<sup>326</sup>. By late 1956, the name had been changed again to Signa.<sup>327</sup>

This new consultancy appears to have been influenced by Herbert Read's philosophy of the unity of the arts. As le Brocquy recalled in 1991:

You could say it was this conviction [that art and design are essentially one thing] which motivated my old friend Michael Scott and me from the early nineteen forties. In those days, and to the end of the fifties, design in Ireland was virtually moribund, severed as it was from the creative imagination of art. Meanwhile the so-called Fine Art of the Academy had painted itself into a corner of isolation. The rupture was complete.

These were the circumstances in which Signa gradually took form as a tiny co-operative venture aimed to secure opportunities for qualified industrial designers to manifest their designs in Ireland. Our general consultant ~~designer~~ was the leading Irish artist, Patrick Scott, but several of our designers trained and lived in London. In particular I remember the strong, clear forms of George Daulby's work and Peter Wildbur's exquisitely sensitive sense of space and detail.<sup>328</sup>

While Aidan Dunne has written that Signa was 'loosely based on the co-operative model of the Magnum photographic agency,'<sup>329</sup> the DRU co-operative was a more direct model.<sup>330</sup> Wildbur remembers meeting le Brocquy when the latter was teaching in the Central School in London and being persuaded to do the typography for oil cans for the le Brocquy family firm, Greenmount Oil.<sup>331</sup> This is one of the many designs that would win accolades for Signa in the 1956 Irish Design Exhibition.

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<sup>326</sup> Cole later married the architect Robin Walker, another of Michael Scott's protegés.

<sup>327</sup> Letter from Muriel Large to Peter Wildbur, July 16, 1991. 'My stay with Louis lasted less than a year (beginning October/November 1955) and for half that period the work was done under the title 'Design Consultants' until it was discovered that the name was already registered, and so by the time "Signa" had been generally agreed upon I had only a number of months to go.' I am grateful to Peter Wildbur for kindly sharing with me his archive of materials relating to Signa.

<sup>328</sup> Text by Le Brocquy sent to Peter Wildbur to forward to Bill Bolger at NCAD who had asked for information on the consultancy: 'would you very kindly think of sending him the (enclosed) altered text.' Letter, February 9, 1993.

<sup>329</sup> Aidan Dunne, 'The Moderns: The 1950s' in *The Moderns*, edited by Enrique Juncosa and Christina Kennedy, (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 106.

<sup>330</sup> Turpin writes that the establishment of the DRUI 'led in turn to the formation of Signa Design Consultants...' John Turpin, 'The Irish Design Reform Movement of the 1960s', *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 1. (Spring, 1986), 8. There is no evidence to suggest that Signa was formed out of DRUI, though it may have been inspired by the London original.

<sup>331</sup> Interview with Peter Wildbur, London, October 13, 2009.

## The Irish Design Exhibition

### Ireland Can Make It?

The Arts Council's third Annual Report concluded with the hope of following the International Design Exhibition 'with a Design exhibition which will consist of Irish products only'.<sup>332</sup> When it came to organising the Irish Design Exhibition, the Arts Council again approached the Design Research Unit. There seems to have been little time lost between wrapping up the first exhibition and beginning to plan the second.<sup>333</sup> The minutes from an Arts Council meeting of 14 December, 1954 recorded that the Secretary, William O'Sullivan was to 'approach Design Research Unit of Ireland to produce the exhibition... It was also agreed that the advice of Mr Michael Scott, FRIAI could be sought at later date in connection with the exhibition.'<sup>334</sup> The idea of including an Irish 'expert' might have been an attempt to short circuit further criticism of employing an English firm. The day after the meeting O'Sullivan wrote to Goslett in London, already expressing doubt that Irish design was up to the challenge of such an exhibition.

I suppose the obvious thing is to repeat the sections given in the [1954] catalogue. There is a very much more limited range of goods manufactured here, of course; for instance, I doubt if we make light fittings, other than the ordinary commercial Bakelite fittings, and this section could possibly be included in the 'domestic' section. I also think that we do not make any commercial or industrial equipment in the country, .... I also think that we could probably isolate 'textiles' as there are a good few woollen mills in the country, making very good quality cloth, as distinct from fabric, in which [category] could be left printed fabric and wallpapers.<sup>335</sup>

In her reply, Dorothy Goslett highlighted the main points from a discussion she had with Misha Black and Milner Gray on the possibilities for the Irish design exhibition. First she expected (rather optimistically) that the Council had already chosen a selection board 'each of whose members would need to be highly qualified in some technical or aesthetic aspect of contemporary industrial design.' She cautioned that 'the standards set by the selection board would have to be exceedingly high,

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<sup>332</sup> Arts Council, Third Annual Report, (1954-55), 18.

<sup>333</sup> Goslett's letter of 29 December is in reply to two of O'Sullivan's, one asking for invoices for the 1954 exhibition and the other applying for help in organising the 1956 exhibition.

<sup>334</sup> Arts Council file 33186/1954/1, Design Exhibition: General.

<sup>335</sup> William O'Sullivan to Dorothy Goslett, December 15, 1954. Arts Council file 33186/1954/1, Design Exhibition: General.

otherwise the exhibits collected together would tend to become only a minor trade show of fairly well-known existing Irish products.’ Confirming O’Sullivan’s doubts, Goslett went on with scrupulous tact:

We feel here, and think it possible that your Council may agree, that if the standards of the Selection Board were set as high as they should be, there are not, as yet sufficient Irish products qualifying as good contemporary industrial design to make a sizeable exhibition, although it is fully appreciated that this situation is slowly being remedied and that in another two or three years, such a full scale exhibition may very well be a practical and exciting position.<sup>336</sup>

Here the DRU were pointing out to the Arts Council the paradox of the exhibition: the very need for such an exhibition – to stimulate good, contemporary Irish industrial design – meant that there was very little such design actually in production to exhibit. Instead, the DRU suggested in point 6 of Goslett’s letter:

...a rather more educative exhibition which would explain, with text, diagrammes and photographs a suitable angle to interest both the manufacturers and the general public in what industrial design is, how the industrial designer works, one or two illustrative case histories on successful collaborations, based if possible on Irish examples and successes.<sup>337</sup>

This was very much in the didactic spirit of DRU’s designs for BCMI, an attempt to make the work of the designer visible. As Jonathan Woodham has pointed out, the equivalent section at BCMI, ‘What Industrial Design Means,’ which told the story of designing an egg cup for mass production, was met with ‘relative indifference,’<sup>338</sup> but it is revealing that the DRU felt it important to educate the *public* on this point. Goslett went on, literally underlining the DRU’s lack of faith in the existence of acceptable Irish design:

The ‘story’ would be told generally on flat screens, around a small and very selective display of industrial Irish products of the highest standards of contemporary industrial design.<sup>339</sup>

She concluded that the ‘country ... is frankly not ready, we feel, to stage a full scale exhibition of its own products in comparison with the ones shown from other countries last year.’<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Dorothy Goslett to William O’Sullivan December 29, 1954. Arts Council file 33186/1954/1, Design Exhibition: General.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Jonathan Woodham, ‘The Politics of Persuasion: State, Industry and Good Design at the ‘Britain Can Make It’ Exhibition’ in *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain: The ‘Britain Can Make It’ Exhibition of 1946*, edited by Patrick Maguire and Jonathan Woodham, (London & Washington: Leicester University Press, 1997), 59.

<sup>339</sup> Dorothy Goslett to William O’Sullivan December 29, 1954, Arts Council file 33186/1954/1, Design Exhibition: General. Emphasis in original.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

O’Sullivan circulated Goslett’s letter to the members of the Arts Council, urging them to ‘study paragraph 6’. The minutes of the Arts Council meeting, 25 January, 1955 note that:

The council approved of the suggestion of Design Research Unit that the Irish Design Exhibition to be presented during 1955-6 should consist of a photographic display, grouped around a very selective display of Irish products of the highest aesthetic standard of contemporary design, and decided that a sum of £2,000 should be allocated from the council’s funds for the setting up of the Exhibition.<sup>341</sup>

However effective such an exhibition might have been it could not satisfy the various interests who had been demanding a full-scale exhibition of *Irish* industrial design. These included such powerful bodies as the Federation of Irish Manufacturers and the Department of Industry and Commerce itself. The scale of the exhibition seems to have grown over the 18 months of preparation, so that the final exhibition included some 237 exhibits, ranging from a plough, through room-sets, to packs and containers. However, the didactic element remained, and the DRU of Ireland’s invoice of November 1956 includes a line item ‘artwork for eleven line drawings ‘How the Industrial Designer Works’.<sup>342</sup> In addition, as Figure 30 shows, the idea of an educational ‘Design Quiz’ (a key element of the Good Design agenda at BCMI) reappeared in the Irish exhibition. In a letter to O’Sullivan in February 1955 Goslett wrote: ‘in turning out a drawer recently, I came across several copies of the booklet “Design Quiz” which we designed and produced for the CoID in 1946. I will send it on.’<sup>343</sup> The didactic intention is also evident in the fact that this was intended as a travelling exhibition – bringing the message of national design reform to all the major population centres of the nation. As well as Dublin’s Mansion House, the tour would eventually take in Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway and Sligo.

Not having a selection committee in place, O’Sullivan requested that Goslett send a list of suggestions of ‘distinguished design experts’ to be approached<sup>344</sup> There were six British suggestions on the DRU list, plus two Swedes, one Swiss, a Dane and a

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<sup>341</sup> Arts Council file 33186/1954/4, Design Exhibition: General.

<sup>342</sup> Arts Council file 33186/1954/4, Design Exhibition: General.

<sup>343</sup> Letter Dorothy Goslett to William O’Sullivan 18/2/55 Arts Council File 33186/1955/1.

<sup>344</sup> Enclosure, Letter Dorothy Goslett to William O’Sullivan Arts Council File 33186/1955/1.

German.<sup>345</sup> O'Sullivan wrote in reply to the suggestions, 'One person would be quite sufficient. He could work with me or two of the Council members, probably Senator McGuire and one other in making the final selection. We both [O'Sullivan and the director, Patrick Little] would personally favour Gordon Russell, but we will leave the matter for the next council meeting.'<sup>346</sup> At that meeting the Swedish designer Åke Huldt was chosen as the design expert, with the Dane Eric Herlow as a reserve.<sup>347</sup> It seems that not all of the Council were as convinced as O'Sullivan and Little that *British* design and *good* design were synonymous.

By May of 1955, Huldt still had not been approached, as O'Sullivan had only received twelve applications for inclusion for the exhibition. He described this as 'rather disappointing' as he had sent letters to all the members of the manufacturing, industrial and service institutions and boards (including those who had complained about the lack of Irish representation in the last exhibition). By June, when the number was at nineteen, Goslett was suggesting a return to the idea of a 'purely educational' exhibition. In July O'Sullivan and Thurloe Conolly considered having a fashion exhibition instead, based on the work of Irish fashion designer Sybil Connolly.<sup>348</sup> Another round of correspondence meant that by September over one hundred firms had been in touch and it was decided to proceed to invite Åke Huldt to come to judge at the end of November. O'Sullivan's letter to Huldt did not hide his disappointment that 'as Industrial Design in not very advanced in Ireland the progress in organizing this exhibition has not come up to expectations...' He concluded: 'As yet we cannot be quite certain whether we need you or not, as you will understand from what I have stated, but I shall let you know at the earliest opportunity, when I hear from you.'<sup>349</sup> Huldt replied in the affirmative to the 'kind and stimulating letter' and wrote that there would be 'no question of charging any fee'.<sup>350</sup> Huldt arrived on November 30<sup>th</sup> and began the process of judging. He also gave a lecture at University

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<sup>345</sup> 'British: Gordon Russell (COID), Paul Reilly, Sir Gerald Barry (DOB), Christian Barman, Mark Hartland Thomas, Robin Darwin (RCA); Swedish: Åke Huldt (Svenska Slöjdförbundet), Elias Svedberg; German: Mia Seeger (Director of German equivalent to the COID), Swiss: Alfred Roth, Danish: Eric Herlow.'

<sup>346</sup> William O'Sullivan to Dorothy Goslett 8/2/55 Arts Council File 33186/1955/1.

<sup>347</sup> Arts Council minutes 8/3/55 Arts Council File 33186/1955/1.

<sup>348</sup> William O'Sullivan to Dorothy Goslett 7/7/ 55 Arts Council File 33186/1955/2.

<sup>349</sup> William O'Sullivan to Åke Huldt 14/9/55 Arts Council File 33186/1955/2.

<sup>350</sup> Åke Huldt to William O'Sullivan 5/10/55 Arts Council File 33186/1955/3.

College Dublin entitled 'Swedish Design Today: Traditional Forms and Modern Needs.'<sup>351</sup> The title points to the fact that the Irish concern with negotiation of tradition and modernity in design was part of a wider contemporary discourse around modern design.

The Arts Council archive contains the lists of objects submitted for exhibition and the grade they were given by the selection committee of Åke Huldt, EA McGuire, William O'Sullivan and at least one other.<sup>352</sup> Entries were rated 'A', 'B', 'C' or simply 'Out' on a series of informal, hand-written check lists, categorised loosely by section and by manufacturer. Those judged A or B standard were typed up with comments. Relatively few of the selection reached an A grade, even fewer had commendations. Though nothing like as dominant as the DRU had been in the 1954 exhibition, by far the most successful designs in terms of the judges' approbation were by the DRUI and Design Consultants, especially in the area of print and packaging. Each had a total of 17 designs in the exhibition. Three of the DRUI total were credited to Thurloe Conolly without DRUI affiliation. The vast majority of the 14 projects attributed to the Design Research Unit of Ireland were actually by London-based associates such as Misha Black and Jock Kinner, usually (though not always) for Irish-based clients. Design Consultant's total also included solo showings by Patrick Scott and Louis le Brocquy. Low those these numbers are, they represent a high proportion relative to other designers. Only the furniture designer, Barney Heron, came close, with ten pieces. Design Consultants' own letterhead was highly commended and both Patrick Scott's and Thurloe Conolly's stationery for furniture designer John McGuire were described as 'all of a very good standard'. While such statements may sound insignificant, given the general absence of comment, and positive comment in particular, they indicate that at least as far as the judges were concerned these two firms were operating in a completely different league from the general run of Irish design. Interestingly, the textiles designed by le Brocquy and Scott for McGuire in 1953 were both highly commended, but Conolly's does not feature. Conolly's cover design for the Hely

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<sup>351</sup> *Irish Press*, December 2, 1955.

<sup>352</sup> Arts Council file 33186/1954/4. Design Exhibition: General. There are at least four different hands in the file.

booklet *Words*, (Fig. 31) fared better and was awarded an A, as was his design for Hely's calendar. Bord Failte advertising was judged 'Excellent', as was its magazine *Ireland of the Welcomes*. Leverett & Fry, the Dublin gourmet shop, which had recently had its retail space and packaging redesigned by DRU was highly commended.<sup>353</sup>

Two projects by DRUI and one by Design Consultants graded 'Excellent' then provided the case studies on which Dorothy Goslett had recommended focusing. Significantly, all three were house-styling exercises, further emphasising the link made at the start of this chapter between Design and Organisation for the modernising agenda. The first was le Brocquy and Wildbur's '... design of a symbol and the re-design of all visual material for the Greenmount Oil Company Ltd.' DRU's exhibition explained to the viewer the 'designer's problem' and presented a 'before and after' display, starting with 'the visual material in its original form. Colour sketches show the process of design the symbol and printers' pulls and colour references show its final form.'<sup>354</sup> The full range of applications, stationary, labels, containers, transport, signage and exhibition displays were presented to 'show the new material after it had been redesigned to incorporate the new symbol'.<sup>355</sup> The DRU's Harrington Goodlass Wall house style provided the second Case History. The 'problem' was described as being 'to establish a design style linking the presentation all of products'. The designer was Kenneth Lambie, one of the members of the DRU in London, though here he is credited as belonging to the Design Research Unit of Ireland.<sup>356</sup> In the final case study, 'a house style for all printed material for Irish Ropes', the British designer Jock Kinnear (who had designed the catalogue for the 1954 exhibition), creator of the Irish Ropes house-style, was also 'of Design Research Unit of Ireland'. The Irish Ropes case history also credited Design Consultants' le Brocquy, who had designed the new colour range for the firms' Tintawn Sisal Carpet.<sup>357</sup> Thus the two firms were presented as the embodiment of Irish 'Good Design'.

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<sup>353</sup> Leverett & Fry also supplied the food for the exhibitions opening reception.

<sup>354</sup> *Irish Design Exhibition Catalogue*, (Dublin: Arts Council, 1956), 16.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> *Irish Design Exhibition Catalogue*, (Dublin: Arts Council, 1956), 17.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

## The design of the exhibition

Very few images remain of the exhibition in Dublin and none from its regional tour, but as Figures 32-34 demonstrate, the overall design of the exhibition was modest, with little or none of the surrealist flourishes or scenic display innovations of BCMI. As well as budget constraints, the extensive nationwide tour planned for the exhibition limited the potential exuberance of Conolly's design or the innovation of the architects, Kenneth Bayes and Maurice Hogan. The main element of the exhibition is a centrally placed metal shelving and display unit with an apparently ingrained lighting system. Further evidence of modern display design is evident in the treatment of the ceiling. The so-called 'Round Room' at the Dublin Mansion House is an early Georgian assembly room with a high and elaborately decorated ceiling. An attempt was made here to anonymise the room by creating a false ceiling of white muslin.<sup>358</sup>

The majority of the designs exhibited were, as mentioned above, graphic work and this was shown either on flat panels or, in the case of packaging, on metal shelves in front of the panels. The DRUI's invoice to the Arts Council listed '28 mounting boards cut to shape and same covered grey linen; cost and labour for dry-mounting onto thin card and then onto mounting boards.'<sup>359</sup> The typographic design of these panels as well as the exhibition labels (and probably the design of the layout of the catalogue) was the work of Jock Kinneir. The case studies were housed in free-standing glass-topped units in the centre of the room. At least in the Dublin showing, six alcoves around the sides of the exhibition space were used to house room sets of Irish furniture and household goods. These were lined with bolts of Irish-made fabrics. One alcove also displayed a plough and cultivator— concessions to the idea of Ireland as an agricultural nation, and the only examples of engineering design in the exhibition. Their inclusion was bitterly regretted by O'Sullivan when the cost of transporting them around the country began to add up. Someone, possibly himself, has written on the DRUI's invoice under 'transportation' 'that b\_\_\_\_\_ plough!'.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> The same treatment would be used by Patrick Scott in his exhibition design for Rosc in 1967, discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>359</sup> Arts Council file, 33186/1954/4. Design Exhibition: General.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.



The design of the catalogue cover and poster (Figs 35-37) by Thurloe Conolly are reminiscent of his 1953 'Signum' textile design for John Maguire discussed earlier. Both feature architectonic elements, rectangular modules in blue, white and black which, in the catalogue, overlap to create geometric depth. The catalogue was printed by the publishers and book printers Browne & Nolan, while the poster was screen-printed by the Dublin firm Hobson Morris. The choice of Gill Sans for the text on the poster is fairly typical of conservative modern typographic design in Britain at the time. Interestingly, it seems that a slightly different face (possibly Tempo Bold for the Ludlow machine) was used to set the details of the travelling locations (see Figs 36 and 37, Waterford and Galway respectively), perhaps these were decided after the template for the overall design had been produced and were made up by Hobson Morris in as close an approximation to Gill as they had to hand.

### Reaction to the Exhibition

The total number of tickets sold for the exhibition was 6,420, with the majority visiting Dublin or Cork showings: 2,769 and 1,569 respectively.<sup>361</sup> These were not large numbers when compared to other Arts Council exhibitions. Overall, the response was positive in the Irish newspapers, but with most repeating the cautionary note struck by official speeches at the various regional openings, warning of the dire consequences for the nation if Ireland did not improve her industrial design. The majority of the coverage of the exhibition appeared in the 'Women's pages' of the various newspapers: novelty and 'female interest' inevitably dominated their stories.<sup>362</sup> Given that the Arts Council (following DRU's lead) were interested in improving the public taste and promoting awareness of 'good' design, they were probably quite pleased with the consumption focus of the reports. However, it is likely that the Department of Industry and Commerce, and especially CTT, were hoping for more coverage of Irish industry and more impact on Irish manufacturing.

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<sup>361</sup> The figures extrapolated from DRUI receipts, were as follows: Dublin 2,769, Waterford 535, Cork 1,569, Limerick 552, Galway 450, Sligo 545.

<sup>362</sup> A good example is the report in the *Nenagh Guardian* in March 1956 which begins 'there's something here to interest housewives and their husbands!' and is accompanied by a photograph of 'a saleslady' for Brendan Dunne furniture posing under one of the company's tables. *Nenagh Guardian* March 31, 1956 (Fig. 45).

Demonstrating canonical gender assumptions about design, the Cork-based *Irish Examiner's* 'Dublin Letter' writer visited the exhibition expecting 'lavish display' but was pleasantly surprised by its 'down to earth' nature and lack of ostentation. He honed in on the more self-evidently 'masculine' exhibits noting that 'while there were many fine domestic items of show, Mr Huldts did not overlook agriculture and he chose for inclusion a plough and a cultivator produced by the well-known Wexford Engineering Co. Strangely enough it did not seem at all out of place.'<sup>363</sup> He was also pleased to note that 'a dozen bottles of Guinness stout were selected by the final selector Mr Åke Huldts because of the famous brown label of traditional design. Incidentally he had never seen a bottle of stout before.'<sup>364</sup>

Few of the exhibitors seem to have taken the opportunity to engage in newspaper advertising to capitalize on their exposure. A rare exception was Kincora Carpets, who had two carpets in the exhibition. They took an ad in the *Irish Press*, which appeared on the same page as that paper's report on the exhibition opening under the heading, 'All-Irish modern industrial design, "Distinction" bid by Arts Council.'<sup>365</sup> (Fig. 38) The ad features a (presumably stock) illustration of a stylish modern housewife admiring her cartoon 'contemporary' living room furniture on a half tone square that presumably suggests the Kincora carpet. The copy reads 'Kincora helped me make this room elegant distinctive and comfortable.' The use of the design reform watchword 'distinctive' in both advert and newspaper article suggests that the Arts Council message was getting through to some limited extent.

### **The Irish Design Exhibition's impact on design consultancy in Ireland**

As noted above, the Irish Design Exhibition endorsed the work of the DRUI and Signa as the manifestation of its message of good Irish design. It was excellent publicity for both firms and it's clear from the archive that the Arts Council often responded to requests for design assistance by referring the correspondent to both Signa and DRUI.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> *Irish Examiner*, March 27 1956.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> *Irish Press*, March 27 1956.

<sup>366</sup> Michael Scott, one of the founders of Signa was co-opted onto the Arts Council board in January 1959 which may have resulted in a slight favouritism towards his concern.

The *Irish Architect and Contractor* was very positive in its reports of the 1956 exhibition, and even conducted a design forum in January 1956 featuring Thurloe Conolly.<sup>367</sup> Another reason for the positive review of the exhibition is probably that Dorothy Cole, manager of Design Consultants/Eidos/Signa, was the art critic and exhibition reviewer of the *Irish Architect and Contractor* in the mid-1950s. Inviting a charge of bias, Cole singled out le Brocquy and Scott for praise:

Patrick Scott's work stood out on its own for originality and versatility as much in his maps, catalogues and showcards for Comhar Cultúr Éireann as in his very striking stationery for Four Provinces Films Ltd and his well known trade symbol for John McGuire Ltd. This designer also belongs to the Irish design firm, Eidos.<sup>368</sup>

Cole's review of the exhibition may be seen to throw light on Signa's approach to the use of the past in contemporary design. For example, she wrote with approval of Thurloe Conolly's work for Donegal Carpets:

... a very nice rug in black, white and brown, and a wonderful change from the unfortunate 'Tara Brooch' rug brought out by Donegal Carpets a few years ago. It is to be hoped that they will employ more designers of Thurloe Conolly's calibre and leave the Tara Brooch in the museum.

The denigration of historical symbolism might seem unremarkable in a modernist design critic, were it not that Cole's Signa also employed Celtic symbolism, evident in much of Patrick Scott's work such as for the Cultural Relations Committee. What Cole seems to have been objecting to was the *literal* representation of Celtic or early Christian motifs. By contrast, the symbol in Scott's work was 'abstracted' or, in his words, 'simplified' and was therefore allusively, rather than literally, Celtic.<sup>369</sup> We might infer something of Signa's agenda by examining the two names used by the company in 1956, Eidos and Signa. First of all, it's clear that the members' classical education was being utilised in naming the group. Eidos is Greek for 'form' and appears in some of Plato's writings in place of 'idea'. It has a further meaning within anthropology as the 'the distinctive expression of the cognitive or intellectual

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<sup>367</sup> See below.

<sup>368</sup> Dorothy Cole, Review, *Irish Architect and Contractor*, Vol. 7 (April, 1956), 35.

<sup>369</sup> Scott described his approach to his work in a 1959 interview with the *Irish Times*: 'he says that what he is primarily interested in is simplifying things, getting down to the bare bones of a subject.' 'Portrait Gallery: Patrick Scott,' *Irish Times*, January 17, 1959.

character of a culture or social group.<sup>370</sup> Tempting as it is to take the latter definition and suggest that the group were trying to create a distinctive character for modern Ireland, it is more likely that Eidos was used in the sense of design being ‘good form’, or in relation to the ‘formalism’ of abstract art. Signa, Latin for ‘signs’, was a more literal and direct statement of the work that the company undertook. It underscored the primarily visual nature of their design process. As their 1965 promotional brochure explained: ‘Signa’s symbol is in the image of an eye, to signify vision and the visual aspect of things.’<sup>371</sup> (Figs 39 & 40) Contemporary reports read this as simply an attempt to bring art(ists) into industry: ‘Signa had been formed with the aim of bringing good art into the field of design ... thus making art an accompaniment of modern life’<sup>372</sup>. But as Signa’s 1965 catalogue would make clear,

Signa was founded in the conviction that industrial design can work, that it can provide a favourable image, a powerful form of commercial persuasion visually built into the product, and that this favourable image can produce financial returns and increased prestige on a scale greatly exceeding its cost.<sup>373</sup>

For these designers the visual was active, not passive – it had a transformative, or at least organisational, power.

### **Design Consultants and the emergence of ‘House Style’**

This view was shared by the design reformer, George Hetherington at Hely’s printing firm. Hetherington had been a patron of both Patrick Scott and Thurloe Conolly before either Signa or DRUI had been formed. He had commissioned Scott and Conolly primarily to design book bindings and covers for the Hely pamphlets. In the text of the 1959-60 booklet, Hetherington explained how Hely’s commissioned designers: ‘we are in constant contact with studios and individuals and understand their specialist skills.’<sup>374</sup> It seems that Hely’s were in close contact with both design consultancies, Signa and DRUI, and frequently did printing for the two firms – especially in connection with packaging work, where Hely’s had the most sophisticated equipment in the country. Hely’s name was associated with many of the

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<sup>370</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/eidos>

<sup>371</sup> Signa Catalogue 1965. A link to what Michael Scott would call the ‘science of vision’ in his choice of ‘rosc’ as the title for the 1967 exhibition, see Chapter 3.

<sup>372</sup> Signa Catalogue 1965.

<sup>373</sup> Signa Catalogue 1965.

<sup>374</sup> George Hetherington, *The Emblem: A Review 1959-60*, (Dublin: Hely’s Limited, 1959), 8.

highly commended and case-study projects in the 1956 Irish Design Exhibition, for example. As well as producing the pamphlets, Hely's engaged in a good deal of self-promotion in the matter of good typography, including the production of luxury type-catalogues. One of these from 1956, with the book-plate of the Design Research Unit of Ireland, is in the collection of Trinity College.<sup>375</sup>

'Design' was the theme of Hely's 1959-60 pamphlet, *The Emblem* (Fig. 41).

Hetherington's analysis of the 'national preoccupation with industrial design' confirms that design was largely understood as house-style. Stating, quite fairly, that Hely's had long had an interest in 'good design', Hetherington went on to suggest that the 'awakening of public debate on the question of design' had led the firm to examine their own design and to 'wonder were we taking our own medicine?' A review of the design of the letterheads of various departments, for example, had led to recognition of wide discrepancies and so Hely's decided to commission a house-style from Signa:

An emblem, a colour-scheme, a house-style. These are the elements we required and these are what Signa (Design Consultants) produced for us. We believe that our friends and customers will like them, will like them more and more as time passes and will recognise in them an expression of the quality of our services and techniques'.<sup>376</sup>

Hetherington was demonstrating his faith in the communicative power of graphic design. He was also demonstrating the commonly held assumption, critiqued by Steve Baker in his analysis of the literature of corporate identity design, that there was an 'essence' of a company which could be 'translated' into symbols that could then be 'read' by the customer.<sup>377</sup> Such ideas were being promoted in the nascent literature of corporate design,<sup>378</sup> and though research into 'communication theory' models such as Shannon and Weaver's of 1949.<sup>379</sup> The 1965 Signa catalogue ascribes the Hely identity to Peter Wildbur, although he remembered the emblem itself as having been by Patrick Scott.<sup>380</sup> Certainly, the cover design of *The Emblem* is credited to Scott.

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<sup>375</sup> *The Bookwork Typefaces at Helys Limited, Dublin*. (Dublin: Hely's Limited, 1956). Trinity College Library, Department of Early Printed Books, OLS-L-1-981.

<sup>376</sup> George Hetherington, *The Emblem: A Review 1959-60*, 3-4.

<sup>377</sup> Steve Baker, 'Re-Reading The Corporate Personality', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 2, no. 4, (1989): 275-292.

<sup>378</sup> In books such as Herbert Spencer's 1952 *Design in Business Printing* (London: Sylvan Press, 1952)

<sup>379</sup> See Kinross, 'The Rhetoric of Neutrality'.

<sup>380</sup> Signa catalogue, 1965. Interview with Peter Wildbur, London, October 13, 2009. Hetherington's connection to the individuals in Signa continued throughout his life. In 1972, Robin Walker, Dorothy Cole's husband and a partner in Michael Scott's firm, designed Hetherington's Miesian Dublin home.

Here a troop of blue and green arrows cavort across the lower two thirds of the page. Unusually for arrows in modern design at this stage, the majority of them point downwards, although perhaps the sense of movement is more important than symbolic signification of 'progress'. Equally, the bustling arrows might be contrasted with the control of the 'emblem' itself at the top of the page.

Steve Baker has critiqued the assertions by practitioners of corporate identity, notably the British designer Wally Olins, that there is a visual equivalence between what a company 'is', its identity and the symbols it uses. He unpacks Olins' critique of those (modernist) designers who think that 'arrows mean progress'.<sup>381</sup> This objection to formulaic design presupposes that a company 'already has' an identity, a meaning, and that the good designer distils that essence into the corporate identity programme. In this context, we might note that Olins would probably consider Patrick Scott's design work as 'formulaic', likewise in intimating that Scott used 'arrows to mean progress', we are not suggesting that there is any ontological relationship between particular symbols and particular cultural concepts of national 'improvement'. It may be useful to introduce Mac Loughlin's comments on Irish modernisation here and to draw a parallel between his understanding of the character of Irish modernisation and the adoption of modernist design in Ireland. Comparing modernisation in post-Independence Ireland to the very different experience of Britain, Germany and US, he wrote:

In these advanced and militarily powerful nations modernity was often as not the product of unplanned social and economic change in the nineteenth century. Modernity in Ireland, on the other hand, was often as not consciously shunned, not replicated, both in the late nineteenth and throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It was embraced, sometimes unconsciously, but more often than not consciously, in the 1960s and 1970s when it arrived as the product of planned social, economic and political change. By then the modernisation of Irish society, like the modernisation of Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy, was 'a deliberately embraced project, a consciously pursued goal'.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Steve Baker, 'Re-Reading The Corporate Personality', 278.

<sup>382</sup> Jim Mac Laughlin 'The "New" Intelligentsia', *Irish Review*, No. 24 (1999), 57. The quote is from Zigmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1995), 228.

Patrick Scott was here 'consciously pursuing' the goal of modernism and 'learning' modernist symbology. Once the vocabulary had been mastered, then the Irish modernists could begin to speak in a distinctive voice.

Perhaps the most telling example of the way in which design could render the State 'legibile' in James C. Scott's terms, was Signa's design for the new Corás Iompar Éireann (CIÉ) livery (Fig. 42). CIÉ, the state-run transport network, commissioned Signa to devise a paint treatment for their rolling stock (a project begun in 1961).<sup>383</sup> It is likely that Signa received the commission through Michael Scott and Patrick Scott's work on Busáras. The brief and its 'solution' is explained in the 1965 Signa catalogue:

The repainting of the C.I.É. rolling stock was not just a new colour scheme. The problem was to evolve a system that would have the effect of making a train composed of many different shaped coaches (some of them 50 years old) into a seemingly homogeneous whole. The width and position of the black band that separates the white from the saffron was evolved so that it would contain, and at the same time disguise, all the various sizes and shapes of window openings. The white band was used to form the strongest possible contrast with the black roof, again to hide the high variation of the coaches. The saffron colour was devised as a house colour and was intended to be used throughout the whole C.I.É. organisation.<sup>384</sup>

The paint treatment was intended to give a sense of visual unity to the jumble of shapes and sizes of rolling stock.<sup>385</sup> Here we could see that the national infrastructure *was made legible* through design. At the time CIÉ were courting controversy by closing railway lines around the country. The repainting of the rolling stock was an opportunity to project the organisation as a functional, and functioning, modern entity, and to disguise the historical reality of labour unrest and financial challenges. In 2002, Scott's recollection of the scheme played down the rational, functionalist aspect to the project. 'I did the black, white and orange trains for CIÉ. I based the colour scheme on my cat, Miss Mouse.'<sup>386</sup> The contrast between 'saffron' in 1965 and

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<sup>383</sup> Bernard Share, 'Steaming Through the Spectrum' in Greg Ryan and Bernard Share, *A Guide to Ireland's Railway Heritage*, (Dublin: Iarnród Éireann, 2002), 36-47.

<sup>384</sup> Signa catalogue, 1965.

<sup>385</sup> There are parallels in Scott's treatment with the great streamlining projects of the inter-war American industrial designers, such as Raymond Loewy's work for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, see Nicholas Maffei, 'The Search for an American Design Aesthetic: from Art Deco to Streamlining' in *Art Deco 1910-1939*, edited by Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton & Ghislaine Wood, (London: V&A, 2003).

<sup>386</sup> Aidan Dunne 'Art built on firm foundations' *Irish Times*, February 6, 2002. Scott also painted a portrait of Miss Mouse inspired by Francis Bacon's Popes. In 1959, Scott was interviewed in the *Irish Times*; the report concluded: 'He is a bachelor and shares his studio with a cat called Miss Mouse.'

‘orange’ in 2002 points to the political significance of the colour. Orange has a long association in Ireland with Unionism. Saffron was associated with early Irish costume, the ‘Saffron leine’ was one of the distinctively Irish garments outlawed under the Elizabethan administration’s project of de-Gaelicisation.<sup>387</sup>

### **‘Not so much a matter of art and national pride as a matter of sound business’: reactions to modernist design and designers.**

Until the opening of a graphic design section at Kilkenny Design Workshops in 1968, Signa functioned almost as the state’s design consultancy. Design Research Unit’s Irish branch closed around 1960 when Thurloe Conolly went to work for the London Office and from there to France.<sup>388</sup> By the mid 1960s, Signa were among those designers expressing a new Irish aesthetic, a synthesis of abstract modernism and Celtic symbolism – ideas that Scott and le Brocqy had begun to explore in the 1950s. However, much of Signa’s work for the state continued in the spirit of a general rejection of nationalist symbolism in favour of simplification, rationality and the adoption of international trends in typography and layout.<sup>389</sup> A good example is the controversial 1964 Department of Foreign Affairs publication, *Some Facts about Ireland*. (Figs 43 & 44) This was essentially a modern version of the 1932 *Free State Handbook* (discussed in the Introduction), providing an overview of the history, geography, culture and industry of the state together with a guide to state services. *Some Facts about Ireland* was intended to be sent to all government departments, the Irish embassies and tourist offices, and to be available to the general public.<sup>390</sup> A comparison between it and its predecessor demonstrates the sea-change in Irish symbolism in thirty years. Peter Wildbur’s design is practically a check-list of the aesthetic requirements of the International Typographic Style popularised by, among

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‘Portrait Gallery: Patrick Scott’ *Irish Times*, January 17, 1959. Throughout the 1960s, the livery was described by CIÉ as ‘golden brown, black and white,’ (CIÉ, Twelfth Annual Report, 31st March, 1962, 7)

<sup>387</sup> Mairead Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland* (Cork, Collins Press, 1999), 54-57. As discussed in Chapter 3, when Damian Harrington redesigned the livery for the Department of Posts and Telegraphs in orange and black, he preferred to use the term ‘marigold’.

<sup>388</sup> Murray, ‘A White Stag in France,’ 101.

<sup>389</sup> ‘Portrait Gallery: Patrick Scott,’ *Irish Times*, January 17, 1959.

<sup>390</sup> Aidan O’Hanlon, ‘Review of *Some Facts About Ireland*,’ *Administration* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1964), 81.



others, Emil Ruder in his 1959 essay 'The Typography of Order'.<sup>391</sup> A grid is strongly in evidence, allowing for variety and contrast within an orderly layout; images are photographic; typefaces are simple, sans serif and consistent. Indeed, the self-effacing Wildbur commented that one contribution he may have made to Irish typography was the introduction of asymmetry.<sup>392</sup> The most striking difference between *Some Facts about Ireland* and the *Free State Handbook* is the lack of any reference in its design to history, other than the inclusion of contemporary images of historical buildings. The book caused controversy on its publication, as the section on Irish history was deeply biased towards a Fianna Fáil agenda. Ferriter has described this as evidence of Fianna Fáil's 'arrogance' in the face of continued electoral success. He writes:

The decision, in compiling the section dealing with the evolution of Irish politics, to omit all reference to the governments of Cumann na nGaedhael from 1922 to 1932 was shameless in the extreme. ... Seemingly, some 'facts about Ireland' were interchangeable with some facts about Fianna Fáil.<sup>393</sup>

The response to the criticism was to quickly print an insert that reinstated the leaders of the pro-Treaty side of the War of Independence and their successors (Fig. 44).

Criticism of the political motivations was projected onto the design of the book, notably in an acerbic review in the Irish language journal, *Comhar*.<sup>394</sup> The reviewer, Bairtle Ó Brádaigh, began by quoting a pamphlet from the recent Signa exhibition in Brown Thomas: 'The role of the graphic designer is firstly to analyse and then interpret the communication problem of a client through whichever medium is envisaged.' He went on: 'According to Signa, the client has to have a *problem* and if the Minister for Foreign Affairs (the client in this case) didn't have a problem in the first place, he did as soon as he put this book before the public.' He interwove his criticism of the political bias with a detailed dismissal of the various modern characteristics of Wildbur's design: the type was too small and lacking a serif, there were no margins round the images, the pictures could be of anywhere (could they not find a 'typical' meat factory?', he asked), the pages were not a standard shape and

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<sup>391</sup> Emil Ruder, 'The Typography of Order' (1959) in *Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design*, edited by Michael Beirut, Jessica Helfand, Steven Heller and Rick Poyner (New York: Allworth, 1999): 135-138.

<sup>392</sup> Interview with Peter Wildbur, London, October 13, 2009.

<sup>393</sup> Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, 557.

<sup>394</sup> Bairtle Ó Brádaigh, 'Dearthóireacht' in *Comhar* Vol. 23, No. 7 (July, 1964), 30.

therefore a waste of paper. He noted an overall 'aura of expense' about the book. 'Of course', he wrote 'the designer may think that he achieved an "effect" that was very "unique" but the artist might say that it's a cheap kind of "effect".' Significantly the words 'effect' and 'unique' were in English, suggesting a link between such cheap tricks and English design. The review in *Administration* was much more positive. It nevertheless alluded elliptically to 'long-dormant feelings about the issues of 40 odd years ago'<sup>395</sup> but these were dismissed as being less important than the end result: finally having a modern publication with up-to-date facts at the fingertips of the civil servant. The reviewer was impressed by the design, especially the use of photographs and concluded: 'It compares well with similar publications produced by other countries – the design is elegant, if the type-face might have been at least a point larger.'<sup>396</sup> Such modernist typographic layout, then, was in keeping with the spirit of the modernising elite in the civil service.

So far, we have seen designers and members of the modernising elite working together, sharing a vision of a 'shamrock-free' Irish design. However, there was still a good deal of reluctance among Irish industrialists to 'art in industry' and the final hurdle for the design promoters in the 1950s was to dispel any sense that design was 'arty' and to present it as business-like. It is surprising that the 1958 *Irish Management* issue dedicated to introducing the benefits of design should have presented designers in quite a negative light, characterising them as either 'temperamental' artists or 'clinical' specialists. The first unflattering portrait was painted in Tallents's essay. 'Designers', he wrote, '... are apt to have the faults as well as the virtues of the artistic temperament, and they are faults particularly uncongenial to managers.'<sup>397</sup> While Desmond O'Kennedy of the O'Kennedy Brindley agency suggested that the advertising agency be employed to stand between the client and the designer, of whom he presented a rather austere image: 'It is not intended as a criticism of designers in general to say that their training and the atmosphere they create in their designs is inclined to be a little clinical, a little

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<sup>395</sup> O'Hanlon, 'Review of *Some Facts About Ireland*', 80.

<sup>396</sup> O'Hanlon. 'Review of *Some Facts About Ireland*', 81.

<sup>397</sup> Tallents, 'Towards Forming a Design Policy', 8.

impersonal.<sup>398</sup> Thurloe Conolly's essay (on impulse buying) in the same issue perhaps demonstrated this 'clinical' tendency. Unlike the other essays in the journal, it was laid out like a report, with numbered headings (Attraction, Identification, Protection, Convenience), a descriptive approach and a didactic tone. The no-nonsense approach of Conolly's article may have been intended to allay presumed opposition by businessmen to anything that smacked of 'art'. Hetherington's essay in *Irish Management* also touches on this point:

It popularly supposed that considerations such as these [communication between designers – 'artists' – and printers] spring from 'highbrow' sources and involve such dangerous and suspect factors as 'aesthetics', 'good taste', and even – Heaven forbid – 'Art'.<sup>399</sup>

He then proceeded to make a business case for house-style and design that emphasised its economic and organisational benefits. Conolly was a popular interview subject for 'colour' pieces in the press. Invariably these remarked (with ill-concealed amazement) on his 'well-kept appearance and, if anything, slightly squirish clothes...'<sup>400</sup> While not quite the 'celebrity' we might associate with the first wave of American consultant designers, Conolly's visibility was certainly an important advertisement for the designer as a modern figure. In an interview with the *Irish Times*, for example, he announced his sympathy with the modernising elite. The interviewer reported that:

Another aspect of designing that delights him is the administrative aspect. He insists that the designer must be able to take part in discussions at the highest executive level, and here he shows himself at once craftsman and man of affairs. For him, there is no conflict between the artist and the practical man.<sup>401</sup>

Such a conflict seems to have been a common fear among those involved in design promotion in Ireland. Certainly, it is a point that Lemass returned to several times when dealing with the allocation of state responsibility for design promotion. His statement in a Dail Debate on the Arts Council is typical: 'I was of the opinion, which I think I expressed at the time—I know I have expressed it on many occasions—that

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<sup>398</sup> O'Kennedy, 'Design and the Advertising Agency', 15. While 'designers are specialists ... an advertising agency is a general practitioner' and, as he concludes, 'A sick man goes to the G.P. before he goes to the specialist!'

<sup>399</sup> George Hetherington, 'Typography and Graphic Design' *Irish Management* Vol. 5, No. 1 (January – February, 1958), 10.

<sup>400</sup> 'Youth at the Helm: In Fashion, Business, Art and in the Air,' *Irish Press*, 12 March, 1955.

<sup>401</sup> 'Portrait Gallery: Thurloe Conolly,' *The Irish Times*, 24 March, 1956.

about the worst type of body to employ to interest businessmen in industrial design is one called an Arts Council.<sup>402</sup> Michael Scott later recalled that ‘Sean Lemass ... didn’t seem to be a fellow who took much interest in any of the arts.’<sup>403</sup> However, Lemass’s eventual decision to wrest design promotion from the control of the Arts Council in 1960<sup>404</sup> seems to have been based as much on his admiration for CTT’s work on design for export as his distrust of ‘art’. Complementing, in a Dáil speech of 1963, CTT’s success in design promotion, he said:

I came to the conclusion it had been initially a mistake to have associated industrial design with art rather than with trade promotion. Indeed, the awakening of interest in industrial design and the tremendous improvement made in this regard in recent years must be largely attributive to the success of Córas Tráchtála in getting it understood that this was not so much a matter of art and national pride as a matter of sound business.<sup>405</sup>

This shift from ‘art and national pride’ to ‘sound business’ is, I would argue, reflected in the shift away from national symbolism in all areas of design in Ireland in this period.<sup>406</sup>

In 1958, Lemass was asked by the Department of Industry and Commerce to approve the cartoon for a mural to be presented to the International Labour Office in Geneva. Lemass suggested that ‘the thatched cottage should go out altogether or be replaced by a more modern type house.’<sup>407</sup> Such a symbolic change was not, this chapter has argued, a negation of nationalism. By rejecting traditional symbols and embracing ‘more modern types’, modernisers in Ireland demonstrated faith in the nation’s future. The problem was never just ‘how to be modern’, but ‘how to be modern and Irish’. I have argued here, following J.C. Scott, that the Irish ‘state’, meaning a largely

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<sup>402</sup> Sean Lemass, ‘Additional Estimate, 1960-61, Vote 13: An Chomhairle Ealaíon,’ *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 183, No. 13 (19 July 1960).

<sup>403</sup> Walker, *Michael Scott*, 178.

<sup>404</sup> As part of the Export Promotion Act introduced on July 29, 1959.

<sup>405</sup> Seán Lemass, Committee on Finance, Vote 13: An Chomhairle Ealaíon, (11 December 1963).

<sup>406</sup> Not everyone considered this a good idea, James Dillon, then leader of the opposition, spoke against the decision to withdraw design in industry ‘from the ambit of the Arts Council’s functions’. ‘[H]anding it over entirely to Córas Tráchtála, ... seems to imply that Córas Tráchtála is charged with the responsibility of sponsoring industrial design which should command the maximum sales, ... We can employ anybody in Europe or the United States of America to seek the lowest common denominator of public taste and, if we are to judge that by the criteria of the popular Press in Great Britain and the United States, the industrial design that would appeal to the greatest number would be something far divorced from what was present to our minds when we invited the Arts Council to interest themselves in it. Do we want to substitute the Córas Tráchtála approach for the Arts Council approach? I think we are in danger of making a serious mistake here.’ James Dillon, ‘Additional Estimate, 1960-61, Vote 13: An Chomhairle Ealaíon,’ *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 183, No. 13 (19 July 1960).

<sup>407</sup> John Horgan, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1997), 183.

bureaucratic elite, attempted to impose 'order' on the administration and economy of the nation, often by visual means. This resulted in the adoption of a visual aesthetic of 'simplicity', or the elimination of nationalism symbolism. Instead of seeing this as a triumph of 'high' modernist universalism over popular nationalism, or as the rejection of symbolism, this chapter has argued that the adoption of a modernist aesthetic and organisational style provided a new symbolic vocabulary in which to profess faith in the modern Ireland. Rather than a cynical attempt to copper-fasten their own power, the modernising elite saw their attempts to 'make the state legible' as a vital remedy to the disease of economic decline. The visualisation of information was also functionally useful in the compiling of economic data on which to build a viable nation.

The next chapter examines a different but connected aspect of visualisation: projecting an image of the nation. As the design exhibitions in particular demonstrated, the Irish modernising elite almost instinctively modelled their idea of 'good design' on the British example. While the neighbouring island provided the most powerful draw, it was, of course, problematic as a model. The next chapter examines the implications of the construction of Irish national identity in relation to (and sometimes by) colonial and tourist images. It returns again to the debates about national symbolism in design and examines how designers in Ireland and abroad attempted to project an image of the nation for home and export markets. I examine the paradoxical situation whereby designers in Ireland sought to present themselves and the nation as modern, while Irish industry looked to modern designers abroad to present themselves and Ireland as traditional. Following the work of Luke Gibbons, Svetlana Boym and others, I attempt to demonstrate how an apparently 'traditional' image of Ireland could be a product of modernity.

## **Selling Ireland: negotiating tradition and modernity in the projection of modern Ireland 1951-1965**

I would be in favour of paying the biggest salary ever paid to anyone in this country to someone from any country abroad, whatever his nationality, who would come in here and help our industrialists to evolve a very exclusive Irish design, and I do not mean a design having shamrocks, harps and leprechauns. The less shamrocks, harps and leprechauns we have, the better it will be in this case.<sup>408</sup>

[The] relationship between ideas of tradition and of modernisation is central to understanding how the discourse of nationalism, which is itself a discourse of modernity, is not only ideologically constructed but played out in the material and visual culture of new and emergent states.<sup>409</sup>

### **Introduction**

Chapter One outlined the problem facing the modernising state: how to present Ireland, and Irish design, as modern but distinctively Irish. This chapter develops that observation by examining various ways of expressing modernity and distinctiveness in design projections of Irishness and Irish design primarily in the years 1951 to 1963.<sup>410</sup> As already noted, ‘industrial design’ in Ireland in these years was effectively design for print<sup>411</sup>; this chapter broadens the focus slightly to encompass publicity design, including exhibitions, promotions, packaging design and advertising. It examines the debates about the role of design in constructing modern Ireland with an emphasis on two prominent (and sometimes opposed) groups, one

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<sup>408</sup> John A. Costello, ‘Committee on Finance, Vote 14: An Chomhairle Ealaíon’, (16 July 1959), 1450-1451.

<sup>409</sup> Linda King and Elaine Sisson ‘Materiality, Modernity and the Shaping of Identity: An Overview,’ in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson, (Cork University Press, 2011), 31.

<sup>410</sup> The start date of 1951 corresponds to the date when the Irish Trade Board was established and export promotion got underway. 1963 marked the establishment of KDW and of the Council of Design and the end of the first phase of state-led design reform. However, the choice of 1963 as an end date for this chapter is partially dictated by contingency: the journal *Campaign*, a rare instance of design writing by designers, ceased publication in 1963. Given that this chapter largely focuses on debates *about* design, rather than designed objects themselves, *Campaign* is invaluable, and the discourse is much harder to track and analyse after it ceased publication.

<sup>411</sup> Penny Sparke has noted a similar situation in Britain ‘The bulk of the freelance British designers’ energies were ... dedicated to graphic design and its related fields. [...] Thus while they embraced industrial design at their periphery they concentrated most of their energies on corporate identity programmes and other graphics-related projects.’ Penny Sparke, *Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1992), 103-4.

representing designers, the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD)<sup>412</sup>, and the other responsible for design promotion and exports, the Irish Trade Board, Corás Tráchtála (CTT). In considering the different strategies proposed by these two groups for projecting an image of Ireland and of Irish design, we encounter another paradox: while modernisation at home was increasingly associated with modernist design, the design and promotion of Irish goods for export frequently invoked stereotypical images of Ireland as quintessentially *not-modern*.

The apparent conflict between tradition and modernity has been well considered in literature on tourism in Ireland; here I examine the parallel case of export promotion. The image aimed at tourists constructed Ireland as non- or pre-modern: rural, traditional, slow-moving and quaint.<sup>413</sup> Ireland was presented as an escape *from* modernity—but accessible *via* modernity. King uses the examples of Guus Melai's Aer Lingus posters depicting the west of Ireland to reinforce Luke Gibbons's argument that tradition does not exclusively reside in the past.<sup>414</sup> Aer Lingus, through modern transport technology, could offer the tourist access to a *place* that was the antithesis of modernity. A trip to the mythical west of Ireland answered the longing Svetlana Boym describes in *The Future of Nostalgia*, 'to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition.'<sup>415</sup>

As noted in the introduction, both Boym and Gibbons argue that 'tradition' is itself a construction of modernity. Boym writes: 'Preoccupation with tradition and interpretation of tradition as an age-old ritual is a distinctly modern phenomenon, born out of anxiety about the vanishing past.'<sup>416</sup> Gibbons argues that John Hinde tourist postcards create an absent

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<sup>412</sup> A note on this acronym is necessary. The Institute was established in 1958, as the Institute of Creative Advertising. In 1962 it added 'Design' to its title. I have used the acronym by which it is now known, ICAD, throughout this chapter, even though in some of the period covered it would have been the ICA. A similar situation obtains with regard to the British organisation, D&AD, originally the Design and Art Directors' Association (DADA). Here too I have followed the convention adopted by other writers in using the modern form, D&AD.

<sup>413</sup> Linda King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze: Dutch Influences and Aer Lingus Tourism Posters, 1951-1961' in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 166-187. See also the essays in *Irish Tourism: Image, Culture, and Identity*, edited by Michael Cronin and Barbara O'Connor (Clevedon; Buffalo, N.Y.: Channel View Publications, 2003).

<sup>414</sup> King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze.' Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996).

<sup>415</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv.

<sup>416</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 19.

Ireland for which the assumed reader is nostalgic. The images, which on the surface seem to celebrate tradition, in fact mark its passing. The representation of an assumed tradition serves to remind the viewer of their own modernity.<sup>417</sup> However, the difference between the Irish nostalgic image constructed for the tourist and Boym's formulation, or Patrick Wright's view of an 'entropic image' pointing to 'heritage in danger', is that there is no real sense of anxiety over the loss.<sup>418</sup> The images being constructed were not for the Irish population to mourn, but for the imagined moderns of Manchester or California – supposedly cut off from their own authentic past – to long for.<sup>419</sup> A similar situation pertains, I argue, in relation to the image of Ireland produced for export promotion.

Design promotion in the post-war years was increasingly self-reflexive, as nations measured the modernity of their exports against the international competition.<sup>420</sup> This found its most extreme expression in the 'voyeuristic gaze of the Cold War, with each side obsessively watching the other'.<sup>421</sup> In this context, external projections could easily be internalised.<sup>422</sup> In Ireland, the relationship between external projection and national design promotion was particularly closely entangled. Córas Tráchtála, which was established in 1951 to increase exports, took over responsibility for 'design in industry' from the Arts Council in 1960. This chapter argues that the emphasis on exports which dictated the CTT agenda in the first decade or so of its existence outweighed any commitment to fostering the development of

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<sup>417</sup> Luke Gibbons 'Back Projections: John Hinde and the New Nostalgia' in *Transformations in Irish Culture*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1996.

<sup>418</sup> Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 66-69.

<sup>419</sup> The Irish critic Fintan O'Toole wrote of the 'heritage' motif in Irish cultural production in the late 1990s 'the majority of Irish people do not want to be authentic, rural or spiritual.' Fintan O'Toole, 'Ireland' in *Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political* (Exhibition catalogue), edited by Declan McGonagle, Fintan O'Toole and Kim Leavin. (London: Merrell Holberton, New York: ICI in association with IMMA, 1999), 23.

<sup>420</sup> On Britain, see for example Paddy Maguire, 'Craft Capitalism and the Projection of British Industry in the 1950s and 1960s,' *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (1993) 97-113. The *Irish Independent* editorial on the 'Design in Ireland' Report was headed 'As others see us' *Irish Independent*, February 2, 1962.

<sup>421</sup> David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, 'Introduction', *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970*, (London: V&A, 2008), 16.

<sup>422</sup> Writing about Irish publishing in a slightly later period, Cormac Ó Cuilleaináin wrote: 'The catchcry of modern Ireland is frequently What Will the Neighbours Think? ... while all nations are sensitive to foreign opinion, we Irish take it under our skin as a pre-condition, not a consequence, of political debate', Cormac Ó Cuilleaináin, 'Irish Publishers: A Nation Once Too Often', *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Media and Popular Culture (1984), 116.



an indigenous design industry.<sup>423</sup> Their goal was to increase the export saleability of Irish goods by any means necessary, even if those goods, their packaging or promotion were actually designed abroad, or as in the case of Kilkenny Design Workshops, by designers imported into Ireland for that purpose.<sup>424</sup>

Inevitably, this brought CTT into conflict with the Irish design community. This chapter demonstrates how designers associated with ICAD decried both ‘hackneyed’ symbols of national identity (shamrocks, harps and Celtic interlace) and the outsourcing of export design and promotion abroad. Among other strategies to counteract this tendency, ICAD presented its members in the role of *experts* in modern, creative promotion and on authentic, modern Irishness for the home and export market. The broader economic background is the government-led modernisation drive outlined in Chapter One (which laid great emphasis on export) and the expectation of Ireland’s joining the European Common Market.<sup>425</sup> Economic and cultural relations with the wider world, particularly with the neighbouring island, provided the wider context for all the debates examined here. The link between export promotion and the concerns of designers in Ireland is provided by an examination of the response to ‘Design in Ireland’, commonly known as the ‘Scandinavian Report’. Sponsored by CTT and published in February 1962 it was indirectly responsible for the establishment of KDW, but an early outcome was to legitimise ICAD as an authentic voice of Irish design.

Despite their differences, ICAD and CTT were each committed to Isaiah Berlin’s definition of nationalism: ‘the elevation of the interests of self-determination of the nation to the status of the supreme value before which all other considerations must, if need be, yield at all times.’<sup>426</sup> They simply disagreed about how best to mobilise design to realise the aim of an economically and culturally viable modern Ireland. Before examining the debates about tradition and modernity, I introduce CTT and ICAD and briefly sketch out their views on the role of design in modernisation and on the construction of an image of Ireland. Contentious relations between designers, modernisers and the imagined audience for Irish goods meant

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<sup>423</sup> This was the case until the late 1960s, at which point, the CTT Design Section, under designer Paul Hogan made concerted efforts to support the industry, first through the establishment of a Council of Design and subsequently through the setting up of the Society of Designers in Ireland in 1972.

<sup>424</sup> It should be noted that not all the early designers in Kilkenny were brought in for the purpose. The Irish sculptor Oisín Kelly, for example, was a prolific and sensitive designer in the early days of the workshops.

<sup>425</sup> Ireland applied to join the Common Market in 1961 and again in 1967.

<sup>426</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (Viking Press, New York, 1980), 338.

that the 'design cycle' in Ireland could be a vicious circle. This chapter traces three key aspects within that cycle: tradition and modernity in design for export, the impact of the Scandinavian Report on relations between designers and the state, and the construction of an image of the 'creative' designer in Ireland.

## Córas Tráchtála (CTT)

CTT was initially established 'to promote assist, and develop exports,'<sup>427</sup> first in Dollar Markets, later expanding to the rest of the world and finally to Great Britain in 1957. In common with the British Council of Industrial Design, CTT accepted that a link between export performance and modern design practice was axiomatic. In an economy with a very high instance of state involvement in industry, the fact that design promotion should be state-led was never in question.<sup>428</sup> The company ran a Design Advisory Service, where firms brought their goods or packaging to be assessed. This consisted largely in encouraging (or enforcing) emulation of existing international exemplars. Describing the process the Chairman, Tadhg O'Driscoll, wrote that 'in a large number of cases [we] ... inform them of reasons why their products will not sell.'<sup>429</sup> Having disabused the manufacturer of the idea that goods designed for the undiscerning Irish market could sell internationally, the manufacturers were shown the future: 'At the same time we exhibit samples of products of American and foreign manufacture which are selling in the United States and Canada, and give reasons for this.'<sup>430</sup> This practice continued throughout the 1950s, despite the fact that CTT were at pains to stress the importance of 'original designs', and – in common with the other modernisers – lamented the negative effects of Protectionism on Irish design:

Many Irish industries came into existence to replace restricted or prohibited imports. There was a natural tendency to copy the goods, British, Continental or American, which were displaced, and little or nothing developed in the way of original designs.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> T.J. O'Driscoll, 'Córas Tráchtála Teo,' *Administration*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1955), 29.

<sup>428</sup> According to Maguire, the Treasury questioned 'why the taxpayer should make a grant towards the aesthetics of design once the principle that good design pays dividends has been sufficiently pioneered. ... Industry... ought to bear the ...cost...' Maguire, 'Craft Capitalism and the Projection of British Industry in the 1950s and 1960s,' 107.

<sup>429</sup> Corás Tráchtála, First Annual Report, (1951-53), 17.

<sup>430</sup> Corás Tráchtála, First Annual Report, (1951-53), 17.

<sup>431</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Eighth Annual Report, (1959-1960), 7.

The search for ‘original designs’ with ‘a distinctive Irish quality’<sup>432</sup> was all the more important in Ireland’s dealings with Britain as a rival and destination for export goods: CTT considered that the British market, when it opened, would be even harder to satisfy than American buyers. In part this stemmed from a recognition of the *similarity* between Irish and British designs. ‘The interest of British buyers,’ CTT wrote in 1956, ‘is limited to articles which are distinctive and different from what British manufacturers have to offer.’<sup>433</sup> A lingering colonial inferiority complex also existed in CTT’s dealings with the British market, which it saw as discerning, competitive and above all, modern – in contrast to British manufacturers’ self-promotion of British exports as ‘traditional’<sup>434</sup>.

CTT had a good relationship with the two design consultancies introduced in the previous chapter, Signa Design Consultants and the Design Research Unit of Ireland (DRUI), in fact they were instrumental in establishing the DRUI and were represented on the company’s board. The CTT ‘device’ or symbol was designed by Patrick Scott at Signa in 1952-1953. (Figure 46) This is typical of Signa’s graphic design work: taking a carved stone boss from the ninth century high cross at Ahenny (Figure 47) as its starting point, Scott injected dynamic movement into the spiral, setting it spinning in space. The symbol in Scott’s work was abstracted or, in his words, ‘simplified’ and was therefore allusively, rather than literally, Celtic.<sup>435</sup> The symbol of an ever-accelerating clockwise spiral was a sophisticated metaphor for distinctively Irish progress and an early example of ‘Celtic modernism’, discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

## The Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD)

The Institute of Creative Advertising and Design was the first design organisation in Ireland, and remained the sole body representing the profession until the establishment of the Society of Designers in Ireland by CTT in 1972.<sup>436</sup> Initially named the Institute of Creative Advertising, ‘Design’ was added in 1963, by which time several of the founding designers had

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<sup>432</sup> Corás Tráchtála, First Annual Report, (1951-53), 7.

<sup>433</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Fourth Annual Report (1956), 12-13.

<sup>434</sup> Paddy Maguire, ‘Craft Capitalism and the Projection of British Industry in the 1950s and 1960s,’ 99, 100, 103.

<sup>435</sup> ‘Portrait Gallery: Patrick Scott’, *Irish Times*, January 17, 1959.

<sup>436</sup> It grew out of a series of meetings held in 1956-7 and was established as a legal entity on September 17th, 1958. The establishment of the Institute was sometimes back-dated to 1956. See for example, ‘Design Expert Appointed’, *Irish Independent*, September 15, 1962.

moved out of advertising agencies and set up their own design consultancies.<sup>437</sup> There are many similarities between ICAD and its contemporary, the British D&AD (originally the Design and Art Directors Association), founded in London in 1962. Like D&AD, which was established by designers themselves, ICAD was established by ‘creatives’<sup>438</sup> working in advertising, including ‘artists, copywriters, designers, photographers, typographers’.<sup>439</sup> Its members were drawn from ‘those in advertising whose livelihood depended on their creative ability’.<sup>440</sup>

In the 1958 there were 33 firms listed under ‘Advertisement Agents’ in the Dublin Street Directory.<sup>441</sup> Of these, about sixteen actually created print advertising (as against selling space or placing adverts).<sup>442</sup> There was a great deal of competition between these and clients often moved between them. Equally, there was a high turn-over of personnel in the agencies. Sun Advertising had the lucrative Aer Lingus account and also did work for Bord Fáilte, the tourist board and Córas Iompair Éireann. While Sun had first invited the Dutch designers, including Jan de Fouw and Piet Sluis, to work on the Aer Lingus account, few stayed long.<sup>443</sup> As well as Sun, the agencies who were recognised for their ‘creative’ departments included O’Kennedy-Brindley, O’Keeffes and Janus. Establishing a precedent that other exporters would follow, the most famous ‘Irish’ advertiser, Guinness, had most of its advertising produced in London by S.H. Benson.<sup>444</sup>

Designers working in advertising predominated among the founder members of ICAD and the O’Kennedy-Brindley agency seems to have been the point of connection for the majority of

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<sup>437</sup> These included Group 3, established by Giles Talbot Kelly in 1960s and Verbiage, set up by Bernard Share and Bill Bolger in 1961. Bernard Share recalled: ‘Two-dimensional designers were covered by advertising. The “D” brought in the 3D –industrial design– boys. “Creative advertising” covered copy, design and artwork originally.’ Interview with Bernard Share, Dublin, 15 April, 2009.

<sup>438</sup> This term was gaining currency in advertising circles in the 1950s as a new approach to advertising, discussed below, raised the status of the art directors and copywriters whose ‘creativity’ was seen as the key to sales.

<sup>439</sup> *Campaign* Vol. 1, No. 1, (October, 1959), 1.

<sup>440</sup> ‘Progress Report’ insert in *Campaign* Vol. 1, No. 1, (October, 1959), unpaginated.

<sup>441</sup> ‘Dublin and Suburbs Trades Directory’, *Thom’s Directory of Ireland for the Year 1958*, (Alex. Thom and Co., Dublin, 1958), 2109. Bernadette Whelan, ‘Introduction to Irish Marketing History’, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2014), (online) <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHRM.41206aaa.001>.

<sup>442</sup> These included: Arks, Arrow, Caps, Domas, Janus, Kelly, Kenny’s, McConnell’s, O’Keeffes, O’Kennedy-Brindley, Padbury, Sun, Wilson Hartnell, and Young’s.

<sup>443</sup> Jan de Fouw remained freelance for his entire career and often made reference to the fact with puns on ‘free lance’ in his self promotional designs.

<sup>444</sup> However, there were some local commissions; including posters by the freelance Jan de Fouw and the Arks agency, while Jarlath Hayes designed Guinness’s in-house magazine, the *Harp*, with occasional assistance from de Fouw and other ICAD colleagues.

those involved.<sup>445</sup> 'O'K-B's' as it was affectionately known, specialised in household and commodity advertising, including food, drink and cigarettes. It was also the Irish agent for a number of international firms including Philips, Mercedes and Volkswagen. In addition to the O'Kennedy-Brindley designers, there were a number of other creatives among the founding members, including the Dutch designers Jan de Fouw, Cor Klaasen (designer of *Campaign*, with Jarlath Hayes) and Gerrit Van Geldren.<sup>446</sup>

ICAD shared with D&AD an anarchic attitude, celebrating the new cultural currency of 'creativity'. Both aimed to 'raise interest, standards, fees.'<sup>447</sup> While D&AD 'was not intended as a professional organisation,'<sup>448</sup> ICAD combined its promotional activities with more conventional professional ambitions. For example, it lobbied government and CTT on matters of design promotion and it attempted to establish codes of practice and educational standards for both advertising and graphic design. Both groups presented themselves as an alternative to what D&AD founder Bob Gill memorably referred to as 'the rolled up umbrella

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<sup>445</sup> Desmond O'Kennedy, principle of O'Kennedy-Brindley moved in the same circles as the modernisers introduced in the previous chapter. The Articles of Association of the Institute of Creative Advertising (from the personal archive of Jarlath Hayes) list the first members. The first President was William (Bill) Bergin (listed in the Articles as a designer and in *Campaign* Vol.1 No.3 as a typographer), was studio manager at O'Kennedy-Brindley from 1960. The Vice President was Jarlath Hayes, listed in the Articles as a designer and then working as an art director at O'Kennedy-Brindley. The designer Gerry Doherty (here as O'Doherty) was also a founder member and later President. He was then with O'Keeffes, but also moved to O'Kennedy-Brindley in 1960. Bernard Share, editor of the Institute's journal, *Campaign*, was a copywriter at O'Kennedy-Brindley until late 1959 when he and his 'visualiser', Bill Bolger, another member, moved to Janus. The Secretary and PRO was Richard Giles Talbot Kelly, described as an 'Advertising Executive', a British designer who had begun his career as an architect but also worked as a copywriter. Talbot Kelly was a pivotal, if divisive, figure in early years of the ICA and design reform in Ireland more generally. As discussed below, in 1962 he was nominated as 'Organising Consultant' of the proposed School of Design at the National College of Art. Talbot-Kelly's career seems to define the lack of specialisation that characterized graphic design and advertising in the 1950 and early 1960s. In an article in *Campaign*, Vol 1, No 2 (Winter 1960), he was described as a copywriter, while in the register of members in the following issue, he is listed as a 3D designer. This issue also features a note that he was leaving Modern Display Artists to set up his own design consultancy, Group 3. However, he appears in photographs taken by Bill Bolger of the studio there in late 1958 or 1959, although, Hugh Oram lists him at Janus at this time. Bernard Share remembered Talbot Kelly as 'a kind of one-man rocket' but also as a man who made more enemies than friends where he worked.

<sup>446</sup> Another founder was photographer Robert Dawson (in whose Anne Street premises many of the Council meetings were held), The other subscribers listed in the Articles were WL Lindsay (Designer), W O'Rourke (Designer), T.E. O'Sullivan (Designer) and the copywriter Marcella Kerin, listed as 'Spinster'. The first Treasurer was furniture and exhibition designer, Francis (Frank) Ryan, then with Modern Display Artists (MDA).

<sup>447</sup> Robin Kinross, 'Images for Sale: 21 Years of Graphics, Advertising, Packaging and Commercials From Design and Art Direction,' *Information Design Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (1984), 92.

<sup>448</sup> Kinross, 'Images for Sale', 92.

and bowler hat brigade' of the British Society of Industrial Artists, which Irish-based designers had the option of joining in the absence of a local group.<sup>449</sup>

Colin Forbes, another D&AD founder, recalled the lack of opportunities for 'creative' work to be evaluated and celebrated in Britain in the early 1960s: SIA exhibitions were not judged and the sole competitive award was the Layton Award in advertising, which recognised only the agency, not the designer or copywriter.<sup>450</sup> Both the D&AD and ICAD held competitions which emphasised 'creativity' (rather than sales) in their evaluations and awarded the individual designers and writers of ads or design work. From 1960 onwards, ICAD ran an annual 'Best Sellers' competition and exhibition, showing members' work in all areas of publicity and design, from packaging, print advertising and exhibition stands to house styles, typography and book design. It also produced a short-lived journal, *Campaign*.

### **The ICAD journal, *Campaign***

*Campaign*, the journal of the Institute ran for eleven issues from October 1959 to June 1963. It was largely written, illustrated and designed by ICA members themselves, occasionally including contributions from their clients and patrons and pieces commissioned from experts or sourced from other publications which the editor thought were relevant to fellow creatives. The name 'Campaign,' was devised by copywriter Bernard Share, the editor of ten of the journal's eleven issues.<sup>451</sup> It punningly referenced both ad campaigns and the proselytising mission of the magazine. *Campaign* is useful in providing evidence of the Irish design community's response and attitude to modernisation and to the problem of projecting an image of the nation through design. Two themes dominated the journal: the characterisation of the modern professional designer, and the development of a national style together with a national design industry. Unlike the D&AD Annuals, *Campaign* was not a showcase of members' work but a means of promoting the ICAD agenda: a manifesto for the national value of modern, 'creative' design and advertising understood in an international

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<sup>449</sup> Mark Bonner, 'D&AD? That Was All My Idea,' *Creative Review* Vol. 32, No. 10 (October 2012), 22. Many Irish and Irish-based designers joined the SIA, including Giles Talbot-Kely and Louis le Brocqy.

<sup>450</sup> Mark Bonner, 'D&AD? That Was All My Idea,' 23.

<sup>451</sup> Interview with Bernard Share, Dublin, September 13, 2011.

context.<sup>452</sup> As noted above, CTT and ICAD shared a concern to project an ‘authentic’ image of modern Ireland and to counteract ‘mistaken notions of the Irish character’ discussed below.<sup>453</sup>

### In Search of a Style

Interviewed by the *Sunday Independent* in April 1961 the new PRO, Isolde Farrell, explained that the Institute wished to encourage advertisements ‘that have a distinctive Irish flavour. But no round towers, shamrocks or shillelaghs...’<sup>454</sup> This attitude was shared by Signa, whose manager wrote in 1962: ‘To be recognisably “Irish” a design does not have to be spattered with shamrocks, shillelaghs and leprechauns!’<sup>455</sup> Bernard Share’s first editorial in *Campaign* identified and rejected the preponderance of such ‘hackneyed’ symbols in design for export: ‘We cannot, unfortunately, declare open season on all Irish manufacturers who emblazon their export packaging with shamrocks and the sun going down over the Paul Henry Country’.<sup>456</sup> He presented ICAD as the leader in the modernising drive to forge a ‘true’ (modern and authentic) reflection of national character: ‘but we can and are working for the development of a true personality in Irish advertising which is distinctive without being ultra-nationalistic’. This would owe ‘nothing to the Exile’s tear-and-beer-stained invocation of his Old Mother,’<sup>457</sup> a reference to the diasporic nostalgia that dominated some contemporary export promotions, including that for Kerrygold butter, discussed below.

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<sup>452</sup> Each issue included detailed, well-informed critique of at least one Irish ad campaign, a review of relevant books and exhibitions, an article critically examining issues related to contemporary design and advertising practice (such as standards in Irish printing, BBC television set design, the role of the Irish language) as well as humorous asides, news, letters and reports from abroad (including articles on Australian radio advertising and Russian book cover design). *Campaign* provides rare examples of contemporary writing about design in Ireland in the 1950s and ‘60s and as such is used extensively in this chapter to examine the discourse within the emerging design profession and the impression it attempted to project to its potential clients. Given the limited availability of foreign publications in Ireland at the time, it is difficult to point to specific potential models for the journal. The photographer Robert Dawson was a subscriber to several international journals, including *Modern Publicity* and *Graphics*, while *Design* magazine, produced by the British Council of Industrial Design from 1954 was widely circulated in Ireland at the time. Dawson’s copies of these journals were passed onto his nephew, Bill Bolger, either at the time or with the rest of his effects after his death. Local inspiration probably came from the handful of literary ‘little magazines’ that emerged after the War. The closest parallel in terms of aim, if not design, was *Envoy: A Review of Literature and Art* (1949-51), edited by the painter John Ryan. This broke with from the social commentary that had dominated its predecessors, such as *The Bell*, edited by Seán O’Faoláin, and saw itself as providing a ‘forum of Irish creative thought’.

<sup>453</sup> Córás Tráchtála, Eighth Annual Report, (1959-1960), 33.

<sup>454</sup> *The Sunday Independent* April 2, 1961.

<sup>455</sup> Dorothy Walker ‘Danes, Design and Us,’ *Creation*, (March 1962), 8, 9, 12.

<sup>456</sup> Paul Henry, an Irish artist whose paintings of a timeless West of Ireland were popular in pre-and inter-war tourist imagery.

<sup>457</sup> *Campaign* Vol. 2, No.6 (March 1961), 1.

ICAD's criticism was not limited to design for export; as noted in Chapter One, Desmond O'Kennedy, the chairman of O'Kennedy-Brindley, characterised domestic manufacturing under Protectionism as a 'harps-and-shamrocks package'.<sup>458</sup> Likewise, round towers, long a symbol of the Celtic Revival, were held in singular opprobrium by *Campaign* contributors. Its anonymous advertising critic, Our Man with A Spanner,<sup>459</sup> poked fun at the 'The Country Shop', run by Arts Council member and crafts activist Muriel Gahan: 'But will the gentleman who parked his emerald Round Tower in a window in St Stephen's Green please move it on? It's in the way of progress.'<sup>460</sup> The reference is probably to a display for Round Tower brand knitwear by Gaeltarra Éireann, a state-owned textile manufacturer, whose advertising was handled by ICAD members in O'KB's, discussed below.

The question of authentic symbolism is central to the discourse around souvenirs —objects which embody tourist projections of the nation. Susan Stewart has pointed to souvenirs as authenticating tourists' travel,<sup>461</sup> but the tourist souvenir is also synonymous with 'inauthentic' representations of nation.<sup>462</sup> Comments made by the illustrator, Eamonn Costelloe, in his 1962 article on the design of souvenirs were already cited in the Introduction to this thesis. Costelloe pointed to the twin pitfalls of tradition and (imported) modernity which 'bedevilled' a search for a native style: 'the G.A.A. approach —death by ritual strangulation with regurgitated interlacing from the Book of Kells— or by immediate facile one of the forelock-tugging gombeen-man — importing your art, pre-packed and rootless, from abroad: 'instant' culture at low cost.'<sup>463</sup> Souvenirs also provided a source of anxiety in the Dáil, with the leader of the Opposition, John A. Costello suggesting that purchase of such

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<sup>458</sup> Desmond O'Kennedy, 'Design and the Advertising Agency,' *Irish Management*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January-February, 1958), 15.

<sup>459</sup> According to Bernard Share, this was written by Giles Talbot-Kelly. 'It used to cause a lot of trouble. That was one column we did have problems with. That was Giles. ... Tact wasn't amongst his major attributes. [But] I don't think as editor I would have dared suggesting that anyone else should [write it].' Interview with Bernard Share, Dublin, March 24, 2009.

<sup>460</sup> Our man with a spanner' *Campaign* Vol. 1, No.3 (Spring 1960), 6.

<sup>461</sup> Susan Stewart, 'Objects of Desire: Part I: The Souvenir,' in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, N.C & London: Duke University Press, 1993): 132-151, particularly pages 145-7.

<sup>462</sup> See Andrea Peach on how Scottish craft was used to create an 'authentic' souvenir. See also David Hume, *Tourism Art and Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism* (London: Routledge, 2013). Souvenirs were also discussed in the Scandinavian Report, as noted below.

<sup>463</sup> Eamonn Costelloe, 'Amongst Me Souvenirs' *Campaign* Vol. 3, No.9 (March 1962), 3.



souvenirs as ‘leprechauns and blackthorn sticks and objects with harps on them... ought to be enjoined by an order of our High Court and by any Act of Parliament by which we could possibly stop that.’<sup>464</sup>

Cor Klaasen’s essay, ‘In Search of a Style’, also in the first issue of *Campaign*, dealt with the question of authenticity and national stereotyping in a wider European context. ‘The Swiss don’t yodel and pick edelweiss; the Dutch don’t eat tulips while sailing on their canals; the Italians do more than sell ice-cream and eat spaghetti... and the Irish don’t sing sad ballads near round towers in the middle of fields of shamrock.’<sup>465</sup> Klaasen’s advice for developing ‘a standard that would be both Irish and international’<sup>466</sup> was to look to the modernist example of ‘artistic puritans who were imaginative designers’.<sup>467</sup>

ICAD members did not reject all national symbolism out-of-hand. Instead they argued for an ‘updating’ of the imagery. This subtly reinforced their position as experts on authentic Irishness, suggesting that an authentic symbolic vocabulary *did* exist, and that they could access it. Corás Tráchtála were equally anxious to establish ‘a true and favourable image of Ireland in general, and Ireland as a reliable source of export products in particular, in the minds of people elsewhere.’<sup>468</sup> Their concern centred upon ‘mistaken notions of the Irish character and Irish behaviour’ in other countries, not simply the portrayal of Irish design as old-fashioned. There were two facets to this ‘mistaken image’, one was the image carefully constructed by the tourist agencies of a non-modern, laid-back Irish way of life. The other was the longstanding stereotype of the ‘Stage Irishman’ (or his supernatural relation, the Leprechaun). In fact, the two were closely related: both were self-conscious, modern constructions of ‘authentic’ otherness to be performed for an audience that imagined itself (for good or ill) irreparably cut off from such authenticity.

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<sup>464</sup> John A. Costello, ‘Committee on Finance, Vote 14: An Chomhairle Ealaíon,’ (16 July 1959), 1450-1451.

<sup>465</sup> Cor Klaasen ‘In Search of a Style’, *Campaign* Vol. 1, No. 1 (October, 1959), 5.

<sup>466</sup> Klaasen ‘In Search of a Style’, 5.

<sup>467</sup> Education was vital. He wrote that ‘the ideal thing would be a new School of Art’. Klaasen ‘In Search of a Style’, 6. Klaasen’s call would be reiterated two years later in the Scandinavian Report.

<sup>468</sup> ‘In some other countries – at least among certain sections – mistaken notions of the Irish character and Irish behaviour persist, and it is our experience that they can, and do, act as an obstacle to sales of Irish products and a brake on promotional endeavour. In spite of past progress, a good deal remains to be done to kill these misconceptions, but well directed publicity can go far to deal them a death-blow.’ Corás Tráchtála, Eighth Annual Report (1959-1960), 33.

An *Irish Management* editorial in 1959 expressed the concerns of the modernisers:

... our tourist industry relies to a great extent on the relaxing qualities of our climate and our way of life. The 'What's-the-hurry?' type of philosophy is associated with the Irishman. This impression is certainly not dissipated by our tourist publicity. It is unfortunate that this image of Ireland which is so beneficial to that important sector of our economy militates directly against our industrial efforts.<sup>469</sup>

The editorial seems to argue that these two images, of tourist and export Ireland, are incompatible.<sup>470</sup> In fact, as is discussed below, tourism marketing in Ireland was more sophisticated than the IMI gave it credit for. While the idea of a pre-modern, mythical island was often presented, there was always a duality in the image, in that this pre-modern world was easily accessed via modern Irish aircraft or modern Irish broadcast technologies. Likewise, a modern export such as Kerrygold butter could be advertised as 'pure village churned' but also as readily available in the new supermarkets. The imbrication of tradition and modernity and their knowing performance of non-modernity has a theatrical precedent in the 'Stage Irishman', often invoked in *Campaign* editorials.

### 'Stage Irish' Design

According to the theatre scholar Lionel Pilkington, 'Stage Irishmen' appear in English and Irish drama from as early as the 1580s.<sup>471</sup> However, Christopher Fitz-Simons in *The Irish Theatre* argues that the Stage Irishman was 'a nineteenth-century phenomenon'.<sup>472</sup> Fitz-Simons appears to distinguish between such baldly racist stereotypes as Shakespeare's Captain Macmorris in *Henry V*,<sup>473</sup> and the Stage Irishman 'proper', a character written and performed by an Irish person, usually for the English or American stage, but often equally popular in

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<sup>469</sup> 'Comment', *Irish Management*, Vol. 8, No. 11 (November, 1961), 395.

<sup>470</sup> I am drawing here on Gibbon's parallel argument about the relationship between projections of Ireland sponsored by Bord Fáilte and the Irish Development Authority in the 1980s. 'The implication ... is that the dynamic image of Ireland as a high-tech paradise projected by the IDA is incompatible with the image of Ireland as an unspoiled romantic paradise promoted by Bord Fáilte.' Luke Gibbons 'Coming out of Hibernation? The Myth of Modernization in Irish Culture', *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 86. He goes on to demonstrate that they are not mutually exclusive: IDA advertising is replete with images of romantic Ireland. Like tourist imagery, it presents Ireland as an empty, unspoiled landscape—here a tabula rasa for the industrial ambitions of the foreign investor.

<sup>471</sup> Lionel Pilkington, 'The Stage Irishman' in *Theatre and the State in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 10.

<sup>472</sup> Christopher Fitz-Simons, *The Irish Theatre* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983), 100.

<sup>473</sup> MacMorris's character is a stereotypical 'fighting' Irishman. Speaking in 'brogue', he famously declares: 'What ish my nation? Ish a villain and a bastard and a knave and a rascal.' Quoted in Lionel Pilkington 'The Stage Irishman' in *Theatre and the State in Twentieth-Century Ireland*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 13-14.

Dublin. Its most famous exponent was Dion Boucicault (1822-1890), of whose work George Bernard Shaw wrote, 'the worst Stage Irishmen are often real Irishmen.'<sup>474</sup> However, Boucicault was attempting to 'update' and 'improve' the Stage Irishman. Contemporary (Irish and British) reviewers pointed to the authenticity of Boucicault's Irish characters 'an authenticity contributed to by the fact that Boucicault was Irish.'<sup>475</sup> Like the image constructed for the tourist, it was a 'traditional', pre-modern image constructed in modernity. It presented 'Irishness' as the authentic, if primitive, antithesis of the audience's own modernity. There are more direct associations with tourist imagery: Boucicault's plays were also widely admired for the authenticity of their scenery and set design. As Deirdre McFeely writes, the reviews of his plays 'attested to the authenticity of the scenery and by referring to Kerry's tourist industry point to the fact that Boucicault was portraying a marketable image of Ireland.'<sup>476</sup>

The pernicious effect of the Stage Irishman on the national image was one of the targets of the Literary Revival in the 1890s.<sup>477</sup> Lady Gregory wrote: 'We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism.'<sup>478</sup> Pilkington points out that what 'buffoonery' and 'ancient idealism' have in common is 'their assumption of a single fixed identity that can be established as nationally representative and that is at a distance from the contemporary modernity of the audience.'<sup>479</sup> This echoes Declan Kiberd's critique of the Revivalists:

The modern English, seeing themselves secular, progressive and rational, had deemed the neighbouring islanders to be superstitious, backward and irrational. The strategy of the Revivalists thus became clear: for bad words substitute good, for superstitious use religious, for backwards say traditional, for irrational suggest emotional.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Bernard Shaw, 'Dear Harp of My Country' (a review of Boucicault's *The Colleen Bawn*, 1896) in *Dramatic Opinions and Essays Volume 1*. (New York: Brenato's, 1922), 328.

<sup>475</sup> Deirdre McFeely, *Dion Boucicault: Irish Identity on Stage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 26. See also Declan Kiberd, 'The fall of the Stage Irishman' in *The Irish Writer and the World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 21-41.

<sup>476</sup> Deirdre McFeely, *Dion Boucicault: Irish Identity on Stage*, 26.

<sup>477</sup> The Irish Literary Theatre, the main cultural centre of the Celtic Revival, founded in 1898 by Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory.

<sup>478</sup> Quoted in Pilkington, 'The Stage Irishman', 11-12.

<sup>479</sup> Pilkington, 'The Stage Irishman', 12.

<sup>480</sup> Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 30.

Kiberd argues that the Irish gave up the opportunity to imagine themselves in favour of becoming the reflection of the English, who projected onto the blank screen of Ireland. 'The negative aspect was painfully obvious in that the process left the English with the power of description and the Irish succumbing to the picture which they had constructed.'<sup>481</sup>

The parallel danger here was that CTT's strategy of employing designers from the target market was that it allowed for a visual construction of the modern nation by groups who already understood it in stereotypical terms, regardless of how flattering those terms might be. By contrast, Pilkington argues that the Stage Irishman —who was, after all, a *clown*— could be subversive, making statements and asking questions that 'straight' Irish characters could not.<sup>482</sup> In addition, Boucicault, the modern actor, would have recognised the distinction between his own Irishness and that of the character he was playing, however 'authentic' the role or the performance. This ability of the Stage Irishman to perform Irishness while observing it seems to have informed the invention in 1961 of 'Lucius O'Trigger PhD', a satirical columnist on export and national image in *Irish Management* who takes his name from that of a Stage Irishman in R.B. Sheridan's 1775 play, *The Rivals* (Figs 48 & 49). For *Irish Management's* O'Trigger, such stereotypes were not pernicious *per se*, they simply needed to be 'updated'. He called for 'a contemporary Stage-Irishman to act as a national Aunt Sally to exorcise the memory of ... 19<sup>th</sup>-century over-simplifications and exaggerations.'<sup>483</sup> In the following section, I examine how Irish exporters used 'Ireland' as a referent for their export products, especially generic commodity exports, meaning that the symbolism used in export design and promotion, reflected and conditioned the image of the nation more generally.

## Selling Ireland: 'collective' branding

The effects of the new, outward-looking 'Programme for Economic Expansion' were most obvious in those state-run bodies which dealt with the promotion of Ireland abroad – CTT, Aer Lingus, the Irish national airline, Bord Fáilte, the Irish Tourist Board, and An Bord Bainne, the Irish Dairy Board. Drawing on the literature on tourism, this section will examine the parallel area of export promotion in the construction of an international identity for Ireland. In particular, it will focus on areas of 'generic' advertising and promotion, whereby state-

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<sup>481</sup> Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 32.

<sup>482</sup> Pilkington 'The Stage Irishman', 12.

<sup>483</sup> 'Lucius O'Trigger', '... And How Does She Look?', *Irish Management* Vol. 8, No. 11, (November, 1961), 407.

funded campaigns promoted categories of Irish commodities abroad. The difference between these campaigns and earlier projects, such as the work of the Pigs and Bacon Commission for example, was that the goods were now being promoted as distinctive, Irish, brands, rather than simply raw materials that were desirable in terms of price or quality.<sup>484</sup>

I demonstrate that the main referent for the value of these brands was an *image of Ireland*. In this there was an attempt to create a deliberate synergy between export commodity promotion and tourist promotion. However, unlike design for Aer Lingus or Bord Fáilte, which was largely the work of Dutch designers working in Dublin, the majority of the export design was not carried out in Ireland. Instead, the image of the nation was constructed by and for foreign markets, to the indignation of Irish designers as represented by the ICAD.

In 1955, CTT's *Exporters Newsletter* ran an article from 'Our American Correspondent' entitled 'Trademark: The Merchandising Talisman.' He wrote, 'Your trademark can, and should, sell IRELAND as well, and trademarks of products for export to the U.S. should fairly breathe that name.'<sup>485</sup> By the late 1950s, it was taken for granted among the modernising elite at *Irish Management* that every Irish export was also promoting Ireland. An editorial cautioned that:

Ireland is a new arrival on the scene of international commerce, and our business methods as well as our products are under close scrutiny. We have not have the opportunity of building up a reputation for reliability and it can only be expected, therefore, that even an occasional lapse from the normally accepted standards will rebound not solely on the individual firm responsible but on our businesses in general.<sup>486</sup>

By the beginning of the 1960s, the term 'brand image' had become commonplace enough in

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<sup>484</sup> Mike Cronin, 'Selling Irish Bacon: The Empire Marketing Board and Artists of the Free State,' *Éire-Ireland* Vol. 39, No. 3 (2004): 132-143. Mary E. Daly, 'An Irish-Ireland for Business?: The Control of Manufactures Acts, 1932 and 1934,' *Irish Historical Studies* (1984): 246-272.

<sup>485</sup> *Exporter's Newsletter* No. 5 (September-October, 1955), 19. This is an early use of the term. Through the 1950s, the term 'house style' was used to describe the design of a company's corporate communications (usually centred around stationery and livery). 'Corporate image' gained currency in the 1960s, especially with the publication of FHK Henrion and Alan Parkin's *Design Coordination and Corporate Image* in 1967. See David Preston, 'Co-ordinated Design Policy and the Shift from One-Off designs to Comprehensive Design Systems,' in *Design Frontiers: Territories, Concepts, Technologies; Proceedings of the 8th Conference of the International Committee for Design History & Design Studies* edited by Priscila Lena Farias and Anna Calvera, (São Paulo: ICDHS, 2012). Wally Olins popularised the term 'Corporate Identity' in the late 1970, while 'branding', which Guy Julier glosses as the convergence of design and advertising, became the dominant term from the early 1990s. Guy Julier 'Design Production' in *The Culture of Design* (London: Sage, 2000): 19-37.

<sup>486</sup> 'Comment', *Irish Management*, Vol. 8, No. 11 (November, 1961), 395.

Irish business for Lucius O'Tigger to dedicate a column in *Irish Management* to the phrase, which he described as being, with 'Common Market', 'the most guff-provoking formula of 1961.'<sup>487</sup> The linkage is telling: Ireland's bid to join what would become the EEC led to a renewed interest in projecting a modern image for the nation. O'Tigger also explicitly linked 'Brand image' with design, lamenting 'our relative lack of sophistication in the matter of design in general' but noting that some of the most useful contributions on the subject of the brand image 'have been largely concerned with the brand image of Ireland.'<sup>488</sup> Citing the Republican ballad 'The Wearing of the Green', O'Tigger suggested its most famous line 'How's poor old Ireland; and how does she stand?', needed 'bringing up to date: ... 'How's poor old Ireland; And how does she *look?*'<sup>489</sup>

'...And how does she look?' became the title for O'Tigger's series of occasional humorous articles on projection of the national image. The change from 'stand', in the sense of political readiness in the original to 'look' is significant. It suggests a move away from a community imagined as 'standing together', fellow participants in a struggle for a democratic republic, towards an idea of identity as something performed and available for consumption.

O'Tigger, clearly in tune with the aims of the modernising elite, saw nothing worrying in this change. His concern was with 'lack of sophistication' in design and 'the traditional time-lag' which meant that 'the majority of Irish managements wouldn't know a brand image if it bit them in the ankle.'<sup>490</sup> While 'nation branding' is generally seen as a late twentieth-century marketing strategy, described by Sue Curry Jansen as 'an engine of neo-liberalism ... which privileges market relations (market fundamentalism) in articulation of national identity...'<sup>491</sup>, there is a definite foreshadowing of its erosion of community self-determination in Lucius O'Tigger's unproblematic embrace of 'stage-Irishry'.

In contrast to his editor at *Irish Management*, O'Tigger recognised the value of the 'tourist image' for Irish business, attributing an improvement in Ireland's international reputation to 'the day-to-day work of our State agencies in aviation, tourism and trade...'<sup>492</sup> Certainly, the

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<sup>487</sup> 'Lucius O'Tigger', '... And How Does She Look?', *Irish Management* Vol. 8, No. 11, (November, 1961), 406.

<sup>488</sup> 'Lucius O'Tigger', '... And How Does She Look?', 406.

<sup>489</sup> The ballad commemorated General James Napper Tandy, a hero of the 1798 Rebellion.

<sup>490</sup> 'Lucius O'Tigger', '... And How Does She Look?', 406.

<sup>491</sup> Sue Curry Jansen, 'Designer Nations: Neo-Liberal Nation Branding—Brand Estonia,' *Social Identities* Vol. 14, No. 1 (2008), 121.

<sup>492</sup> 'Lucius O'Tigger', '... And How Does She Look?', 406.

three agencies worked closely together: they shared premises in New York and Montreal; tourist films were shown at export displays; the three collaborated on stands for exhibitions and trade fairs and there was much interchange of staff. In addition, from 1956, they jointly organised an annual 'Irish Week' on London's Regent Street coinciding with St Patrick's Day. Linda King has remarked that 'Aer Lingus's dependence on indigenous tourism development meant that it needed a close relationship with the tourist board.'<sup>493</sup> Both used the same pool of Dutch designers, 'while the practice within the sector of jointly commissioning promotional material and the shared operation of tourist bureaux in certain countries became commonplace.'<sup>494</sup> While CTT did not engage the same designers as the other agencies, at least not for export promotion, there was some overlap in the strategies used to promote Ireland. King describes this approach as one 'where the visualization of national geographies is presented as exemplifying Ireland's difference for the potential tourist.'<sup>495</sup> So, if Irish export promotion was part of a wider contemporary drive to project an image of Ireland, which Ireland would it sell – Industrial or Romantic? In fact, of course, it sold both, depending on the market.

## Tradition and modernity in export promotion

### Part 1 CTT's image in the United States

In common with most western European economies in the immediate post-war years, Ireland had a significant dollar deficit in the early 1950s. This was the main reason why CTT was established, first in 1950 as the Dollar Export Advisory Committee and then as the statutory body, Corás Tráchtála Teo. In 1952 it commissioned a group of US consultants to report on the prospects for various Irish products in the dollar markets. Their results were published in 1953. The recommendations included improving the look of Irish packaging, and 'building on strength', in other words focusing on areas such as tweed, bloodstock, whiskey and meat exports, which already had a profile in the dollar markets. Following this advice, CTT engaged

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<sup>493</sup> Linda King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze: Dutch Influences and Aer Lingus Tourism Posters, 1951-1961' in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 170.

<sup>494</sup> King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze', 170.

<sup>495</sup> King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze', 170. As King points out, an added dimension for was that the Dutch designers were themselves recent immigrants to Ireland and their own exploration of their new home informed their design and illustrations.

in what they called 'Collective Effort' projects, where a number of firms would collaborate to produce a single branded product. In common with contemporary tourist promotion, they used real Irish place names and landscape imagery. In its first three years CTT developed 'Donegal Tweed' and 'Limerick Canned Meat'.<sup>496</sup> The use of place-names as part of the brand harked back to an earlier era of commerce, when goods were routinely associated with their place of origin.<sup>497</sup> In Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century a sizeable range of local products were still 'named simply after their place of production.... Amongst these were Balbriggan hosiery; a name which in the nineteenth century had achieved the status of a common noun; Tullamore Dew and Bushmills (whiskey); Dripsey and Blarney (tweeds) and many others.'<sup>498</sup> There were also a number of brands named after the nation, including National Raincoat, National Boiler, National Brand underwear and the Protection-era coffee-substitute, Irel coffee essence.

CTT's first collective project brought together six Irish meat exporters to produce standard packs for the North American market under the common brand Limerick Canned Meat. It was not a success.<sup>499</sup> The abiding problem encountered with exporting meat was the price differential. There was very little that could be done to influence the price set by the international market on export of agricultural produce and raw materials. Corás Tráchtála learned from this that the only area where they could influence price and demand was in manufactured, and especially branded, goods.<sup>500</sup> By 1958 they were able to boast that 'the year 1957-8 was a record one for Irish exports,<sup>501</sup> with an increase of 23% over two years. The main increase came from foodstuffs and manufactured goods, these products were the

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<sup>496</sup> Corás Tráchtála, First Annual Report, (1952-1953), 13. The former appears to have been carried out by DRU.

<sup>497</sup> Jane Pavitt, 'In Goods We Trust,' in *Brand New*, edited by Jane Pavitt (London: V&A, 2000), 32. 'As historian and anthropologist James Carrier has pointed out, until the 1800s consumers were unlikely to associate goods with the name of the manufacturer, importer or distributor. Goods were more likely to be thought of in terms of the retailer or the place of origin – French lace, Scotch Whisky and so on.' Pavitt, 'In Goods We Trust,' 33.

<sup>498</sup> Bernard Share, 'In Our Own Image: The Branding of Industrial Ireland,' *History Ireland Vol. 6*, No. 4, (Winter 1998): 31-35.

<sup>499</sup> The project was described as 'useful in showing up a number of points on which improvement will be necessary.' Corás Tráchtála, First Annual Report, (1952-1953), 13.

<sup>500</sup> 'Open-market items, whose sale depends more on price than on promotional efforts were 78% of total dollar exports in 1951; last year they constituted only 40%. Manufactures, on the other hand, which were less than 19% of the total in 1951 advanced to 44% last year.' T.K. Whitaker, 'Why We Need to Export Overseas' *Administration*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1955), 55.

<sup>501</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Sixth Annual Report (1957-8), 5.



most 'susceptible to promotional methods and ...the type of stimulus which we can provide.'<sup>502</sup>

In fact, when it came to dollar trade, export revenue provided only a tiny fraction of the total income. Any increase in Ireland's dollar earnings in the 1950s was occasioned not by industry or export but by such sentimental factors as emigrants' remittances, tourism (including dollar purchases at Shannon Airport) and sales of Irish Sweepstakes tickets. These made up 87.5% of the total income in 1954 and were increasing.<sup>503</sup> In this context, it is not surprising that CTT attempted to tap the buying power of the diaspora. In 1954, they sent '30,000 specially worded letters, sent mainly from Dublin, and dealing with tweed overcoats, shoes and general products' as part of a direct mail campaign to Americans with Irish surnames.<sup>504</sup> Together with the links to tourist promotion, this situation may explain why they presented an almost exclusively nostalgic (rather than industrial) image to the American market.

As well as seeking export opportunities, CTT's activity in the United States and Canada had a strong promotional aspect

Our activity in this field in the United States can be summarised as five fashion shows and special promotions, twelve exhibitions, two series of window displays in airline offices throughout the country, sixteen special promotions in the Press, and about twenty radio and television appearances...<sup>505</sup>

Figure 50 shows one such exhibition promoting Irish tweeds and fashion garments. It was held in Ireland House, CTT's newly redesigned New York premises reopened by Sean Lemass in January 1956. The display conforms to one nostalgic construction of 'romantic', 'mythical' Ireland, referencing past times, the rural and nature. The fabrics themselves, supposedly the subject of the exhibition, are consigned to one wall, while the centrepiece is a life-size Irish colleen, dressed in flowing robes, playing an enormous harp. She is positioned on a plinth made of turf, festooned with shamrock and daffodils. The harp is not a traditional Irish one, but a large concert harp and is positioned the wrong way round for playing.<sup>506</sup> Two mannequins dressed in hunting tweeds stand either side of a nineteenth century grandfather clock – a rather obvious reference to historical time. This construction clearly referenced

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<sup>502</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Sixth Annual Report (1957-8), 6.

<sup>503</sup> Whitaker, 'Why We Need to Export Overseas,' 55.

<sup>504</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Third Annual Report (1954-5), 15.

<sup>505</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Third Annual Report (1954-5), 14.

<sup>506</sup> I am grateful to Sarah Teasley for pointing out these facts.

strategies used to promote Ireland to the potential tourist, which themselves echoed how the country was imagined in nineteenth century colonial literature. As Joe Cleary puts it, Ireland was:

construed as a sublime periphery to the European mainstream, a place that was out of the world, beyond the world, an alternative to the world. Viewed thus, Ireland becomes almost wholly identified with 'tradition,' the latter conceived from this perspective, however, in a positive sense not as a lamentable obstacle to progress (as 'tradition' is typically construed in modernization discourses) but as a repository of all those values lost or about to be lost in the destructive maelstrom of 'progress'.<sup>507</sup>

Similar values would eventually inform the publicity in CTT's more successful 'collective effort', the campaign to increase exports of Irish whiskey to the United States which began in 1953.

### **Distilling the nation**

CTT's third annual report stated: 'Whiskey satisfies the requirements of a first-class item for export in that its production is backed by traditional skill and by the availability at home of first quality raw materials.'<sup>508</sup> So the company found it 'startling... that 50% of the whiskey drinkers questioned had never even heard of Irish whiskey.'<sup>509</sup> Comments in the Dáil from the 1940s onwards reflected deputies' surprise that Irish whiskey was not more popular in the United States, especially among the diaspora.<sup>510</sup>

Corás Tráchtála's initial research showed that several factors had inhibited the development of a market for Irish Whiskey. First of all, Irish exporters had not been prepared for Prohibition in 1919 and their export lines were badly damaged. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, 'distillers in Ireland found themselves unready to come back to market. With whiskey maturing in a seven-year cycle, they simply did not have enough ready-

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<sup>507</sup> Joe Cleary, 'Introduction: Ireland and Modernity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, edited by Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10.

<sup>508</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Third Annual Report (1954-5), 9.

<sup>509</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Second Annual Report (1953-4), 3.

<sup>510</sup> A statement by William Norton, opposition spokesperson on Industry and Commerce in 1958, is typical: 'At many Irish functions in America you would not see Irish whiskey served at all or, if you did, it would be a negligible proportion of the total offered and consumed at a banquet. There should be an enormous potential goodwill for Irish whiskey in America. There are 20,000,000 people of Irish birth or extraction there. We ought to have some special heart-call to them to help the motherland by buying Irish whiskey if they want to drink whiskey at all. How to tap that goodwill has to be thought out in such a way that we shall be able to indent on that potential patronage for the sales of Irish whiskey in America.' William Norton, 'Committee on Finance, Vote 50: Industry and Commerce,' *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 171 (25 November, 1958), 844.

matured whiskey to satisfy American's thirst – and thus Scotch whisky, once the outsider, gained a foothold.<sup>511</sup> In the meantime, the reputation of Irish whiskey had been damaged, as bootleggers in the US sold 'inferior' spirits as Irish product. In 1949 the then Minister for Industry and Commerce, Daniel Morrissey, announced that 'following representations made by the Irish Minister at Washington to the United States Department of State, the words 'Irish type' have been prohibited for use on any whiskey not actually manufactured in Ireland.'<sup>512</sup> This was the beginning of the construction of a brand for Irish whiskey that would link directly to the reputation of the nation. The second problem that CTT encountered was the matter of taste: research showed that American whiskey drinkers preferred a lighter, blended whiskey, more in the manner of Scotch. Traditional Irish whiskey, often referred to as 'Pot Still' was considered too strong. The initial solution to this problem was to focus on promotion of 'Irish Coffee', itself an invention of the Irish tourist and aviation industries.<sup>513</sup>

The main problem, however, was simply a lack of awareness of the existence of Irish whiskey as a category distinct from Scotch or Bourbon. CTT drew four initial conclusions from their research:

1. To expand sales of Irish Whiskey in the United States promotion in the American sense is needed, of an order not hitherto contemplated.
2. Co-operative 'education' advertising and publicity is an important part of such promotion.
3. Irish Pot Still Whiskey sales are capable of expansion in the United States and Canada.

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<sup>511</sup> 'House of the Spirit' Joanne Hunt, *'The Irish Times' Ireland's Best Snugs 2010*, a supplement with the *Irish Times*; Sponsored by Powers Whiskey, (November 19, 2010), 14.

<sup>512</sup> 'Irish Whiskey in America', *Dáil Éireann Ceisteanna: Oral Answers*, (24 November, 1949).

<sup>513</sup> 'Food is often invented for the benefit of tourists. Irish coffee, devised by the barman at Shannon Airport and frequently served in England, is an obvious example,' Venetia J. Newall, 'The Adaptation of Folklore and Tradition (Folklorismus)' *Folklore*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (1987), 141. 'Irish' coffee is said to have been invented in 1942 by chef Joe Sheridan for the consumption of tourists on the Pan Am layover at Foynes, later Shannon, airport in Co Clare. It was popularised by an American travel writer, Stanton Delaplane who persuaded Jack Koeppler, the owner of the Buena Vista Café in San Francisco, to start making it. Buena Vista was one of the largest single importers of Irish whiskey, accounting for almost one-twelfth of all US annual consumption. Koeppler was interviewed by the *Irish Times* on the occasion of his first visit to Ireland in 1955: he professed himself disappointed that Irish coffee was not widely available in Ireland. *Irish Times*, April 25, 1955. The first mention of 'Irish Coffee' in the *Irish Times*, was in a 1946 satirical attack by 'Quidnunc' on the tourist purveyors of the County Wicklow seaside town of Bray who were accused of attempting to provide for their new English tourist trade 'an imitation of how we think that the boarding-house keepers of Southend would cater for a party of mill-girls from Bootle.' *The Irish Times*, July 26, 1946. Irish Coffee can be considered part of an ersatz experience, constructed to conform to the tourist's idea of how Ireland should be.

4. A considerable volume of sales may be expected for a lighter blended Irish whiskey.<sup>514</sup>

CTT found Irish distillers initially reluctant to engage in 'collective effort' despite being reassured that it 'would not involve any loss of existing brand identities.' However, Middleton, Cork and Tullamore Distilleries agreed to co-operate in formatting a new company, Irish Distillers Limited, which would produce a blended whiskey for export only, so as not to affect their own brand at home.<sup>515</sup> The new whiskey would be bottled in Ireland but promoted and distributed by The American Distilling Company, whose initial order for approximately 30,000 gallons constituted 'an amount greater than the total exports of Irish whiskey to the United States in 1954.'<sup>516</sup> Despite the high hopes, the new brand, trademarked 'Dunphy's Original Irish' Irish Whiskey by the American Distilling Company in December 1957, does not seem to have been the key to changing American perceptions of Irish Whiskey. There was a marked increase in exports to the United States from 1955 onwards, but a disgruntled member of the opposition pointed out in the Dáil that the income was hardly worth the expenditure:

...we sold less than £92,000 worth [of Irish whiskey] to America in spite of the fact that this House voted £50,000 to Corás Tráchtála Teoranta to sell Irish whiskey to America and that another £25,000 as a minimum went into the advertising campaign from the distillers. A total of £75,000 was spent in one year on a publicity campaign and in the year prior to that the sales of the whiskey reached only £90,000.<sup>517</sup>

It was clear that a much greater degree of collaborative effort was needed. In 1958, CTT published a special edition of their *Exporters Newsletter* dedicated to their efforts in promoting Irish Whiskey in the United States and chronicling the development of a high-profile print campaign in the *New Yorker* magazine. 'Joint effort', it declared, was vital for success in this market. While each distiller continued to promote their own particular brand all were 'united in efforts to popularize Irish Whiskey as a drink.' All Irish whiskey exporters, including Bushmills from Northern Ireland, were now involved in the 'institutional' advertising campaign:

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<sup>514</sup> Corás Tráchtála Third Annual Report (1954-5), 9.

<sup>515</sup> Both Middleton and Tullamore already offered their own brands on the American market. D.E. Williams, owners of Tullamore had trademarked Tullamore Dew in the US in 1954.

<sup>516</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Third Annual Report (1954-5), 10.

<sup>517</sup> John McQuillan, 'Adjournment Debate: Exports of Blended Whiskey,' *Dáil Éireann Debates* Vol. 174, (8 April, 1959).

For the distillers' joint or 'institutional' campaign, the problem is not *which* type of Irish whiskey to push. It is rather to get favourable attention for 'Irish', whether blend or pot still as a quality product, as drink worthy of the discriminating. If this can be accomplished it is more advantageous than otherwise that there should be some variety between the various brands, thus affording scope for the exercise of individual tastes.<sup>518</sup>

The advertising was handled by the newly-established San Francisco agency of Weiner and Gossage. (Figs 51-53). Howard Gossage was renowned for his iconoclastic approach to advertising, which often involved audience participation: he famously ran a competition for the Quantas airline that had a live kangaroo as a prize.<sup>519</sup> Thomas Frank, in his account of the emergence of 'anti-advertising advertising' has described the Irish Whiskey campaign as 'a studied effort to deviate as forcefully as possible from the predominant advertising styles of the day.'<sup>520</sup> The campaign had two main aims, to 'speak of the flavour in realistic terms' and to 'build a new image of Ireland to convey its message.'<sup>521</sup> The first point related to the tendency of Irish exporters to hide the flavour of whiskey in Irish coffee. Gossage invented a 'battle' between Irish whiskey and Irish coffee and framed the campaign in those terms, engaging the audience and asking them to take sides:

In short, involve Americans in Ireland and Irish Whiskey. It will be necessary to establish the true character of Irish Whiskey itself without neglecting the foothold achieved by Irish Coffee. At first blush, these two would seem to be inimical, and they are. But herein lies strength. There is, to be sure, a controversy and perhaps the best thing we can do is to bring the controversy out into the open – make it a public issue. This can be done in a highly diverting way, we think. Result: promotion of other uses of Irish Whiskey and the boosting of Irish Coffee to boot...<sup>522</sup>

Two 'camps' were imagined: 'Pride' was for those who liked their whiskey neat; 'Profit' for those who preferred the allegedly more 'profitable' Irish coffee. One advert was headed: 'Has Irish Whiskey sold its birthright for a mess of Coffee Pottage?' Readers were encouraged to write to Irish Whiskey Distillers care of a Dublin post office box stating their preference and in

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<sup>518</sup> 'Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.', *Exporters Newsletter Special Issue* (December 1958), 6.

<sup>519</sup> Kim B. Rotzoll, 'Gossage Revisited: Reflections of Advertising's Legendary Iconoclast', *Journal of Advertising* Vol. 9, No. 4 (1980): 6-42.

<sup>520</sup> Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (London & Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997), 77.

<sup>521</sup> 'Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.', *Exporters Newsletter Special Issue* (December 1958). The language of a modern American advertising agency itself seems to have been a novelty. CTT presented verbatim the report they received from the in June 1958. Weiner and Gossage were allowed to persuade the reader in the terms they persuaded CTT.

<sup>522</sup> 'Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.' 8.

return they would receive a badge bearing the legend 'Pride' or 'Profit', 'The lovely stamp you'll get on the return envelope alone is worth the effort, not to mention the brave badge...' 10,000 'enthusiastic letters were received in a relatively short time.'<sup>523</sup> The *Exporters Review* reprinted a selection of the letters received, which were far from exclusively written by Irish-Americans. Regardless of ancestry, many of the writers believed that the ads had been created in Ireland. Two examples may suffice to give a flavour of the correspondence:

Broxville Road, Bronxville, New York

Your series of ads. in recent and current issues of the *New Yorker* warmed the cockles of the heart of this three-generations-removed-from-the-old-sod Irish-American. All my forebears on both sides of the family are from Kerry... Enclosed is my coupon for a 'Pride' badge... I'll wear the badge with pride that the Irish not only make such wonderful whiskey but have the imagination to devise the ads. appearing in the *New Yorker*.<sup>524</sup>

Chestnut Street, Ashville, North Carolina.

To be quite honest, Irish whiskey has not been a crashing issue in my life. All has changed... Your ad. has been a joy. I wish some of our advertisers would import more clever ideas along with the booze.<sup>525</sup>

Weiner and Gossage argued that advertising Irish whiskey was really about building a national brand, 'a new image of Ireland'. They explicitly rejected the Stage Irishman,

This image should be a realistic one to dispel the shillelagh-carrying, bog-trotting, leprechaun-ridden, 'top-o'-the-mornin'' Irishman. He was a good enough fellow but the trouble is he never quite existed in Ireland. Let us instead of sentiment and bathos, cultivate lively interest and meaningful conjecture.<sup>526</sup>

By invoking the stereotype of the Stage Irishman, Wiener and Gossage were then able to dispatch him, and promise to present 'real Ireland', flattering to the client and reinforcing the stereotype of Ireland as somehow 'authentic.' The success of this strategy to promote Ireland as a sophisticated, literary place is demonstrated in the comments noted above that readers believed the ads were written in Ireland. This authentic Ireland for the American advertisers was to be first 'projected in the expression and attitudes of the copy itself.'<sup>527</sup> Ireland was framed as 'literary': the ads consisted of full pages of faux-naïve, humorous text, in a deliberately archaised setting. According to Gossage, he and his colleagues 'developed a

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<sup>523</sup> Corás Tráchtála Seventh Annual Report (1958-9), 15. By the following year, they had received 30,000 letters.

<sup>524</sup> 'Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.', 43.

<sup>525</sup> 'Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.', 38.

<sup>526</sup> 'Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.', 8.

<sup>527</sup> 'Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.' 8.

feeling for the Irish culture from the 12<sup>th</sup> [sic] century Book of Kells.<sup>528</sup> The adverts attempted to capture the Irish ‘attitude and tone of language’.<sup>529</sup> The copy delights in verbosity and garrulousness, each ad finishes in the middle of a sentence, which resumes at the start of the next advert, a ‘teaser’ approach that also suggests the unstoppable flow of Irish talk. The campaign’s ideal audience (the ‘taste makers’) was itself literary and literate and the expectation was that they would read, not just look at the adverts.

At the top of the pyramid of influence are writers, journalists, men in the broadcasting and telecasting industries, and advertising men. They are an unusually verbal lot, and because they have resources for disseminating their opinion, ideas placed with them are liable to achieve currency beyond what one would ordinarily expect.<sup>530</sup>

Thomas Frank has written of the ads’ novelty:

Appearing as a long series of instalments, each one consisted of a full page of words, densely packed and forbidding, and written in a long-winded Irish-sounding vernacular as distant from ‘advertisingese’ as the campaign’s eighteenth-century illustrations were from the immaculate, full-color renderings that accompanied the standard liquor advertising of the era.<sup>531</sup>

The ‘Irish-sounding vernacular’ recalls Roland Barthes’s observation about ‘Italianicity’ in the branding of Italian convenience food in ‘The Rhetoric of the Image’.<sup>532</sup> He wrote that ‘the sign Panzani gives not simply the name of the firm but also, by its assonance, an additional signified, that of “Italianicity”’.<sup>533</sup> Barthes argued that this connotation is based on the differential nature of the sign, it was specifically aimed at the French market, ‘(an Italian would barely perceive the connotation of the name, no more probably than he would the Italianicity of tomato and pepper), based on a familiarity with certain tourist stereotypes.’<sup>534</sup> Likewise, the understanding of the tone of the language in the ads as ‘Irish-sounding’, i.e. distinctive, was a specifically non-Irish knowledge. However, it would not be true to say that the Irish ‘barely perceived’ these connotations. The forensic way in which CTT examined the campaign demonstrated a desire to understand Ireland ‘as others see us’.<sup>535</sup> The campaign met with media approval, endorsing the view that the ads reversed traditional stereotypes.

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<sup>528</sup> Rotzoll, ‘Gossage Revisited’, 13. The Book of Kells dates from the ninth century.

<sup>529</sup> Rotzoll, ‘Gossage Revisited’, 13.

<sup>530</sup> ‘Irish Whiskey: An Account of the Current Sales Promotion Campaign in the U.S.A.’, 9.

<sup>531</sup> Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 77.

<sup>532</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The Rhetoric of the Image’ *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 32-51

<sup>533</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The Rhetoric of the Image’, 33.

<sup>534</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The Rhetoric of the Image’, 34.

<sup>535</sup> ‘As others see us’ *Irish Independent*, February 2, 1962.

One headline read, 'Pride is Selling Irish Whiskey at a Profit, Sans Leprechauns.' The importance of this external approbation is underlined by the inclusion of a photographic montage of headlines from the American Press on a fold-out page in the 1958-9 CTT annual report. (Figure 54) Rather than incorporating them in the text, they are given special, and costly, visual prominence. Bernard Share and Bill Bolger's advertising for Janus, discussed below, used a similar 'Irish sounding vernacular',<sup>536</sup> whether this was coincidental or directly inspired by Gossage, it nevertheless demonstrates that aspects of the whiskey campaign were endorsed by Irish designers as an 'authentic' mode of projecting Ireland. While Frank sees the 'soft' tone, 'confiding, friendly, personal, and even a little hapless', as evidence for Gossage's anti-advertising advertising,<sup>537</sup> the terms also suited a particular construction of Ireland, as old-fashioned without being old-fogey. Frank notes the 'bizarre' statement in one ad that 'Progress is perhaps our least important product.'<sup>538</sup> In the context of a wider construction of Ireland as a place outside of modernity, a romantic repository for lost authenticity (conveniently recoverable via consumption) such a statement makes perfect sense.

## Part 2 Irish exports and publicity in the United Kingdom

Ireland's economic relationship with America was relatively uncontroversial, not so its dealings with its largest export market, the United Kingdom. The years of Protectionism and the so-called Economic War with Britain had equated patriotism with self-sufficiency and hardened attitudes to trade with the 'old enemy'. It wasn't until 1957 that Lemass, within months of Fianna Fáil's return to power, extended the functions of Córas Tráchtála to include Britain and instituted a major reorganisation of the company's structure.<sup>539</sup> This was a statement of Lemass's rejection of Protectionism and his faith in exports as the way out of economic decline as well as his ability 'to distinguish modernisation from Anglicization.'<sup>540</sup> Hugh Campbell writes: 'No longer would Ireland have to package every modernising scheme in ultranationalist clothing for fear that it might otherwise be seen as a pernicious

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<sup>536</sup> Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 77.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Corás Tráchtála, *Sixth Annual Report (1957-58)*.

<sup>540</sup> J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-85* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 242.



influence.<sup>541</sup>

As noted earlier, CTT considered that the British market would be tougher to satisfy than American buyers. The question of differentiation from British goods was of paramount concern: 'If they lack that distinctiveness, they must rely on a price advantage over comparable British products — a condition which, for a variety of reasons, few of our products satisfy.'<sup>542</sup> Even before they were promoting exports to the British market, CTT opened a trade centre in London's Regent Street in 1955. It was described by the chairman as 'modernly designed and attractively appointed'.<sup>543</sup> Irish firms paid an annual fee to be included in the permanent displays and every season the showrooms would hold specially themed exhibitions – such as Irish footwear (Figure 56). The centre occupied two floors of Regent House, providing on the ground floor a permanent exhibition of Irish export products whose manufacturers had paid for the 'A' service. There were 25 of these firms who received a standing display and full use of the Board's services. They included the minority of firms, such as Irish Ropes, John Maguire, Gaeltarra Eireann and Gateaux Cakes, who employed the services of professional designers. These were the firms that entered the 1956 exhibition, participated in the 1957 IPI packaging seminars and awards, and were among the entrants for the ICAD 'Best Sellers' advertising awards from 1960 onwards. Others were already well known exporters, such as Waterford Crystal and Guinness. Of the 25, ten were manufacturers of garments and fabrics, including linen and woollens. Five were manufactures of confectionary and cakes, three were meat packers, Guinness and the newly formed Irish Distillers represented the alcohol exporters. In addition to Waterford Crystal and Irish Ropes, the remaining products were gypsum and electric radios. A further 16 firms availed of the 'B' service which entitled firms to display samples on the first floor and to use the basic services of the Centre. The dominance of the fabric, garment and confectionary industries continued in the B participants. In addition, two other design-aware firms took spaces – Arklow Potteries and P.J. Carroll Cigarettes.

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<sup>541</sup> Hugh Campbell, 'Modern Architecture and National Identity in Ireland', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, edited by Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 297.

<sup>542</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Fourth Annual Report (1956), 12-13.

<sup>543</sup> Corás Tráchtála, Third Annual Report (1954-55), 6

The first photograph reproduced in a CTT annual report is of the Irish Export Centre (Figure 55). It is probably of the permanent exhibition on the ground floor given that Gaeltara Éireann ('A' service clients) garments are on display and the fact there appears to have been a temporary exhibition of Irish footwear running at the same time (Figure 56). The building was designed by Michael Scott while the interior treatment was by Thurloe Connolly. The decorative motif running through the space is the 'pub wall' motif devised by Patrick Scott. In stark contrast to the American display discussed above, the arrangement of the goods in the exhibition cases is quite abstract. The goods are not placed in a narrative context and do not appear to be shown in use. Fabrics are draped in artful arrangement, while packages, presumably of confectionary, are suspended geometrically in space. Women's knitwear is displayed on a grid of female torsos. Overall there are echoes of art gallery or museum displays. Hidden lighting, the restrained palate, all add a sense of sophistication.

A more direct comparison with the American image is presented by the Irish Footwear display. Instead of the clock signifying past time, here we have a telephone, connecting Ireland to the modern world, ready to take orders for shoes. As in the ground floor display, the presentation is abstract rather than representational or narrative. The connotations are of urban modernity, not rural tradition. Instead of the wild flowers in the American display there is a potted plant, even nature is contained. The chairs are modern, in the prevailing contemporary fashion, probably by Barney Heron, but very much in the style of British designer Ernest Race. Only the animal hide on the wall disturbs the sleekly modern aesthetic, which references the kind of 'contemporary' style associated with the Design Research Unit. With this Celtic exception, there is no trace of 'tradition' in the CTT displays in Britain in the 1950s. Only in the photographs of Ireland that frequently formed part of the exhibitions do we see something of the mythological construction of Ireland as non- or pre-modern. Like tourist publicity images, these were almost inevitably western landscapes or seascapes, devoid of people. By contrast, another Irish export body, An Bord Bainne, explicitly invoked these traditional tourist stereotypes in its promotion of a new collective brand, Kerrygold.

### **Branding butter**

A final case study of Irish export promotion in Britain, The Irish Dairy Board's Kerrygold brand, links together many of the issues raised so far. The report 'An Appraisal of Ireland's Industrial

Potentials,’ commissioned by CTT from the New York-based IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation) Technical Services Corporation in 1952 was a key source for the first ‘Programme for Economic Expansion’.<sup>544</sup> Chief among its recommendations was the immediate exploitation of Ireland’s agricultural industry through increased export of foodstuffs, which as we’ve seen, led to CTT’s initial interest in food export. In the wake of the ‘Programme for Economic Expansion’, an Advisory Committee on Marketing of Agricultural Produce in 1959 was established, which included senior members of CTT. One of the outcomes of this was the passing of the Dairy Produce Marketing Act and the establishment of the semi-state body, An Bord Baine, the Irish Dairy Board.<sup>545</sup>

The new board’s remit was limited solely to the *export* of milk-products.<sup>546</sup> It shared this exclusively extra-national marketing position with Aer Lingus. Up to this point, Irish butter had been exported wholesale, primarily to Britain, to be blended with local produce. It was all sold under the title of ‘Irish butter’ with minimum packaging and certainly no branding from individual creameries.<sup>547</sup> Even within Ireland, while local creameries used distinctive packaging, butter was sold via local monopolies as a commodity, not a brand. The decision made by An Bord Baine’s first committee was to replace Irish-butter-the-commodity with Irish-Butter-the-brand. While those involved in the process, notably the first General Manager, Sir Anthony (Tony) O’Reilly, remembered this as a totally unprecedented move; in fact the Danish government had already branded Danish butter internationally under the Lurpak name in 1957.<sup>548</sup> An Bord Baine’s task was to create an identity not just for a single product but for the combined efforts of the entire Irish dairy industry. The project was thus to brand Ireland itself and it is not surprising that there were distinct similarities between the advertising and design strategies used by Bord Baine, Aer Lingus and Bord Fáilte.

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<sup>544</sup> IBEC Technical Services Corporation (text by Stacy May) ‘An Appraisal of Ireland’s Industrial Potentials.’ (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1952). Tom Garvin, *Judging Lemass*, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009), 188. Garvin calls the IBEC report the Old Testament to T.K. Whitaker’s New Testament in reference to the latter’s blueprint for Lemass’s reforms, his report ‘Economic Development’ of June 1958, also known as ‘the Grey Book’. Garvin, *Judging Lemass*, 188 and 194.

<sup>545</sup> Patricia Lysaght, “‘Taste Kerrygold, Experience Ireland’”: An Ethnological Perspective on Food Marketing’ *Béaloideas*, Vol. 72 (2004), 69.

<sup>546</sup> Kerrygold only began to be marketed in Ireland from 1973 onwards.

<sup>547</sup> An Bord Baine, *The Bord Baine Story: Twenty-One Years of Growth in the Irish Dairy Industry* (Dublin, 1982); Information from the Cork Butter Museum.

<sup>548</sup> An Bord Baine, *The Bord Baine Story*; Information from [www.Lurpack.com](http://www.Lurpack.com)

In later years O'Reilly emphasised his own role in the construction of the Kerrygold brand, but the main architect behind its success was the London office of an American advertising agency, Benton & Bowles, who developed Kerrygold and its advertising from its inception until the 1970s, when the Dublin-based Irish International agency took over. Benton & Bowles followed the CTT model of commissioning packaging and advertising design from the destination market itself – something which raised the ire of ICAD members.<sup>549</sup> Benton & Bowles already had the Irish Pig and Bacon Commission account. According to O'Reilly, the firm 'had a reputation for solid but unimaginative creative work.'<sup>550</sup> The agency warned An Bord Bainne that the image of Ireland would need to be improved in order to sell its butter.<sup>551</sup> Research was carried out on attitudes to Irish products and 'Ireland scored very badly.'<sup>552</sup> Benton and Bowles were keenly aware that they were involved in the construction or mediation of the Irish tourist image. In an article (presumably an advertorial) in *The Irish Times* in February 1968, Douglas H Lowndes, Chairman of Benson & Bowles, invoked Stage Irish stereotypes, ostensibly to dismiss them. Note that he was writing specifically about the image of exports, but with the assumption that all consumers are potential tourists:

The old British music-hall image of the long-lipped peasant, the dubious back-kitchen butter churn, the unmade road cluttered with donkey carts is crumbling fast and being replaced with an awareness of the truth. Every tourist can see for himself that the rural charm of Ireland is increasingly interwoven with sophisticated farming installations, that the grey boiled potato is as notorious a fiction as the flaccid boiled cabbage that used to be the principal weapon of critics of English cooking and that the hired Cortina in Kinsale is the same as the one in Scarborough.<sup>553</sup>

He went on to note the links with Aer Lingus and Bord Fáilte:

...each advertising man can see the interplay between his own campaigns and those of the companies he does not handle. Between Aer Lingus and the Tourist Board, I understand, this interplay is closely planned. But, in addition, every time Kerrygold

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<sup>549</sup> Editorials in 1961-2 issues of *Campaign*, complained of Irish firms taking their advertising accounts abroad. However, the *Irish Times*' 'London Letter' of September 21, 1963 reported that the Bord Bainne stand at the Manchester Food, Cookery and Catering exhibition was designed by 'the Dublin artist Jan de Fouw'. De Fouw was one of the Dutch émigré designers working in Dublin and a member of the ICAD committee.

<sup>550</sup> Ivan Fallon, *The Player: The Life of Tony O'Reilly* (London: Coronet, 1994), 129. 'O'Reilly did not know enough about advertising to assess it – he was recommended to the firm and they accepted him, and that was enough.'

<sup>551</sup> Ivan Fallon quoted a Bord Bainne executive "While we may have been seen as having many charming characteristics, Ireland's rating as a possible food supplier was not high". Irish products did not enjoy much of a reputation in Britain." Fallon, *The Player*, 129. This was presumably despite the work that Benton & Bowles had already been doing on behalf of Ireland on the Pigs and Bacon Commission campaign.

<sup>552</sup> Ivor Samuels, 'The Launch of Kerrygold Butter', in *British Cases in Marketing*, edited by J.S. Bingham (London: Business Books, 1969), 145. Ivor Samuels was the Benton & Bowles account executive responsible to An Bord Bainne.

<sup>553</sup> Douglas H. Lowndes, 'Irish Marketing Invasion of the United Kingdom', *The Irish Times*, February 6, 1968.

prints a gorgeous colour picture of fat Irish cattle grazing by a tranquil lake, every time the Pig and Bacon Commission shows Irish bacon sizzling on an Irish pan, not only does a British reader get the flavour of Irish food, but a hint of a flavour of Ireland itself.<sup>554</sup>

In keeping with Barthes's observations about Italy, Ireland itself is presented as consumable, edible even, not just a place to escape to but one to experience, to consume directly.

In common with CTT's collective export brands, the new butter brand was named after a 'real' Irish place, County Kerry. Tony O'Reilly claims that he invented the name 'Kerrygold' because 'marketing is about imagination and ethos and image, and Kerry and Kerrygold are the image that we want[ed] to project of Ireland to the world. And the rest, as they say, is history.'<sup>555</sup> It was Kerry's international fame as a *tourist* destination, rather than as a dairying centre, that was important. Indeed, O'Reilly recalled that a member of the board pointed out 'Sure there's no bloody cows in Kerry!'<sup>556</sup> Benton and Bowles outlined what the name had to do: 'The objectives for the name were clear. It had to be a butter name and therefore have strong connotations with farms, sun, natural goodness and creaminess. It had to be an exclusively Irish name. It had to be euphonious.'<sup>557</sup> Many of the suggestions O'Reilly dismissed as 'stage Irish names such as Blarney, Colleen, Leprechaun and Shillelagh'<sup>558</sup> Despite O'Reilly's protestations the shortlist produced by the agency still contained Tub-o-gold and Leprechaun. As well as Kerrygold, the others were Buttercup and Golden Farm ('not Irish enough'<sup>559</sup>) and Shannon Gold which 'suffered from the fact that most British housewives thought about Shannon as an airport rather than a river', and was therefore ruled to be 'too modern and too mechanical in tone'.<sup>560</sup>

The design of the pack was also undertaken by Benton & Bowles.<sup>561</sup> Like the name, 'the pack had to be Irish to give it not only distinctiveness in the cold cabinet but also competitiveness

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<sup>554</sup> Lowndes, 'Irish Marketing Invasion of the United Kingdom'.

<sup>555</sup> Quoted in Lysaght, 'Taste Kerrygold, Experience Ireland', 71.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Samuels, 'The Launch of Kerrygold Butter', 148-9.

<sup>558</sup> Fallan, *The Player*, 131.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid.

<sup>561</sup> 'In an ideal world, a packaging brief would have been given to a designer and pack testing would have been undertaken before the design was finalised. In reality, the creative group working on the advertising campaign produced a series of designs from which one was selected.' Samuels, 'The Launch of Kerrygold Butter', 149.

versus the less specific 'Fernleaf', 'Anchor' etc.'<sup>562</sup> The overall symbolism is of the butter as golden ingot, such as might perhaps be found at the end of a rainbow.

The yellow floral repeat pattern is based on buttercups—wild, natural flowers—but also the rectilinear pattern created by butter-pats, which was the only marking on its precursor, wholesale-exported butter (Fig. 57). The inclusion of a silhouette of a cow 'remained as a token of the product's farm origin.'<sup>563</sup> The most striking aspect of the design is the uncial-like typographic treatment of the brand name 'Kerrygold'. As is typical of Irish typography of the period, the letterforms evoke the Irish alphabet and its national associations through generic uncial forms without actually taking the shapes of the Irish characters. The letter R for example takes the uppercase roman form, rather than the long, dagger-shaped Irish R. The D however, is given a minuscule form. The letter was often treated this way as it referenced the Irish alphabet without impairing legibility for the habitual reader of roman. Neither letter K nor Y appear in the Irish alphabet, so their 'Gaelicness' is entirely dependent on the assumed association of uncial with Celtic Ireland. Benton & Bowles in fact described this as 'a simple piece of typography using green imitation lettering.'<sup>564</sup>

Kerrygold advertising allowed for a close synergy between export and tourist imagery. For Benton & Bowles the 'meaning of Ireland' appeared to be fixed and unproblematic. This brand development process was recorded or rather, re-enacted, in *Powers of Persuasion*, a 1964 BBC documentary on advertising which used Kerrygold's campaign as a case study.<sup>565</sup> One scene shows a group of Oxbridge-accented young men in cravats, smoking pipes (clearly 'creatives') discussing advertising strategy. They comment on the fact that the test group has picked up on 'creaminess' in the ads they've been shown.

'Do we know anything about the cream in Kerrygold?'

'Fact is, John, there's a pint in every packet!'

'We know what Ireland is, we don't have to make Ireland be. Can't we just do Ireland, pure?'<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> Samuels, 'The Launch of Kerrygold Butter', 149.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> The documentary is worthy of study in itself as an example of the mythologizing of advertising as part of 1960s Swinging London.

<sup>566</sup> *Powers of Persuasion*, BBC documentary, c.1964 (Courtesy Cork Butter Museum).

This is a clear statement of the presumed 'naturalness' and stability of the connotations of Irishness for a mid-sixties, middle-class British viewer. Ireland has an existing meaning which can be 'done', 'pure'. That meaning then functioned in the campaign as an 'object correlative' for the product, conferring meaning by association.<sup>567</sup>

Figure 58, an advert which appeared in the *Stock Exchange Gazette* in 1966, is a good example of the link between tourist images of Ireland and those used by promoters of Irish exports. Ireland itself is the country's most valuable export and the sign which gives meaning to the commodity being advertised. (Note that there are no cows here, it is the *land itself* that produces the butter). In the case of the Kerrygold product, the meaning is clearly transferred in the advert from left to right – the logical sequence of reading. The anchoring and reductionist caption 'This is Ireland', informs us that it is 'Ireland' that is the object correlative for 'Kerrygold'. What, then, is 'this Ireland'? What existing meanings are already associated with Ireland and how are they symbolically mobilised in the advertising? We should note the importance of the audience – here the British businessman, in his office or on his way to work, reading the *Stock Exchange Gazette*. As John Urry has written:

[The tourist] gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness. What makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with; what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be.<sup>568</sup>

The Kerrygold idea of Ireland was constructed in Britain for the prospective British tourist, whether their potential journey was geographical or imaginary and Benton and Bowles' initial ideas had played directly on stereotyped ideas of Ireland as a rural, traditional, 'not-England'. The first television ads announced the butter as 'village churned', i.e. rural and handcrafted.<sup>569</sup> The original tag line of the TV commercials: 'Please, don't cook with Kerrygold', which made a virtue of its slightly higher price tag, was rapidly replaced with more emotional and less direct appeals including 'Ireland is Kerrygold country' and 'Made of

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<sup>567</sup> Judith Williamson explained her use of the term in her 1978 book *Decoding Advertisements*, 'The product which initially has no 'meaning' must be given value by a person or object which already has a value to us, i.e., already means.' Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, 31. '... the advertisement does not create meaning initially but invites us to make a transaction whereby it is passed from one thing to another. A system of meaning must already exist ... exterior to the ad – which simply *refers* to it, using one of its components as a carrier of value...' Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, 19.

<sup>568</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, (London: Sage, 2002), 1.

<sup>569</sup> It was actually the word 'creamery' that the test subjects picked up on. They seemed to confuse the word 'creamery' meaning a dairy co-operative, with the idea of 'creaminess' (perhaps with an Irish accent?). (*Golden Gallons*).

Ireland’ along with the quantifiable guarantee of ‘a pint of cream in every pack’. While advertising continued to evoke mystical Irish landscape, the campaigns became more focused on how that landscape, especially the green grass, was available within the Kerrygold package, within reach. The advertising for Irish butter not only distilled time, *pastness*, into the package, it also distilled place: Ireland.

As in CTT’s verbatim reproduction of Weiner and Gossage’s client pitch, so we find evidence that the process of branding itself was part of the An Bord Bainne’s modern identity. Their 1967 promotional film, *Golden Gallons*, featured another re-enactment of the creative process that led to the first television adverts, but this time with prominence given to the Bord’s own input. The film also reminds us of the deliberate synergies between tourism and export agencies. Bord Fáilte photographs and their magazine, *Ireland of the Welcomes*, are prominently displayed on the table of the advertising executives in the re-enactment, clearly intended to be read as the ‘inspiration’ for the campaign.

## Return of the Leprechaun

Writing in 1982, then Managing Director of An Bord Bainne, Brian Joyce, remembered not just an explicit relationship between tourism and Kerrygold in its early days, but an appeal to the Irish diaspora in Britain as well:

Bord Bainne were blazing the Kerrygold trail, and Bord Fáilte were busy selling Ireland to the British Tourist. [This] represented a signal to the million Irish people who had emigrated since the war that the folks back home had come out of their long hibernation.<sup>570</sup>

As in America, the exporters expected Irish emigrants to provide a ready market for a ‘taste of home.’ The North West T.V. area was chosen to be the test area for Kerrygold, Of the eight TV areas, ‘Winterhill’, which took in Manchester and Liverpool, was nearest to Ireland and also had a very high concentration of first and second generation Irish immigrants.<sup>571</sup> Figure 59, an advert from a series in the later 1960s aimed at the grocery trade, explicitly references the emotional appeal of the TV advertising and implicitly evokes an idea of a distant ‘home’. In their appeal to the diaspora, Kerrygold’s nostalgic images clearly correspond to Boym’s idea of longing for a home that is both geographically and temporally distant.

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<sup>570</sup> Brian Joyce, ‘The Board Will Go from Strength to Strength’ in An Bord Bainne, *The Bord Bainne Story*, 11

<sup>571</sup> Ivor Samuels, ‘The Launch of Kerrygold Butter,’ 146-7; Patricia Lysaght ‘Taste Kerrygold, Experience Ireland’, 71.



Notwithstanding Lowndes protestations to the contrary, Benton and Bowles' promotion of Kerrygold in the UK made extensive use of the most stereotyped of Irish symbols, including the Stage Irishman's supernatural cousin, the Leprechaun. In 1963 the butter was launched in Liverpool with leprechaun dolls. Figure 60, from the 1966 series 'The Kerrygolden Touch' aimed at Northern English working-class housewives plays on the idea of the leprechaun's pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.<sup>572</sup> In common with Gossage's 'audience participation' approach to promoting Irish whiskey, these encouraged consumers to interact with the brand, investing the promotion with the authenticity of 'real people'. The dolls proved enormously popular: '...with people writing in to say their luck had changed from the moment they got their Larry the Lucky Leprechaun.'<sup>573</sup> By contrast, Joe McGough, the Bord's secretary, recalled that 'The Irishmen were embarrassed by them', particularly because the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, 'had that very week made a speech to the Irish Institute of Management in Killarney saying that Ireland had to get away from symbols such as the harp, the wolfhound, round towers – and leprechauns.'<sup>574</sup> Ironically, in July of the same year, when Lemass was featured on the cover of the US magazine *Time*, he was accompanied by a leprechaun. The inclusion of the leprechaun in the *Time* cover points both to its persistence as a symbol and to its usefulness as a readily-understood symbol of traditional Irishness. In this case, the unexpected pairing of leprechaun with gleaming steel industrial structures underscored the article's argument about the extent of the transformation of Ireland under Lemass's modernisation programme.

The return of the Leprechaun highlights the danger in outsourcing export promotion of reinforcing existing stereotypes. The difficulty for the Irish state which projected an image of Ireland as the antithesis of modernity was, then, how to be modern. If Ireland was to 'become' modern, the obvious example to follow was Britain or America. But how could Ireland be modern in the image of Britain or America, if that very image of modernity was dependent on an image of a backward Ireland? It was not possible for the Irish to emulate the moderns, because they had already accepted their fate as the imaginary from which and

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<sup>572</sup> 'Irish butter doing well in Britain' *The Irish Times*, March 19, 1963.

<sup>573</sup> Fallon, *The Player*, 133.

<sup>574</sup> Quoted in Fallon, *The Player*, 131.

in opposition to which modernity had been crafted. Gibbons writes: If Ireland looked to the image of England, in other words, it would end up seeing its own distorted reflection – as if in the “cracked looking-glass of a servant” with which Joyce liked to compare his work.<sup>575</sup> One way out was to seek an alternative to the straight tradition/modernity binary. Scandinavian design, then the epitome of fashionable, softened or ‘organic’ modernism, seemed to offer such an alternative.<sup>576</sup>

## The ‘Scandinavian Report’

‘Design in Ireland’, the report of a group of Scandinavian designers invited by CTT in 1961 to review Irish design for export, is often seen as a catalyst for ‘design reform’ in Ireland, a ‘manifesto’ for modern design.<sup>577</sup> The Report endorsed a combination of modern design (especially ‘simplicity’) with native tradition. While this made sense in the context of textiles, glass and so on, it was less immediately relevant in relation to graphic design. What was the ‘native tradition’ in publicity design, for example? In fact, what the Report ‘modernised’ in Irish graphic design was not so much the work itself, as the self-construction of its practitioners. The debates around it galvanised and focused an already emerging profession.

Soon after taking over the design promotion agenda, CTT commissioned a group of Scandinavian design experts to visit Ireland and make recommendations on the state of Irish design.<sup>578</sup> Their report, ‘Design in Ireland’, commonly known as the ‘Scandinavian Report’, was published in February 1962 and became the blueprint for CTT’s design reform agenda. The immediate concern that occasioned the Report appears to have been Ireland’s impending application to join the European Common Market.<sup>579</sup> The exports discussed above were largely aimed at Britain and the United States, markets which, although challenging, were to some extent familiar (not least because of the Irish diaspora within them). Europe, however, posed a new problem. CTT responded with their usual strategy of employing advice

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<sup>575</sup> Luke Gibbons, ‘Identity Without a Centre: Allegory, History and Irish Nationalism,’ in *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 139.

<sup>576</sup> See Kjetil Fallan, *Scandinavian Design: Alternative Histories* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

<sup>577</sup> Turpin, ‘The Irish Design Reform Movement of the 1960s’, 11.

<sup>578</sup> Published in 1962 as ‘Design In Ireland’ (Dublin: Córas Tráchtála, 1962).

<sup>579</sup> Announcing the commissioning of the Report, the CTT Annual Report stated: ‘Their report will ... provide recommendations for the whole new approach which is so clearly necessary if our manufactured goods are to succeed on European markets.’ Corás Tráchtála, Ninth Annual Report (1960-61), 11.

from designers in the market targeted. 'Scandinavian' design was reaching the peak of its mid-century international popularity and its organic, softened modernism, with echoes of tradition and craft, seemed a good exemplar for industrial design in a non-industrial nation.<sup>580</sup> As noted in Chapter One, as early as 1954 Herbert Read had recommended 'Scandinavia' as a model for Irish design reform, and both Sweden and Denmark were often invoked as exemplars.<sup>581</sup> Indeed, a Swede, Åke Huldt, had been recruited as the judge on the 1956 Irish Design Exhibition.

Huldt, Manager of Svensk-Form, was one of the five designers recruited to carry out the report. The rest of the group was made up of Kaj Franck, then head of design at the ceramics firm, Arabia, in Helsinki; Danish architect and designer Erik Herløw; Swedish architect and educator Erik Christian Sørensen; and Gunnar Biilmann Petersen, Professor of Graphics and Typography at the Royal Academy of Copenhagen.<sup>582</sup> The negative comments on the state of Irish design contained in the Report confirmed civil service fears about Ireland's backwardness in terms of export promotion. It also occasioned unprecedented public debate about design and ICAD, who generally endorsed the Report's findings, seized the opportunity to present its members as experts on modern, creative design in Ireland.

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<sup>580</sup> Although one Irish journalist referred to 'that terrifying Scandinavian furniture you buy by the yard,' A'n Irishman's Diary', *Irish Times*, April 27, 1967. On the popularity of mid-century Scandinavian design see Fallan, *Scandinavian Design* and also Gillian Naylor, 'Swedish Grace... or the Acceptable Face of Modernism?' in *Modernism in Design*, edited by Paul Greenhalgh (London: Reaktion, 1990): 164-184.

<sup>581</sup> For example, in 1959 by the opposition leader, John A. Costello: 'We have already had a practical demonstration of that in Sweden where they started, I believe, from scratch to make improvements in design.' John A. Costello, 'Committee on Finance, Vote 14: An Chomhairle Ealaíon,' (16 July 1959), 1451. Scandinavian countries might also have been expected to be relatively neutral in nationalist terms compared to Britain ('former coloniser') or the United States ('rampant Americanisation'), nevertheless, the consultants were characterised as modern day reincarnations of the rampaging Vikings (see below).

<sup>582</sup> As well as Huldt, CTT Chairman, William H. Walsh had already met Herløw. Turpin reports a conversation he had with Walsh in 1984: 'I looked to Denmark; I had good connections there; it was a similar country to Ireland. I visited Denmark and spent some days with Professor Herløw of Copenhagen. At that stage I had the idea of getting a sort of audit done on the design situation in Ireland; I saw that this had to be done by outsiders, although we knew what had to be done. Herløw advised me to contact some others outside Denmark. I saw a number of leading practitioners in Scandinavia; they agreed to visit Ireland and make a report.' John Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin Since the Eighteenth Century: A History of the National College of Art and Design*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1995), 416. Steen Ejlers, drawing on Gunnar Biilmann Petersen's archive, suggested the connection actually came via the Danish Embassy: 'The link with the Scandinavian design environment was established by the Danish Consul, Jørgen Tholstrup, who on behalf of Córas Tráchtála asked the Danish architect Erik Christian Sørensen to put together a group of specialists in design.' Steen Ejlers, 'The Hunt for Authentic Tradition: Or How Irish Applied Arts Were Conceived in Copenhagen', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10 (2000), 47.

The Report's main recommendation, the reorganisation and centralisation of design education, corroborated ICAD's calls for educational reforms that would prioritise modern design.<sup>583</sup> Rejecting CTT's brief that 'they should limit themselves to improving the standard of work intended for export', over a quarter of the Report's 55 pages were dedicated to a proposal for a new design School within a larger Institute of Visual Arts.<sup>584</sup> This was not the immediate outcome, however. William H. Walsh, chairman of CTT was, according to Paul Caffrey, 'the single driving force behind the Scandinavian Report' and intended that it would endorse his view of the centrality of design to the export agenda.<sup>585</sup> Rather than a new design school, Walsh's Kilkenny Design Workshops (KDW), which opened in 1965, was the Report's actual legacy.<sup>586</sup> CTT, were in a hurry: they wanted saleable export designs immediately, and were not prepared to wait even the length of a four-year degree course to produce modern designers. Instead they imported them from abroad, citing the 'most pressing need for a corps of trained designers on whom manufacturers can draw for good original designs, practical in their application to industry and with an indigenous flavour.'<sup>587</sup>

### Scandinavian advice on an Irish style

The Report's criticism of graphics and the printing industry was not as harsh as of some other areas (there was extensive comment on stamps, however, discussed in Chapter Three). The experts 'saw some good work, but generally standards were poor', they noted that Irish graphic design, including advertising, 'suffered from a lack of trained designers, and perhaps also an unwillingness to utilise the talent available' — a complaint that ICAD would have

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<sup>583</sup> See for example, Klaasen's call for 'a new School of Art' in 1959. Klaasen, 'In Search of a Style', 6.

<sup>584</sup> '...instead, the design group believed the aim should be a general improvement in applied arts and design, including an improvement in design training in Ireland.' Ejlers, 'The Hunt for Authentic Tradition,' 47.

<sup>585</sup> Paul Caffrey 'Commentary', *Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol. 2 No. 3 (November 2009), 325.

<sup>586</sup> This was due in part to civil service politics, where responsibility for the Report's findings was batted back and forth between the Departments of Education and Industry and Commerce. But Walsh also had a clear agenda that would culminate in CTT establishing a 'multi-disciplinary, state sponsored design consultancy' in 1963. Una Walker states that the idea came from 'the Plus Applied Art Centre in Fredrikstad, Norway, which Walsh visited in 1962.' Una Walker, *The Scandinavian Report: Its Origins and Impact on the Kilkenny Design Workshops.* *Journal of Art Historiography* Vol. 9 (December, 2013) 13. Caffrey notes that while it is 'often stated that the workshops were inspired by the Scandinavian report, ... this is not so. Walsh had planned to found the workshops prior to the publication of the report. However, the report added weight to his plans for a state design consultancy.' Paul Caffrey 'Commentary', 326. See also Anna Moran 'Tradition in the Service of Modernity' in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 191-210.

<sup>587</sup> *Córas Tráchtála, Eleventh Annual Report (1962-3)*, 10.

unhesitatingly endorsed.<sup>588</sup> Packaging fared worse: it suffered from ‘lack of character and of a strong motif, bad lettering and ornamentation’. The Report suggested, though not in so many words, a more modernist approach: ‘packages... free from unnecessary detail and with a balance between the different parts... to make an absolutely clean thing, in which elements foreign to the motif have not been introduced.’<sup>589</sup> The introduction to the Report emphasised that its authors did not endorse emulation or copying of Scandinavian designs.<sup>590</sup> Instead, Ireland should follow the Scandinavian exemplar of combining modern design principles with indigenous materials and ‘authentic tradition’. In this context, Irish tweeds and knitwear received the highest praise.

The Report identified three strands of ‘good Irish design tradition’ in Ireland: ‘the rural handicraft, the Georgian tradition, and the early Christian culture.’<sup>591</sup> In effect, they dismissed the second of these, ‘the Georgian tradition we regard as English, not Irish, in its origins...’.<sup>592</sup> The early Christian tradition was discussed in some detail and it is clear that the authors approved of the use of archaeological sources, but of neither the examples currently popular in Ireland nor their mode of representation. In keeping with modernist orthodoxy their main criticism was of the ornamental approach, complaining that ‘designers have almost invariably turned to the queerest and most complex motifs, the interlaced animals, etc., which are apt to lose their proper character when reproduced in modern processes and will rarely harmonise with the surrounding of our time.’<sup>593</sup> They endorsed the sources that, in fact, were already being employed by Signa and other modern designers, writing that ‘there

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<sup>588</sup> ‘Design in Ireland’, 27, 28.

<sup>589</sup> ‘Design in Ireland’ 29.

<sup>590</sup> ‘Design in Ireland’, 2. This was also frequently reiterated in CTT publicity. For example, CTT’s *Exporters Review*, quoted Jack Lynch, Minister for Industry and Commerce, announcing the intention of bringing the Scandinavian group to Ireland to the Annual Dinner of the Federation of Irish Industries in 1961: ‘It is not the intention that we should duplicate anything is being done in Scandinavia, but rather that we should use their experience and advice in training our own artists, so that we can develop our own “handwriting” in the design of our manufactured products and our packaging.’ *Exporters Review* (First Quarterly Issue, 1961), 3-4.

<sup>591</sup> ‘Design in Ireland,’ 5.

<sup>592</sup> ‘Design in Ireland,’ 6. Paul Caffrey, an expert on eighteenth century Irish design, writes: ‘Georgian tradition, the strongest artistic and design tradition, was dismissed as essentially not Irish. The work of native Irish silversmiths, cabinet makers and glass makers interpreting the Rococo or Neo-Classical tradition was ignored and described as an imported tradition. Although this was an inaccurate and over-simplified approach to the eighteenth century design legacy, it was the accepted view of many Irish people at the time. Any attempt at its replication was condemned as copying the hackneyed features of English production, to be avoided at all costs.’ Paul Caffrey, ‘The Scandinavian Ideal: A Model for Design in Ireland,’ *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8 (1998), 36.

<sup>593</sup> ‘Design in Ireland,’ 6.

is an unemployed treasure of Irish patterns fit for design usage; the simple granite carvings and the small ornaments scattered over the pages of the illuminated manuscripts.<sup>594</sup>

The early Christian influence was also discussed in relation to souvenir design.<sup>595</sup> Here the Report appears contradictory, suggesting that '[i]f people wish to draw inspiration from the past, they should study the Book of Kells, the stones of Clonmacnoise, etc' but criticizing souvenirs where 'the tourist factor has been introduced' where 'the motifs from the Celtic and early Christian times are very dominating.'<sup>596</sup> However it appears that the 'tourist factor', presumably a synonym for inauthenticity, depends on the mode of representation, transfer drawings ('always depressingly incorrect and ugly') and the choice of motifs, ('the oddest of the old ornaments ... the interlaced animals, etc.') that is at fault.<sup>597</sup> In the Book of Kells and carving at Clonmacnoise, the designer would 'find sources of simple drawings and colour compositions which would be quite natural to use, because they *are almost modern*'.<sup>598</sup> The idea of early-Christian art as already (almost) modern is discussed extensively in Chapter Three.

Notwithstanding its own symbol, CTT had tended to denigrate the use of early Christian sources in packaging and publicity as a legacy of Protection-era nationalism. For example, in 1960 a CTT spokesman stated that: 'In the age of the jet and the supermarket, we must look beyond the Book of Kells for our designs if we are to compete successfully in world markets.'<sup>599</sup> The Scandinavian Report seems to have occasioned a change in their attitude. In October 1962, Erskine Childers, the Minister for Transport and Power, quoting CTT, reiterated their call that 'entirely different design, packaging, marketing and selling of goods would be required. More use should made of ancient Celtic design, motifs and symbols.'<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid.

<sup>595</sup> Steen Ejlers has discovered that in early 1962, CTT's Paul Hogan commissioned Gunar Bilman Petersen to work on souvenirs with Celtic motifs, a series of clay ashtrays for Shangarry Pottery. In a letter in of January 1962 Hogan suggested that these ashtrays would be 'a silent illustration of our views'. Ejlers, 'The Hunt for Authentic Tradition', 50. Ejlers suggests that these 'almost seem to be a fusion of Celtic and Japanese modes'. Ejlers, 'The Hunt for Authentic Tradition', 49. Such abstraction and simplification of early Christian sources were common in Celtic modernist design in Ireland, discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>596</sup> 'Design in Ireland,' 25.

<sup>597</sup> 'Design in Ireland,' 25.

<sup>598</sup> 'Design in Ireland,' 26. Emphasis added.

<sup>599</sup> 'Packaging and Product', *Irish Times*, November 2, 1960.

<sup>600</sup> Editorial, 'The Wind of Change', *Irish Printer*, (September-October, 1962). The speech was delivered to the annual dinner of the Advertising Agencies in the Gresham Hotel.

This brought CTT into line with the ICAD designers who had already been experimenting with an ironic reinterpretation of early Christian sources, discussed below.

The wide range of recommendations in the Report (from postage stamps to souvenirs to art education) posed a problem for the government: which Department should have responsibility for it?<sup>601</sup> Initially Lemass decided that the Department of Education should deal with the matter.<sup>602</sup> The Department had not commissioned the report and the Minister, Patrick Hillery, was therefore not expecting have to carry the burden of implementing its findings.<sup>603</sup> Nevertheless he took to design reform with alacrity, establishing a Council of Industrial design in 1963 which reported two years later and addressing the replacement of the vacant position of Professor of Design at the National College of Art.<sup>604</sup> Significantly, he did not appoint another 'Professor', but an 'Organising Consultant', ICAD's Richard Giles Talbot Kelly.<sup>605</sup> This validated ICAD as the representative of modern Irish designers and an

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<sup>601</sup> See memos and letters between departments in NAI TAOIS/S 13814C/62. On February 7, 1962 the Taoiseach wrote to the secretaries of five departments (Education, Posts & Telegraphs, Transport & Power, Finance, and Industry & Commerce) asking for feedback. The following day he wrote to their Ministers asking who should take responsibility.

<sup>602</sup> Letter from Sean Lemass to Jack Lynch (Minister for Industry and Commerce), May 29, 1962: 'I have come to the conclusion that the most appropriate course now would be to assign to the Minister for Education the main responsibility for the further examination of the Report and formulation of proposals, certain matters which are the concern of other Ministers being excluded from this area of responsibility.' NAI TAOIS. S/13814C/62

<sup>603</sup> Even a year later, in 1963, Hillery described himself as 'a newcomer upon whom the subject [of design] has almost thrust itself...' P.J. Hillery, Minister for Education 'Foreword,' *Irish Management*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (April, 1963), 121. The Department also refuted the findings in the Report against the current staff of the National College of Art. Hillery's detailed 25-page report, sent to Lemass on May 1, 1962, took particular exception to the 'peculiar and rather sinister' decision to 'assign as the visitors' conductor to the College a person who, on the testimony of the College staff, had been an ill-conducted student there before he finally left without completing the course.' Hillery, 'Interim Observations on the Scandinavian Report,' 2. NAI TAOIS. S/13814C/62. This was Paul Hogan, then a young designer working under William H. Walsh and later head of the Design Section of CTT. He had gained notoriety by stealing one of paintings in the disputed Hugh Lane bequest from the Tate Gallery in 1956 as an act of protest, which fact was also noted with disapproval by Hillery (probably quoting the NCA staff).

<sup>604</sup> See Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin Since the Eighteenth Century*, 424-428. 'It is clear that the chief purpose of the Council was to lay out a new scheme for design education, based chiefly on reform at the NCA. This was the official response to the challenge of the Scandinavian report.' 427. Hillery maintained a commitment to design education throughout his career. Even after he was elected President of Ireland in 1976 he attended degree show openings at NCAD and could be called upon to lend his support to design initiatives.

<sup>605</sup> This had been vacant since 1959, but the position had been filled before the Scandinavians' visit. However, the new Professor, the American designer Karl Koehler, did not arrive until December 1961 and 'owing to the demands of his own industrial design business in the United States, he was unable to stay beyond the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1962.' Letter from Secretary to Minister Industry and Commerce to Private Secretary Department of the Taoiseach 26 July, 1962. NAI TAOIS. S/13814C/62. Kohler had worked in advertising and was best known as a designer of World War Two propaganda posters (see for example, [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_325350.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325350.pdf)). See also an interview with Karl Koehler, 'Gossip Column: My friends on the Left Bank are jubilant', *Irish Press*, February 9, 1962.

agent of design reform within the discourse of modernisation.<sup>606</sup> The title was very much in keeping with the language of modernisation ('organisation' being one of its watchwords, as noted in Chapter 1) and of modernist design: 'consultant' was the description favoured by a new generation of designers who were breaking away from the advertising agency and 'commercial art.'<sup>607</sup> Thus both CTT and ICAD were deeply concerned with the implementation of the Scandinavian Report. In the period between its publication in February 1962 and the opening of KDW in November 1965, an argument raged on the meaning of 'design in Ireland'.

### Response to the Report

Apart from some patriotic bridling against the 'Norsemen', generally the response was more positive than might have been expected. The *Irish Printer*, for example commended CTT's initiative and welcomed the criticism.<sup>608</sup> Designers, prominent among them Signa and ICAD members, took the opportunity to remind the public that they had been pointing out such inadequacies in Irish industrial design and, especially, design education for years.<sup>609</sup> In March 1962, ICAD's *Best Sellers* exhibition was opened in the NCA by Signa's Louis le Brocqy and provided a public forum for designers' response. Le Brocqy called the Report 'a drastic shot in the arm', 'a severe injection for Ireland's design illness'.<sup>610</sup> *Campaign* also welcomed the Report and congratulated CTT's initiative, but it went on to make ICAD's own claim to be an expert voice on modern design reform, and to set to the agenda: 'In an effort to demonstrate our practical support we are devoting this issue of *Campaign* almost exclusively to matters of design and education .... as a tribute to the excellent work of our Scandinavian visitors.'<sup>611</sup> It

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<sup>606</sup> This was not a universally popular decision, C. Gordon Lambert, Marketing Director of the long-established biscuit manufacturers, W & R Jacob & Co. Ltd, wrote to the Secretary to the Taoiseach enclosing the text of an address given under the auspices of the Association for Advertisers in Ireland in November 1962. He wrote that: 'Many thought it a pity that the New Design School was used as a platform to promote a new association called the ICAD, which has not yet gained the confidence of the Irish Advertising or Industrial section.' Letter, C. Gordon Lambert to R. Foley, February 1, 1963. NAI TAOIS/S13814C/63.

<sup>607</sup> The changing terminology used to describe design practice is discussed below.

<sup>608</sup> 'Córas Tráchtála has taken the initiative in promoting a policy which may ultimately streamline our design in industry – particularly in the printing industry – and they are worthy of every praise and commendation for their work.' Editorial, *Irish Printer*, (March-April, 1962), 12.

<sup>609</sup> 'Since its inception five years ago the Institute of Creative Advertising has stressed the vital need for improved education facilities...', 'Design for Education' Editorial, *Campaign*, Vol. 2, No. 9 (March, 1962), 1.

<sup>610</sup> 'Get awards for top designs in advertising', *Irish Press*, March 24, 1962. The *Evening Herald* recorded, probably literally, that 'he took the opportunity of waving the Scandinavian design group's report in everyone's face'. *Evening Herald*, March 24, 1962.

<sup>611</sup> 'Design for Education', 1.



pointed out and endorsed the Bauhaus precedent of the proposed Institute of Visual Arts but cautioned leaning too heavily on Scandinavian instructors, suggesting that ‘instructional aid should come from countries where the soul of the people is more akin to the Irish,’ and Italy, France, Britain and the U.S.A. were suggested as helping to infuse ‘a greater warmth’.<sup>612</sup>

As part of their response to the Report, ICAD organised a public seminar ‘Design: the next five years’, at the Building Design Centre in October 1962. The Minister opened the seminar, conferring authority on ICAD as a representative body. The addition of the word ‘design’ to the Institute’s title was also announced at this event and in the pages of the September edition of *Campaign*. The change suggests an attempt to ensure that the public recognised the fact that for ICAD, design was always central to their mission.<sup>613</sup>

### **Criticism of the design of ‘Design in Ireland’:**

Turpin notes that the Report was ‘amazingly thin on facts’, offering little by way of evidence for their critique and claims that it was less a typical civil service report than ‘a manifesto, an ideological document, a clarion call for modernism in design.’<sup>614</sup> He points out that as the report was not in a format familiar to civil servants it was easier for them to dismiss on those grounds.<sup>615</sup> Not only in the style of the content, but in visual appearance too, the document broke with civil service conventions (Fig. 61). In fact, Lemass does not appear at first to have

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<sup>612</sup> ‘Design for Education’, 1. The critique of Scandinavian design as ‘chilly’ was also picked up by Dorothy Walker (née Cole), director of Signa Design Consultants. In her evaluation of the Scandinavian Report in the new fashion and lifestyle magazine, *Creation* of which Walker was the co-editor, she accused Danish design of ‘smugness’. By contrast, she argued that Irish ‘national humour and its refusal to take itself seriously’ together with ‘exuberance of inspiration’ meant that ‘we seem to have more in common with Italy than with Scandinavia – which goes to show that climate has nothing to do with it.’ Dorothy Walker, ‘Danes, Design and Us’ *Creation*, (March 1962), 9.

<sup>613</sup> It also reflects the shift in terminology from ‘commercial art’ to ‘graphic design’ within the profession discussed below. By 1962 several ICAD founders had begun to move out of advertising and set up their own design consultancies, including Talbot Kelly himself who founded Group 3 in 1960 and Bill Bolger and Bernard Share, who set up Verbiage while still working in Janus in 1961.

<sup>614</sup> John Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin Since the Eighteenth Century*, 417, 421.

<sup>615</sup> He cites the example of Tarlach Ó Raifeartaigh, Secretary of the Department of Education, in his later evidence to the Commission on Higher Education which reported in 1967. ‘He could not understand the reference and categorical statements of the Scandinavians when the group “had spent only about two hours in the college during a holiday period, had not seen any classes in operation and had not offered any evidence to support their views.”’ John Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin*, 421.

recognised that it was a report at all, referring to it in a letter to John Haughey, Chairman of CCT, as a 'brochure'.<sup>616</sup>

Sean S. Ó hEigeartaigh, director of the Irish language publishing house, Sairséal agus Dill, initiated a discussion about the Scandinavian Report on the pages of newspapers starting with his detailed critique of the design of the Report itself.<sup>617</sup> Tellingly, he began by referring to the group as 'Norse designers', an implied connection between the Report's attacks on Irish design and the Viking raids on early Christian Ireland, which was made by several critics.<sup>618</sup> He went on to critique the design of the Report itself, based on the criteria applied by the authors to Irish print design. In this, we find echoes of the criticism of *Facts About Ireland*, discussed in Chapter 1, notably in his observation that the 'very peculiar size, 10 inches high by 3.5 inches wide' was 'exceedingly wasteful to produce' as well as 'quite unsuited for insertion in the ordinary bookcase'. The generous margins, leading and spacing were described as 'an extravagance' and even 'childish'. The asymmetric layout was also criticised. He concluded: 'Is the appearance appropriate and appealing? Yes, if design is regarded as something arty, unpractical and odd. No, if it is to be functional, unobtrusive and an economic proposition.'<sup>619</sup> However, other letter writers approved of the 'stylish appearance' and 'unusual and attractive design'.<sup>620</sup> Standing back from the individual criticisms, what is suggestive is that the *design* of the Report, as much as its content, was obviously intended to be a manifesto for modern design. Ó hEigeartaigh's evaluation of the

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<sup>616</sup> 'Thanks for sending me the Brochure on Design in Ireland which was prepared by the Scandinavian Design Group. I think this is an interesting and valuable publication, which should help arouse greater interest in the importance of design.' Letter, S. Lemass to J. Haughey, February 1, 1962, NAI TAOIS/S 13814C/62

<sup>617</sup> His letter appeared in both the *Irish Press* and the *Irish Independent* on the same day, February 8, 1962. Many of the replies were also addressed to both papers.

<sup>618</sup> In fact, in a later letter in the correspondence he made this explicit, quoting Alice Stopford Green's *History of the Irish State to 1014* (1925) to define 'Norsemen': 'fierce pagan raiders from the northern seas ... They marked the earliest threat of external forces gathering to break the free development of Irish civilisation.' Sean S. OhEigeartaigh 'Norse Design' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Press*, February 8, 1962. Turpin reports William H. Walsh's recollection of the criticisms, 'A common layman's reaction at the time was, "we have the book of Kells and the Ardagh Chalice: why do we need these godless Scandinavians to tell us what to do?"' Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin Since the Eighteenth Century*, 422.

<sup>619</sup> Sean S. OhEigeartaigh 'The Norsemen', Letters to the Editor, *Irish Press*, February 14, 1962.

<sup>620</sup> Seamus Ó Muireadhaigh 'Scandinavian Design Report', Letters to the Editor, *Irish Press*, February 14, 1962. By contrast, the *Irish Architect and Contractor*, (though acknowledging 'not that the Architect and Contractor can't afford to be stuffy about such things!') 'the design, layout and typography of the Report itself isn't the loveliest of piece of industrial design in the world either!' *Irish Architect and Contractor* Vol. 1, No. 7 (February 1962), 11.

Report as if it were a *commercial* publication<sup>621</sup> demonstrates that he recognised the proselytising nature of the design.

## ICAD's attempts to set the design reform agenda

### ICAD's response to 'Design in Ireland'

Talbot Kelly's appointment as organising consultant of the proposed Design School was announced in the press on September 15, 1962.<sup>622</sup> It is most likely that he came to the Department's attention through his role as spokesperson for ICAD's sustained criticism of design education in Ireland in the lead-up to the Scandinavian Report and in the subsequent debate.<sup>623</sup> For example, in an article in the *Irish Times* in early 1961, he called for a 'College of Industrial and Commercial Design, under an internationally-trained and thinking designer.'<sup>624</sup> His vision for the new School echoed the ICAD agenda<sup>625</sup> and brought him into conflict with Walsh and CTT.

Lemass split the responsibility for implementing the Scandinavian Report between Hillery and CTT, the latter focusing on the proposed KDW.<sup>626</sup> Walsh and Talbot-Kelly both addressed a meeting of the IMI in January 1963 at which Walsh outlined the plans for KDW. In a pointed reference to these, Talbot Kelly 'urged Irish manufacturers to investigate what talent was available before importing designers.'<sup>627</sup> He went to state that 'an American, Karl Koehler, a Briton, James Gardner and a Scandinavian, Erk Herlow' had all said that 'a designer from abroad would not readily understand the peculiar facets of life here that affect design and designers.'<sup>628</sup> He reiterated the importance of ICAD membership as a 'yardstick of training' in design.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> He observed that the 'title of the book appears in black in the top corner of a shimmering blue cover' which made it 'illegible in a shop window from a distance of 6 feet'. Sean S. OhEigeartaigh 'Norse Design' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Press*, February 8, 1962.

<sup>622</sup> 'Design Expert Appointed', *Irish Independent*, September 15, 1962.

<sup>623</sup> He was President of the Institute from 1960-62 and subsequently Secretary and PRO.

<sup>624</sup> Giles Talbot Kelly, 'Design for Selling: the shape of things to come', *Irish Times*, March 24, 1961.

<sup>625</sup> In keeping with the graphic design orientation within ICAD, Kelly emphasised the importance of 'graphic "know-how", such as typography,' in the formation of the industrial designer for example. 'Dublin to have industrial design school', *Irish Independent*, September 26, 1962.

<sup>626</sup> 'Report of the Council of Design,' (Dublin: Stationery Office, September 1965), 4.

<sup>627</sup> 'Design School would have to start at the very beginning' *Irish Independent*, January 11, 1963.

<sup>628</sup> 'Design Shops to give full employment', *Irish Times*, January 11, 1963.

<sup>629</sup> 'Design Shops to give full employment', *Irish Times*, January 11, 1963. In fact, he stated there were 'two professional bodies for designers in Ireland, membership of which guaranteed a standard of work and standards

Throughout 1963, relations between CTT and ICAD became more strained. In May, Hillery wrote to Lemass in support of an invitation for the Taoiseach to open ICAD's Best Sellers. He noted that Talbot Kelly 'has met with a certain amount of opposition' in his role as Organising Consultant and asking that Lemass might accept the invitation, as 'by putting an official stamp of Government approval on one of Talbot Kelly's activities, would help me considerably in achieving general acceptance of his position with me.'<sup>630</sup> Advising on the same question, the Department of Industry and Commerce, having consulted with CTT's downplayed ICAD's importance:

while the Institute may be doing useful work in fostering a higher standard of creative work in advertising, its contribution to industrial design has not so far been of sufficient importance that the Taoiseach should perform the official opening of its exhibition.<sup>631</sup>

It also noted the potential conflict between Best Sellers and the IPI: 'Packaging is mainly the concern of the Packaging Institute sponsored by Córas Tráchtála.'<sup>632</sup>

Talbot Kelly attacked the IPI in an article in the *Irish Times*, first stating that 'Packaging is NOT just the concern of the Irish Packaging Institute alone.' He then drew attention to the crucial distinction between Best Sellers and the IPI exhibitions: in the former, entries had to be 'written, designed and produced' in Ireland.<sup>633</sup>

I emphatically believe as stated that 'a pack designed in Switzerland and printed in Alaska' should not be able to win an *Irish* Packaging Award. Certainly such a pack can

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of conduct'. He meant ICAD and the British Society of Industrial Artists, which Irish designers could join and of which Talbot Kelly himself was a member.

<sup>630</sup> Letter Patrick Hillery to Sean Lemass, May 5, 1963. NAI S13814C/63.

<sup>631</sup> Letter from Secretary, Department of Industry and Commerce to Sean Lemass, April, 23 1963. NAI S13814C/63.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Giles Talbot Kelly, 'The Second Competition', *Irish Times*, June 24, 1963. This was also a point of contention in the Irish Design Exhibition, discussed in Chapter One. It also gave Signa pause in 1964. The minutes of the Signa Board meeting of June 8, 1964 note that: 'For purposes of clarification Miss Shortt [the company secretary] requested a Board decision regarding Signa's stand in the case of a Competition qualification — "Designed in Ireland". It was agreed that Signa work whether designed by BDMW or by the Dublin Studio in the opinion of the Board comes under this qualification and may be entered.' Dorothy Walker Papers, NIVAL. In the event, Signa won most of the top awards, including the President's Award for cigarette packaging. However, at least one of these prize winning entries, Panda tissues, was designed by Raymond Kyne in the Dublin office. *Irish Times*, June 24, 1964.

win a packaging award. I feel it is sensible to expect either the design or the printing to be executed in Ireland for an *Irish* award.<sup>634</sup>

CTT's aim with the Packaging Award (awarded to the client rather than the designer) was simply to encourage Irish manufacturers to take an interest in design rather than to raise the standards of design executed in Ireland. In this it echoed the broader KDW agenda, against which Talbot Kelly took direct aim in *Campaign* in June 1963. 'The Kilkenny project raises serious doubts in the minds of those who think deep and far into the purposes of men, the meanings of material, the ends of culture', he wrote.<sup>635</sup> 'Even as a possible short-term solution to the so-called shortage of designers for industry it leaves much to be desired, as the Scandinavian Design Group would endorse. Deep investigation of exiting talent in Ireland would be infinitely more rewarding.'<sup>636</sup>

As KDW began to take shape, plans for the new Design School faltered and emphasis shifted to the Council of Design, which, when it finally reported in 1965, made similar recommendations to the Scandinavian Report. Frustrated with the lack of progress, Talbot Kelly resigned his position as Organising Consultant in December 1963, although he remained a member of the Council of Design.<sup>637</sup> He emigrated to Canada in 1965. Under his stewardship ICAD successfully raised the profile of designers in Ireland and forced CTT to consider the design profession *in Ireland* as part of 'Irish design'.<sup>638</sup>

The June 1963 issue of *Campaign* that critiqued KDW and appeared to establish ICAD's position as vital to design reform was, ironically, the last.<sup>639</sup> *Campaign* was a loss-making publication and had been sponsored by the Arts Council until CTT took over responsibility for design in industry. Subsequently, CTT refused to fund ICAD activities unless they explicitly

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<sup>634</sup> Giles Talbot Kelly, 'Packaging to Sell,' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, August 24, 1963. This was a response to a series of letters on the article, one from E.G.O. Ridgewell, Chairman of the Irish Packaging Institute, in particular.

<sup>635</sup> Giles Talbot Kelly, 'Visual Education – The Next Decade' *Campaign* Vol.3, No. 11, (June 1963), 3.

<sup>636</sup> Talbot Kelly, 'Visual Education – The Next Decade,' 3.

<sup>637</sup> 'Design school consultant resigns,' *Irish Times*, December 20, 1963.

<sup>638</sup> Letter from Paul Hogan to Jarlath Hayes regarding the new organisation in 1972. Jarlath Hayes archive.

<sup>639</sup> It was revived in 2016 as an annual publication with a grant from ID2015, the government-funded Year of Design.

dealt with design for export.<sup>640</sup> Share's last editorial bitterly criticised CTT, 'the Government body directly concerned with design have seen fit to withhold their support at a time when it is most needed if the work of the Institute is to continue to contribute towards the advancement of design education and the raising and maintaining of standards.'<sup>641</sup>

He went on to list ICAD's commitment to design reform. It was, he wrote:

the only body representing all aspects of creative activity in the publicity, design and industrial fields. ... Its governing Council includes the man appointed by the Department of Education to organise the new Design School within the National College of Art. It publishes the only journal devoted exclusively to design in all its aspects. It has brought in from abroad important speakers and exhibitions which would otherwise have been unavailable. It has pressed continually for improvements in the education facilities for advertising and design and is proud of the part it has played.<sup>642</sup>

It is clear that ICAD was fully committed to the modernisation agenda. The Institute believed that 'advertising – good advertising—is vital to the Irish economy today, both in home and export spheres, ....'<sup>643</sup> Elsewhere Share argued on economic grounds for the importance of evolving a national character in design as an aid to Irish export, which he called 'practical nationalism' presumably as a refutation of 'old-fashioned', romantic (impractical) nationalism. Linda King has written that *Campaign*, 'reflected a Lemassian perspective on how design practice and education enrich economic development, as well as providing specific commentary on design for the tourism industry.'<sup>644</sup> She also notes that founder member and regular contributor to *Campaign*, the Dutch designer Jan De Fouw, stated that the Lemassian vision 'of a more internationally engaged and affluent Ireland was keenly felt within advertising and design circles...'<sup>645</sup> The final section of this chapter will examine how ICAD members promoted through design and publicity an image of the modern Irish designer, presented as an expert on 'creativity' and authentic Irishness.

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<sup>640</sup> Talbot Kelly complained to the *Irish Times* about CTT's refusal to fund the 1961 exhibition, claiming they took eleven weeks to refuse. 'An Irishman's Diary: High Comedy?', *Irish Times*, March 22, 1961. However, they did fund Best Sellers in 1964, allowing ICAD to invite a panel of judges from abroad for first time, including the British graphic designer, Alan Fletcher. *Irish Times*, June 24, 1964.

<sup>641</sup> Bernard Share, Editorial, *Campaign*, Vol. 3, No 11. (June, 1963), 1.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid.

<sup>643</sup> Bernard Share, Editorial, *Campaign*, Vol. 1 No 1 (Winter, 1959), 1.

<sup>644</sup> King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze', 186.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

## 'Creative' advertising

Creativity, as the title of the organisation attests, was what ICAD founders believed marked them out from other members of the advertising profession.<sup>646</sup> Bernard Share's first editorial in *Campaign* linked creativity and efficiency, writing of the name of the Institute he rhetorically asked, 'But why Creative advertising? (thus our 'practical' critics).'<sup>647</sup> He explained, that advertising, 'like any other branch of human endeavour is at its best when at its most efficient, and we believe that there is no substitute for good creative thinking in achieving this end.'<sup>648</sup> Creativity was here presented as rational and efficient. He criticised the argument that 'good advertising is advertising that sells' suggesting that this attitude was 'largely defunct in more progressive lands',<sup>649</sup> and hence framing creativity as a *modern* quality, understood in 'more progressive lands'. Share was thus linking two modern approaches to advertising which were gaining support in the United States, Britain and elsewhere.

The late 1950s saw a great deal of change in the advertising profession internationally, with greater emphasis being placed on the role of the 'creative team': designers, copywriters, photographers and art directors. In the United States, where many of the changes originated, two new approaches to advertising emerged. The first, 'reason-why' approach, emphasised 'the research-based sales-function of advertisements [which] ...stressed the uses and benefits of products ... and their unique selling proposition (USP), in order to build a brand image around these clearly communicated benefits.'<sup>650</sup> The second, sometimes called 'big idea' advertising was made famous by the US agency, Doyle Dane Bernbach, particularly their

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<sup>646</sup> 'Progress Report: a brief survey of ICA activities', an insert into *Campaign* Vol. 1, o. 1, identified the gap which the ICA attempted to fill: 'until recent times, a need still existed for an organisation which would cater specifically for the creative man, and would further the interests of creative advertising.' Other roles within the agencies were already represented by existing organisations, such as the Irish Association of Advertising Agencies, later the Institute of Advertising Practitioners (IAPI) which was founded in 1928. In common with its British equivalent, IAPI's membership was weighted towards advertising executives, managers and marketing personnel, rather than creatives. See Hugh Oram, *The Advertising Book: The History of Advertising in Ireland*, (Dublin: MO Books, 1986), 51, 28 and 208.

<sup>647</sup> Bernard Share, Editorial, *Campaign* Vol.1, No. 1 (October, 1959), 1.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

<sup>650</sup> Colin McDonald and Jane Scott, 'A Brief History of Advertising', in *The SAGE Handbook of Advertising*, ed. Gerard Tellis and Tim Ambler (London: Sage, 2007), 17-34, cited in Stefan Schwarzkopf, 'What Was Advertising? The Invention, Rise, Demise, and Disappearance of Advertising Concepts in Nineteenth-and-Twentieth-Century Europe and America,' *Business History Conference*, Vol 7. (2009), 16. Schwarzkopf notes that this school predominated in J. Walter Thompson (JWT), McCann-Erickson, and the Ted Bates agency.

Volkswagen adverts from 1959 onwards.<sup>651</sup> This favoured clever, witty, copywriting and art direction and ‘stressed the primacy of creative, and often challenging and ironic, artwork over direct-sales messages.’<sup>652</sup> Layouts were usually structured around a large, arresting visual image, usually a single photograph; with a bold, concise headline in a separate zone of white space. The copy staked its claim with ‘factual and often entertaining writing, instead of puffery and meaningless superlatives’.<sup>653</sup>

While even the most challenging of Irish advertising in the early 1960s stopped short of the modernity of DDB, the impact of this mode of advertising, which depended on the talents of the creative team, rather than market researcher and account handlers, seems to have informed ICAD’s ‘creative’ mission. Frank Mort and Stefan Schwarzkopf have argued that a growing interest in consumer psychology in advertising from the early 1950s led to ‘an enhanced role for creative artists, especially for copywriters and art directors within commercial processes.’<sup>654</sup> This ‘shifted the power balance within agencies away from market researchers, planners, and account executives to creative teams, who often resented ‘being managed.’<sup>655</sup> ICAD seems to have been a reflection of this process; what the founder members had in common was their ‘creative’ status, whether photographers, art directors, copywriters or exhibition designers.

### **Contrasting styles of advertising: Round Tower**

A good illustration of the approach they favoured in the late 1950s is given by a comparison of three adverts for the same brand, Round Tower knitwear manufactured by Gaeltarra Éireann. Established in 1931, the company embodied Protection-era economic nationalism, but is also an excellent example of the interweaving of tradition and modernisation in Ireland. It was set up as a state-sponsored initiative to provide employment in the

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<sup>651</sup> George Lois and Bill Pitts, *What’s the Big Idea? How to Win with Outrageous Ideas*. (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

<sup>652</sup> Schwarzkopf, ‘What Was Advertising?’, 16.

<sup>653</sup> Philip B. Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 355.

<sup>654</sup> Frank Mort, ‘The Commercial Domain: Advertising and the Cultural Management of Demand,’ in *Commercial Cultures: Economics, Practice, Spaces*, edited by Peter Jackson, Michelle Lowe, Daniel Miller and Frank Mort. (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2000), 47.

<sup>655</sup> Schwarzkopf, ‘What Was Advertising?’, 16.



economically-deprived Gaeltachtaí (Irish-speaking districts). By 1964 it had 34 centres in Gaeltacht areas employing about 760 people on a full-time basis and 1,000 part-time.<sup>656</sup> The national authenticity of the product was signalled by the round tower, a popular symbol of Romantic Nationalism; however the text of the early adverts emphasised reliability and economy rather than tradition or patriotism.<sup>657</sup> By the late 1940s, the advertising shifted its focus towards 'fashionability' in a series entitled 'Fashionable Intelligence', whose copy invoked 'Paris and New York' (Fig. 62). The knitwear was presented in a typically 'modern' context, with models photographed in conventional fashion poses in loose cut-out shapes that echo M.F. Agha's layouts for American *Vogue* in the 1930s. However, from 1959 the advertising was taken over by O'Kennedy-Brindley and two ICAD members worked on campaigns, Eamonn Costelloe for tweed and Jarlath Hayes for knitwear. Costelloe's illustration (Fig. 63) with its jokey interpretation of a tailor who has apparently escaped from the margins of a medieval manuscript, is in the spirit of the popular pre-war modernist advertising image of the 'funny little man'.<sup>658</sup> The white space and simple graphic line, together with the ironic evocation of the grand narratives of nationalism mark this out, as the caption in another version of the ad reads, as 'traidisiún do'n lá inniu', tradition for today, or 'up-to-date tradition' (Fig. 64).

Hayes's series was more visually radical (Fig. 65). The double half-page ad appears like the set for a modern television programme, combining illustration and photography to create a collage-like effect that played with scale and depth. *Campaign's* Man With A Spanner lavished praise upon the campaign, describing it as 'the freshest ad in years'.<sup>659</sup> It even featured that icon of 1950s modern consumer culture, the teenager, here the 'teen-age sister'. *Campaign* also noted another innovation, the use of the Irish language in a modern, everyday setting rather than in a nationalist or heritage context: 'And as the seamróg sinks slowly in the West, welcome to fashion, finesse and sales.'<sup>660</sup> The Irish language is used here

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<sup>656</sup> 'Athbheochan na Gaeilge. The Restoration of the Irish Language,' (Baile Atha Cliatha: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1965), 54-56.

<sup>657</sup> The adverts stated that: "'Round Tower" knitwear will be found to be as good as the hand-woven tweeds.' *Irish Independent*, November, 1931.

<sup>658</sup> See Virginia Smith *The Funny Little Man: Biography of a Graphic Type* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993).

<sup>659</sup> 'Our man with a spanner' *Campaign* Vol. 1, No.3 (Spring 1960), 6.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*

for the shamrock, emphasising the link between the language and the romantic nationalist tradition which, *Campaign* argued, this advertising campaign breaks.

Share suggested in *Campaign* in 1960 that Irish audiences were suspicious of advertising featuring 'solemn-faced Gracious Living and the Top People who live it'.<sup>661</sup> By contrast, he argued, authentic advertising did not take itself too seriously. Both of the Round Tower ads provide a strong contrast to a contemporary display ad in the *Irish Times* for Magee Tweed (Fig. 66). Here the viewer is hailed by the traditional 'expert', presumably a 'business man', offering advice. The (long) copy is written in conversational style as the 'expert' addresses the reader as an equal who understands business methods. The composition is busy, with several zones of information, styles of typefaces and modes of illustration.

### **Defining designing: Graphic design and commercial art**

The 1950s also saw the emergence of a new term, 'graphic designer', as distinct from the 'commercial artist' or art director. The distinctions that existed in the UK between 'graphic design' and 'commercial art', 'art direction', or simply 'advertising' were less clearly drawn in Ireland.<sup>662</sup> In part this was because the small pool of designers moved with reasonable ease between advertising and design contexts. The exceptions were the two design consultancies Signa and DRU. Signa appear to have done very little advertising while Thurloe Conolly stated in 1956 that the DRUI 'did not engage in advertising.'<sup>663</sup>

While there is a chronological aspect to the distinction between 'commercial art' and 'graphic design', the first gradually being replaced by the second through the 1950s, there was also an ideological dimension.<sup>664</sup> According to Alex Seago the term 'graphic design' was first used in

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<sup>661</sup> Bernard Share, Editorial, *Campaign* Vol. 2, No.6 (March 1961), 1.

<sup>662</sup> Until the establishment of RTÉ television in 1962, advertising in Ireland was exclusively print-based.

<sup>663</sup> Thurloe Conolly, quoted in the *Irish Architect and Contractor* in January, 1956 as part of a forum on Industrial Design in Ireland organised by the journal. He explained that commercial art, 'meant primarily advertising. Industrial design, on the other hand... involved nearly everything but advertising.' 'Industrial Design in Ireland: Forum', *Irish Architect and Contractor*, (January, 1956), 23. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>664</sup> Some of the D&AD founders referred to themselves as 'graphic designers' to distinguish themselves from their colleagues who worked on advertising campaigns. One of the origins of the organisation was the Association of *Graphic Designers* London, founded by Derek Birdsall in 1959. While the D&AD was intended as 'a union of the advertising and design worlds' (Kinross, 'Images for Sale', 93), initial distrust had to be overcome. One early member recalled that the designers (including the founders Birdsall, Forbes and Alan Fletcher) 'regarded themselves as artists' and 'looked disparagingly' at art directors as 'hucksters... doing commercial stuff'. Malcolm Hart quoted in Bonner, 'D&AD? That was All My Idea,'(online).

Britain by Richard Guyatt, Professor of Publicity Design at the Royal College of Art in 1948.<sup>665</sup> Guyatt changed the name of his course to Graphic Design to counter a widespread view of commercial art as ‘a vulgar trade practised by fine artists who had failed to make the grade, or, worse still, by *louche* lower-class types with no formal art education at all.’<sup>666</sup> ‘Graphic design’ began to enter the Irish lexicon through British connections. In Ireland, as in Britain, ‘commercial artist’ was the common term for a ‘two-dimensional designer’<sup>667</sup> until the 1960s, but the earliest uses of ‘graphic design’ in the Irish press relate to Signa and the DRUI.<sup>668</sup> Signa’s London-based members Peter Wildbur and George Daulby described themselves as graphic designers<sup>669</sup> and this terminology seems to have been adopted from them by the Dublin office. In an interview promoting the 1954 International Design Exhibition, the *Irish Times* asked the DRU’s Dorothy Goslett’s to explain the term. The writer concluded: ‘apparently it covers all sorts of things like posters, booklets, labels, packaging, trademarks and even shopping bags.’<sup>670</sup> The term was used in the 1958 special ‘design’ issue of *Irish Management* largely dedicated to the DRU.<sup>671</sup>

Jonathan Woodham has argued that ‘the widely felt uncertainty of the connotations of terms commonly used in the interwar years such as ‘commercial art’ or ‘graphic design’, ‘industrial art’ or ‘industrial design’ reflected the inability of designers to establish a clear-cut professional identity or status.’<sup>672</sup> A parallel uncertainty beset the ICAD, which used a wide variety of terms to describe the activities of those members whom we might now term graphic designers.<sup>673</sup> There were 34 names listed in first Register of Members in 1960, of

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<sup>665</sup> Alex Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things: Development of a Postmodern Sensibility*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 25.

<sup>666</sup> Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things*, 26.

<sup>667</sup> This awkward phrase was used in the second ICAD register of members.

<sup>668</sup> The very first instance of the term ‘graphic design’ that I have found comes in an *Irish Times* book review in 1928 and uses it interchangeably with ‘commercial art’. The unnamed reviewer was complementary of Mr W.G. Raffé’s ‘helpful volume’ *Graphic Design* (London: Chapman and Hall) and recommended it ‘for the art student who wishes to turn his art to commercial purposes, as well as for the professional commercial artist...’. *The Irish Times*, January 13, 1928.

<sup>669</sup> Both were involved in the pre-D&AD, Association of Graphic Designers London and the exhibition ‘17 Graphic Designers, London’.

<sup>670</sup> ‘Candida’, ‘An Irishwoman’s Diary,’ *Irish Times*, April 23, 1954.

<sup>671</sup> A caption to a photograph of playing cards designed by Kenneth Lambie describes them as ‘a pleasing example of graphic design.’ *Irish Management*, Vol 5, No. 1, (January-February), 11.

<sup>672</sup> Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth Century Design*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 167.

<sup>673</sup> ICAD was a very broad church. Despite not taking advertising work, Signa’s Louis le Brocquy opened the Best Sellers exhibition in 1962 and Signa won most of the prizes in Best Sellers 1964. In addition, the typographer and publisher Liam Miller, none of whose work could have been categorised as ‘commercial art’, was an early member of the organisation.

which 17 were listed as designers (ten two-dimensional and seven three-dimensional), seven as artists (including several of the Dutch designers), four copywriters, three photographers and one typographer. There was a certain amount of slippage between these categories, particularly between two-dimensional designer and artist. For example, Cor Klaasen who, with Jarlath Hayes, designed Volume 1 of *Campaign* (including the issue that featured the Register) was listed as an 'artist'. On the other hand, James A. Gooch, whose artwork adorns the cover of the journal, was categorised as a 'two-dimensional designer'. In the 1963 Register, in keeping with the change of title, the distinction between 2D and 3D was dispensed with and 'illustrator' replaced 'artist.'

In terms of aesthetic preferences, ICAD was as wide-ranging as its members, but with a general commitment to 'modern' design. ICAD argued that a new visual vocabulary was needed for modern Ireland, but rather than agreeing on a single aesthetic, members endorsed a spectrum of modernisms. King carefully counters the prevailing and rather sweeping description of the Dutch as having introduced European modernism into Irish design, citing John Turpin's writing in particular. 'It is often stated that the Dutch design expertise that came to Ireland in the 1950s was directly responsible for introducing 'Bauhaus principles' to Ireland.'<sup>674</sup> Their illustration-style, she explains, owes more to the influences of American animation and post-war Dutch reactions against the International Typographic Style than to strict Bauhaus or New Typography principles. It was, she writes, 'primarily illustrative, eschewing modernism's distinct emphasis on photography as the primary visual means of expression....'<sup>675</sup> However, as in Britain, economic and technological factors, as much as aesthetic ones, limited the use of photography in Irish advertising until the 1960s.<sup>676</sup>

Beyond the medium used, the style of the Dutch, despite its 'clarity of form, hierarchical organisation of type and image, use of clear grids and an emphasis on primary shapes and colours',<sup>677</sup> was largely figurative and whimsical. The text elements were almost always either hand-drawn or entirely outside of the control of the designer, being designed and over-printed in a separate process (Fig. 67). King's insistence on the modernist resonance of the

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<sup>674</sup> King '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze', 185.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid.

<sup>676</sup> Paul Jobling, *Advertising Menswear: Masculinity and Fashion In The British Media Since 1945* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 5.

<sup>677</sup> King '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze', 185.

use of sanserif letterforms is probably correct, though the overall feel is of a conservative or softened modernism.

Cor Klaasen, writing in *Campaign* in 1959 pointed out the oversimplification of aesthetic terminology: 'Only one style is ever referred to here [in Ireland] and that is what people call "the Continental Style"... There is no such thing as a "Continental Style" ... since every European country has its own style or styles which they preserve and maintain as part of their national personality.'<sup>678</sup> Nevertheless, he outlined 'how modernism developed' and in doing so made an eloquent and persuasive case for the zeitgeist and a machine aesthetic.<sup>679</sup>

International modernism, as practiced by Signa Design Consultants, was sometimes criticised on the pages of *Campaign*. In Spring 1960 Our Man With A Spanner described as 'cold, cerebral, utterly un-commercial, static, monotonous, culled from magazines, arbitrarily conceived, decadent' the work at Signa's exhibition of industrial and graphic design at the Building Centre.<sup>680</sup> Neither did their design for the Building Centre's journal, *Forgnán*, find favour: in a balanced and well-informed article by De Fouw he acknowledged the aesthetic appeal of the journal but concluded that the slavish adherence to 'functionalism' imprisoned the content in a 'typographical straight-jacket'.<sup>681</sup>

### The design of *Campaign*

Naturally, *Campaign* itself provided the best illustration of the Institute's approach. James A. Gooch's covers for the first volume (Fig. 68) suggest some affinity with the ideas of the New Typography: only one (sans serif) typeface is used, in three sizes; all lower case, while the type is all ranged right. A black bar unites type and image, reading as a version of the kind of printers rules favoured in earlier modernist compositions. The name 'Campaign' appears twice, once in black on white, then above as a mirror image, white out of black, echoing Moholy-Nagy's famous cover for *Bauhaus Bucher No. 14* of 1929. But there were, as

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<sup>678</sup> Klaasen 'In Search of a Style', 5.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> Signa were not named in the column, but it is clear from an article in the *Irish Press* that it was the Signa exhibition that was running at the BDC at this point. 'Exhibition of Designs,' *Irish Press* February 16, 1960.

<sup>681</sup> Jan de Fouw, 'Forgnán: Store for Gunpowder, Review of New Building Centre Monthly,' *Campaign* Vol. 3, No. 9 (March, 1962), 10. The design and layout of the journal was by Peter Wildbur.

Linda King has noted, distinct American influences, especially in the style of illustration. Gooch's abstract cover features the spiral form which is so common in modernist-inflected Irish graphic design in the 1950s and 60s.<sup>682</sup> Here the treatment suggests paper cut-out, as the line undulates and squares-off the spiral turns. Paper cut-outs also provide the background for each version of the name 'campaign'. The American designers Paul Rand and Saul Bass, whose work was influenced by Surrealism and Dada, were popular among members of the ICA, many of whom were also painters. Saul Bass's approach to lettering and his use of paper cuts-outs were remarked on with approbation in the pages of *Campaign*.

Gooch's design for the second volume of *Campaign*, (also in two colours) is more surreal than abstract (Fig. 69). It is a visual pun on "chicken-and-egg", again using strong blocks of solid colour, which creates a contrast between the bold cut-out of the egg, and the loosely-drawn, apparently amorous, chickens, over-printed with a circle of yellow 'yolk'. The covers for Volume 3 were by the Dutch designer Piet Sluis, best known for his colourful illustrated posters for Aer Lingus and Bord Failte (Fig. 67). By contrast, his design for *Campaign* (Fig. 70) is abstract and geometric, based on repeat overlapping triangles. The use of cut-outs and rubylith film allows a two-colour print to look like three. The layout is more tightly controlled on a grid than Gooch's and the type is fully integrated into the composition.

The design of the journal did not meet with universal approval. Talbot Kelly, wrote to the Arts Council asking them to sponsor *Campaign* and enclosing a copy of the first issue. The Council minutes of November 17, 1959 record that ICAD were to receive indemnity against loss but that 'the Secretary was instructed to inform the Institute that the Council were not satisfied with the lay-out and standard of the magazine.'<sup>683</sup>

### **'Creative' Campaigns**

Creative practice not only united the disparate members of the Institute, but it was a strategic marker of distinction in an international context where the 'immoral' techniques of advertising were coming under scrutiny, and a local one where design was increasingly presented as key to modernisation. An emphasis on 'creativity' allowed members to distance

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<sup>682</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>683</sup> Arts Council file, 33719/1958/1

themselves from those areas of advertising that were distasteful while simultaneously establishing their practice as nationally beneficial. The final section of this chapter will examine a number of advertising campaigns by ICAD members which demonstrate this strategy.

The creative difference that ICAD wished to project is evident in a self-promotional photograph of the 1961 Council, taken in Robert Dawson's photography studio (Fig. 71).<sup>684</sup> The Council members are shown pulling faces and striking self-consciously exaggerated poses with various props. The photographs are often manically surreal, gleefully juxtaposing incongruous objects and bodies, apparently celebrating the ludicrousness of modern life and its objects.<sup>685</sup> This kind of clowning also fed into the studio atmosphere in the agencies. Hugh Oram reported that Share and Bolger habitually wore Mickey Mouse ears made from black sugar paper while working in the Janus office in the early 1960s.<sup>686</sup> Bolger remembered taking these from the coat hook and donning them each morning, signalling the beginning of the creative day, as a reversal of 'the bank manager hanging up his bowler'.<sup>687</sup> Asked to explain why other ICAD members so often ended up in each others' ad campaigns, Bolger recalled, 'When you wanted a man for a shoot, you got sent a "model". We didn't want models. We usually wanted nutters, real people.'<sup>688</sup> This connection between authenticity and 'craziness' suggests the idea of the primitive avant-garde, outside of the rules of 'normal' society. Equally, the apparent 'zaniness' of the ICAD members, together with their beards and casual attire, suggested a connection to the all-important youth market. By the early 1960s, advertisers in America were beginning to trade on the cultural capital of 'cool', rebellion and anti-authority.<sup>689</sup> This youthful, modern, 'craziness' of their creatives was evidently seen by the advertising agencies as a marketable quality in modern Ireland as these values were celebrated in the agencies' own advertising aimed at the modernising elite.

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<sup>684</sup> Figure 71 shows Brian Murphy, Jan de Fouw, Frank Ryan (top), Bill Bolger, Bernard Share, Doug Grainger (middle row), Giles Talbot Kelly (floor).

<sup>685</sup> They appear to be influenced by two contemporary comic sources: the BBC radio series, *The Goon Show*, and the Irish satirist Myles na gCopaleen, both favourites among the ICAD members. Share quoted the former with approval in his editorials, while an *Irish Times* column by Myles, a pseudonym of the civil servant Brian O'Nolan or Flann O'Brien, was reproduced in the first issue of *Campaign*.

<sup>686</sup> Oram, *The Advertising Book*, 140. Oram tells several other anecdotes about Share and Bolger at Janus, but does not name them.

<sup>687</sup> Interview with Bernard Share and Bill Bolger, Dublin, February, 12, 2013.

<sup>688</sup> Interview with Bernard Share and Bill Bolger, Dublin, February, 12, 2013.

<sup>689</sup> See Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*.

### Janus: advertising creativity and modernity.

A good example of how the 'creative' department was deployed to promote the advertising agency is the case of the campaigns by Share and Bolger for Janus. These appeared in *Irish Management*, organ of the modernising elite in business and the civil service and a point of mediation between designers and modernisers.<sup>690</sup> The adverts also echo the ICAD claim that its members were 'experts' in Irishness, they are replete with colloquialisms and local in-jokes. The first Janus series was entitled 'Team and Variations'. Share often drew on specific Irish accents in his puns, in this case referencing Dubliners' tendency to sharpen the 'th' sound in 'theme' (Fig. 72). Bolger visualised twelve variations on the idea of the creative team. In doing so, the pair showcased a wide variety of visual and copy styles. For the first of these Bolger photographed members of the agency wearing the letters that made up the copy headline. In a review in *Campaign*, Giles Talbot Kelly praised this advert: 'Portraits of real people who will actually do work for you.... most flattering to the buyer!'<sup>691</sup> Number 3 drew attention to the central relationship between visualiser and copywriter, with a scraperboard illustration of their feet at the desk. It reinforced the stereotype of the 'arty' designer whose shoes were 'Italian suede', contrasting with the less flamboyant brogues of the copywriter. Number 4 (Fig. 73) returned to the idea of the distinctiveness of the Irish accent and the copywriters erudition. It presented typographically the variety of distinctive ways the word 'advertisement' is pronounced in Ireland. 'In Ireland you'll hear people talking about adVERTisements and adverTISments; and we in Janus rather relish this seventeenth-century pronunciation of a twentieth-century phenomenon'.

The next series of adverts were all photographic and had a very distinctive black and white visual style. The starting point for the ads was the casting of Tommy McCann, a finished artist in the studio of Janus as the model for all the shoots. The conceit in each was that he appeared as 'twins' in Bolger's seamless photomontages, echoing the idea of Janus, the two faced Roman god. Bolger redrew the agency's symbol based on McCann's distinctive beard and quiff which made his face 'pleasingly symmetrical' but also announced his modernity and difference from the mainstream, as did the fashionably tight-fitting suit he worn in all the

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<sup>690</sup> See Grace Lees-Maffej, 'The Production–Consumption–Mediation Paradigm,' *Journal of Design History* Vol. 22, No. 4 (2009): 351-376.

<sup>691</sup> Giles Talbot Kelly, 'Heads They Win? Janus Advertising,' *Campaign*, Vol. 2 No. 6 (March, 1961), 2.



advertises (Fig. 74). The first ad in the series (February, 1961), explicitly linked Janus's creative orientation to the cultural capital of cool. 'Janus sells to cool customers' showed McCann offering parcels to two music fans (presumably intended to be 'teenagers', but modelled by Janus staff). The 'cool' customer is seated cross-legged with bow-tie and guitar while the 'square' is pictured with gramophone.<sup>692</sup> Janus thus offered the square world of management access to young consumers. Puns also featured, 'Janus (wait for it) has the intrée' showed McCann sitting in on an office desk in-tray.

Figure 75-77 are from the final series Share and Bolger made for Janus before they left to concentrate full time on their own consultancy, Verbiage: Words and Pictures. This series ran in *Irish Management* from April to December, 1962 and again emphasised the creatives as 'experts' and 'specialists'. The copy was written in the voice of The Client, extolling the virtues of the modern, creative service he enjoyed (but did not fully understand) from Janus. The Client himself was illustrated as an old-fashioned businessman with stiff collar, top hat and striped waistcoat. He was apparently based on an individual in CTT.<sup>693</sup> The copy in the second advert (Fig. 75) was replete with references to the arcana of the production department: dragon's blood, dow etching and hair spaces, emphasising through the use of technical jargon the specialist and expert nature of the practice. The image was a pun on 'dragon's blood', a resin used in etching, and showed The Client as an unlikely Saint George spearing a dragon who encircles him. The dragon is rendered in a new technique Bolger had developed, which printed an image from a cardboard cut out, marbled with oil and water-based ink. It created a complex texture and a sense of depth even in the black and white reproduction in *Irish Management* by exploiting the high quality paper used to print the journal. Bolger used the same technique for the next ad in the series, a pun on the word 'column'. The copy, again in the voice of The Client, referred to advertising in newspaper column inches, while the image showed The Client atop a cartoon of Nelson's Pillar, the Dublin landmark (Fig. 76).

The advert in Figure 77 is an example of how ICAD members advertised their local expertise to create immediate recognition in the audience. In this case, it plays on the double meaning

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<sup>692</sup> The insider joke here was featuring copywriter Norman Mongon as the guitarist, Mongon was well known as a jazz musician. Jazz was a very popular pastime for many ICA members including Piet Sluis and Jack Cudworth.

<sup>693</sup> Interview with Bernard Share and Bill Bolger, Dublin, February, 12, 2013.

of 'the Post Office': a place where stamps are bought but also a shorthand for the General Post Office in Dublin's O'Connell Street. This was the symbolic heart of the fighting in the Easter Rising of 1916 and to have been 'in the Post Office' was to have fought for Irish freedom. The Client, however, fought in the GPO not for Independence but for stamps. The reproduction of the most commonly used definitive stamp as The Client's top hat draws attention to the overt republican nationalist symbolism —the spectacular nationalism— hiding in plain sight in the everyday visual culture of post-war Ireland. Such ironic treatment of the grand narrative of heroic nationalism, an 'ironic rereading of established versions of authentic Irishness',<sup>694</sup> is usually written about as a feature of *postmodern* Ireland. In fact, we might see this strategy as in keeping with the critique of romantic Ireland that characterised modernisation in Ireland more generally.

### Experts in Irishness

The sociologist (and former advertising executive) Neil O'Boyle has studied the discourse of advertising culture in contemporary Ireland. His work is informed by Sean Nixon's on the culture of London advertising agencies which argued for the centrality of 'creativity' as a kind of cultural capital within them.<sup>695</sup> By contrast, O'Boyle argues that for Irish advertising professionals, the 'supreme value' is 'knowing what it means to be Irish'.<sup>696</sup> It is evident from their writing in the early 1960s that ICAD members also sought to present themselves as 'experts' on Irishness, as part of their professional identity. Unlike O'Boyle's respondents, who tended to ascribe their insight to a 'gut –feeling' drawn from the 'fact' of their having lived in Ireland, this 'knowing' was the result of critical, objective study.

ICAD's Dutch designers in particular, worked hard to become experts on Irishness. They had the advantage of being both insiders and outsiders; tourists and makers of tourist images. As King writes:

...they extensively and regularly toured the countryside, using both still and moving cameras to document and record those aspects of Ireland and Irish life that for them

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<sup>694</sup> Colin Graham, "'...Maybe That's Just Blarney: Authenticity in Irish Culture,' in *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 134.

<sup>695</sup> Sean Nixon, *Advertising Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

<sup>696</sup> Neil O'Boyle, *New Vocabularies, Old Ideas: Culture, Irishness and the Advertising Industry* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), and Neil O'Boyle 'Knowing What It Means to be Irish: Experience as Practice in the Advertising Industry' *Social Identities* Vol. 15, No. 5, (September 2009): 565-584.

exemplified difference and which they then used as source material to inform their work for various tourism agents. What is consistent in their individual testimonials is that a shared interest in the landscape and social practices formed a collective consciousness that they were outsiders observing and recording patterns that were in the process of being challenged or eroded.<sup>697</sup>

What King doesn't mention is the impact this had on their fellow Irish-born designers. By remarking on the small differences that the Irish took for granted they helped to make the familiar strange and remarkable. Jan de Fouw's work for *Ireland of the Welcomes*, though aimed at the tourist market, was avidly consumed, collected and reused by other designers.<sup>698</sup> According to King, it moved beyond 'geographic depictions to encompassing subject matter that typically included such subjects as home-baked brown bread —when it had become a symbol of status and economic prosperity to buy white, pre-wrapped bread— and the distinctive markings of indigenous beach pebbles.'<sup>699</sup> The Dutch in noticing, recording and pointing out that this taken-for-granted way of life was something on the wane, brought their fellow designers into modernity, allowing them to see the everyday with the eyes of moderns. This made them better able to identify those small differences between Irish and other cultures that could be enlarged into 'distinction', the byword of national design. As Boym and Gibbons remind us, tradition is not what modernity replaces, it is created by modernity.

This observation leads to a final instance of self-promotion of advertisers as experts on modern Ireland, but here aimed at a British audience, and returns to the strategy of 'Celtic modernism', the subject of the next chapter. Figure 78a is a 1959 ad for the O'Kennedy-Brindley agency in the British trade journal *Advertiser's Weekly*, art directed by Jarlath Hayes. The copy simultaneously evoked stereotypical representations of Ireland in the British media as mystical, historical and traditional while also refuting them through the use of modern slang. It reads, the 'minstrel boy is real gone, sent in fact right back to the history books where he belongs...'. The minstrel boy with his harp (presented as the traditional mode of mass communication in Ireland) was modelled by a fellow creative in the exaggerated, 'ham', fashion seen in ICAD self promotional photographs. The ad is denoted as not traditional –

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<sup>697</sup> King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze', 173.

<sup>698</sup> The archives of both Bill Bolger and Jarlath Hayes contain copies of the magazine, often with the stamp of the O'Kennedy Brindley agency, from which photographs, illustrations and display type have been cut out. The magazine also seems to have been used as evidence of an 'authentic' image of Ireland in the preparation of export marketing campaigns in London, as is discussed above in relation to butter advertising.

<sup>699</sup> King, '(De)constructing the Tourist Gaze,' 184.

'fairy rings are strictly for squares' – but is connoted as part of a tradition, though the *modality* of both text and image is modern – *hip*, even. In common with Hayes and Share's Strongbow ad for Donnellys (see Fig. 184), the idea of the British as 'invaders' is explicitly invoked, albeit in an ironic fashion: a list of British clients is described as 'a few of the Invaders who have found our specialised knowledge helpful'. The ad explicitly presents O'Kennedy-Brindley as experts in authentic Irishness who can prevent British clients falling into the 'stage Irish' trap, warning that: 'strangers arriving to do business in Ireland with a shillelagh under their arm are likely to be met with gael-force reactions.'

## **We have always been modern: Celtic modernist affinities 1960-1973**

### **Introduction**

Preceding chapters have established that in the 1950s and 1960s, modernisers in Ireland—in government, industry and design—actively sought to project an image of Ireland through design that simultaneously suggested modernity and national distinctiveness. A number of strategies for the negotiation of tradition and modernity apparently required by this dual projection have already been identified, notably the recall of the Celtic past in otherwise contemporary or modernist design settings and the use of Gaelic and/or uncial typefaces. Chapters 3 and 4 will explicitly examine these twin strategies, arguing for the existence of a kind of Celtic modernism in Irish graphic design and typography from the early 1950s until at least the late 1970s. This chapter focuses primarily on how graphic design (and to a lesser extent, exhibition design) in Ireland at this time presented ‘traditional’ content (archaeological, heritage sources, the Irish language, traditional music) in canonically international modernist form. For example, this is seen in adherence to the conventions of the New Typography of the 1920s, particularly as reformulated in 1950s Switzerland. It was summarised by Emil Ruder as favouring objective photography, grid-based dynamic layouts, sans serif typography, an emphasis on contrast and designed use of white space.<sup>700</sup> In addition, photography offered a contemporary medium through which to update the visual symbolism of Celtic sources, while maintaining their visual potency. The examples discussed in this chapter typify the move from decorative and romantic designs towards explicitly archaeological sources of Celtic imagery in communicating an image of Modern Ireland, which percolated into the everyday visual language of Ireland by the end of the 1960s.

In keeping with one of the aims of this thesis, to decentre the position of the *1961 Report on Design in Ireland* (the Scandinavian Report) and Kilkenny Design Workshops (KDW) in the narrative of Irish design history, I argue here that many of the innovations ascribed to KDW’s graphic design department in the early 1970s had been pioneered up to a decade earlier by Irish graphic design consultancies, notably Signa and Verbiage. More significantly, I argue that

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<sup>700</sup> Emil Ruder, ‘The Typography of Order’ (1959) in *Looking Closer 3: Classic Writings on Graphic Design*, edited by Michael Beirut, Jessica Helfand, Steven Heller and Rick Poynor (New York: Allworth, 1999): 135-138

the tendency to describe the output of KDW (and by implication, these predecessors) as ‘vernacular’ modernism creates a false distinction between those designs that utilised heritage sources as content and those that did not, by suggesting that only the latter were ‘international’. In fact, the crucial argument of these two final chapters is that the use by modernist graphic designers in Ireland of so-called ‘Celtic’ sources, was itself an attempt to signal that Ireland was *already international and modern*. In keeping with the early twentieth-century avant-garde’s formalist framing of the ‘Primitive’, Irish artists, and later, Irish designers, found Celtic objects to be proto-modern. This was emphasised in Celtic modernist graphics by strategies of de-contextualisation and auto-exoticism, where familiar (even hackneyed) sources were made strange by graphic intervention.

Guy Davenport has suggested that part of the modern movement’s fascination with the primitive, especially new discoveries of the prehistoric such as the caves of Lascaux, was that they promised a past that was *new*, in that no one had known of its existence before.<sup>701</sup> The idea of the Celtic as ‘new’ was also prompted by the fact that images of Irish archaeological material became more accessible to artists and designers from the early 1950s onwards.<sup>702</sup>

The design examples discussed below mainly date between 1960 and 1973, which spans Ireland’s three bids (1961, 1967 and 1972) to join the European Common Market, later the European Economic Community (EEC); membership finally commenced in January 1973. In this context, a common pan-European Celtic heritage was presented as a compelling precedent for Ireland’s participation in a federal Europe. ‘Celtic’ was often conflated in Ireland with the art and material culture of the early Christian church, and thus Celtic visual culture recalled a scholarly, vital past for Irish culture.<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>701</sup> Guy Davenport ‘The Symbol of the Archaic’ in *The Geography of the Imagination* 16-28 (1997, 1954) See also Herbert Read, ‘Preface,’ in *40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern* (London: ICA, 1948). The distinction between this ‘archaic’ primitivism and the ‘tribal’ primitive is credited by several art historians (including Andrew Causey) to Robert Goldwater’s 1938 *Primitivism in Modern Art*. Andrew Causey, ‘Barbara Hepworth, Prehistory and the Cornish Landscape’, *Sculpture Journal* Vol. 17, No. 2, (2008), 14.

<sup>702</sup> This knowledge came via publications such as those by art historian Françoise Henry, which were distinguished by very high quality photographs, and through the findings of archaeological excavations such as the controversial excavation and ‘restoration’ of the Neolithic passage grave at Newgrange Co. Meath from 1962-75, discussed below.

<sup>703</sup> As discussed below the influential Irish artist Mainie Jellett directly linked Cubism to Early Christian art in an essay, ‘Modern Art and Its Relation to the Past,’ in *The Artist’s Vision: Lectures and Essays on Art*; with an introduction by Albert Gleizes, edited by Eileen MacCarvill, (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1958). In addition, the

Both of the central aspects of my understanding of Celtic modernism – the Celtic as European/international and as proto-modernist— owe much to the avant-garde painters of early Independent Ireland, in particular to the writings of the highly influential, French-trained Cubist, Mainie Jellett. The link to design is a direct one, since the key modernist designers in the post-war years were either themselves modernist painters or members of the same artistic milieu, dominated by Jellett’s ideas. Herbert Read also influenced these practitioners in the late 1940s, when he was arguing for links between the British avant garde and prehistoric British art. Throughout the chapter I touch on connections between Celtic modernism and ideas of the primitive in avant garde art. Nevertheless, this thesis is concerned with design, and in a case study of the *Rosc ’67 International Exhibition of Modern Painting and Ancient Celtic Art* (hereafter, *Rosc ’67*) I argue that it was through design strategies already well-established in Ireland that Rosc’s organisers were able to make their influential case for the Celtic as (primitive) modernism and thus, for the modernity of Irish art.

### **KDW graphics in Irish design historiography**

As discussed in the introduction, I have adopted the term ‘Celtic modernism’ to encapsulate a variety of approaches to the problem of creating graphic design that could be ‘Irish but distinctive’ in the period of economic modernisation. ‘Celtic modernist’ design is not exclusively that which deploys Celtic symbolism; it is a loose term that describes attempts to present an image of Ireland as distinctive and also modern. The following section establishes and critiques the dominant historiographical view of what I have termed Celtic modernism: that it was developed by designers at KDW in the early 1970s and that it was a ‘vernacular, adapted’<sup>704</sup> version of the same designers’ ‘international’ modernist work. I argue that this overlooks almost two decades of work by Signa and other Irish design consultancies and creates a false distinction between different designs based on the nature of their *content*. In order to unpack these arguments, I first introduce some of the most commonly invoked examples of corporate identity design at KDW.

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so-called Celtic heritage connected Ireland to a pan-European cultural network providing an alternative to the dominant cultural axes: Britain or the United States.

<sup>704</sup> Linda, King, “‘Particles of Meaning’: The Modernist Afterlife in Irish Design’ in *Modernist Afterlives in Irish Literature and Culture*, edited by Paige Reynolds (London: Anthem Press, 2016), 138.

## Córas Tráchtála Annual Report, 1969

In each of the preceding chapters, the design of annual reports has been presented as revealing a great deal about the ideologies of the culture, the clients and the designers responsible for them. The CTT annual report of 1969 (Figure 78b) is another example of this; demonstrating the dominance of a visual mode that deployed stylised Celtic symbols in modernist compositions, particularly in graphics commissioned by the modernising elite. The 1969 Report's cover broke with the long-standing visual strategies previously used on its predecessors: an interpretation of Patrick Scott's corporate symbol for CTT, a representation of the modernity of CTT itself (such as images of their new, modernist, headquarters) and/or the content of the report, often represented by a graph. (See Figures 12-16 for a visual overview of these.) Depending on the viewer's cultural reference points, the 1969 cover is either an abstract composition of two overlapping circles, the larger one printed and embossed in a darker brown on the chocolate-coloured paper stock, or it is a schematic illustration of a Celtic collar or lunula. The lunula was a popular motif in Celtic modernist design, a recognisably 'Celtic' object that was simple in form, 'truthful' in its use of materials and had a minimum of applied decoration. It was not 'hackneyed' having not been commonly used as a symbol in earlier phases of Celtic Revival design.<sup>705</sup> Early Irish metalwork is invoked by the use of gold foil for the lettering (set in all caps in Futura).

The 1969 Report was the first to credit a design consultancy (KDW), rather than being designed in-house by the printers. This coincided with the opening of the graphic design department at KDW in 1968, for which the young Dutch-trained Dubliner, Damien Harrington, had been recruited directly from the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague.<sup>706</sup> His arrival signalled a more general shift in KDW away from craft towards industrial design and a move into corporate identity design (especially for state and semi-state bodies), which had

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<sup>705</sup> Lunula did frequently appear in representational images of Celtic heroes, as for example in Frank Brandt's illustration of a charioteer driving white horse in an advert for the Electrical Supply Board in 1928. Reproduced in Sorcha O'Brien's essay 'Technology and Modernity: The Shannon Scheme and Visions of National Progress,' in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King, and Elaine Sisson, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 70.

<sup>706</sup> Harrington was recruited by KDW director William H. Walsh.



been Signa's domain up to this point. Harrington's first commission, for example, was for a new identity for the Post Office (Fig. 79a and Fig 79b).<sup>707</sup>

### Post Office Identity 1968-9

The pre-existing Post Office symbol (Fig. 80) is a good example of the use of Gaelic lettering to symbolise state identity. It was less a logo than a typographic convention, as the detail and application of the letter forms varied widely. It used the spikier form of the Gaelic alphabet, with the characteristic insular T, as well as the very distinctive symbol used for *agus*, the Irish word for 'and'.<sup>708</sup> The decision to update the identity of the Post Office was another instance of that desire for organisation and 'legibility' among the modernising elite in Ireland already traced in chapter 1. An official departmental justification argued that redesign of the symbol 'in monogram form ... would be more in keeping with modern trends than the outmoded and rather clumsy "P and T" which was in use for so long.'<sup>709</sup> Harrington's design replaced the Gaelic form with a lowercase, sans serif roman. This was logical, given that the Gaelic alphabet had been decommissioned three years earlier, but it was one of the first major demonstrations of the impact of that decision on the visual culture of the State.

The Post Office had been powerfully associated with the colour green ever since the inspired visual transformation effected by painting green the Imperial red boxes in 1922.<sup>710</sup> Like Patrick Scott's livery for CIÉ in 1961 (discussed in Chapter One), Harrington's design replaced green with its complementary colour, orange. As in the CIÉ case, however, Northern Irish Unionist affiliations with 'orange' meant that a chromatic euphemism was required: while

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<sup>707</sup> The commission came from Erskine Childers, minister for Posts and Telegraphs (for the second time) from November 1966 to July 1969, and a great supporter of Irish design, as his extensive response to Design in Ireland attests: it ran to 20 typewritten pages. March 16, 1962. NAI TAOIS/S 13814C/62.

<sup>708</sup> This is the Tironian symbol 'et', a direct equivalent of the ampersand.

<sup>709</sup> Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien Labour Party Minister for Posts and Telegraphs in 1974. Conor Cruise O'Brien 'Committee on Finance, Vote 43: Posts and Telegraphs (Resumed)', *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 273, No.8 (13 June, 1974).

<sup>710</sup> See Brian P. Kennedy, 'The Irish Free State 1922-49: A Visual Perspective' in *Ireland, Art into History* edited by Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy (Dublin: Town House, 1994): 132-152 and Ewan Morris, *Our Own Devices: National Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005).

Scott's trains were 'saffron', Harrington's colour scheme was 'marigold yellow'.<sup>711</sup> The choice of new colour was justified on rational grounds: 'The decision to alter the colour of vans was taken in the interest ... of road safety ... yellow shows up better under different lighting conditions.'<sup>712</sup>

The logo depends on a clever visual pun, where the negative space between the two letters forms the vertical bar of the plus sign.<sup>713</sup> Harrington's interest in such effects was informed by the work of Swiss typographer Max Bill, ultimately derived from the de Stijl Constructivist experiments of the late 1910s, both of which he encountered at The Hague. Harrington's logo designs are in the tradition of international modernist designers, such as Anton Stankowski in the 1950s. His replacement of the Tironian et with a mathematical symbol imbued the p+t logo with a sense of efficiency and modernity, and much like the Signa scheme for the CIÉ livery, attempted to confer these values onto a much abused postal system. The redesign did not meet with universal approval, especially in the Dáil.<sup>714</sup>

### **OPW symbol, 1972**

The schematised version of a specific Celtic motif on the CTT annual report is echoed in other work by Harrington. He was responsible for much of the publicity design for KDW itself in the 1970s; here, his ability to combine historical allusion with visual wit was given free rein. He liked to poke gentle fun at those who saw KDW as a 'Norse invasion', for example in the simple typographic mark he developed for the 1978 Danish Design exhibition at the KDW shop (Fig. 81) or the Viking warship, patterned with the KDW logo, seen on the catalogue for the Irish Furniture and Furnishings Fair in 1970 (Fig. 82).

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<sup>711</sup> This came as something of a surprise to Harrington, who had spent several years in Holland where orange had positive nationalist associations; of course, it was from there that the Ulster Loyalist association of colour had first arisen, via William of Orange in the 1690s.

<sup>712</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien 'Committee on Finance, Vote 43: Posts and Telegraphs (Resumed)', *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 273, No. 8 (13 June, 1974). According to Joanna Quinn, the orange colour had been arrived at after testing various colours under street lights in Dublin to ensure they were visible in the dark. Joanna Quinn, *Designing Ireland: A Retrospective Exhibition of Kilkenny Design Workshops 1963-1988* (Dublin: Crafts Council of Ireland, 2005), 16.

<sup>713</sup> In this it foreshadows the 1994 FedEx logo where the negative space between the E and X forms an arrow.

<sup>714</sup> One Fine Gael T.D. asked, 'Why could we not have held on to the old symbol? What was wrong with it? Probably some trendy young man with a tweed tie was given 50 guineas to sit down and design a new symbol for the Department of Posts and Telegraphs for no obvious reason.' John M. Kelly, 'Committee on Finance, Vote 43: Posts and Telegraphs (Resumed)', *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 273, No. 4 (5 June 1974).

Probably the best known, certainly the longest-serving,<sup>715</sup> example of Celtic modernist corporate identity design is Harrington's symbol for the Office of Public Works (OPW), originally designed in 1972 for its Parks and Monuments branch (Fig. 83).<sup>716</sup> This takes as its starting point the famous 'tri-spiral' design which appears on both the entrance stone to, and a large stone inside, the Neolithic passage grave at Newgrange, Co. Meath (c.3,200 BCE) (Fig. 84 and Fig. 92). This choice was understandable given the recent completion of excavations and the controversial reconstruction then ongoing; indeed, Newgrange would be the standard-bearer of the newly reorganised National Monuments Service. But – and this is a crucial point that this chapter demonstrates – Harrington was also tapping into a long-standing association of Newgrange with modernist art and design as, paradoxically, a symbol of modern Ireland. Peter Wildbur writes of 'conventional and popular symbols which every designer files away at the back of his mind ... as off-the-shelf symbols... since the symbolism is firmly established in the viewer's mind and all that is required is an appropriate graphic form.'<sup>717</sup> For example, a tortoise for slowness, or a dove for peace. Following Fiske, these can be called 'redundant' communication, where their use is expected and their meaning is understood.<sup>718</sup> It is just this redundancy that makes such symbols such useful tools in the inculcation of 'banal nationalism'. Later in the chapter I demonstrate that by 1972, Newgrange was already well established as an off-the-shelf symbol for Modern Ireland.

In the 1985 self-promotional book, *Kilkenny Design: Twenty-One Years of Design in Ireland*, the OPW symbol is described as a 'triple whorl'; Newgrange and its tri-spiral are not

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<sup>715</sup> Harrington's OPW symbol continued in use until 1996 when a new logo was introduced. From 1996 to 2003, responsibility for national monuments was devolved from the OPW to a new body, Dúchas: the Heritage Service, who used a modified version of the symbol, with a new orange colour scheme.

<sup>716</sup> Date from NIVAL file. Anna Moran dates it to 1973-4 in 'Tradition in the Service of Modernity: Kilkenny Design Workshops and Selling "Good" Design at American Department Store Promotions, 1967-76,' in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 197. Linda King gives 1973 in "'Particles of Meaning'", 138; it is dated 1969 in Enrique Juncosa and Christina Kennedy, *The Moderns*, (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 495.

<sup>717</sup> Peter Wildbur, *International Trademark Design: A Handbook of Marks of Identity*, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1979), 22.

<sup>718</sup> In communications theory, these would be referred to as instances of 'redundant' communication, where their use is expected and their meaning is understood. John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1990), 10-17.

mentioned.<sup>719</sup> Yet Harrington himself acknowledges the source. However, as a ‘form follows function’ advocate he has since tended to emphasise that it was originally designed to be cut out of wood using a router, which encouraged simplification.<sup>720</sup> In the best tradition of his constructivist training, Harrington reduced, flattened and abstracted the tri-spiral into pure geometry: three discs of concentric circles, each with a wedge removed, arranged so that the negative space between them forms a central triangle. The density of the concentric patterns against the white space creates such a strong visual contrast that the symbol almost vibrates – again an effect owing much to De Stijl, and one also deployed by Stankowski. Its triangular shape and Op-Art quality also invite comparisons with the 1963 Woolmark by Francesco Saroglia for the International Wool Secretariat.<sup>721</sup>

The use of an abstracted, geometric interpretation of a Celtic symbol was certainly not unprecedented. Scott had already established a connection between archaeological sources and modern design in his symbols for the Cultural Relations Committee in 1951 and for CTT c.1952. Nevertheless, Harrington’s rigorous, controlled, modernist design and typography, which he credited to his Bauhaus-trained tutors at The Hague, and his ability to find pure geometry in archaeological motifs made his graphics very striking. He could also include contemporary cultural references (such as the nod to Op Art in the OPW logo) without compromising the design’s longevity.

## **Modern or vernacular modernism in Irish graphic design**

This successful pairing of international modernism and the Celtic past is often cited as the innovator of that combination and as evidence of Harrington’s having brought international modernist graphics to Ireland. Anna Moran has stated that designers at KDW ‘reinterpreted traditional Irish motifs or signals of Ireland’s heritage by viewing them through the lens of

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<sup>719</sup> Nick Marchant and Jeremy Addis, *Kilkenny Design: Twenty-One Years of Design in Ireland* (London: Lund Humphries, 1985), 179.

<sup>720</sup> Damien Harrington, ‘The Designer and the State’, Public lecture, Waterford Institute of Technology, May 4, 2006. There may be some retrospective conflation with his Forestry Service Logo which certainly was designed for wooden signs.

<sup>721</sup> Parallels with contemporary Irish art also exist, such as Micheal Farrell’s paintings blending ‘international colour field painting with Celtic motifs’ or Patrick Scott’s *Device* paintings. See Dorothy Walker, *Modern Art in Ireland* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1997).

international modernism',<sup>722</sup> and Luke Gibbons has gone further, hailing KDW as 'a trail-blazer in vernacular modernism as traditional Irish motifs or "Celtic" forms were filtered through the linear abstractions of the International Style in an attempt to forge a distinctive Irish visual identity.'<sup>723</sup> This raises two difficulties: the idea of KDW as innovating a mode (since, as discussed above, the strategy had been established by Signa almost two decades earlier) and, the question of whether that mode constitutes 'vernacular' modernism. This chapter, and the thesis more generally, demonstrates that Harrington's OPW symbol appears towards the end of a process, rather than being the starting point.

Linda King has noted that 'KDW had particular successes in poster, packaging and corporate identity design' and claims that 'such specialisms were unusual for the period as "graphic design" was generally assumed to be "advertising".'<sup>724</sup> Certainly, in the 1950s, most graphic design work was carried out by designers working for advertising agencies, but as the 1960s began there were several design consultancies at work. Signa often provided corporate identity design, including the KDW identity of 1964 for which Louis le Brocquy designed the logo.<sup>725</sup> Since international modernism and corporate identity design had reached Ireland before KDW<sup>726</sup> got into its stride, a synthesis of Celticism and modernism was already well established in the repertoire of graphic designers in Ireland before Harrington chose Newgrange's tri-spiral as inspiration.

The difficulty raised by the terms 'vernacular', 'regional' or 'national' was noted in the introduction. Each assumes a *standard* or *high* modernism from which the local design deviates. By contrast, it is the fluency and confidence in using the formal language of international modernist graphic design (as evident in the work various designers at Signa, and Harrington at KDW) that exposes the limitations of categorising it as *vernacular* modernism,

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<sup>722</sup> Moran 'Tradition in the Service of Modernity', 196.

<sup>723</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Modalities of the Visible' in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 25.

<sup>724</sup> Lisa Godson and Linda King, 'Design and Material Culture', in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall, and Peter Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 127.

<sup>725</sup> The KDW letterhead and stationery were also designed in the Dublin office; Signa brochure, 1965. List of Work in Progress, minutes of Signa Board meeting August 31, 1964. Dorothy Walker Papers, NIVAL.

<sup>726</sup> Despite Damien Harrington's oft-repeated and only slightly tongue-in-cheek claim that 'there was no design in Ireland before 1970'. Harrington, 'Designer and the State'; and personal communication.

as defined by Hansen and by Gibbons. For both these writers, the distinction between high and vernacular modernism is primarily about form: the adaptation or incorporation into international modernism of local, and/or demotic, vernacular forms. But in the case of these designers, Ireland adhered to international norms of modernist design—even the Irish language was increasingly being set in Helvetica (figures 85 and 86)—and as this chapter’s examples demonstrate, the Celtic or traditional appears as *content*, while the *form* is uncomplicatedly modernist.

Linda King draws a distinction between the ‘language of International modernism’ (e.g. the p+t logo) and a ‘vernacular, adapted modernism’ (e.g. the OPW logo) in Harrington’s corporate identity work.<sup>727</sup> King’s distinction seems to be based on the fact that the latter self-consciously draws on local sources while there is nothing which links the former to its Irish context. However, we should acknowledge that there is little *formal* difference in Harrington’s approach to the two schemes. The degree to which *content* changes the critic’s reading of the *style* of design from vernacular to ‘high’ or ‘international’ is worth noting. For example, one could hardly describe as ‘vernacular’ Peter Wildbur’s 1966 use of the same Newgrange spiral, in an equally modernist setting, on a cover he designed for György Kepes’s book *the man made object* (Fig. 87).<sup>728</sup> Presumably Wildbur had in mind the idea of Newgrange as a very early ‘man made object’. The overall graphic strategy here seems to suggest the modernist idea of ‘universal man’, with disparate objects from different origins and periods linked through placement and visual style. Here the ‘Celtic’ is set free from any nativist associations as, in a modernist context, the (primitive) Celtic had *transnational* connotations. This is one of the reasons why I have avoided the term ‘vernacular’ in favour of ‘Celtic’ modernism, thus evoking the same paradoxical universality yet distinctiveness as the designers of the 1950 and ‘60s did.

This section has attempted to demonstrate the central position afforded to KDW in the historiography of Irish graphic design. While never denigrating Harrington’s evident abilities, the remainder of this chapter demonstrates that the graphic language and references he so

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<sup>727</sup> King, ““Particles of Meaning””, 138.

<sup>728</sup> This volume was part of Kepes’s influential Vision and Value series for Studio Vista; I am grateful to Professor Ian McLaren for bringing this example to my attention and for send an image of it.

skilfully deployed at KDW were already well established in Ireland. It also attempts to complicate a distinction between international and vernacular modes of Irish modernist graphics. The limitations of this distinction are particularly evident in the case of design for Irish traditional music, where the designers were at pains to render *international* very *vernacular* content.

### Gael Linn: 'Trad' and modernism

Gael Linn, a record label founded in 1956 to promote traditional Irish music and the Irish language, exemplifies the complexity of the relationship between modernity and tradition, form and content. Gael Linn began life as a student organisation with the aims of preserving and promoting the Irish language. In keeping with the emerging ideology of modernisation in Ireland, the group recognised an economic dimension to the decline of the language and set about investing in modernisation projects in the Gaeltachtaí, the Irish-speaking areas of Ireland.<sup>729</sup> Funds were raised by novel means, including a very successful football pool (based on Gaelic football, not soccer) as well as via the record label.<sup>730</sup> The company also produced Irish language documentaries and, from 1956 to 1964, a newsreel, *Amharc Éireann*.<sup>731</sup> From the outset, Gael Linn record sleeves embraced a modern design aesthetic. (Figure 88) The early covers show the direct influence of contemporary American jazz labels, as well as a strongly grid-based composition.<sup>732</sup> Designs by Verbiage's Bill Bolger for Gael Linn from the mid 1960s generally use photographs of the artists as the main compositional device; these were then closely cropped and/or silhouetted against a contrasting background (Figures 85 and 86).<sup>733</sup> According to Bolger, this strategy had pragmatic origins: 'most of the [artists] were ordinary fellas, and we didn't always have the money for nice studio portraits of them; they might bring you a wedding photo...'<sup>734</sup> Certainly, the Gael Linn artists were only rarely

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<sup>729</sup> Projects included a fish processing plant in Carna, Co. Galway and a pig farm in Co. Donegal.

<sup>730</sup> Dónall Ó Móráin, 'Founding of Gael Linn, 1950-1959', <http://www.gael-linn.ie/default.aspx?treeid=257>

<sup>731</sup> Mairéad Pratschke, 'A Look at Irish-Ireland: Gael Linn's "Amharc Éireann" Films, 1956-64' *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (October, 2005): 17-38.

<sup>732</sup> Rosanne Lancaster, 'The Packaging & Promotion of Irish Traditional Music, 1950s - 1970s,' public lecture, Typography Ireland Green Sleeves symposium, National Print Museum, Dublin 5 May, 2017. See also, Rosanne Lancaster, 'Traditional Modernism', <http://www.100archive.com/article/traditional-modernism>

<sup>733</sup> Peter Wildbur's designs for Claddagh Records, founded in 1959, can be seen as a precedent for this new approach to the presentation of traditional music. Certainly, Bolger acknowledged Wildbur as a major influence on his own design work and invited him to be a visiting lecturer at NCAD when he established the new Department of Visual Communications there in the 1980s.

<sup>734</sup> Interview with Bill Bolger, Dublin, September 13, 2011.

full-time professional musicians with PR managing their image, but it is clear from the visual (as well as acoustic) production values that Gael Linn were prepared to invest time and money in them. For example, *Amhráin as Árainn agus as Conamara* (Fig. 85) from 1972 features die-cuts on the cover and a full bleed on the gatefold. Ciaran Swan and Niall McCormack have pointed out that Gael Linn's use of photographs of musicians and singers helped to emphasise that the genre was a living tradition.<sup>735</sup> In the case of Figure 86, the recognisably contemporary fashion and hairstyles of the young singers also underlines this. Bolger's statement chimes with Lupton's account of the use of vernacular material by 'professional' designers: it is by the alchemy of the professional that the everyday and unspectacular is transformed into communication. It also partakes of the mythology of an everyday authenticity ('ordinary fellas') that muted Gael Linn's obviously professional artifice. The slightly raw quality of some of the portraits, as discussed below, is probably more deliberate than Bolger's characteristic deprecation admits. Certainly, his typographic treatments were aesthetically informed and in much of his Gael Linn work, he echoed the uncompromising modernism of the company logo by using Helvetica, designed white space and a strong grid.<sup>736</sup> Thus a cover like that for *sean nós*<sup>737</sup> singer Darach Ó Catháin is a good example of Celtic modernism where the form is modernist, while the content is (apparently) traditional. But the story of Darach Ó Catháin is not so straightforward, and shows how misleading it can be to impose binary oppositions –such as metropolis/region, tradition/modernity– when analysing mid-century Ireland.

Ó Catháin was born in 1922 in the Connemara Gaeltacht, but in 1935 his family chose to take part in the resettlement of native speakers to a new government-created Gaeltacht in Rath Cairn, Co. Meath (itself a brilliant example of the use of 'authoritarian high modernist'<sup>738</sup> tactics in an attempt to re-Gaelicise the new nation). In the early 1960s Ó Catháin earned a living simultaneously as a labourer on the English building sites and as the *sean nós* singer on

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<sup>735</sup> Ciaran Swan and Niall McCormack, Exhibition text, *Green Sleeves: The Irish Printed Record Cover* (Dublin, National Print Museum, 5 May - 1 October 2017). I am grateful to Ciaran Swan for the many insightful conversations we had when I was assisting him with research for the exhibition.

<sup>736</sup> Although, as discussed in the next chapter, he could also invoke contemporary 'pop' (art, as well as music) references in his Irish-language designs, see for example, his design for *Buntús Cainte*.

<sup>737</sup> Literally 'old style', a traditional form of ornamented, unaccompanied, solo singing.

<sup>738</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998), 340.



RTE radio's *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh*; a key catalyst of the Irish folk movement, this programme introduced middle class Ireland to the 'authentic' sound of traditional Irish music. Since at least the late-nineteenth century, many Irish-speaking subsistence farmers or fishermen from remote Gaeltacht communities divided their year between 'traditional' occupations at home and labouring on building sites in British cities. This was reflected in Ó Catháin's dual-name identity; he was also (and more familiarly) known as Dudley Kane. In 1963 he moved his family to Leeds where, like many Irish-speaking families who found seasonal work in England, they spoke English with an English accent.<sup>739</sup>

In Bolger's cover for Ó Catháin's eponymous 1975 album (Fig. 86), the singer's authenticity is emphasised in the 'objective' placement of his half-length portrait photograph, cut-out against a white background. The distinctive orthography of the Irish language version of his name stands out forcefully in the black, inch-high Helvetica characters. The intention is clearly to confound expectations, to de-familiarise and de-contextualise the 'trad' singer while showing the primitive authenticity (and therefore modernity) of the man himself. The album has a black and grey *trompe l'oeil* frame around three sides; that the frame is not continuous is also disconcerting. The frame suggests simultaneously a window (transparency), through which we 'see into' the authentic world of the *sean nós* singer, and a picture frame (representation) which hints at the construction of Dudley Kane as Darach Ó Catháin by *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh*. The sleeve notes credit the portrait to Edmund Ross, a professional studio photographer in Dublin. A comparison with the use of the same photograph by the American Shanachie label is telling. There, the background and photograph are both subjected to a greenish cast (Fig. 89). Instead of the diminished figure in a sea of white space, Ó Catháin fills three quarters of the space and his portrait is positioned to the right of highly decorative type in the manner of record sleeves for 'crooners' of the 1950s and '60s. By comparison, the formalism of modernist graphic design created a kind of *cordon sanitaire* around the 'traditional' content that made it seem *strange* rather than overfamiliar and *passé*. Joep Leerssen has termed this strategy 'auto-exoticism' in relation to the antiquarians of the early nineteenth-century Celtic Revival who 'exoticised' familiar Irish

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<sup>739</sup> This summary of Ó Catháin's life is taken from the sleeve notes of the 1975 album and from the RTÉ Radio 1 documentary 'Dudley Kane: Darach Ó Catháin is here in Leeds', by Peter Woods, first broadcast on August 10, 2008 and available at [http://www.rte.ie/radio1/doconone/2009/0528/645999-dudley\\_kane/](http://www.rte.ie/radio1/doconone/2009/0528/645999-dudley_kane/)

place names by ‘correcting’ their orthography, for example turning Limerick (back) into Luimneach.<sup>740</sup> Making the familiar strange allowed the everyday to become at once ancient and also novel.<sup>741</sup>

The aim of this section was to explore the fluency with which designers in Ireland, outside of KDW, deployed the language of international modernism, even when packaging vernacular material. The visual form of auto-exoticism evidenced here is a key component of Celtic modernist graphic design. It has close links to the aesthetic strategies of modern abstract art, and particularly to the Modern Movement’s appropriation of so-called ‘primitive’ or ‘tribal’ art as proto-modern, discussed below.<sup>742</sup> The next section establishes the links between modernist art and design in Ireland in the pre- and immediate post-war years, arguing for the direct influence of early twentieth-century aesthetic theory on an influential group of designers who were simultaneously modernist painters. The fluidity of roles at that time has proved beneficial for research into modernist design, given the paucity of contemporary design criticism, as there was much more written, by critics and by these individuals themselves, on the meaning of the Celtic in contemporary *fine art*. This allows me to explore two key elements of Celtic modernist design philosophy: the idea of the Celtic as a kind of primitive and as an international (or universalist) alternative to an insular Gaelic identity. Although both of these ideas have long histories in nationalist thought, it was artist Mainie Jellett’s straightforward statement that Celtic art was modern art that had the most direct impact on graphic design.

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<sup>740</sup> Joep Leerssen *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*. (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996) 147. Maeve Connolly has called this ‘alienation’. Maeve Connolly ‘Celtic Revivals: Jim Fitzpatrick and the Celtic Imaginary in Irish and International Popular Culture,’ in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 251-265.

<sup>741</sup> Leerssen also sees this at work in Thomas Kinsella’s translation of the Irish legendary epic *The Táin*, published in 1969 by Liam Miller at Dolmen Press, which used a contemporary vernacular language but also kept unfamiliar archaic spellings of common Irish names, such as Deirdre which he spelled Derdriu.

<sup>742</sup> See for example, Shelly Errington, ‘What Became Authentic Primitive Art?’ *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 9 No.2 (1994): 201-226; Daniel Miller, ‘Primitive art and the necessity of primitivism to art’ in *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art*, edited by Susan Hiller, (London: Routledge, 1991); *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, edited by Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkeley: University of California, 2003). A good deal has been written on the Celtic Revival and primitivism and on its impact on Irish Modernism up to Joyce, these include Terry Eagleton, ‘The Archaic Avant-Garde’ in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish culture* (London & New York: Verso, 1995). *Irish Modernism and the Global Primitive*, edited by Maria McGarrity and Claire A. Culleton, (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

## ‘Celtic Cubism’<sup>743</sup>

Jellett has been described by one writer as an ‘evangelist’ for modernism.<sup>744</sup> She worked in Paris with cubists André Lhote and Albert Gleizes, and maintained a connection to the Parisian avant-garde after her return to Dublin in 1921. With Gleizes, she and her colleague Evie Hone developed an abstract Cubism that none-the-less contained traces of representational elements. This lent itself particularly well to the requirements of modernist graphic design, especially of symbols or marques, which simplified and abstracted, but never completely dissolved, the letters or pictogrammes of which they were made. Riann Coulter has noted that Jellett’s interest in Celtic art was part of a wider modernist concern with the primitive. It was encouraged by Gleizes, who argued that ‘Celticism was a form of primitivism that represented a return to origins’.<sup>745</sup>

Much of her work was overtly religious in inspiration and subject matter, which, it has been suggested, made her modernist aesthetic more palatable in the conservative climate of De Valera’s Ireland (Fig. 90).<sup>746</sup> Acknowledging the radical qualities in Jellett’s ‘Celtic Cubism,’ Gibbons considers that her work nonetheless demonstrates a recourse to a ‘Celtic consciousness’, transcending time and place, which ‘still relied on fixed conceptions of national character.’<sup>747</sup> However, art historians Róisín Kennedy and Riann Coulter have each proposed a historically-informed reconsideration of the role of the Celtic in the construction of an Irish modern art, positing (as does this thesis) that the Celtic was seen as an *alternative* to a protectionist, reactionary, Gaelic-Irish identity.<sup>748</sup> Given the modernising ethos of the

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<sup>743</sup> Luke Gibbons, ‘Peripheral Visions: Revisiting Irish Modernism’ in *The Moderns*, edited by Enrique Juncosa and Christina Kennedy (Dublin, Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 98.

<sup>744</sup> Cyril Barrett, ‘Mainie Jellett and Irish Modernism,’ *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, Vol. 9 (1993), 170.

<sup>745</sup> Riann Coulter, ‘Mainie Jellett’ in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015): 242-244.

<sup>746</sup> Coulter, ‘Mainie Jellett’, 242-3.

<sup>747</sup> Luke Gibbons, ‘Identity in Irish Art: Modernism and the Politics of Form,’ in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 218. The ‘Celtic Consciousness’ is a reference to a book of that name published in 1982 and containing essays which largely conform to a psychological-mystical-metaphysical Celticism, instantly recognisable from mind-body-spirit websites and contemporary Irish gift shops. *The Celtic Consciousness*, edited by Robert O’Driscoll (Mountrath, Co. Laois: Dolmen, 1982). As discussed in the conclusion to this chapter, metaphysical interpretations of the Celtic had begun to dominate Irish art and art criticism by the early 1970s and Gibbons’s essay goes onto detail those.

majority of clients commissioning Celtic modernist design, it seems more likely that this was the interpretation favoured by those designers who were influenced by Jellett's theories. Róisín Kennedy cites her 'writings and lectures on art of the 1930s and 1940s, in which the connection between Celtic art and that of modernism was made explicit.'<sup>749</sup> In these essays she linked the Parisian avant-garde's investigation of primitive art with the case of Irish ('Celtic') heritage and outlined the conceptual building blocks for subsequent Celtic modernism: the relationship between primitivism, non-Western art and the Celtic; a broad temporal scope for 'Celtic' that encompassed the Neolithic passage grave at Newgrange and the ninth-century Book of Kells; the essential abstraction and therefore modernity of the Celtic; and the centrality of 'Early Irish Christian art' to the conception of Celtic. In the title essay of the anthology, written in the 1920s, Jellett explicitly linked the ninth-century Irish illuminator and the Cubist: 'In point of fact, a cubist artist is nearer the Early Irish Christian artist in his ideals of artistic expression than the academic artist of this own time.'<sup>750</sup>

In another essay in the collection, 'Modern Art and Its Relation to the Past,' she wrote:

The Celtic sculptors or those of the Early Irish Christian High Crosses and the painters of the illuminated manuscripts had consummate skill and a highly developed sense of form. The photographic representation of the human figure if they had wished to do it would have been child's play after the formal intricacies of Celtic or Early Irish Christian abstract pattern and form.<sup>751</sup>

Here Jellett picks up on the 'abstract' quality of Celtic pattern and frames it in formalist terms. This was also common in the Modern Movement's approach to 'primitive' art.<sup>752</sup>

However Jellett identified *herself* as primitive. This rather different response to the Othering enacted by, for example, MoMA's African Negro Art of 1935, or the more recent '*Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, in 1984, discussed below. The primitive (and the archaic) is usually written about as 'they' not 'we'; 'then' not 'now'. Fiona

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<sup>748</sup> Róisín Kennedy, 'Made in England: The Critical Reception of Louis le Brocquy's "A Family",' *Third Text*, Vol. 19, No. 5, (September, 2005): 475–486; Riann Coulter, 'Translating Modernism: Mainie Jellett, Ireland and the Search for a Modernist Language,' *Apollo*, Vol. 164, No. 535 (September, 2006): 56–63.

<sup>749</sup> There were published posthumously in 1958 as *The Artist's Vision*, edited by Eileen MacCarville.

<sup>750</sup> Mainie Jellett, 'The Artist's Vision' in *The Artist's Vision: Lectures and Essays on Art*; with an introduction by Albert Gleizes, edited by Eileen MacCarville, (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1958), 8.

<sup>751</sup> Jellett, 'Modern Art and Its Relation to the Past', 90.

<sup>752</sup> She also linked the Celtic to African art. The ideal behind this art was the same as that of the ancient African and of many other great art forms, the creation of form either inspired by nature or by the human mind and used to produce a complete organic structure of form and colour controlled by whatever medium the artist chose to employ.' Mainie Jellett, 'Modern Art and Its Relation to the Past', 75–76.

Stafford writes, ‘while “primitivist” generally implies admiration for the “primitive”, the praise is inevitably expressed in the language of the “non-primitive” observer.’<sup>753</sup> So even when a painter like Gauguin styled himself a fellow primitive, his was always a white body, and likewise when the writer J.M. Synge visited the Aran Islands, he was always the (English-speaking) man from the mainland, not one of the authentic Gaels he studied.<sup>754</sup> By contrast, the archaic Celtic had an advantage for the artists in that *no one was Celtic* – the Celts, if they ever existed, had long since expired– and at the same time it was a designation that any Irish person (or person from any of the other Celtic-language groups) could legitimately inhabit. In one way it anticipates the modernist call for ‘an artist of primitive stock re-exploring his own tradition with a more sophisticated eye’ in the catalogue for the 1948 exhibition, *40,000 years of Modern Art* organised by Herbert Read at the ICA in London.<sup>755</sup> It could be suggested that Jellett’s embrace of the Celtic was no different from the romantic strategies of the Revivalists cited by Kiberd (discussed in Chapter Two), who accepted the colonial (Arnoldian) stereotype but turned the negatives into positives.<sup>756</sup> However, Mainie Jellett was also a modernist and committed to an *international* –not just *universal*– art. Róisín Kennedy states: ‘Jellett cogently argued that the foundations of Irish art were both abstract in form *and* part of a European, rather than a national, tradition.’<sup>757</sup> Jellett herself was wary of De Valera’s ‘mad nationalism and narrow-minded men’<sup>758</sup> and Kennedy contends that Jellett’s promotion

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<sup>753</sup> Fiona Stafford, ‘Primitivism and the “Primitive” Poet: A Cultural Context for MacPherson’s Ossian,’ in *Celticism*, edited by Terence Brown. (Amsterdam & Atlanta GA: Rodolphi, 1996), 81-82.

<sup>754</sup> Peter Conrad notes the desire among moderns to find themselves actually primitive: ‘Ethnic pedigrees were coveted and cultivated. Gauguin insisted proudly on his Peruvian birth, Strindberg... called himself an honorary Aztec... Klee believed his mother... had North African ancestors.’ Peter Conrad, *Modern Times: Modern Places*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 347. On Synge, see Justin Carville, ‘Visible Others: Photography and Romantic Ethnography in Ireland,’ in *Irish Modernism and the Global Primitive*, edited by Maria McGarrity and Claire A. Culleton, (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 93-114. This self-identification as Celt is something which links modernist to postmodernist artist/designers, like Jim Fitzpatrick, discussed below, who according to Maeve Connolly, sees himself ‘as a Celt’. Connolly, ‘Celtic Revivals’, 251.

<sup>755</sup> W.G. Archer and Robert Melville in *40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern* (London: ICA, 1948), 46.

<sup>756</sup> As noted above, Luke Gibbons echoes the broader critique of Primitivism in his description of Jellett’s ‘Celtic Cubism’ as a ‘recourse to a “Celtic Consciousness” transcending time and place’. He continues: ‘In Ireland, the relation of modern abstraction to the timeless or spiritual qualities of ‘Celticism’ served to further insulate art against the incursions of actual history, and the political instabilities of the early decades of the newly established state.’ Gibbons, ‘Identity in Irish Art,’ 218.

<sup>757</sup> Kennedy, ‘Made in England’, 484. Emphasis added.

<sup>758</sup> Bruce Arnold, *Mainie Jellett*, 136, quoted in Coulter, ‘Mainie Jellett,’ 243.

of the Celtic was also intended as a ‘replacement of the idea of a Gaelic culture’, so central to De Valera’s ideology.<sup>759</sup>

### **The interrelation of Irish modernist art and design elites.**

Jellett’s influence permeated through to post-war modernist designers via two main artistic channels: The White Stag group and the Irish Exhibition of Living Artists (IELA). Given that the previous chapter traced the gradual redefinition of the designer as something (anything) other than an artist, and the desire for an elusive ‘professionalism’ that drove members of ICAD to define their practice increasingly in opposition to the ‘old fashioned’ commercial artist and the ‘romantic’ fine artist, it may seem anachronistic to turn to art history to inform discussion of design of the period. But many leading graphic, exhibition and interior designers of the 1950s were, by the mid-‘60s, far more celebrated for their paintings; among them were Louis le Brocqy and Patrick Scott of Signa Design Consultants, and Thurloe Conolly of the Design Research Unit of Ireland,<sup>760</sup> while the leading art critic was Dorothy Walker (née Cole), the manager of Signa. Conolly, Scott and the ICAD co-founder, photographer Robert (Bobby) Dawson, had been associated with the Bloomsbury-derived White Stag group during the war years, while the Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA), established in 1943 to promote modern art, numbered many commercial, graphic and exhibition designers among its exhibitors.<sup>761</sup> The Signa founder Michael Scott<sup>762</sup> was also the instigator of the Rosc exhibitions, and Walker and le Brocqy served on their committees while Signa’s Patrick Scott, Peter Wildbur and Raymond Kyne all had a hand in their design. Thus, from the 1940s to the mid-1960s, the same individuals constituted the avant-gardes of both fine art and

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<sup>759</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, a distinction between Celtic as progressive and Gaelic as reactionary would have resonance for typographers like Liam Miller, as ‘Gaelic’ was the term used to describe the very limited and typographically undistinguished set of typefaces available in which to set Irish in the Irish character. On the other hand, ‘Celtic’ was often associated with ornament in commercial art and design and might have had reactionary connotations for even ‘conservative modernist’ designers.

<sup>760</sup> Writing in 1971, Brian O’Doherty noted that Thurloe Conolly was the painter most affected by Jellett’s ‘tough-mindedness’ and ‘anti-romantic ideas’, and lamented ‘his loss —he abandoned painting for design’. Brian O’Doherty, *The Irish Imagination*, 1971, 10.

<sup>761</sup> Both these groups are discussed below.

<sup>762</sup> Michael Scott, modernist architect and founder of Signa Design Consultants, discussed in previous chapters. No relation to his employee Patrick Scott, nor to the other Scotts mentioned in this chapter: art historian Yvonne Scott, linguist and philatelist David Scott or social geographer J.C. Scott— none of whom are related either.

design.<sup>763</sup> Jellett herself had worked as a designer in Paris, under the influence of Gleizes, 'designing rugs, advertisements, popular murals and stage sets.'<sup>764</sup> As Raymund Ryan has noted in relation to Patrick Scott's career, which 'oscillated between architecture per se, interior and product design, graphics and fine art' as well as stage design, this 'rich spectrum... was not uncommon in the early Modern Movement.'<sup>765</sup> This was especially pronounced in a small city like post-war Dublin. Likewise, the pool of clients likely to employ designers, whether in the public or private sector, was equally small and equally clannish.

As I established in Chapter One, the British art critic and design theorist Herbert Read was introduced to Irish designers and their patrons via the White Stags,<sup>766</sup> having known the leaders in London. Jellett opened the group's second exhibition in October 1940 and showed with the group on three occasions, thus the group were exposed both to her work and her ideas. Read wrote the introduction to the catalogue of their 1944 *Exhibition of Subjective Art*, and the following year he wrote the introduction to Herbrand Ingouville-Williams's book, *Three Painters*, a study of the work of Basil Rákóczi, Kenneth Hall and Patrick Scott. Read was supposed to open the 1944 show but wartime restrictions on travel prevented his journey.

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<sup>763</sup> For example, of the five modern artists selected to represent Ireland at the Guggenheim International Award in New York in 1958, three were simultaneously active as designers: Norah McGuinness (who was in charge of window dressing at Brown Thomas department store while also President of the IELA), Louis le Brocquy, and Patrick Scott. (The other two artists were Patrick Collins and Gerard Dillon.) McGuinness and Scott represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 1950 and 1960 respectively. Le Brocquy's painting *A Family* was also shown there in 1956. On Norah McGuinness's design work see Marianne Hartigan 'The Commercial Design Career of Norah McGuinness' *Irish Arts Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Autumn, 1986): 23-25; and *Irish Times* 25 July, 1968.

<sup>764</sup> Barrett, 'Mainie Jellett and Irish Modernism', 173.

<sup>765</sup> Raymund Ryan, 'Design as Communication, Pleasure, Knowledge,' in *Patrick Scott: A Retrospective*, edited by Yvonne Scott, (Dublin: Hugh Lane, 2002), 104.

<sup>766</sup> This had been founded by painters and interior designers Basil Rákóczi and Kenneth Hall in London in 1935 and was loosely associated with the Bloomsbury set. Both pacifists, they left London for Ireland at the outbreak of the war and in 1940 moved to Dublin. The White Stags' 'Subjective Art' shared with the Surrealists an interest in the unconscious. As Rákóczi put it: 'Objects which appear in Subjective paintings, such as a bird, a fish, a figure, or a garden, are not represented in a realistic manner, but as dream-images, as conceptual memories, as the eidetic phantasies of the child-mind.' Quoted in Sean Kissane, 'The White Stag Group' in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015): 487-489. According to S.B. Kennedy the group's aim was to 'promote the advancement of subjectivity in psychological analysis and art'. The group's members had a stylistically varied output, from the strongly surrealist painting of Thurloe Conolly, who was also influenced by Paul Klee, through the linear abstractions of Hall and Patrick Scott to the Picasso-influenced Bobby Dawson. Rákóczi and Hall quickly attracted Irish artists working in abstract and surrealist modes, including Jellett, described by Hall as 'by far the most important Irish artist of the day.' Letter from Kenneth Hall to Lucy Wertheim, letter of 23 April 1940, quoted in S.B. Kennedy, Bruce Arnold, and Sean Kissane, *The White Stag Group* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005), 181.

When Read did finally make it to Dublin, in 1947, Michael Scott lent Thurloe Conolly his car and together with Louis le Brocquy's mother Sybil, they toured Wicklow.<sup>767</sup> This anecdote points once again to the closely-knit nature of the art and design community in Ireland and the inevitable overlap of ideas from one field into the other. Read's connection suggests that the group were aware of the explicit connections he drew between the pre-historic and modern art in his *40,000 Years of Modern Art* exhibition and his monographs on contemporary British artists.

In addition to her involvement with the White Stags, Jellett's ideas influenced Irish designers (as painters) through her role as the dominant intellectual force in the annual Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA). This had been established in 1943, partly in response to the rejection by the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) of a painting by Louis le Brocquy, *Spanish Shawl*, and partially in order to cater to a growing demand for an outlet for modern artists in Ireland.<sup>768</sup> It aimed to 'make available to a large public a comprehensive survey of significant work, irrespective of School or manner, by living Irish artists'.<sup>769</sup> The group was inspired by Jellett's trenchant criticisms of the RHA in 1942 and she was elected chairperson of the new organisation.<sup>770</sup> Coulter notes that Jellett was worried that her efforts to reconcile modernism and a distinctive Irish identity were being hijacked by narrow reactionary forces: 'Looking to the RHA, in 1942 she feared that those achievements were threatened by aesthetic conservatism and a narrow definition of "Irishness"'.<sup>771</sup> She saw the IELA as an opportunity to counter this and in February 1944, the month Jellett died, the IELA unanimously passed a motion that 'non-Irish artists be eligible to exhibit in the 1944

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<sup>767</sup> Murray, Peter 'A White Stag in France,' 100.

<sup>768</sup> Riann Coulter, 'Hibernian Salon des Refusés', *Irish Arts Review* Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003): 80-85. Brian Kennedy notes that the 'exhibition was an *official* exhibition, not a *salon des refusés*. It was held in the same premises as the annual Academy show and enjoyed the patronage of the President of the Academy and leading figures in the world of education'. Brian [S.B.]Kennedy, 'R.H.A., Modernism and Living Art', *Circa*, No. 14 (January- February, 1984), 29.

<sup>769</sup> IELA Minute Book, May 12, 1943, quoted in Riann Coulter, 'The Irish Exhibition of Living Art (1943-87),' in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 236.

<sup>770</sup> The exhibitions rapidly gained critical respect. Brian Kennedy claims that 'Within a few years of its inauguration the Living Art became the most important annual art salon in Ireland.' Kennedy, 'R.H.A., Modernism and Living Art', 29.

<sup>771</sup> Coulter, 'Hibernian Salon des Refusés,' 82-3.



exhibition'.<sup>772</sup> That exhibition included works by English artists Ben Nicholson, Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore. It is probably significant that these were all artists championed by Herbert Read (who opened the IELA's exhibition in 1947)<sup>773</sup> and in whose work he found an archaic or primitive quality that chimes well with Jellett's understanding of the Celtic as modern. The IELA counted many artist-designers among its members. As well as Jellett, the first committee comprised le Brocquy, the painter Fr Jack Hanlon and Norah McGuinness, who took over as Chairman in 1944. Thurloe Conolly and Patrick Scott were regularly included in their exhibitions, the latter designing many of the catalogues under the Signa banner (Fig. 91) and Thurloe Conolly, Michael Scott and Patrick Scott later joined the committee.<sup>774</sup>

Through the White Stags and the IELA, the idea of a Celtic Primitive became established as a truism of Irish art and design, continuing well into the 1970s. In his 1969 text book, *A Concise History of Irish Art*, the modernist art critic Bruce Arnold succinctly claimed the Celtic as modern and Irish: 'Irish art begins as abstract art: the ritual decoration by early Bronze Age man of the tombs of his ancestors.'<sup>775</sup> This quote shows a subtle shift from the rather abstract idea of the Celtic in Jellett's work, which was more allusive than archaeological, 'inflecting the angularity and three-dimensionality of Cubism within the contours of ancient Celtic and medieval art',<sup>776</sup> towards the incorporation of specific sites and objects into compositions —typical of Celtic modernist design. This is particularly well expressed in the changing meanings and interpretations of the passage grave at Newgrange by modernist artist and designers, the subject of the next section. This takes us back to where the chapter began, and demonstrates that the spiral motif in Harrington's OPW logo had a long history of use in modernist contexts and develops the link between the use of Celtic sources in modern art and their use in high modernist graphic design.

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<sup>772</sup> IELA Minute Book, February 1944, quoted in Coulter, 'Hibernian Salon des Refusés,' 85.

<sup>773</sup> This was probably the occasion of his jaunt with Thurloe Conolly.

<sup>774</sup> In 1950, the IELA committee, which included Conolly, wrote a letter to the *Irish Times* in support of Michael Scott's controversial bus station, Busáras, completed in 1953 with interior decorations by Patrick Scott. 'The Bus Station', Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, May 19, 1950.

<sup>775</sup> Bruce Arnold, *A Concise History of Irish Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), 11.

<sup>776</sup> Gibbons, 'Identity in Irish Art', 218.

## Newgrange: 'Older than Stonehenge'

The passage grave at Newgrange in Co. Meath had long been a significant archaeological symbol of Irish heritage. It dates from c. 3200BCE, but over time the passage and kerbstones with their remarkable decoration had become covered with soil. Until its excavation in the 1960s, only a handful of the decorated stones were visible. Only three of the 97 massive kerbstones that surround the mound were exposed: the entrance stone with its distinctive pattern of interlaced tri-spirals (Fig. 92); Kerbstone 52<sup>777</sup> directly opposite it at the back of the mound, which is divided into two decorative zones, one with three spirals and a lozenge pattern and one with a pattern of concentric semi-circles and ovals (Fig. 93); and Kerbstone 67 to the east of the mound, again divided into two powerfully contrasting designs, a pattern of lozenge shapes on one side and a two part spiral above a diamond shape (Fig. 94). In 1699 the entrance to the passage was rediscovered and Newgrange became popular with early tourists.<sup>778</sup> In the centre of the mound is a corbelled chamber lined with standing stones or orthostats, on one of these is carved a tri-spiral design, measuring approximately 30cms across. Inevitably, these long-visible decorations provide the most recognisable set of Newgrange motifs. The tri-spirals from the chamber and the entrance stone have proved particularly popular, possibly because they are apparently distinctive to Newgrange and its sister site, Knowth.<sup>779</sup>

David Harvey has pointed to the 'emblematic' role of Newgrange as a marker of Irish national identity in the early years of Irish independence. Its seniority (read superiority) to Britain's comparative monument, Stonehenge, was frequently invoked.<sup>780</sup> Harvey quotes Dr George

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<sup>777</sup> The naming and numbering of stones follows the conventions established by Claire and Michael Kelly in their excavations of the site.

<sup>778</sup> In the 1820s, tourists' litter endangered the mound, with a 'goosbery tree... and two or three young cherry trees growing up through the loose stones. These last were probably produced from cherry-stones dropped there by some of the visitors to this moat.' Quoted in Anthony Candon and Claire O'Kelly, 'An Early Nineteenth Century Description of Newgrange, County Meath,' *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 114 (1984), 26. Peter Harbison quotes the minutes of the Royal Irish Academy's Antiquities Committee in 1847 suggesting the need for the erection of a gate at Newgrange, 'to exclude such visitors as might injure' it, and indeed, the tomb contains a wealth of historical graffiti. Peter Harbison, 'In Retrospect: The Royal Irish Academy's Only Archaeological Excavation: Dowth in the Boyne Valley', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, Vol. 107C (2007), 209.

<sup>779</sup> Geraldine Stout and Matthew Stout, *Newgrange* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008), 31.

<sup>780</sup> Newgrange's antiquity continued to be expressed in comparative terms, for example in 1982, Liam de Paor wrote that Newgrange was 'older than the pyramids' in 'The Art of the Celtic Peoples,' in *The Celtic Consciousness*, edited by Robert O'Driscoll (Mountrath, Co. Laois: Dolmen, 1982), 122.

Little in the *Irish Press* in 1938 describing it as ‘a Cathedral to Stonehenge’s parish church’ before going on to describe the necessity of its reconstruction as ‘a national duty.’<sup>781</sup> By the mid-1940s it had become a reference point for contemporary artists.<sup>782</sup> The excavations and subsequent reconstruction of the tomb that took place from 1962-74 had a mixed reception in artistic circles. On the one hand, it destroyed the ‘mystical’ timeless quality that appealed to romantic sensibilities, on the other, its findings considerably enhanced the site’s international significance and revealed a wealth of ‘new’ artistic inspiration. The artist Nano Reid, for example, ceased painting the site as a result of the excavations which she described as akin to a child taking the stuffing out of a doll.<sup>783</sup>

### **Stalin does the Stone Age**

The excavations at Newgrange were carried out from 1962-75 by Michael O’Kelly, Professor of Archaeology at University College Dublin and chair of the National Monuments Advisory Council (NMAC). O’Kelly’s most significant discovery was that Newgrange was oriented so that during the Winter solstice, the rising sun would shine down the passage to illuminate the central chamber. The ‘roof box’, through which the rays penetrated, had slipped over the centuries, ruining the effect.<sup>784</sup> This discovery added greatly to the status and mystery of Newgrange. The publications that accompanied the excavations gave fresh impetus to the use of the spiral motif from the entrance stone. The first of these was the 1967 *Guide to Newgrange*, illustrated by the author, Claire O’Kelly, O’Kelly’s wife and assistant on the

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<sup>781</sup> David C. Harvey ‘Newgrange, Heritage and the Irish Nation: Two Moments of Transformation’ in *Ireland’s Heritages: Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 130

<sup>782</sup> These included both avant-garde painters such as le Brocqy and Nano Reid (who had jointly represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale with Norah McGuinness in the 1950) and more conservative artists, such as the young composer Brian Boydell, the sleeve notes for whose *Megalithic Ritual Dances* of 1956, cites as inspiration ‘circles of immense stones bear testimony of the religious rituals .... with their dark hints of human sacrifice’. There is a direct parallel to the British Neo-Romantic painters who were ‘discovering’ prehistoric Britain. Róisín Kennedy notes that ‘Neoromanticism had a particular resonance for le Brocqy, not only because it represented the most avant-garde art to be seen or read about during the mid-1940s, but because its protagonists were concerned with defining the historical origins of a national style.’ Róisín Kennedy, ‘Made in England’, 477, fnt 11.

<sup>783</sup> In the 1950s and early 1960s Reid had painted many works inspired by Newgrange, both the building and legends surrounding the site. Riann Coulter quotes an interview with Reid in 1971, where she ‘complained that the megalithic passage graves of the Boyne valley were more interesting “when you didn’t know what was inside them”.’ Riann Coulter, ‘Complementary Spirits: Nano Reid and Gerard Dillon,’ *Irish Arts Review*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Winter, 2009/2010), 59.

<sup>784</sup> Current archaeological research has questioned the degree of intervention made by O’Kelly to ‘restore’ this phenomenon. See Michael Gibbons and Myles Gibbons, ‘The Brú: A Hiberno-Roman Cult Site at Newgrange?’, *Emania: Journal of the Navan Research Group*, No. 23 (2016), 67-78.

excavation. It showed in schematic, diagram form much of the newly uncovered decoration. The 'matter of fact' presentation of this material emphasized its modernity and its novelty.<sup>785</sup>

While the excavation itself was controversial, as it involved demolishing most of the tumulus, its rebuilding from 1967-74 was even more contentious. The 'restoration' was, in effect, a new build. O'Kelly chose to construct a reinforced concrete structure into which the original (and some replica) orthostats and slabs were inserted. Figures 95a-c show O'Kelly working on the reconstruction. The reinforced concrete frame of the passage is clearly visible. Most controversially, he decided that the extensive finds of white quartz stones represented a collapsed outer wall, rather than a quartz pavement as is found in similar tombs in Britain.<sup>786</sup> He embedded them in a four-metre-high, reinforced steel and concrete wall which had been erected to support the weight of the cairn.

The overall impact is to make the building appear from a distance like a powerfully modernist structure. The archaeologist Neil Oliver pithily described it as 'Stalin does the Stone Age'.<sup>787</sup> The publicity around O'Kelly's reinterpretation of Newgrange served to establish a link between ancient Ireland and modernity, replacing the historical-romantic image of the Celt with a kind of Celtic brutalism. This reinterpretation was given weight by juxtaposing the scientific methods of archaeology against the 'romanticism' of critics like Reid. Despite the formal similarity between the finished result and the modernist architectural aesthetic emerging in Ireland at the time,<sup>788</sup> Michael Scott and Louis le Brocq were among the opponents of the rebuilding, writing to complain to Minister Noel Lemass in 1972. However,

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<sup>785</sup> Significantly for a later generation of designers, the 'art' of Newgrange was included in the new Department of Education History and Appreciation of Art syllabus in 1970. That syllabus is still in use. See for example, Henry J. Sharpe, *Art History and Appreciation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976).

<sup>786</sup> Stout and Stout, *Newgrange*.

<sup>787</sup> 'I'm in two minds about the modern Newgrange. It is striking and a tourist draw but it's brutal and overdone, like Stalin does the Stone Age,' Neil Oliver, quoted in the *Irish Independent*, October 26 2011. <http://www.independent.ie/regionals/drogheda/independent/localnotes/newgrange-overdone-says-oliver-27160631.html> I am grateful to Dr Connell Vaughan for bringing this piece to my attention.

<sup>788</sup> It is not within the scope of this thesis to speculate as to the architectural inspirations for O'Kelly's redesign, but it is worth noting that he trained as an architect in the 1930s before switching to archaeology. The modern Newgrange closely resembles designs for several Irish modernist churches, including an unbuilt design by Scott for Lettermore in Co. Galway in 1956, and others influenced directly by Le Corbusier's Ronchamp, such as Liam McCormick's St Michael's Church in Creeslough Co. Donegal of 1971. See Richard Hurley, *Irish Church Architecture in the Era of Vatican II* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2001).

Scott and O’Kelly had a long history of animosity: as noted below, O’Kelly strongly objected to Scott’s equally heavy-handed approach to antiquities in the *Rosc ’67* exhibition.

### **The use of the Newgrange tri-spiral in modern design**

Damien Harrington’s 1972 OPW symbol coincided with the reconstruction of Newgrange as a modernist monument and his use of the tri-spiral could be interpreted as a simple reference to a specific heritage site. However, the use of the tri-spiral in modernist design and for modernising clients, discussed in this section, points to associations of modernity and progress, not just heritage. Le Brocquy’s Newgrange drawings from 1944, particularly of the tri-spiral found in the central chamber and of the decoration on the entrance stone, later found their way into several Signa commissions. The earliest of these was one of Le Brocquy’s first commercial designs, the 1952/3 Irish Megalithic textile (Fig. 96) produced for John Maguire at Brown Thomas.<sup>789</sup> At the same time he produced a decorative ‘Newgrange’ carpet for the CTT office (Fig. 97) with the triple spiral as the main device.<sup>790</sup> At least two of his Newgrange designs were displayed in the 1956 Irish Design exhibition: the Irish Megalithic fabric and an album cover for the Tradition Record label in New York (Fig. 98). This was 1956 *The Lark in the Morning: folk songs and dances from the Irish countryside*, with typography by George Daulby. This was the first recording of the influential Irish musicians, The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, widely recognised as having popularised Irish folk music (and the Aran sweater) internationally. They are not credited on the cover, but various members of the two families are listed on the sleeve notes to individual tracks. The tunes were collected as ‘field recordings’ in Ireland by the American collector Diane Hamilton before the musicians became famous through their appearance on the Ed Sullivan show in 1961.<sup>791</sup> Signa’s design for this sleeve is in marked contrast to contemporary American packaging of

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<sup>789</sup> In her biography of her husband, Anne Madden lists three of le Brocquy’s design applications of the image, ‘some of the freehand drawings which Louis had made at Newgrange in the early nineteen forties were adapted for various purposes, including fabrics commissioned by Dublin’s Brown Thomas department store in 1952, very large murals engraved at Tulse Hill Comprehensive school, London, 1954 (architect FRS Yorke) and an Irish stamp celebrating the Newgrange Solstice in 1983.’ Anne Madden, *Seeing His Way: Louis Le Brocquy, A Painter*. (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1994), 73-4.

<sup>790</sup> While an article in the *Irish Times* described this as le Brocquy’s ‘latest and very exciting work of art’, the caption credited the design to the veteran modernist architect and interior designer, Raymond McGrath, then senior architect at the Office of Public Works. Anne Treanor, ‘There’s Magic in Carpets’, *Irish Times*, January 27, 1953.

<sup>791</sup> Signa’s work with Tradition would lead to Peter Wildbur and Signa becoming the designers for Claddagh Records.

Irish music whether traditional or classical. Typical of the standard approach is Decca's 1956 *New Music from Old Erin*, (Fig. 99) which included Brian Boydell's Megalithic Dances. The text is set in Libra, a popular choice for conveying typographic Gaelic-ness and the cover features a photograph of a rural cottage, with stone walls, haystack, horse and cart.<sup>792</sup> The 'new music' is overshadowed by its age-old place of origin.

In the 1950s, various designers associated with ICAD, produced versions of the tri-spiral. It is even hinted at in James Gooch's Saul Bass influenced design for the first series of covers of *Campaign*. A particularly telling example is Jan de Fouw's humorous elision of cogs and spiral, industry and Ireland, for the Industrial Development Authority in a promotional pamphlet dating from the late 1950s. (Fig. 100) The caption reads 'Why Ireland: a unique combination', De Fouw suggests that the 'unique combination' is of heritage and modernity, the teeth of the gear turns the spiral (or perhaps vice versa). A refined chalk version was used on the redesigned cover of the Irish Management Institute's journal, *Irish Management*, in its special issue on Irish design in 1963 (Fig. 101). No designer is credited, and although Thurloe Conolly had designed previous covers, the presentation of the motif is more literal than one would expect to find in his designs. This issue presented text about commissioning modern design and thus explicitly linked for their readers the 'best' of modern design with the tri-spiral.

Peter Wildbur also incorporated the tri-spiral into many of his designs, not by any means exclusively for Irish clients. As already noted, he used it on the cover of the 1966 *man made object* and the same illustration was first used three years earlier in a cover for another British publisher, the Pelican *Megalithic Builders of Western Europe* (Fig. 102). Here Wildbur's use of the distinctive tri-spiral presented Newgrange as the preeminent symbol of European Neolithic culture. His version is more clearly graphic than le Brocquy's, a loose interpretation of the spiral from the central chamber, rather than the entrance stone. In later versions he distorted the illustration with the repro camera, giving it a three-dimensional effect as on cover of the 1971 catalogue for Brian O'Doherty's *Irish Imagination* exhibition: a landmark collection of critical writing on Irish art and modernism (Fig. 103).<sup>793</sup> Here the illustration was

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<sup>792</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, Libra was popular in Ireland too, as it had a useable set of Gaelic characters.

<sup>793</sup> This accompanied Rosc '71. See Róisín Kennedy, 'The Irish Imagination 1971—Stereotype or Strategy', *Journal of Art Historiography* No. 9 (2013): 1-12.

overlaid with a bright green coloured film —a very rare instance of Wildbur’s use of green for an Irish client. He recalled that at Signa they ‘almost daren’t use green! It had become such a cliché. I think we did once or twice... No shamrocks, definitely.’<sup>794</sup> He also noted the potential of the Newgrange tri-spiral to become as hackneyed as the symbols it supplanted: ‘I was always worried of using too many spiral designs in case they became another graphic cliché.’<sup>795</sup>

In the introduction to the catalogue, O’Doherty argued that in Ireland, ‘the past has always had a big future.’<sup>796</sup> Based on the selection of modern artists he had chosen for exhibition, he suggested that Irish art ‘falls naturally enough’ into the following categories: Pre-Christian art, Early Christian art, the Folk Tradition, The Landscape. Of the first category he wrote: ‘Its timelessness makes it more imaginatively accessible than historical periods.’<sup>797</sup> The idea of the timeless primitive was certainly part of the appeal of the symbol for modernists endeavouring to link Ireland with a wider, international modernist visual culture. However, O’Doherty was attempting to ‘to argue that modernist Irish art was quite distinct from modernist art being produced elsewhere’.<sup>798</sup> He based this on the idea of ‘an Irish or Celtic imagination’, which returned the Celtic to a narrower, more nationalist, definition than Jellett had endorsed. Thus we might speculate that Wildbur’s uncharacteristic use of the colour demonstrates that by 1971 the tri-spiral had been so successfully deployed as a symbol of outward-looking modernisation or universal mankind that it had to be ‘re-Gaelicised’ with a wash of green to better suit O’Doherty’s purpose. A more likely interpretation is that the ‘green wash’ rendered the exhibition unmistakably ‘Irish’, in light of the belief that it was a kind of ‘apology’ for not having included Irish artists in the main Rosc exhibition which it accompanied.

These examples represent only a handful of the very wide range of the tri-spiral’s application in modernist design from the early 1950s onwards, which point to its having represented a widely-accepted way of signalling a ‘new’ kind of Irishness. It answered the need, articulated

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<sup>794</sup> Interview with Peter Wildbur, London, October 13, 2009.

<sup>795</sup> Email from Peter Wildbur email, 13/11/2016

<sup>796</sup> O’Doherty, *The Irish Imagination*, 20.

<sup>797</sup> O’Doherty, *The Irish Imagination*, 20.

<sup>798</sup> Róisín Kennedy, ‘Storm in a Teacup: Irish Modernist Art’, in *Modernist Afterlives in Irish Literature and Culture*, edited by Paige Reynolds, (London & New York: Anthem Press, 2016), 120.

in the pages of *Campaign* and elsewhere, for an alternative symbol to replace the shamrocks, harps and Celtic interlace of the previous generation. In examining a final instance of the deployment of the tri-spiral in modern Irish graphic design, we can trace one instance of Celtic modernism entering into the everyday habitus of Irish culture, through children's books. The design consultancy Verbiage was founded by Bernard Share and Bill Bolger in 1961, while they were still working for Janus. One of their most successful self-initiated projects was the *Bed That Went Whoosh* series of children's books published by Alan Figgis between 1964-7, (Figs 104-117).<sup>799</sup> These stories, written by Share and illustrated by Bolger, were aimed at children aged six to ten and were unusual in that they were available in identical English and Irish language editions. The Irish edition of the books, referred to generically as 'Na Huis Leabhar' ('The Whoosh Books'), was produced first, in a translation by Eoghan O Tuarisc from Share's original English. (Figs 104-106)

Both the narrative and the graphic approach in the books attempted to seamlessly interweave Celtic tradition and modernism. The hero of the stories is a small boy called Niall, who travels through time and space in a magical bed accompanied by his penguin Upstairs and his mouse, Whiskers. His adventures take him to important Irish heritage sites (Clonmacnoise, Kilkenny City, Georgian Dublin, Fig. 107), and significant historical events (the Armada, the making of the Book of Kells). Fantastical origins of important antiquities were imagined: for example, in *The Bed That Went Whoosh! To Ossory*, Whiskers provides the inspiration for an illustration in the Book of Kells and Upstairs is immortalised in a stone panel in a high cross at Clonmacnoise (carved by the improbably named 'Dusty') (Fig. 108-112). The trio also had adventures with modern technology: the Bed went Whoosh to New York (on an Aer Lingus plane). In each of the books, Niall wears a distinctive pair of pyjamas patterned with the Newgrange tri-spiral, placed on its side and given a vestigial stalk to turn it into a shamrock (see for example, Fig. 115). Bolger used motifs from Newgrange Kerbstone 52 to pattern the interior of the Aer Lingus plane in the second story (Fig. 118).

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<sup>799</sup> A new six-book series was proposed in 1967, including book about 'the colonisation of Iceland by Vikings from Dublin and their women. Period 900+', 'Bernardo O'Higgins and the independence of Chile. Period 1820+'. A nation once again' and the American Civil War, but was not pursued, although Share wrote several draft scripts and Bolger completed illustrations for the Viking book. Memo to Alan Figgis dated February 13, 1967, Verbiage archive.



*The Bed That Went Whoosh* introduces a popular strategy of Celtic modernists, the direct 'quotation', often using photography, of specific archaeological sources. This is something that is also evident in the Peter Wildbur's design for the Rosc '67 catalogue and particularly in Heinrich Gerl's designs for the second definitive series of stamps in 1966, both discussed below. In Bolger's illustrations, the contrast between the objectivity of the appropriated photographs and the comic, cartoon-like drawings add to the humour. In a fashion reminiscent of their work for Janus and at Verbiage, there is a cheerful iconoclasm at play in the Whoosh books, liberated here from the constraints of a client.<sup>800</sup> They approached the project as they did their advertising and design work, working alongside each other and making suggestions for improvements. Share remembered the 'plot being altered because Blotch [Bolger] had found a nice trannie [transparency]'.<sup>801</sup> In fact, Bolger rarely used transparencies, preferring to cut up photographs and combine them in collages with his original illustrations. Sometimes these photographs were sourced from the National Monuments branch of the Office of Public Works, but often they were 'borrowed' from books like *L'Art Irlandais* by Françoise Henry or cut out from the pages of the tourist magazine, *Ireland of the Welcomes*, designed by their friend Jan de Fouw. Figure 113, the cover of *The Bed That Went Whoosh! And Lost Whiskers*, features a collage of an illustration of the mouse, Whiskers against a backdrop of an OPW photograph of the thirteenth-century Reginald's Tower in Waterford City, while Figure 116 has the Bed inserted into a found black and white photograph of a New York street, given vibrancy with an orange film overlay. The

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<sup>800</sup> Although an extensive collection of letters recently discovered in Bernard Share's archive are testimony to the anxiety of the publisher, Alan Figgis of Hodges Figgis, who worried that Bolger's 'perfectionism' caused delays, and feared (correctly) that the lavishness of the design mitigated against the books making a profit ('...please execute William Donnybrook-Carey with all possible whoosh'). As well as being Verbiage's most important client, for whom they designed books and advertising, Figgis was a close friend of the pair and the painful questions of deadlines and expenses were playfully expressed in parodies of business language. Requesting payment for stock and the artwork for a catalogue that Verbiage had decided to illustrate with photographs of puppets, Figgis threatened: 'if it is not paid by 12.30 we will cease to have intercourse (except with our solicitors). Moreover we shall take junctions against Bugler for obtaining Puppets with falsies – having not returned same as promiscuous.' Letter from Alan Figgis to Verbiage, April 10, 1968. In a similar vein, accompanying a query as to recent sales, Share wrote a parody called 'The Bed That Went Bankrupt', which featured a villain called Fungwart the Rubbisher. Verbiage archive.

<sup>801</sup> Interview with Bernard Share and Bill Bolger, Dublin, February, 12, 2013.

resulting images were inspired by contemporary international designers, including the French Robert Massin,<sup>802</sup> that played with scale, texture and white space.<sup>803</sup>

The *Whoosh* books appear to have been popular: according to an article in the *Kilkenny People*, 60,000 copies had been sold by April 1967.<sup>804</sup> They were also influential, in part because so few Irish picture books were produced, especially in the Irish language, and they were approved by the Department of Education for use in schools in 1964. More significantly for their penetration into everyday life, their dissemination benefitted from their authors' experience in publicity. The books were promoted in a series of newspaper ads and by a widely-reported publicity stunt in April 1965. *The Irish Times* announced that 'a marvellously ornate bed, which has been acquired from Cahir House and suitably motorised, will trundle through Dublin's streets to sing the praises of the series'.<sup>805</sup> The stunt was repeated several times, and eventually a special bed was made. Another boost to the books' popularity was a deal to turn the stories into a series of six three-minute films to be shown on RTÉ television's new flagship children's programme, *Wanderly Wagon* which launched in 1967. The programme was based around the adventures of a magical horse-drawn caravan and featured actors and puppets. The animated *Whoosh* films were standalone segments which broke up the narrative. No visual record survives of the films (all the tapes of early *Wanderly Wagon* episodes were erased), but Susan Waine, Bolger's niece, remembers 'a Jackanory-style programme with stills of illustrations and voiceover. Very crude and basic, but effective.'<sup>806</sup> Pat Donlan notes that the publicity bed was "'parked" in the grounds of RTÉ in

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<sup>802</sup> Best known for such surreal collage works as the *Bald Soprano* (1965). See Richard Hollis, 'Massin: Language unleashed', *Eye Magazine* No. 16, (1995): 67-77.

<sup>803</sup> The illustrations themselves were something of a challenge to the printer and it took several attempts before Cahill's mastered making blocks that accommodated both half-tone photographs and solid colour fields. The publisher, Alan Figgis of Hodges Figgis, was closely involved in the production, commenting on scripts and illustrations. On June 28, 1966 he wrote to Share 'now that we know more of the technique I'm sure that Bill would have little difficulty in maintaining the steady improvement in the illustrations (more of those photograph-cum-drawing jobs and good variety in colours).' Letter from Alan Figgis to Bernard Share, 28 June, 1966, Verbiage archive.

<sup>804</sup> *Kilkenny People*, April 24, 1967. This figure seems to have been given to the journalist by Bolger and Share and may have been exaggerated for effect. It is difficult to verify the figures as there are only partial records in the archive, however, over 19,000 copies of the English series had been sold in the first six months. The Irish series had, inevitably, a smaller market and monthly sales for individual titles were usually in single figures. (Various sales statements from Hodges Figgis, 1965-6, Verbiage archive).

<sup>805</sup> Irishman's Diary, *Irish Times*, April 1, 1965.

<sup>806</sup> Susan Waine, email correspondence, August 16, 2017.

Dublin'. She is not quite correct when she writes that the books were published 'to coincide with the television series', as they were published at least three-years before the TV films.<sup>807</sup> However these did bring the stories to a wider public.

These children's programmes<sup>808</sup> constitute an other example of the gradual penetration of new, modern, kind of Celtic into everyday Irish visual culture. The tri-spiral/shamrock on Niall's pyjamas in the *Whoosh* books is never remarked upon, it is not important to the story or the character. There was little requirement to project through the illustrations a sense of Irish distinctiveness to appeal to overseas purchasers, given that the primary market was intended to be Ireland. Instead, it aimed at a kind of civic education. As the reviewer in the *Irish Times* noted, there was a didactic impetus in the books: 'It manages to provide a lot of information about Ireland without in any sense being an "information" book',<sup>809</sup> and as such corresponds to the longstanding tradition of children's literature as agents of nation-building.<sup>810</sup> The use of the Newgrange motif in this example, and in several other instances for Irish consumption, is therefore a good example of banal nationalism where allegiance to nationality is daily and unobtrusively inculcated in unremarked upon ways. The qualification that I am trying to make in this chapter, however, is the shift towards *Celtic modernism* in the vocabulary and styles of symbolism that formed the sense of Irish national habitus in a modernising Ireland.

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<sup>807</sup> Pat Donlan 'Books for Irish Children' *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English 1891-2000*, edited by Clare Hutton and Patrick Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 383-4.

<sup>808</sup> Share and Bolger made two other forays into children's entertainment: their 1971 book *Irish Lives* (Dublin: A. Figgis, 1971), an encyclopaedia of generally over-looked Irish luminaries became an RTÉ children's TV series in 1976. It was called *Irishmen and Irishwomen* (after the opening lines of the 1916 Proclamation) and was presented by Ronnie Drew of the folk band The Dubliners. (I am grateful to Bernard Share's son, Perry, for drawing this to my attention.) In 1977, they produced another animated series as a filler for *Wanderly Wagon*, a stop-motion animation called *Lug*. This time the 'Celtic' reference was more explicit: the main character Lug, was based on the ancient Irish god Lugh, who gives his name to the Celtic harvest festival of Lughnasa, and to the month of August in Irish. In the series, Verbiage combined archaeological research with Dr Who-style science fiction. For example, the character lived in a crannog, a Neolithic island-house, based closely on the restored example in the recently opened Craggaunowen heritage park in Co. Clare, but battled his nemesis, Balor of the Evil Eye (another figure from Irish mythology), with technologies that included a metal spaceship.

<sup>809</sup> Una Lehane 'Books of the Day: some for children' *Irish Times*, December 22, 1965.

<sup>810</sup> See for example *The Nation in Children's Literature: Nations of Childhood* edited by Kit Kelen and Bjorn Sundmark (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

So far, I have outlined some examples of modernist graphic design in Ireland in relation to the development of a vocabulary of international modernism and a preference for direct visual quotation of often archaeological sources. In the second half of this chapter, I examine two case studies of Celtic Modern design in more depth. The first traces a shift from nationalist to internationalist concerns in stamp design, an example of state-commissioned graphic design that also had a popular impact: banal nationalism in action. The second case study, Rosc '67, had a more limited audience but it provided a public statement of the idea of the Celtic as Irish, primitive and equal to contemporary international modernism.

### **'The silent ambassadors of national taste': stamp design and Celtic modernism**

'The official designs of the Government, especially its designs in connection with postage stamps and coinage, may be described, I think, as the silent ambassadors of national taste.'<sup>811</sup>

This section develops the point made earlier that Celtic modernist design attempted to construct the Celtic as modern and international in order to create a visual precedent for Ireland's international modernity. The stamps were designed and issued just as Ireland was making a second bid to join the EEC. In this context, the idea of the Early Christian period as one when Ireland had played a leading role in Europe was compelling. This provides the backdrop to the appointment of a German artist to design stamps which referenced not just Irish, but *British* sources of ancient art. In Gunnar Biilmann-Petersen's justification for the disproportionate amount of space dedicated to stamps in *Design in Ireland*, the Danish design expert outlined three of the ways in which stamp design expresses the themes of this dissertation: they contribute to the projection of Irish identity abroad, they are inculcators of (banal) nationalist habitus, and they represent one area of design which is directly influenced by Government policy.

First, ... postage stamps are the first Irish manufactured products that many people see and in this way are capable of conveying a good or bad impression of Ireland. Secondly, as a commodity handled by nearly all the people in the State, they are a profound factor in the moulding of public taste. Thirdly, they are a case in point where the Government by direct intervention can set standards for public design.<sup>812</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> Senator W. B. Yeats 'Coinage Bill, 1926 Second Stage,' *Seanad Éireann Debates* Vol. 6, No. 12 (3 March 1926).

<sup>812</sup> [Gunnar Biilmann-Petersen] 'Stamps,' *Design In Ireland* (Dublin: Córas Tráchtála, April 1962), 30.

The criticism of Irish stamps in the Scandinavian Report led directly to the establishment in 1963 of a Stamp Design Advisory Committee (SDAC) which generally pursued a modernising agenda in line with that of CTT.

Although my focus is on the less well-known *second* definitive or permanent series issued in 1968, a comparison with its predecessors is necessary to demonstrate how the 1966 designs perfectly encapsulate the change that had occurred in the meaning of Celtic sources and in the style of their handling under the influence of international modernism. Henrich Gerl's designs are emblematic of that Celtic modernism which reimagined Irish heritage as European and modern(ist). They demonstrate the argument being made in this chapter, that by decontextualizing disparate archaic sources, graphic designers were able to reconfigure them as modernist and as part of a unified series, and that Celtic modernist design attempted to construct the Celtic as modern and international in order to create a visual precedent for Ireland's international modernity.

### **Defining independent Ireland: the first definitive and commemorative stamps**

The stamps in the first permanent series (issued 1922-3) clearly demonstrate how 'Celtic' motifs were deployed in the early years of the State. The four designs were chosen by an open competition which solicited almost 800 entries.<sup>813</sup> (Fig. 118) The competition called for designs 'of symbolical character' with 'inscriptions ... shown in Gaelic characters.'<sup>814</sup> These included, according to Joseph Cannon, 'all the obvious types: allegorical figures of Ireland, sunrises and sunbursts, harps, shamrocks, round towers, wolf-hounds, Celtic knots and decoration. ... The Post Office had asked for symbolism – and got it with a vengeance.'<sup>815</sup> The four winning entries were, in order of issue: the Map of Ireland by James Ingram, the Cross of Cong by Lily Williams, the Sword of Light (An Chlaideamh Soluis) by J.J. O'Reilly and the Arms of the Four Provinces by Millicent Grace Girling. Each showed the name of the country as 'Éire' and the value of the stamp was written in Irish as well as displayed in Arabic numerals.<sup>816</sup> Each stamp used slightly different Gaelic characters presented as if majuscule,

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<sup>813</sup> J.C. (Joseph Cannon) 'The First Irish Stamp Designs', *Irish Times*, September 14, 1972.

<sup>814</sup> Classified ad, *Irish Times*, February 2, 1922.

<sup>815</sup> J.C. 'The First Irish Stamp Designs'.

<sup>816</sup> The naming of Ireland is fraught with difficulty. Technically, it was only in the new Constitution of 1937 that the name 'Éire' in Irish and 'Ireland' in English was formalised.

each with a strong calligraphic leaning. While none was based on a specific typeface, they conformed absolutely to the nineteenth-century Celtic Revival archaising tendency to use modern (post-Counter Reformation) Gaelic typeforms as a model for hand-drawn forms evoking semi-uncial manuscript compositions.

Criticism of Irish stamps often drew unflattering comparisons between their design and that of Irish coins, which had been the result of a competition organised by the Coinage Design Committee, headed by the poet and Senator, W.B. Yeats, in 1926.<sup>817</sup> Though ultimately heralded as a great success, the decisions of the Committee were controversial at the time: their chosen theme (Irish animals, reflecting Ireland's major industry, agriculture) eschewed overt nationalist symbolism, while the competition was won by the British sculptor Percy Metcalf. The committee memorably rejected 'outworn so-called national symbols, such as the shamrock, the sunburst and the round tower',<sup>818</sup> and the resulting designs were famously denounced as 'pagan' and 'the thin edge of the wedge of Freemasonry.'<sup>819</sup> (Fig. 119)

In their anxiety to unequivocally signal national values and the fact of independence, the design of each of the stamps was overwhelmed by symbols. As Lisa Godson has written, the 'most widely circulated "map stamp" was burdened with intricate detail and abrupt jumps in scale, showing Ireland framed by an archway, with further decorative devices of Celtic ornament and shamrocks.'<sup>820</sup> Individually the stamps were over-detailed and little

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<sup>817</sup> See *W.B. Yeats and the Designing of Ireland's Coinage*, edited by Brian Cleve (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1972). and Paul Caffrey 'Nationalism and Representation: The Coinage Design Committee (1926-1928) and the Formation of a Design Identity in the Irish Free State', in Linda King and Elaine Sisson, *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 75-89.

<sup>818</sup> Brian P. Kennedy and others have attributed the phrase to Yeats. Brian P. Kennedy 'The Irish Free State 1922-49: A Visual Perspective' in *Ireland: Art Into History*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, and Brian P. Kennedy (Dublin: Town House, 1994), 138. However, Thomas Bodkin, a member of the 1926 Committee, presented it as the text of a report from the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland who informed the committee that they were, "'strongly of [the] opinion that hackneyed symbols – round towers, shamrocks, wolf dogs, sun bursts – should be entirely avoided.' Even the shamrock as a symbol has, they said, "no dignity of age behind it, being not more than a hundred years old.'" Thomas Bodkin 'What We Did (Or Tried to Do)' in *W.B. Yeats and the Designing of Ireland's Coinage*, edited by Brian Cleve, (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1972), 41. The archaeological origin of the phrase is significant, given that it would be recalled frequently by modernisers in the 1960s, especially in relation to the stamp design competition.

<sup>819</sup> Bodkin 'What We Did (Or Tried to Do)', 81.

<sup>820</sup> Lisa Godson 'Design and Material Culture: Section 1' in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V: Twentieth Century*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall, and Peter Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 122

attempt was made to unify them as a series, save the repetition of the denomination in paired shapes at the bottom of each stamp. Three featured shamrocks, and all included 'Celtic' interlace of some kind. Two, the map and the arms of Ireland, made reference to the aspiration for a united Ireland. The lack of any indication of a border on the map stamp was, as Ciaran Swan writes, 'acutely political'.<sup>821</sup> The aim of the symbolism was in keeping with the general thrust of Celtic Revival design. It was, 'an attempt by the Irish Free State to generate linkages – both cultural and political – with a previous time of Irish sovereignty, that of the Celtic Christian period.'<sup>822</sup> In these stamps, the Celtic is the past, not the present. The motifs, like the typography, are not specific historical elements but generalised emblems.<sup>823</sup> By the second definitive series, this would be completely reversed. Specific archaeological motifs would be abstracted and simplified to create an image of the Celtic as modern.

### The Scandinavians report on stamps

Two international factors greatly affected Irish stamp design in the early 1960s. The first was the introduction of the Europe-wide Europa stamp series where a single design was used across the 19 countries of the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations. This meant that a direct comparison could be made between Irish stamps and European standards in design. The second and more significant impact came from the damning criticism of Irish stamps in the Scandinavian Report. Stamp design was the one area of design which was most directly impacted by the Report. The graphics expert, Gunnar Biilmann-Petersen had been taken ill during the group's stay and spent his time on a desk exercise, reviewing the design of the Irish definitive and commemorative stamps.<sup>824</sup> His findings were included as a separate section in the Report, the only section to be illustrated.

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<sup>821</sup> What is depicted is a map of the imagined community of Irish nationalism, rather than the administrative Free State. The undivided nature of the island is emphasised by being reversed out of the background colour: it is unblemished white. The ideological function of the map is indicated by the ancillary decoration, the Romanesque arch, shamrock and Celtic interlace announce that this is a map of Ireland. As Swan writes, by framing the map within 'the archaism of a Romanesque arch it succeeds in distancing it from more contemporary political concerns, allowing the stamp to operate a symbol of a burgeoning sovereignty and as a visual link to the past.' Ciarán Swan, 'Vanishing Borders: The Representation of Political Partition in the Free State 1922-1949', in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922-1992*, edited by Linda King and Elaine Sisson (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 135.

<sup>822</sup> Swan, 'Vanishing Borders,' 135.

<sup>823</sup> Even the Cross of Cong is reduced to a generic 'Celtic Cross'.

<sup>824</sup> 'An especially detailed study was made of Irish stamp design. This was partly because Petersen was too ill to travel around Ireland and was left behind in Dublin where he took over the critique of Irish stamps.' Joanna Quinn, 'The Scandinavian Group and the Design in Ireland Report' *Designing Ireland: A Retrospective Exhibition of Kilkenny Design Workshops 1963-1988* (Dublin: Crafts Council of Ireland, 2005), 7.

It comprised five pages, plus a three-page fold-out section showing images of 41 stamps (Fig. 120). By comparison, for example, the section on the design of glassware merited less than a page, despite the importance attributed by the State to Waterford Crystal. The amount of space dedicated to stamps, and the material emphasis given by the illustrated fold-out, meant that this section was the most prominent in the 54-page review portion of 'Design in Ireland'. In their accounts of the Scandinavian Report, the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Press* newspapers all reprinted images of the stamps. As a result, there was an unusually high level of public debate about this aspect of graphic design, and it was an area in which the state was in a position to influence design. Biilmann-Petersen's critique followed the general tone of the Report, finding the Irish stamps lacklustre at best. The direct result of this was the establishment of the SDAC. Peter Wildbur recalled that the Scandinavian Report was a pivotal moment for modernist design and for the fortunes of Signa. 'The Scandinavian Report was very influential ... in changing views. In fact, it was the [adverse comment in the] report on stamps that induced them to bring Signa in. It shows in the report a listing of all the pre-Signa stamps.'<sup>825</sup> It is worth examining Biilmann-Petersen's Report in some detail, as it would become the benchmark against which subsequent designs, including the definitive series would be judged.

While the Report claimed that the 41 stamps examined were a 'random selection from some one hundred and fifty stamps covering the whole production from the foundation of the state,' in fact this represents all but one of the 42 different designs for Irish stamps from 1923 up to October 1958, so his analysis is comprehensive.<sup>826</sup> Biilmann-Petersen devised a set of criteria for examining his sample: '1) Clear indication of value; 2) The name of the country clearly visible; 3) An easy and balanced composition or lay-out; 4) ...not easy to counterfeit...; 5) If possible the subject or eventual picture on the stamp should appeal to the public.'<sup>827</sup> According to his examination, Irish stamps fared very poorly in categories 1 and

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<sup>825</sup> Interview with Peter Wildbur, London, October 13, 2009.

<sup>826</sup> 'Design in Ireland', 31. The number 150 must include the same design printed in different colours and/or denominations. The one omitted is the Lough Derg version of the Airmail series, the other three similar designs were discussed.

<sup>827</sup> 'Design in Ireland', 31.



2.<sup>828</sup> 'What low-class print can do together with deplorable lay-out on a stamp can be viewed on no. 26.'<sup>829</sup> This is the 1938 Father Mathew stamp which is certainly one of the least successful of the commemoratives having apparently no unity, and no relationship between the three elements (Fig. 121). It was printed by letterpress, and appears to use Colm Ó Lochlainn's Baoithín typeface. It is surprising that an artist of the standing of the academician Sean Keating was credited as the designer, and it may be that he was responsible only for the portrait sketch. Fr Mathew was the founder of the temperance movement in Ireland, and of this stamp the *Irish Times* quipped 'it is anything but sober'.<sup>830</sup>

Generally, Biilmann-Petersen favoured stamps which were heraldic or 'reproduced classic works'. He considered the 1952 Thomas Moore stamp, to be 'the best of all the collection' (Fig. 122). It was based on a portrait by Sir M. Archer Shee in the National Gallery and printed recess by De la Rue in London.<sup>831</sup> Overall he characterised Irish stamps as cluttered and lacking in unity and was forthright in his criticism.<sup>832</sup> By 1962 Biilmann-Petersen's critique of the definitives was a commonly held view among modernisers and the general public alike. In fact, in typically direct style, the editorial of the *Irish Architect and Contractor* damned the Scandinavian Report for its faint praise of the whole collection of stamps:

As I glanced at that drab and dreary pull-out page of reproductions from Ireland's glorious philatelic past, and read the polite half-condemnations applied to them, I marvelled at how far politeness can go in stifling judgment. With one or two exceptions, that bunch of stamps is about as miserable a collection of juvenile

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<sup>828</sup> Richard King's James Clarence Mangan stamp was criticised on both counts, although the designer was hampered by having to fit 'Republic of Ireland' in two languages onto a stamp 20.5 x 24 mm. King's Micheál O Cléirigh stamp came 'very close to being a wholesome modern composition' but he was wary of 'unrestricted lines going everywhere' in this and other works. Those printed recess by De La Rue in Dublin were considered 'better technically' than the letterpress stamps, especially those by the state printers.

<sup>829</sup> 'Design in Ireland', 33.

<sup>830</sup> Editorial, 'Sitting on Stamps', *Irish Times*, November 12, 1963.

<sup>831</sup> He wrote: 'A clear and well executed subject in balance within the surface, and with a distinct text not harmful to the picture, and a secondary text that is subordinated to the rest.' He praised the 1954 UCD centenary (with a portrait of Cardinal Newman) and the 1950 Holy Year stamp (which depicted a statue in St Peter's, Rome) on the basis of the quality of the originals, though both suffered from 'too many surplus details' and a 'noisy background'.

<sup>832</sup> 'In nos. 2, 5 and 6 the design is too split-up and nos. 13 and 14 are only half stamps. The childish and insignificant asymmetric placing of elements in the background of no. 34 misses a correlation of the detail which could have marked the design. The motif of the diagonals in no. 36 is so timid and transparent that it is killed by the pedantic and boringly executed ornament next to it.' 'Design in Ireland', 32. The stamps referred to are 2: James Clarence Mangan (King, 1949), 5: Fr Mathew, (Sean Keating, 1938), 6: 1798 Rebellion (1948, Karl Uhlemann), 14: Mother Mary Aikenhead (1958), 13: Admiral Brown (1957), 34: An Tostal (1953, Fergus O'Ryan) and 36 An Cliabh Solais, definitive series (1923, J.J. O'Reilly).

doodling as you will find in the civilised world; and why no one said so is a mystery to me.<sup>833</sup>

On foot of the receipt of 'Design in Ireland', the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, asked the five ministers most implicated in the report to give feedback.<sup>834</sup> The reply from Michael Hilliard, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, demonstrated a distinct lack of enthusiasm to engage with improvements in design.

As regards the design of postage stamps we have the last 10 or 12 years accepted the fact that in present circumstances we are unlikely to get acceptable designs from within the country. ...Pending an improvement in the art of design here I don't think we have an alternative to proceeding as we have been doing.<sup>835</sup>

By November 1963, however, Hilliard cited Biillman-Petersen's assessment criteria as a blueprint for improvement in stamp design in his speech announcing the establishment of the SDAC. The Scandinavian Report, he said, 'should be studied by anybody who wants to know the principles upon which the new committee will operate.'<sup>836</sup> While the Report was undoubtedly the catalyst for the reform of stamp design, it should be noted that a similar desire to modernise the national image projected via stamps was evident in Britain at the same time, and likewise a similar 'disagreement over what was appropriate to the modern image' of the nation.<sup>837</sup> Peter Jones has argued that Tony Benn's appointment in 1964 as Post Master General began a period of modernisation in British stamp design that sought to reflect Prime Minister Harold Wilson's 'techno-nationalist rhetoric... a call to transform a

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<sup>833</sup> *Irish Architect and Contactor*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (February 1962), 11. Biillmann-Petersen's opinion on the definitive series was mixed. The Arms of the Four Provinces by Millicent Grace Girling was ranked top in the category of 'Stamps with symbols, coats of arms etc'. The Cross of Cong by Lilly Williams was rated third in this category, despite being found wanting in relation to the display of the name of the country. The other stamps in the first series, the Map of Ireland by James Ingram and the Sword of Light (An Cliabh Solais) by J.J. O'Reilly fared poorly, largely on the grounds of over-elaboration and confused layout. The map stamp was described as 'rather poor because not enough attention has been paid to the subject.' Biillmann-Petersen went on: 'A geographical map is an amorphous figure and to be discernible it has to be made as big as possible and isolated. In this case the arch and ornament ought to have been omitted, being incongruous to the subject.' 'Design in Ireland', 34. As mentioned above the 'map' was less a map than a statement of intent, its meaning anchored by the decoration.

<sup>834</sup> These were: the Ministers for Education, Posts & Telegraphs, Transport & Power, Finance, and Industry and Commerce. Memo to Secretary of Department of Taoiseach, May 29, 1962 NAI TAOIS/S 13814C/62.

<sup>835</sup> Letter from Michael Hilliard to Sean Lemass, 22 March, 1962 NAI TAOIS/S 13814C/62.

<sup>836</sup> Reported in the *Irish Times*, November 12, 1963.

<sup>837</sup> Peter Jones 'Posting the Future: British Stamp Design and the "White Heat" of a technological revolution', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2004), 166.

moribund Britain into a modern, technologically advanced nation.’<sup>838</sup> There are clear parallels with the attempts by the Irish SDAC to reflect the Lemassian vision of Modern Ireland.

In response to the criticism, the Department of Posts and Telegraphs in consultation with the Arts Council set up the SDAC in October 1963,<sup>839</sup> following the British model that had been instituted by the CoID in 1946.<sup>840</sup> The make-up of the committee was less conservative than the British, comprising well-established modernists, many associated with Signa and later with Rosc ‘67.<sup>841</sup> The chairman was Fr Donal O’Sullivan, S.J., close friend of Michael Scott and patron of Signa, who was also Director of the Arts Council.<sup>842</sup> The committee was charged with improving the design of Irish commemoratives and beginning work on a new permanent series of Irish stamps, to replace those that were by now 40 years old. Welcoming the establishment of the SDAC, Senator Edward Maguire said: ‘Any proposals to redesign [the definitive] series would be welcomed by “almost everybody,” ... The current series he described as “too small, characterless and unimaginative.”’ Maguire was clear that stamps required industrial designers, not easel painters.<sup>843</sup>

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<sup>838</sup> Peter Jones ‘Posting the Future’, 164.

<sup>839</sup> Memo of May 13, 1963, ‘Meeting between the Department of Posts and Telegraphs and the Arts Council to discuss ‘difficulties in the way of ensuring good design for Irish postage stamps.’ Arts Council File D6040. Minister Michael Hilliard explained the process to the Dáil in ‘Stamp Design Committee: Ceisteanna/Questions. Oral Answers,’ *Dáil Éireann Debates* Vol. 208, No. 9, (9 April 1964).

<sup>840</sup> See Peter Jones ‘Posting the Future’, 166. The British version was disbanded in 1967.

<sup>841</sup> Presumably in order to prevent accusations of bias, no designers were included, though there were two architects. Michael Scott’s protégé Arthur Gibney was the youngest member of the committee. The other architect was the veteran modernist Raymond McGrath, then Chief Architect at the Office of Public Works. Australian-born McGrath had had a successful career as a modernist architect and writer in London before taking up the OPW job in Dublin in 1940. One of his important commissions was the 1930 BBC Broadcasting House in Portland Place. See Donal O’Donovan, *God’s Architect: A Life of Raymond McGrath* (Bray: Kilbride Books, 1995) and the exhibition at the Irish Architectural Archive ‘Raymond McGrath: Modern Master’ May 2013. McGrath was a consultant designer to Donegal Carpets, and for Dun Emer. McGrath had written to Seán O’Faoláin at the Arts Council in 1958 to ask ‘I wonder if you could use your good influence to get some decent stamps?’ Letter from Raymond McGrath to Seán O’Faoláin, October 6, 1958. Arts Council file D6040.

<sup>842</sup> Two important painters were included, Norah McGuinness, President of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art and Maurice McGonigal, president of the Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts, the most conservative of the visual arts representatives on the SDAC. The other two members were Mr Robson Lowe, chairman of the British Philatelic Expert Committee and Mr J.A. Scannell, Assistant Secretary to the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. ‘Artists to advise on new stamp designs’ *Irish Times*, October 3, 1965.

<sup>843</sup> ‘Stamp design was almost industrial design, and it was difficult to ask an artist, who was an easel painter, to produce a design that fitted in with the technical requirements of stamp production. “You might as well ask him to paint a room,” he added.’ ‘Artists to advise on new stamp designs,’ *Irish Times*, October 3, 1965.

The committee got to work quickly, recruiting Peter Wildbur of Signa, whom they knew to be capable of producing designs that were modern but distinctive (Fig. 123). Between 1963 and 1974, 60 different designs for stamps were issued; of these 32 were by Signa designers. The group's dominance was even more pronounced in the first three years of the SDAC: from December 1963 to December 1966, thirteen of the seventeen stamps issued were designed either by Peter Wildbur or Raymond Kyne. Modernisation of Irish stamp design received a boost in 1965 when the Revenue Commissioners installed a new Chambon rotary photogravure machine in their stamping branch.<sup>844</sup> In common with the techno-nationalist rhetoric in Britain, the machine itself was celebrated in newspaper articles and politicians flocked to be photographed with it. Fittingly, the first stamp to be printed in full colour on the Dublin machine, designed by Raymond Kyne, commemorated W.B. Yeats (Fig. 124a).

### The Second Definitive Series

Despite his enthusiasm for Signa's commemorative designs, Joseph Cannon echoed the general criticism of Irish design discussed in Chapter One: 'We have been too conservative in our attitude towards stamp issues. There are very faint signs of a more realistic and modern approach to the subject, but it is abundantly clear that we lag sadly behind the rest of the world.'<sup>845</sup> The problem of the definitive series as the 'ambassador' of Irish taste abroad still remained. 'The "image" of Ireland presented is a poor one indeed.'<sup>846</sup> Chairman of the SDAC, Donal O'Sullivan was keenly aware of the role stamps would play in projecting an image of Ireland and had faith in the power of stamp design itself to signal the state's modernity: 'if the designs themselves are outstandingly good they will attract world-wide attention and portray the progressiveness of modern Ireland.'<sup>847</sup> Given his close relationship with Michael Scott, this is not surprising. In the view of O'Sullivan and his committee, the most important aspect of the design of the definitives was to convey 'dignity', echoing the anxieties about the projection of an image of Ireland discussed in Chapter Two. O'Sullivan closely linked this to the (imagined) view from abroad: '... the Committee felt strongly that dignity was the

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<sup>844</sup> 'W.B. Yeats stamp,' *Irish Times*, May 21, 1965.

<sup>845</sup> Joseph Cannon, 'Are our stamps good enough?' *Irish Times*, May 25, 1964.

<sup>846</sup> J.C. (Joseph Cannon) 'Postage Stamps: A dismal image', *Irish Times*, February 26, 1964.

<sup>847</sup> Donal O'Sullivan, S.J., Chairman Stamp Design Advisory Committee, letter to Minister Michael Hilliard, December 1964. Letter circulated to government January 26, 1965. Approved February 2, 1965. NAI TSCH 96/6/125 'Postage stamps: designs for permanent use' (May 1959-November 1966).

essential quality in the designs for a permanent stamp series which would enhance or mar Ireland's image at home and, particularly, abroad.'<sup>848</sup> The brief given to the SDC in relation to the design of definitives could not have been more Lemassian. At the inaugural meeting of the SDAC, Hilliard said:

We have ... been represented as a people who live too much in the dreamy past. We all desire that that kind of image should be replaced by a true representation of Ireland and its people – that of a progressive nation, with cultural and material achievements and an influence in other countries of which we have reason to be proud.<sup>849</sup>

According to O'Sullivan, they were tasked with choosing a design theme which would 'reflect the Ireland of today, its vigour, its desire and will to excel'.<sup>850</sup>

Many themes had already been suggested through official and unofficial channels; O'Sullivan summarised them as 'Industry, Agriculture, Horse Breeding, Racing, National Sports, Beauty Spots, Historic Buildings and Monuments.' These were all rejected, instead 'the Committee came to the conclusion that inspiration for the new stamps should be sought from early Irish art'.<sup>851</sup> At first glance, this seems like a rather conservative choice, albeit one that had the requisite 'dignity' and appeared to demonstrate continuity with the first definitive series. However, the Celtic modernist spirit was clear in O'Sullivan's qualification that early Irish art was chosen because it had 'its own distinct and original flavour, not with a view to lifeless copying but rather to recapturing its spirit and expressing it in terms of modern design.' He argued that 'such a course would not be inconsistent with the aim of reflecting the "Ireland of Today"'.<sup>852</sup> The theme would also have been acceptable to the modernists on the Committee (such as the IELA's McGuinness and O'Sullivan himself) and to the more conservative artists like Maurice McGonigal. In light of the winning design, by the German artist Heinrich Gerl, the SDAC's decision on a theme should be seen as another expression of the idea of ancient Irish art as proto-modern, one which would have chimed with the

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<sup>848</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>849</sup> 'New Stamps to Reflect the Ireland of Today – Hilliard,' *Irish Times*, November 12, 1963.

<sup>850</sup> Donal O'Sullivan, S.J., Chairman Stamp Design Advisory Committee, letter to Minister Michael Hilliard, December 1964. Letter circulated to government January 26, 1965. Approved February 2, 1965. NAI TSCH 96/6/125 'Postage stamps: designs for permanent use' (May 1959–November 1966).

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

longstanding views of the IEILA on the link between the Celtic and the Modern discussed earlier.<sup>853</sup>

Following the precedent of the 1926 Coinage Commission, the SDAC decided to hold an invited international competition: 'If we are to get really outstanding designs', O'Sullivan wrote, 'the services of first class graphic artists must be enlisted. We accordingly recommend that a competition be held confined to about twelve artists, of whom three would be Irish, and the remainder artists of international repute from other countries.'<sup>854</sup> Of the three Irish names put forward, two were Signa designers, Patrick Scott and Louis le Brocquy, demonstrating once again the degree to which Signa had become synonymous with modern design for the state. The third name was unexpected, Una Craddock was a recent graduate from the National College of Art, who had won the RDS Taylor Art Competition in 1961.<sup>855</sup> She was a student member of the ICAD and won an award in the 1962 Best Sellers competition.<sup>856</sup>

O'Sullivan's letter named fifteen artists to be approached. They included Biilmann Petersen from Denmark, whose Report had been the catalyst for the establishment of the SDAC. Like Petersen, many of the artists were recognised for their ability to work in a range of fine and applied arts.<sup>857</sup> Generally, the other international suggestions were well-known designers and artists, primarily associated with interwar and immediate post-war poster-design, and —with

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<sup>853</sup> By December 1964, O'Sullivan's friend Michael Scott had already begun work on what would be the Rosc '67 exhibition (discussed below) and had approached him with a view to finding a suitable name for the exhibition. O'Sullivan was thus aware of the plans for the presentation of ancient Irish art as proto-modern in Rosc '67.

<sup>854</sup> Donal O'Sullivan, S.J., Chairman Stamp Design Advisory Committee, letter to Minister Michael Hilliard, December 1964. Letter circulated to government January 26, 1965. Approved February 2, 1965. NAI TSCH 96/6/125 'Postage stamps: designs for permanent use' (May 1959-November 1966). Again, there was a precedent in Yeats's inclusion of three Irish artists among the seven invited to submit designs for the coinage.

<sup>855</sup> Mary Mather, 'The Chance they Deserve', *The Irish Times*, April 4, 1968.

<sup>856</sup> 'Publicity Display Awards', *Evening Herald*, March 23, 1962. Apart from these student awards, Craddock does not seem to have any other major commissions or awards that might have brought her work to the attention of the SDAC. Her inclusion is puzzling, but she may have come to the attention of O'Sullivan via the small and interconnected circles of Irish art, design, industry and civil service at the time. Craddock had set up a jewellery design business, Seabhach, in 1965 with two classmates, one of whom was a mature student, Elizabeth O'Driscoll, wife of Tim (or Tadgh) O'Driscoll, then Director General of Bord Fáilte and a friend of O'Sullivan's.

<sup>857</sup> These included Jean Lurcat from France, best known for his tapestries, and the sculptor and interior designer Piero Fornasetti from Italy.

the exception of the American Saul Bass<sup>858</sup> — conservative modern in approach.<sup>859</sup>

Significantly, none were known for their stamp design. This suggests, once again, that O’Sullivan was more concerned about the projection of an image of Ireland as modern and visually sophisticated than with producing good stamps *per se*.

Of the fifteen approached, nine entered designs, three initially agreed to submit but were unable to complete (Louis le Brocquy, Walter Brudi, and Jean Lurcat who died) and three (Saul Bass, Graham Sutherland and Hans Erni) appear to have refused the offer. Two new names were added, the British artist John Piper and another Signa designer, Raymond Kyne. Kyne was one of the few entrants to have had experience designing stamps and was probably included after the success of his commemorative designs for W.B. Yeats (1965) and the 1916 Rising (1966) (Figs 124a and b), perhaps as a replacement for his colleague le Brocquy. Frustratingly, the entries have not been kept in the National Archives and despite the fact they were included in a well-publicised exhibition at the Building Design Centre, no photographs of the designs appear to have survived.

### Gerl’s designs as Celtic modernism

The winner of the competition was the German, Heinrich Gerl, who submitted eight designs, all based on animal themes associated with early Irish art (Figs 125-128). The committee chose three of these and a fourth was subsequently added to the set.<sup>860</sup> The choice of Gerl’s designs returns to the central idea in this chapter: Ireland as an increasingly confident and

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<sup>858</sup> Best known for his film posters and title sequences for the likes of Alfred Hitchcock and Otto Preminger. Bass does not appear to have responded to the invitation.

<sup>859</sup> The two British suggestions, Edward Bawden and Graham Sutherland had had considerable success as poster designers, particularly for the London Underground. Sutherland had designed posters for the London Underground in the early 1930s, but by the 1960s was better known as a painter and tapestry designer. Bawden was an illustrator and graphic designer, who designed for London Transport from 1924-1952. Two of the three German designers (Hermann Eidenbenz and Walter Brudi), as well as the two Swiss (Hans Erni and Adolf Fluckiger), had worked in poster design in Switzerland, though none was an exponent of the International Typographic Style, having more in common with the earlier generation of ‘softened modernism’ represented by the work of Herbert Matter and others. The work of each of the five designers is discussed in Richard Hollis *Swiss Graphic Design: The Origins and Growth of an International Style 1920- 1965* (London : Laurence King, 2006). ‘Softened modernism’ is the term used by Jeremy Aynsley to describe the pictorial modernism of Matter’s work which echoed the ‘organic’ modernism of mid-century furniture design. Jeremy Aynsley, *20th Century Graphic Design*, (London: Mitchel Beazley, 2001), 102. The third German entrant was the Munich painter, Heinrich Gerl. The Japanese poster designer Ryuichi Yamashiro was also invited as well as the ground-breaking American graphic designer, Saul Bass.

<sup>860</sup> Cabinet Minutes November 25, 1966. NAI G 47903/63

international nation for whom the Celtic was a European rather than simply a national identity, which could be expressed through modernist graphic design. As David Scott has remarked, these stamps marked ‘a new European presentation of Ireland’s image.’<sup>861</sup> The first indication of this was that the winning designer was not Irish: much was made of this at the time, but the choice of a West German in 1966 was considerably less controversial than the Coinage Committee’s selection of the designs by Yorkshire’s Percy Metcalf in 1926. Several commentators, including an editorial in the *Irish Times*, favoured Patrick Scott’s designs, and at the opening of the exhibition, O’Sullivan admitted that the SDAC had had difficulty in choosing between the winning designs and those by Scott. Scott’s designs featured portraits from early Irish art. One of them, depicting a Madonna and Child from the Book of Kells, was eventually used as a special Christmas stamp in 1972 (Fig. 129). The typography on Scott’s designs was much stronger than on the Gerl stamps and reflects Signa’s strength in this area. As it appears to have been a straight choice between Scott and Gerl, it seems likely that the SDAC *deliberately* opted for the international artist.

That a contemporary (archaeological rather than romantic) model of early Irish art was what O’Sullivan had in mind is evident in the fact that each of the entrants was sent a copy of the first volume of *L’Art Irlandais* by the Dublin-based French art historian, Françoise Henry. Henry, a close friend of Mainie Jellett’s, is considered the founder of art history as an academic discipline in Ireland.<sup>862</sup> In 1954 the Cultural Relations Committee<sup>863</sup> published her *Early Christian Irish Art*.<sup>864</sup> This was popular in both senses of the word. It provided for the first time an accessible guide to the visual culture of Ireland’s ‘Golden Age’ and was reprinted several times. While it was innovative in that it contained photographs, rather than drawings, these were surpassed in her ‘masterful’ three-volume trilogy on early Irish art, first published

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<sup>861</sup> David Scott, *European Stamp Design* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 92.

<sup>862</sup> Francis Halsall, ‘Strategic Amnesia: Modernism and Art History in Ireland in the Twenty-First Century’, *The Irish Review* No. 39, (2008), 21. Her first book, *La Sculpture Irlandaise Pendant les Douze Premiers Siècles de l’Ére Chrétienne*, was based on her PhD thesis and published in Paris in 1933. She was invited to lecture in French in UCD in 1932, and in 1948 moved from French to Archaeology. In 1965 she established the new History of Art department. Niamh O’Sullivan, ‘History of Art: The Academic Discipline’ in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 207. See also James White, ‘Françoise Henry’, *Studies*, Vol. 64, No. 256 (Winter, 1975): 307-312.

<sup>863</sup> Under the auspices of the Department of External Affairs, mentioned in Chapter One. Michael Scott was on the committee and Patrick Scott designed the CRC’s symbol.

<sup>864</sup> Henry’s *Le Sculpture Irlandaise* had already been published in 1933 Paris and her *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* had appeared in London in 1940.



in Paris by Zodiaque as *L'Art Irlandais* (1960-1964), and from 1965 by Methuen as *Irish Art*.<sup>865</sup> These were brilliantly composed and lit so that previously obscured or eroded detail came into focus, thus they provide an instance of how a (literally) new vision of early Irish art became available to designers in the 1960s. As noted above, designers like Bill Bolger rapidly exploited them. The importance of these new photographs to the SDAC's brief is evident from the fact that they sent the entrants copies of the French edition, rather than the state-sponsored 1954 version which contained a very similar text in English.

The theme of 'early Irish art' maintained a connection to the first permanent stamps, while Gerl's choice of animals in Irish art echoed Yeats's controversial decision to eschew national symbols in favour of images of native animals on the coinage. The new definitives were an attempt to shift the form while maintaining much of the content, but the form, of course, has meaning, and the change in style signalled modernity and the new interpretation of the Celtic as international. Gerl's choice of sources for the chosen designs was one of the most commented on aspects of the design. The first three stamps selected by the SDAC were recorded in a memo that accompanied their submission to the Cabinet for approval.

The design for the low value stamps (1/2d. to 7d.) shows a dog, in stylised form, and is based on decorations on an ancient Irish brooch from Killamery, Co. Kilkenny, which is in the National Museum. The design for the intermediate values (8d. to 1s. 5d.) depicts a stag and is based on a decoration on the suspended bowl from Lulingstone, England, which is in the British Museum. For the high value stamps (2s.6d., 5s. and 10 s.), which are double the normal size, the artist has chosen the winged ox, symbol of Saint Luke. This design is based on an illustration in the Gospel Book of Lichfield (in Lichfield Cathedral, England) showing the symbols of the four Evangelists. The sources from which the designs were chosen are illustrated in the book '*L'Art Irlandais*', by Françoise Henry, an authoritative work on early Irish art which was supplied as a guide to each artist.<sup>866</sup>

Of the three designs proposed, only the first one, the dog, had an Irish provenance. At the Cabinet meeting, a fourth design was selected from among those submitted by Gerl. This was the Eagle, symbol of the evangelist St John, from an Irish manuscript in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Thus the balance was restored in favour of Irish sources. David Scott has seen 'a certain paradox' in Irish stamp design that 'reflects the wider problem of a

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<sup>865</sup> Peter Harbison, 'Celtic Culture in Context', *Irish Arts Review* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter, 2012-2013): 120-123.

<sup>866</sup> Memo for the Government, November 15, 1966. NAI G47903/63 'New designs for permanent issue of postage stamps.' NAI TSCH 96/6/125 'Postage stamps: designs for permanent use' (May 1959-Nov 1966).

Irish culture which strives to be both Irish and European; and yet the latter ambition involves a certain re-attachment to the British tradition from which Irish culture is trying to create a separate identity.<sup>867</sup> This seems to me to miss the point, in effect the inclusion of sources from Britain could be seen as an act of de-colonisation. Gerl may not have realized the import of his choice of sources. There are only so many suitable animal images in Henry's book (at this point it would be very interesting to know what the other two, unused, designs took as sources). As far as he knew he was drawing examples from a book called *L'Art Irlandais*, Gerl could have been forgiven for thinking it contained only 'Irish art'. And this is the crucial point: Henry's work is itself an argument for the cultural influence of Ireland on her neighbours during the early Christian period and the centrality of Ireland to the cultural life of Europe. The publicity surrounding the stamps often incorporated the British sources as 'Early Irish Art'. The standard text prepared for the publicity surrounding the announcement of the winner in July 1967 emphasised the Irish influence on Britain: 'A stag inspired by an Irish Art decoration can be traced to a suspended bowl, now in the British Museum, from Lullingstone, Kent.'<sup>868</sup> The Celtic as a kind of Irish international style here allowed for a rare example of reverse colonisation.

### **Old sources, modern style**

A comparison between the source photographs in Henry's *L'Art Irlandais* (Figs 130 to 133) and Gerl's submitted designs demonstrate how clearly they conform to the modernist graphic strategies of decontextualisation and abstraction discussed below in relation to Rosc '67. Gerl abstracted the individual animals from their context, eliminating background and simplifying interlace patterns. He presented each one on strong flat fields of colour, filling the frame. This reduced the differences between the original materials, scale and contexts and incorporated them into a series. According to Gerl '...the task I set myself was to represent the animals, derived from different epochs, in a uniform series.'<sup>869</sup> That this graphic strategy was modernist was not lost on the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Joseph Brennan, who

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<sup>867</sup> Scott, *European Stamp Design*, 89.

<sup>868</sup> See for example, the text accompanying reproductions of the three Gerl designs originally selected, enlarged up to five times their actual size in *The Irish Times* on July 18, 1967. The same text appeared in the booklet produced to accompany the exhibition of the stamps at the Building Design Centre.

<sup>869</sup> Stamp design exhibition booklet, Building Design Centre, 1967, unpaginated.

reported to the Dáil in October 1966 that the designs for the new series of permanent stamps were ready to be submitted for approval. 'These designs, the House will notice, will have moved gradually, if not entirely—I do not want to get out of my depth here— towards modern art.'<sup>870</sup> The least successful element of the design was the lettering, which was in roman capitals, with an exaggerated and attenuated serif, particularly on the base of the E which has an awkward extended upswing. Despite the fact that by 1967 it was more than four years since Gaelic lettering had been used on stamps, and the Gaelic alphabet itself had been decommissioned, writers to the *Irish Times* still demanded that 'the elegant cursive Irish lettering (complete with accent on Éire) would be far more suitable than the angular alphabet used.'<sup>871</sup>

The graphic contrast between the first and second definitive series is even more marked because they both use heritage sources. David Scott contrasts 'the simplicity of the new design' to the 'antiquated complexity'<sup>872</sup> or 'quaint decorativeness'<sup>873</sup> of the earlier definitive set' and notes that the 'Celtic motifs, signalling an English and European as well as an Irish cultural heritage, replace the harps, maps of Ireland, crosses, etc.'<sup>874</sup>

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<sup>870</sup> Joseph Brennan, 'Committee on Finance, Vote 42: Posts and Telegraphs (Resumed)' *Dáil Éireann Debates* Vol. 224, No. 15 (27 October, 1966).

<sup>871</sup> F.E. Dixon, Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, August 8, 1967; 'Heinrich Gerl's designs are excellent, and I suspect that two defects are the responsibility of the Design Committee and not the artist. Firstly, the elegant cursive Irish lettering (complete with accent on Éire) would be far more suitable than the angular alphabet used. Secondly, the word "POSTAS" should be incorporated...'

<sup>872</sup> David Scott, 'Posting Messages', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, (1990/1991), 189.

<sup>873</sup> Scott, *European Stamp Design*, 89.

<sup>874</sup> Scott, 'Posting Messages' 189. Another comparison is also possible, between Gerl's submissions to the competition and those of Gunnar Biilmann-Petersen, whose designs for the competition Steen Ejlers has located. Biilmann-Petersen's designs incorporated complex Celtic ornament within simple geometric forms, a giant letter 'E' for Eire and a large figure 9 to represent the denomination. The emphasis on these elements gives expression to what he had identified in the Scandinavian Report as key elements of stamp design: Clear indication of value and the name of the country clearly visible. Ejlers's evaluation of these designs suggests that they 'integrate a contemporary mode of expression (the emphasised E's and large figure 9) with the historical, especially Irish dimension (the ornamentation)'. He argues that the proposals 'thus attempt to synthesise past and present in a more sophisticated way than the more predictable use of a pictorial "quotation" – like for instance the fabulous monsters from a medieval manuscript in the winning submission – along with modern typography.' Steen Ejlers, 'The Hunt for Authentic Tradition: Or How Irish Applied Arts Were Conceived in Copenhagen', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*; Vol. 10 (2000), 52. However, in the context of Irish visual culture of the 1960s, Biilmann-Petersen's densely ornamented designs would most likely be read as a continuation of the 'antiquated complexity' of Free State Celtic design. His stamps update Celtic interlace but don't respond to the unspoken brief, implied in the circulation of *L'Art Irlandais*, to reference archaeological models. See also Steen Ejlers, 'Irland' in *Arkitekten & Grafikerne Gunnar Biilmann Petersen 1897-1968*, (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 2002):227-234. I am grateful to Clare Bell for translating this text from the Danish.

## Response to the Gerl stamps

*The Irish Times* welcomed the new stamps: although ‘we may regret that an Irish designer did not put in the best design...’ and ‘[a]nybody who sees the alternative designs shown in the Building Centre will have his own ideas about the ultimate choice... few could quarrel with the advisory committee’s choice.’<sup>875</sup> The writer again linked the competition to the Coinage Committee, suggesting that Gerl ‘will surely rank in the years to come with the Englishman, Percy Metcalfe, who designed our coinage in 1928.’<sup>876</sup> The editorial must have gratified O’Sullivan, as it appeared that the stamps achieved all he had hoped for: ‘The new stamps are dignified; they are worthy ambassadors of the country, and they reflect its ancient culture in a way that takes nothing from the portrait of the New Ireland because they are *well conceived* and they will be produced by the most *modern process*.’<sup>877</sup> In keeping with the idea of Celtic modernism, the writer suggests that it is the design and technology of the stamps that renders the Celtic sources modern; portraits of the New Ireland. Not everyone agreed, one letter writer complained that the designs were *insufficiently* modern. Ian W. Whyte wrote that ‘they are not the slightest bit representative of Ireland as it is today. They symbolize Celtic art but how many of us today are Celts?’ For this writer at least, the change in style was irrelevant, by referencing Celtic sources in ‘their contents, they are identical to their predecessors – in fact, they are only modernized versions of those long-despised stamps.’<sup>878</sup> Generally, however, the main cause of concern was, as E. Clery put it, ‘only one of the designs on the new Irish stamps is taken from an object of incontrovertible Irish origin, i.e. the Killamery Brooch’.<sup>879</sup>

The most sustained criticism of the stamps in the pages of the *Irish Times* came from the young archaeologist, Etienne Rynne, who found fault with them on both ideological and artistic grounds. Rynne marvelled that ‘after half a century of independence Ireland should produce new stamps which are more English than Irish’.<sup>880</sup> He asked what ‘would be the

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<sup>875</sup> ‘Culture by Post’, *Irish Times*, July 18, 1967.

<sup>876</sup> ‘Culture by Post’, *Irish Times*, July 18, 1967.

<sup>877</sup> ‘Culture by Post’, *Irish Times*, July 18, 1967. Emphasis added.

<sup>878</sup> ‘Our Stamps’ Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, July 27, 1967.

<sup>879</sup> E. Clery ‘New Stamps’, Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, August 3, 1967.

<sup>880</sup> Etienne Rynne, ‘The New Stamps,’ Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, October 28, 1968.

State's reaction to a series of British stamps showing the Books of Durrow and Kells, the Ardagh Chalice, and the Tara Brooch, all of which have on several occasions been claimed as fine examples of early British art?'<sup>881</sup> Rynne seems to have missed what I believe was the appeal of Gerl's choice of sources to the SDAC, it was exactly that they co-opted British examples and rendered them Irish that gave them their charge. This was addressed directly in the reply to his letter from Eilish MacCurtain the Information Officer with the Department: 'The fact that some of the sources for the stamps were found outside Ireland does not imply in any way that the motifs used are not indigenous to the Ireland of the period, as this art, which was part of the early Irish civilization, spread like all creative art far beyond the bounds of this country.'<sup>882</sup> Rynne's particular ire was directed at the stag design: 'worst of all ... a definitely non-Irish design taken from an object found in Kent! ... the static, uninspired quality of which is completely foreign to early Irish art...' He objected to the license taken with the detail of the stag by the 'German artist' who 'faithfully copied the cracks across the waist and neck ... but has messed up the tail ...'.<sup>883</sup> He questioned why no expert in early Irish art or representative of the National Museum was invited to join the SDAC and ultimately appears to have wanted a literal reproduction of early Irish art rather than to see elements reinterpreted as part of a modern series. Again, MacCurtain flattened his argument and reiterated the commitment to Celtic modernism, suggesting that the inspiration:

should be sought from early Irish art; not, obviously, with a view to making a literal transposition from any particular old Irish design but rather to re-capturing its spirit and expressing it in modern terms. ...There was no intention of confining any of the artists to a faithful reproduction of the originals. Otherwise, photographic reproductions would have sufficed.<sup>884</sup>

By contrast, archaeologist Liam de Paor was impressed by the new definitive stamps.<sup>885</sup> He concurred with Donal O'Sullivan's views, writing that 'we turn to early Irish art not in militant assertion of our Irishness, but to find motifs which we can at once claim as part of our heritage and adapt to late twentieth-century taste' and was impressed by 'the most striking

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<sup>881</sup> Etienne Rynne, 'The New Stamps,' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, October 28, 1968.

<sup>882</sup> Eilish MacCurtain, 'The New Stamps,' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, October 31, 1968.

<sup>883</sup> Etienne Rynne, 'The New Stamps,' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, October 28, 1968.

<sup>884</sup> Eilish MacCurtain, 'The New Stamps,' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, October 31, 1968.

<sup>885</sup> With his art historian wife, Marie, de Paor had published the influential *Early Christian Ireland* (Thames & Hudson, 1958) and was an authority on the period as well as an outspoken left-wing political commentator.

sign of these ecumenical times ... that the sources for the designs are not all Irish.<sup>886</sup> The stamps also met with the approval of the typographer Liam Miller, who had a keen interest in philately and wrote an article on stamps for the *Irish Times*, in which he praised Gerl's definitive series.<sup>887</sup> The design undoubtedly appealed to Miller's long-standing view of Ireland's Celtic heritage as proto-European. He wrote that 'while, in design, they still claim their traditional heritage; they do so in a way which proclaims the place of this heritage in an international context.'<sup>888</sup>

Thus we can see a shift in the use of 'Celtic' motifs in stamp design away from decorative symbols of Free State values of nationalism and pious tradition to a more radical international modernism, signalled by the visual quotation of authenticated antiquities. The final case study in this chapter, Rosc '67, echoes this strategy, in three dimensional as well as two-dimensional form, as the exhibition paired 'Celtic' artefacts with contemporary international painting. It directly addresses two interrelated themes already encountered: the relationship between art and design in post-war Ireland and the emergence of an archaeologically influenced Celtic modernism. This exhibition occupies a central place in the canon of modernist art in Ireland.<sup>889</sup> I argue that, through exhibition and graphic design, it entrenched the connection between international, visual modernism and the Celtic.

### Rosc '67: Designing Celtic Primitivism

The six Rosc exhibitions held from 1967 to 1988, are widely considered to have 'brought contemporary avant-garde art to Ireland from abroad and [provided] the first introduction of a recognisably modernist art to the general public in Ireland.'<sup>890</sup> The idea of a series of four-

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<sup>886</sup> Liam de Paor, 'Roots: Early art an inspiration for new postage stamps,' *Irish Times*, October 15, 1968

<sup>887</sup> Miller was later a member of the SDAC. In 1976 he compiled *Postage Stamps of Ireland 1922-1976*, compiled for the Philatelic Section of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs (Dublin, 1976). In archive of Jarlath Hayes, with notes by Miller in pencil. The pamphlet was part of the material given to Hayes when he was designing Miller's last book, *Dolmen Book of Irish Stamps*, (Dublin: Dolmen, 1987), which Miller dictated from his hospital bed. Information from Susan Waine, daughter of Jarlath Hayes, May 5, 2017. See also Maurice Harmon, *The Dolmen Press: A Celebration* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2001).

<sup>888</sup> Liam Miller 'Ireland in the world of stamps,' *Irish Times*, January 23, 1976.

<sup>889</sup> In his recent book on the Rosc exhibitions, Peter Shortt writes that their importance 'in introducing contemporary art to Ireland in the twentieth century cannot be overstated.' Peter Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision: The ROSC Art Exhibitions 1967-1988* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2016), xi.

<sup>890</sup> Halsall, 'Strategic Amnesia', 32.

yearly exhibitions was architect Michael Scott's, developed in consultation with his friend, the American curator and museum director, James Johnson Sweeney, in 1964.<sup>891</sup> In the absence of a gallery of modern art in Ireland, the exhibitions would introduce the Irish public to the 'best' of international contemporary art. Sweeney would be chairperson of an international selection panel and the first exhibition would be accompanied by a display of Celtic Art, alongside the modern pieces. The 70 x 49 metre main hall of the Royal Dublin Society (usually used to host trade fairs and agricultural shows) was secured as a venue. The final selection committee comprised Sweeney, the French curator Jean Leymarie and the Dutch curator and graphic designer, Willem Sandberg. The members of Signa Design Consultants were centrally involved: Dorothy Walker was on the executive committee, while Patrick Scott designed the Rosc 'motif' and the interior treatment of the main venue.<sup>892</sup> (See Figures 134 & 135) The catalogue was designed by Peter Wildbur also at Signa. (Figs 136-141)

When the exhibition opened on November 12, 1967 the main section featured the recent work of 51 artists, a total of 144 exhibits,<sup>893</sup> while the accompanying Celtic section displayed 75 objects. The date range of objects included in this section stretched the definition of 'Celtic' to breaking point: examples originally selected for exhibition included decorated stones from the Neolithic tomb at Newgrange (c. 3200 BCE, though believed in the 1960s to be c. 2000 BCE), the Turoe Stone (c. 300 BCE), The Book of Kells (c. 800 CE), and the Cross of Cong (12th century CE). Nor were the selected objects by any means exclusively made on the island of Ireland. This expansive and a-historical definition of 'Celtic' art has led to justified accusations of a strategy of formalist decontextualisation of the artefacts in pursuit of an ideological aim.<sup>894</sup> Following Róisín Kennedy's argument that modern art exhibitions in mid-century Ireland 'were part of the Irish State's drive for recognition as an independent nation with a unique culture',<sup>895</sup> I contend that Rosc '67 functioned as propaganda, helping to create

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<sup>891</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 3.

<sup>892</sup> When a second venue became necessary (see below), architect Arthur Gibney, of Stephenson Gibney and Associates, was deputised to design the interior following the pattern established by Patrick Scott. (Figs 31 & 32)

<sup>893</sup> Including Francis Bacon, Robert Indiana, Willem de Kooning, Roy Lichtenstein, Joan Miró, Barnett Newman, Ben Nicholson, Pablo Picasso, Robert Rauschenberg, Pierre Soulages, Antoni Tapies and Victor Vasarely.

<sup>894</sup> By Luke Gibbons and others, see below.

<sup>895</sup> Kennedy, 'Made in England', 486. She cites Chris Cappock, 'Editorial: The Art of Appropriation', *Circa*, no 14, (January/February, 1984), 5.

an artistic patrimony for modern art in Ireland.<sup>896</sup> In other words we can view them in connection with the desire to project an image of modern Ireland discussed in Chapter Two.<sup>897</sup>

The main criticism of the exhibition, at the time and since, was that it did not include any Irish artists in the contemporary selection.<sup>898</sup> In light of this, many writers have seen the Celtic display as a ‘sop’ to the Irish audience, while Luke Gibbons has drawn parallels between it and Hal Foster’s critique of William Rubin’s *‘Primitivism’ in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* exhibition at MoMA in 1984.

The key question raised by Foster’s critique of the MoMA show is if setting works ‘adrift from specific referents and coordinates’, thus making ‘it possible to define [them] in wholly western terms’, is part of the same aesthetic ideology that also suppresses the particular cultural coordinates of *contemporary* art. The re-staging of the ancient past in the early Rosc exhibitions was consistent with the idea that contemporary Irish art was of no value – perhaps on account of its ostensible ‘Irishness’.<sup>899</sup>

Shortt contests this, suggesting that there is evidence that some Irish artists were to be included in Rosc ‘67 by Sweeney, but Scott decided against it saying it was an exhibition of International art in Ireland.<sup>900</sup> While the omission of Irish art warrants attention, this discourse tends to overlook the prominence of many Irish artists, as designers, in the exhibition. For example, art historian Yvonne Scott has noted that an original work of art was commissioned from an Irish artist for the exhibition: the cover motif for the catalogue,

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<sup>896</sup> Brenda Moore McCann, in ‘Cold War Art’, *Dublin Review of Books* No. 90 (June 2017), has convincingly identified additional propagandistic intentions for the modern art exhibition. Following Serge Gillbaut, she argues that Rosc was part of a broader Cold War project to promote modern art as a manifestation of the American capitalist dream or its ideological referent ‘freedom’. Similar arguments are made in *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970*, edited by David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (London: V&A. 2008). See also Gay McDonald, ‘The “Advance” of American Postwar Design in Europe: MoMA and the Design for Use, USA Exhibition 1951–1953.’ *Design Issues* Vol. 24, No. 2 (2008): 15-27.

<sup>897</sup> That two of the six corporate sponsors were Aer Lingus, the state airline, and the tourist board, Bord Fáilte, would seem to support this. According to Shortt, Tim O’Driscoll, director-general of Bord Fáilte was responsible for securing the main sponsor, American multinational W.R. Grace, via his friendship with its corporate vice-president John D. Moore (from 1969 American Ambassador to Ireland). Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 8. The other three sponsors were An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council of Ireland, ClÉ, and RTÉ, the state broadcaster.

<sup>898</sup> An *Irish Times* editorial defended this omission on grounds of impartiality, suggesting that choosing Irish artists to include would inevitably leave the committee open to accusations of bias and would end up too partisan, commenting that in entries to the Venice Biennale and Sao Paulo, ‘a political tendency akin to an Olympic contest has been too apparent in recent years’. ‘World’s Best’, *Irish Times*, October 3, 1967,

<sup>899</sup> Gibbons, ‘Identity in Irish Art’, 223.

<sup>900</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 330.



painted by Patrick Scott.<sup>901</sup> This was the largest, most prominent, and the only full colour image in the extensively illustrated 216-page catalogue and is discussed in more detail below.<sup>902</sup> Foster uses 'affinity' to describe the apolitical, formal equivalences made between modern Western art and objects from very different times and places. He points to the fact that these affinities are constructed by the gallery setting. Following Mary Anne Staniszewski in her book *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*,<sup>903</sup> I argue that these apparent affinities, and the decontextualisation or defamiliarisation required to render them susceptible to such equivalence, are not simply abstract theoretical or curatorial positions but *design strategies*.

Two kinds of affinity are at work in the parallel exhibitions at Rosc '67: firstly, an affinity between the ancient and the modern, explicitly discussed in the catalogue essays, in the exhibition publicity and in its critique; and secondly, within the Celtic section itself, an implicit affinity between a range of artefacts with different purposes, from different places, representing a sweep of some 4,000 years under the rubric of 'Celtic'. The second affinity was presented (through design) as 'going without saying' and was consequently more persuasive and accepted without comment.<sup>904</sup>

Before examining the design of the Rosc '67 exhibition it is useful to give some theoretical context and to point to other exhibitions with which it shared visual and ideological similarities. While almost all writers on the Celtic section at Rosc '67 have cited MoMA's 1935

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<sup>901</sup> Yvonne Scott, 'From the "Ridiculous" to the Sublime', in *Patrick Scott: A Retrospective* edited by Yvonne Scott, (Dublin: Hugh Lane, 2002), 50-51. The original is a painting, 152.4cmX152.4cm oil on panel. Many writers have quoted Edwin Mullins' comment in *The Sunday Telegraph* review of Rosc '67 that 'Patrick Scott's catalogue motif is so outstanding as to merit inclusion within the covers as well as on the cover.' Walker, *Modern Art in Ireland*, 115.

<sup>902</sup> It was also printed on the best quality stock in the catalogue, which was used for the cover. The fact that art historians, including Scott herself, have failed to comment on these factors presumably points to the both the 'transparency' of design and its relatively low status in the fine art setting.

<sup>903</sup> Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

<sup>904</sup> Roland Barthes, writing about an image of a black soldier saluting the French flag on the cover of *Paris Match*, explained that it is the banality, the lack of comment, with which this image is presented that makes it significant: 'If I state the fact of French impartiality without explaining it, I am very near to finding that it is natural and *goes without saying*: I am reassured.' Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', *Mythologies*. (London: Vintage, 1993), 143.

*African Negro Art*<sup>905</sup> exhibition, curated by James Johnson Sweeney, as an intellectual precedent, none have considered the possible *design* influences of such MoMA exhibitions on Rosc, nor the of the likely influence of Sweeney's fellow juror Willem Sandberg's *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud (Modern Art – New and Old)* at the Stedelijk Museum in 1955. Given Herbert Read's close connection with the Irish art scene, it is also useful to examine his 1948 *40,000 years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern* as another possible model.<sup>906</sup>

### Designing Affinities

Foster uses the Oxford English Dictionary to distinguish between three kinds of 'affinity': 'resemblance, kinship, and spiritual or chemical attraction ("elective affinity").'<sup>907</sup> He argues that the affinities in the MoMA *Primitivism* show, 'mostly of the first order, were used to connote affinities of the second order: an optical illusion induced the mirage of the (modernist) Family of Art.'<sup>908</sup> Such an attitude allowed comparison between art works across epochs and across cultures. It is a strategy that depends on an idea(l) of universality, one of the core principles of modernism.<sup>909</sup> This tendency is also apparent in the Modern Movement's framing of the 'primitive'. Introducing *40,000 years of Modern Art*, for example,

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<sup>905</sup> Unlike the other exhibitions mentioned, *African Negro Art* did not include a comparison with contemporary Western Art. James Johnson Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, exhibition catalogue, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1935).

<sup>906</sup> Another early precedent for matching primitive and modern could be found in MOMA's 1933 *American Sources of Modern Art* which showed Aztec, Mayan and Incan objects. Under Alfred Barr and exhibition director Holger Cahill, the aim was to 'bring together examples of this art [of ancient civilisations of America] ... and to show its relation to the work of modern artists.' Like *40,000 Years of Modern Art*, it included a small section, 'Contemporaries', dedicated to modern artists whose work the organisers felt had been influenced by ancient American art. Holger Cahill, *American Sources of Modern Art*, exhibition catalogue, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1933).

<sup>907</sup> Hal Foster, 'The "Primitive" Unconscious of Modern Art', *October*, Vol. 34 (Autumn, 1985), 53.

<sup>908</sup> Foster, 'The "Primitive" Unconscious of Modern Art,' 53. Formalist art criticism of the mid-twentieth century argued that all forms, even human bodies, are essentially abstract. The French art historian Henri Focillon, for example, famously referred to the human bodies in works by Raphael as 'garlands' and 'interlaces'; the 'ornament of human form'. Henri Focillon 'The Life of Forms in Art' (1934) in *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Eric Fernie (London & New York: Phaidon, 1995), 170. Focillon also echoes contemporary modernist typographic arguments. Formalism, like the rigor of the New Typography, does not constrain creativity: 'A large number of experiments and variations is likely to occur whenever the artist's expression is at all confined, whereas unlimited freedom inevitably leads to imitation.' 178.

<sup>909</sup> As Foster notes, this is 'thoroughly ideological, for if evolutionism subordinated the primitive to Western history, affinity-ism recoups it under the sign of Western universality. ("Humanity," Levi-Strauss suggests, is a modern Western concept.)' Foster, 'The "Primitive" Unconscious of Modern Art,' 53-4.

Herbert Read played down the formal similarities that actually structured the exhibition and emphasised the universal dimension:

It is not merely that certain modern artists have at certain periods of their development been influenced by primitive art – that is something rather obvious and not requiring an exhibition to demonstrate. What is not so obvious is what we might call the universality of art, and, more particularly the eternal recurrence of certain phenomena in art which, on the appearance, are labelled ‘modern’...<sup>910</sup>

The theme of ‘universal man’ also appears in John Hunt’s introduction to the Celtic section at Rosc ’67: ‘The art of the Early Iron Age was, in Ireland, the first truly satisfying aesthetic expression of man’s spirit.’<sup>911</sup> Michael Scott’s introduction aspired to a loftier universality. Having noted the assistance of various Northern Irish lenders he ‘hoped that future Rosc exhibitions... will further enhance Ireland’s cultural unity... [and] ... form part of the effort leading toward the establishment of a world cultural heritage, and thereby to the unity of nations.’<sup>912</sup>

As many critics have pointed out, the search for affinities between ancient or ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ art, requires a de-contextualisation of the Other in order for the comparison to ‘work’. As Gibbons argues, ‘Cultural artefacts were removed like primary raw materials from their original settings, and *refined through abstraction* to take their place alongside masterworks of the west...’<sup>913</sup> This de-contextualisation can (and often does) have a political agenda, as in the denial of colonial oppression in the decontextualized display of African tribal art in the museums of its colonisers. The situation in relation to the presentation of visual affinities between archaic art (or more properly, archaic *artefacts*) and modern abstract art is slightly different and lends itself to a different political mobilisation. In the case of Rosc ’67, the display of Celtic artefacts alongside contemporary international painting and sculpture could be seen as a nationalist strategy to create an artistic patrimony for Irish art. This strategy was not unique to Ireland. For example in Herbert Read’s series of monographs on his artist friends, including Henry Moore (1944), Ben Nicholson (1948), Paul Nash (1948) and Barbara Hepworth (1952), images of their work are interspersed with illustrations of

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<sup>910</sup> Herbert Read, ‘Preface,’ in *40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern* (London: ICA, 1948), 6.

<sup>911</sup> John Hunt, ‘Introduction to the Celtic Section,’ *Rosc ’67* exhibition catalogue, (Dublin, 1967), 125.

<sup>912</sup> Michael Scott ‘Introduction by the Chairman of the Committee,’ *Rosc ’67* exhibition catalogue, (Dublin, 1967), 9.

<sup>913</sup> Luke Gibbons, ‘Identity in Irish Art,’ 221. Emphasis added.

'primitive' and 'archaic' art such as Bronze Age metalwork from Britain and Cyprus.<sup>914</sup> Read's *40,000 Years of Modern Art* included European examples and had a section entitled 'Prehistoric Europe'. With the exception of two items, these came from France, Greece and Crete and included colour photographs of the cave paintings at Lascaux as well as Hellenic and Minoan pottery and sculpture. The two exceptions were the Megaliths from Zennor in Cornwall and a photograph (lent by the Ashmolean Museum) of the bronze-age chalk figure of a White Horse carved into the hillside at Uffington, Berkshire in England (fig 142). Harriet Atkinson has noted how such chalk figures recur in the guides published in conjunction with the Festival of Britain, and shows how they were linked both to national myths and to literary heritage. She has also pointed out that the aerial photographs of these figures carved into the rolling landscape connected them specifically to the land of Britain.<sup>915</sup> But the aerial view was itself also an indicator of technological modernity and the photograph taken from the airplane was a key element of the modernist machine aesthetic.<sup>916</sup> So the display of the photograph of the White Horse in the ICA was in keeping with the aesthetic presentation of archaeological objects as modernist forms which simultaneously established their validity as signs of regional or national specificity.

Nevertheless, universality rather than national distinctiveness was the overt context for the display of British 'prehistoric' images in the catalogue of *40,000 Years*, which pairs an aerial photograph of the chalk figure of the White Horse at Uffington with a painting by the Catalan artist, Joan Miró, *The Little White Horse* of 1927 (Fig. 142). The formal similarity is striking, with a fortuitous shadow on the Downs adding to the similarity. This equivalence was not discussed in the text by W.G. Archer and Robert Melville, although they did mention links

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<sup>914</sup> Andrew Causey, 'Herbert Read and Contemporary Art,' in *Herbert Read Reassessed*, edited by David Goodway (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 137. In *Art and Industry* Read linked the modern to Greece of the fifth century BCE and Christian art of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. The introductory essay to the Nicholson book rehearsed the argument from *40,000 Years of Modern Art*: 'The tendency to abstraction in art is by no means specifically modern. It has recurred repeatedly throughout the history of art, and was already recognised as an historical phenomenon, and called 'abstract', before the modern movement came into being...'. Quoted in Causey, 'Herbert Read and Contemporary Art,' 138.

<sup>915</sup> Harriet Atkinson, 'Imaginative Reconstruction: Designing Place at the Festival of Britain, 1951,' Unpublished PhD thesis, Royal College of Art London, (2006), 148.

<sup>916</sup> See for example, Le Corbusier's 1924 essay 'Eyes That Do Not See', in *Towards An Architecture* Translated by John Goodman, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 145-192. Gertrude Stein 'From the airplane I saw there, on earth, the jumbled lines of Picasso...' quoted in Peter Conrad, 'Trains, Cars, Aeroplanes,' in *Modern Times: Modern Places*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998): 91-110.

between modern and 'primitive' works, such as those between Joan Miró and Australian Bushmen.<sup>917</sup> In fact, neither of the British examples is mentioned in the text of the catalogue. Writing about another instance of colonial visual encounter, Roland Barthes noted 'if I state the fact ... without explaining it, I am very near to finding it natural.'<sup>918</sup> Thus, these unexplained visual affinities appear even more persuasive than those discussed in the text. Hal Foster points out several times that the (modernist) presentation of the exhibition at MoMA may itself have constructed the apparent 'affinity' between tribal and modern.<sup>919</sup> Staniszewski attributes the term 'affinity' to Robert Goldwater's book *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (1938) and notes the influence of the idea on display techniques at MoMA, particularly from 1946 onwards. Goldwater developed the concept 'to align cultural objects that look somewhat similar but are wholly unrelated in indigenous function and meaning.'<sup>920</sup> She also shows how exhibition design manifested these affinities: in the case of *Art of the South Seas*, designed by René d'Harnoncourt, by allowing 'vistas' from the display of one region's art through to another. (Fig. 143) Staniszewski also points to the 'aestheticized and decontextualized presentations of ethnographic artefacts' in exhibitions designed by d'Harnoncourt for The Museum of Primitive Art in New York, which was affiliated to MoMA. The inaugural exhibition in 1957 (just ten years before Rosc) featured sixty objects of different kinds, functional and decorative, from all around the world, spanning 4,000 years. Staniszewski describes it as an 'absolutely modernist setting' which 'isolated and decontextualized the artefact'. These were 'spot lit, placed on white pedestals, and spaciouly arranged throughout white-walled and grey-carpeted galleries.'<sup>921</sup> (Fig. 144) This 'extremely formalist exhibition technique' was, she says, the dominant one for displays at the museum.<sup>922</sup>

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<sup>917</sup> 'There is the same reduction of form to a single stroke of the bush, the same audacious simplification.' W.G. Archer and Robert Melville in *40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern* (London: ICA, 1948), 41.

<sup>918</sup> See footnote 903 above. Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', *Mythologies*. (London: Vintage, 1993), 143.

<sup>919</sup> Foster, 'The "Primitive" Unconscious of Modern Art,' see for example, page 52, footnote 19.

<sup>920</sup> Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 111. The formalist dimension of the concept was underscored in the organisation of the objects in the 1946 exhibition *Art of the South Seas* into categories such as 'natural forms simplified' and 'natural forms geometricized'. Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 111-2.

<sup>921</sup> Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 116.

<sup>922</sup> Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 117.

Both Read and Willem Sandberg also employed similar techniques of isolation and decontextualisation in their attempts to create visual affinities between primitive and/or prehistoric and modern. *40,000 Years of Modern Art*, was designed by the well-known graphic designer, FHK Henrion (Fig. 145). A contemporary record of the event noted a number of design innovations:

Each exhibit was individually illuminated from above, and since many of the exhibits were extremely valuable... Henrion avoided expensive and obtrusive security barriers by placing the exhibits on islands made out of sharp gravel, thus preventing visitors from getting too close to the art works.<sup>923</sup>

It also created a physical and spatial frame around the objects and paintings to isolate and decontextualize them, something Patrick Scott and Arthur Gibney would echo in their strategy for the National Museum space at Rosc '67.

Sandberg's installation for *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud* also used space to good communicative effect: 'Through the strategy of comparison the exhibition made a case for the strong affinity between objects from different times and cultures. Comparisons between examples of modern works of art and so-called primitive works of art were juxtaposed in niches created by movable wall stands.'<sup>924</sup> (Fig. 146) Sandberg's design for the catalogue (Fig. 147) echoed Edward Burrett's for *40,000 Years of Modern Art* in pairing photographs of objects to suggest affinities:

... the analogy of the coupled objects was convincingly presented by the use of parallel photographs of the objects portrayed in the same position and in the same size. Couples and trios were presented, such as a wooden African Negro figure from the Ivory Coast together with a wooden male figure by Kruyder and a painting of a female head by Picasso.<sup>925</sup>

The significance of the Stedelijk design was the didactic use of position and scale, a characteristic that Peter Wildbur's *Rosc '67* catalogue also employed in the Celtic section.

Having established several relevant precedents for the visual construction of affinities, we turn now to an examination of the design of Rosc '67.

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<sup>923</sup> Adrian Shaughnessy *FHK Henrion* (London: Unit Editions, 2013), 41.

<sup>924</sup> Nana Leigh, 'A Rhetorical Analysis of African Art in the Story of Modern Art' in *Collecting Geographies Stedelijk Studies Journal*, No. 1, (Fall 2014). Online. <http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/journal/creating-ancestors-affinities-rhetorical-analysis-african-art-story-modern-art/>

<sup>925</sup> *Idid*.

## White cubes: exhibition design for Rosc '67

Brenda Moore-McCann notes that the 'lack of a dedicated exhibition space led to the unusual treatment of the industrial RDS building that received almost unanimous praise from critics and the public.'<sup>926</sup> Patrick Scott was called upon to decontextualize a nineteenth century industrial hall and create a neutral zone for the artworks. (Figs 134 & 135)

First a new fluorescent lighting system was installed above the immensely large exhibition space. Below the lighting, the ceiling area was draped in strips of translucent white muslin. This permitted a diffused light to illuminate the exhibition space. The walls of the exhibition space were also created with large drapes of white muslin, and Scott designed a vestibule, again draped in white muslin, through which entry was gained to the main hall.<sup>927</sup>

Effectively, in the best spirit of the modernist exhibition space, Scott had created a white cube.<sup>928</sup> Raymond Ryan's choice of phrase to describe Scott's design echoes the arch-modernists Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier when he writes that 'Scott "cleaned out" the interior'.<sup>929</sup>

The way the paintings were hung in the main Rosc exhibition was also novel, as they appeared to hang in free space, suspended by nylon cord from the ceiling.<sup>930</sup> There was a strong graphic quality to this design solution as the paintings thus appeared to float in space (decontextualized), but also hung in a grid. The system also allowed for visual comparisons (similar to René d'Harnoncourt's 'vistas') from one painting through to the next. (Fig. 148) There was, however, little scope for Scott to experiment with pairing of ancient and modern,

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<sup>926</sup> Brenda Moore-McCann, 'The Rosc Exhibitions' in *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V*, edited by Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 422.

<sup>927</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 37. This account is based on Shortt's interview with Patrick Scott in 2009. Other writers, including Brenda Moore-McCann, say that the walls were lined not with gauzy muslin but with a more opaque white cotton, which seems more likely as this would fully disguise the brickwork behind it.

<sup>928</sup> This 'unifying white interior', Christina Kennedy points out, prefigured by ten years Patrick Ireland's 'paradigm-changing series of essays' on the white cube gallery space written for *Artforum* in 1976. Christina Kennedy, 'Patrick Scott and James Johnson Sweeney: Connections, Trajectories, Interstices, 1945-67', in *Patrick Scott: Image, Space, Light*, edited by Christina Kennedy, (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 74-75.

<sup>929</sup> Ryan, 'Design as Communication, Pleasure, Knowledge', 108.

<sup>930</sup> Writing thirty years later, Dorothy Walker credited the innovative back-to-back or 'piggy-back' hanging of the paintings to Sweeney; he had earlier designed a system for hanging paintings in the glass-walled museum he curated in Houston, a building designed by Mies van der Rohe. Walker, *Modern Art in Ireland*, 117. She commented on the novelty of the hanging, writing that it was 'a revelation to visiting artists and critics, since it had not been seen in New York or Europe.' However, as Shortt has discovered, the exact technique used was in fact another of Scott's innovations. 'Initially Sweeney selected pictures of comparable size and hung them back-to-back, in what he called 'piggy-back hanging'... [but to solve the problem of unevenness] ... at Patrick Scott's suggestion, wooden panels were hung from the cords and the pictures attached to each side of the panels.' Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 38.

as Henrion and Sandberg had been able to do, as political factors dictated they would be displayed in separate venues.

Shortt and Moore-McCann agree that the idea of including a selection of ‘ancient Irish art’ was Michael Scott’s, although in his catalogue introduction and elsewhere he put the suggestion into the mouths of the three judges.<sup>931</sup> Sweeney was undoubtedly in favour of the idea and was already an acknowledged expert on early Christian Irish art, having published a book on Irish illuminated manuscripts in 1965.<sup>932</sup> An editorial in *The Irish Times* on October 3, 1967 explained the reasoning behind the inclusion of ancient art (probably quoting a Rosc press release): ‘art is a continuous process and what we see as unique can be found infinitely varied in other places and times. There is, to put it crudely, a connection between the abstractions of Picasso and the decorative patterns of the Book of Kells.’<sup>933</sup> The original idea had been to show the ancient and modern art in the same space, as Henrion and Sandberg had done, no doubt to underline those ‘connections’,<sup>934</sup> and the intention is still evident in Scott’s introduction: ‘Stone sculptures ... are shown integrally with contemporary paintings in order to exemplify the close relationship between the art of the past and that of today. ... The confrontation of early Irish works and modern ones will further illuminate and augment the appreciation of the ancient art of Ireland.’<sup>935</sup> The exhibition’s formalist agenda was even supported in the Dáil, with Fianna Fáil T.D. James Gibbons stating: ‘It is important in the public interest to demonstrate the principles of ancient Irish art and modern affinity between design. This can best be achieved by exhibiting the sculptured stones with the modern paintings.’<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>931</sup> In his introduction to the catalogue, Scott wrote, ‘During the preliminary discussion, the jury and committee came to the conclusion that a contrast of the modern paintings with some of the great objects of our ancient culture would be of the greatest aesthetic interest both nationally and internationally.’ Michael Scott ‘Introduction by the Chairman of the Committee,’ 8-9.

<sup>932</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, *Irish Illuminated Manuscripts of the Early Christian Period* (London: Collins/UNESCO, 1965).

<sup>933</sup> ‘World’s Best’, *The Irish Times*, October 3, 1967.

<sup>934</sup> Dorothy Walker wrote: ‘It was decided to include a section of ancient art with the contemporary painting, in order to demonstrate that the art of the past can share both spirit and appearance with the art of the present, and that such parallel presentation could enhance both forms.’ Walker, *Modern Art in Ireland*, 113.

<sup>935</sup> Michael Scott ‘Introduction by the Chairman of the Committee,’ 9.

<sup>936</sup> James Gibbons T.D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance, ‘Ceisteanna—Questions, Oral Answers, Removal of Ancient Monuments’ (19 October 1967).



The idea was frustrated on several fronts. Firstly, the National Museum was unwilling to let its treasures leave its premises. Even after Michael Scott's political connections were used to get the RDS main hall designated as a museum space, the National Museum's director Dr Lucas was unmoved. As well as the Museum's collection and a few privately owned objects, there were several carved stone artefacts from around the country in the care of the Office of Public Works that the organisers wanted to include in the exhibition.<sup>937</sup> Unlike Read's use of photographs to show the prehistoric monuments in situ, the committee wished to display the physical objects themselves.<sup>938</sup> The idea of uprooting stone monuments from their historical, social, cultural or spiritual context is surely an extreme example of 'de-contextualisation'. The controversy that erupted around the removal of these objects to Dublin meant that, although Scott eventually secured the majority of these, they had to be displayed in the National Museum itself.

The committee now found themselves with two exhibition venues, one of which, the Museum, had a highly decorative, late nineteenth century Beaux Arts Museum interior. (Fig. 149) This, I argue, meant that the graphic and display design had to work particularly hard at presenting a 'modern' context and atmosphere for the objects left in the Museum. The job of conveying both the modernity of the objects, and also the image of Rosc itself, was delegated to the design elements. The solution was to hang white fabric on walls and ceiling to 'neutralise' and to link the two venues. Design was Scott's first response to the crisis. On hearing that the Museum would not lend out the objects requested, he telegraphed Sweeney: 'Impossible to bring old museum pieces to RDS. Do you agree we design interior of museum showing all pieces you want [and] catalogue to cover both exhibitions... or scrap altogether old Irish display...'<sup>939</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> These were the Iron Age Turoe Stone, from County Galway; the Tau Cross, Killinaboy, County Clare; a fragment of a cross shaft and a carved capital from Clonmacnoise, both late 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the 7<sup>th</sup> century Carndonagh cross from County Donegal. Listed by James Gibbons T.D. in answer to a question for Oliver J. Flanagan T.D., 'Ceisteanna—Questions, Oral Answers, Removal of Ancient Monuments' (19 October 1967).

<sup>938</sup> Admittedly it would not have been possible to display the chalk horse in a gallery and a menhir could only have been transported at great expense.

<sup>939</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 22.

The display strategy for the Museum was delegated to another architect, Arthur Gibney, who had worked for Michael Scott.<sup>940</sup> His transformation of the lobby of the Museum was remarkable. His display of the ancient objects strongly echoed Patrick Scott's hang in the RDS. The objects, in specially made cases, appeared to be floating in space, decontextualized even from gravity. (Fig. 150) Gibney was limited in the lighting effects possible, especially in the central vestibule that held the large objects (Fig. 151); however, it is clear from Figure 152 that he wished to emulate as far as possible the formalist convention of strong directional spot lighting. In this context it had the advantage of not only transforming a piece of architectural masonry into a sculpture, but also of making the carving on the weathered stone easier to distinguish.

It is likely that the suspended cases were designed by Gibney, since he was later credited for similar ones in the much less contentious Viking Art exhibition that accompanied the next Rosc, in 1971.<sup>941</sup> In her criticism of Dr Lucas's role in the monuments controversy, Dorothy Walker writes that he 'even balked at the suggestion of showing his beautiful gold objects in suitable display cases, instead of the dowdy desk-type cabinets used in the Museum' and he referred to them as 'fancy "shopcases"'.<sup>942</sup> Lucas's use of a commercial metaphor is telling. As the row over the monuments unfolded, the debate descended into a battle between the polarised stereotypes of commerce and academia, pitting progress against heritage.

One of the most vehement objectors to the removal of monuments was Michael O'Kelly, then engaged on the high profile 'restoration' of Newgrange. Shortt quotes a letter O'Kelly wrote to the then President of Ireland, Éamon de Valera, using language aimed to stir his well-known traditional, Catholic and nationalist sympathies: '...examples of our ancient heritage, the majority of them religious monuments, are being used as a gimmick to support a selection of profane paintings none of which is more than four years old and none of which has been painted by an Irishman.'<sup>943</sup>

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<sup>940</sup> Before setting up in practice with the ICAD member Sam Stephenson as Stephenson Gibney.

<sup>941</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 94, quoting Rosc '71 preliminary report, page 1.

<sup>942</sup> Walker, *Modern Irish Art*, 114. Walker's quote is from A.T. Lucas's book *In The National Museum: Its Place in the Cultural Life of the Nation* (Dublin: National Museum, 1971).

<sup>943</sup> Quoted in Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 12.

In the heat of the debate, the OPW had to issue a statement denying that there was any truth in reports that the great decorated stone at the entrance to Newgrange was to be moved to the RDS for inclusion in Rosc '67.<sup>944</sup> Three of the stones displayed at the Museum had earlier been taken from Newgrange during its restoration. O'Kelly wrote to the *Irish Times* to complain that their labelling was intended 'to make it appear that I am inconsistent in my views on our monuments' by suggesting that he had already moved stones from their original setting to Dublin, which he had attempted to prevent the committee doing.<sup>945</sup> He also drew attention to having been mocked in the Dáil by the Fianna Fáil T.D. Michael Carty, a supporter of Rosc and parliamentary secretary to the Taoiseach.<sup>946</sup> Carty levelled the characteristic accusation of intellectual or academic 'elitism' against O'Kelly and his fellow objectors 'these learned gentlemen who if they see things themselves want no one else to see them'. He also hinted at the understanding of Rosc as a source of publicity for the state: 'National monuments like the Turoe Stone ... are the property of the Irish nation, and if they are confined to localities and not lent to an exhibition as well known internationally as the Rosc Exhibition, it is an insult to the Irish nation...'.<sup>947</sup>

In his letter, O'Kelly went on to explain that he and the OPW had decided to replace the stones in question with replicas as they had been found, during restoration, deeply buried in

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<sup>944</sup> Ian Blake, 'Newgrange stones not for Ballsbridge' *Irish Times*, October 10th, 1967. Ian Blake was the paper's archaeological correspondent and a supporter of O'Kelly.

<sup>945</sup> Michael O'Kelly 'Moving Monuments' Letters to the Editor, *Irish Times*, November 21, 1967.

<sup>946</sup> It had, Carty said, caused him 'great amusement' to read in the *Rosc* catalogue the entries on the three stones, which he then read out for the record:

...No. 216, Neolithic decorated stone from small burial mound at Newgrange; removed in 1964 by the excavator, Professor M.J. O'Kelly, with the consent of the Commissioners of Public Works: Pocked decoration, painting modern; [...] What amuses me is that this was the gentleman who removed three exhibits and placed them in the National Museum through the good offices of the Commissioners of Public Works, and he objects to monuments like the Turoe Stone being brought to Dublin and lent to the Rosc exhibition. He gave 'who began it' to the Minister for Finance for allowing his Parliamentary Secretary to engage in the removal of these ancient monuments to Dublin despite the fact that he had done it himself in 1964.

Michael Carty T.D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Taoiseach, 'Committee on Finance, Vote 8: Public Works and Buildings (Resumed)', (16 November 1967). In fact, the text he read was not from the catalogue, which did not list the controversial part of the text 'removed in 1964 by the excavator, Professor M.J. O'Kelly, with the consent of the Commissioners of Public Works.' Presumably what he was reading was the text of the label, which he had either transcribed or, more likely, been given to read by someone close to the exhibition.

<sup>947</sup> Carty, 'Committee on Finance', (16 November 1967). This could also be inferred from the comments of his colleague, Fianna Fáil T.D. James Gibbons, in the same debate that it was 'in the public interest to demonstrate the principles of ancient Irish art and modern affinity between design'.

the tumulus and their carving was consequently almost pristine. He noted that vandalism was still a problem at Newgrange and hence ‘they had of necessity to be brought to the National Museum.’ As we’ve seen, his work at Newgrange involved a startling level of intervention and his objection to the movement of monuments had less to do with damaging or decontextualizing the objects. O’Kelly’s attitude was not so much inconsistent as revealing his antipathy to archaeological artefacts being re-contextualised, and potentially commodified, even as art.

The other leading opponent of the movement of monuments was the architect Niall Montgomery, who resigned from the National Monuments Advisory Council in protest. As a modernist architect and noted Joyce scholar, he was sympathetic to the artistic aims of the exhibition and his objections were mainly on established conservation grounds.<sup>948</sup> In a statement to *The Irish Times* after his resignation, Montgomery stressed the danger to the monuments of moving them and the importance of context in understanding their history and their religious significance. However, he also pointed to the potential commodification at work in the re-contextualisation of material cultural heritage in a gallery setting. Like O’Kelly he always referred to the contentious objects as ‘monuments’, while the Rosc committee generally referred to them in press releases as ‘sculptures’.<sup>949</sup> He argued that the NMAC was ‘concerned with their historical, archaeological and venerable aspects, not with artistic values, which are primarily market values, assessed – and often created – by skilled tradesmen only.’<sup>950</sup>

Unlike O’Kelly, Montgomery belonged to the same set as the Irish members of the Rosc committee and was versed in, and sympathetic to, the aesthetic theory that informed the

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<sup>948</sup> Montgomery was a pioneer of architectural conservation in Ireland. See Erika Hanna, *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-1973* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Although Ellen Rowley cautions that Hanna’s lack of visual literacy skews her conclusions in favour of those architects who were writers, like Montgomery. Ellen Rowley, ‘Review: *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-73* by Erika Hanna,’ *Irish Arts Review* Vol. 30, No. 4, (Winter 2013): 135–136. Montgomery, had been a co-founder with Michael Scott of the Building Design Centre in 1959 and was one of its first directors. He was also an associate of William H. Walsh and accompanied him on the trip to Norway in 1962 that would provide Walsh with the model for KDW. Paul Hogan, ‘Introduction’ in Joanna Quinn, *Designing Ireland: A Retrospective Exhibition of Kilkenny Design Workshops 1963-1988* (Dublin: Crafts Council of Ireland, 2005), 2.

<sup>949</sup> ‘Haughey rode down decision on monuments says architect,’ *Irish Times*, November 4, 1967.

<sup>950</sup> Niall Montgomery quoted in ‘Haughey rode down decision on monuments says architect,’ *Irish Times*, November 4, 1967.

exhibition. In fact, he cleverly quoted James Johnson Sweeney writing about African art in defence of his argument:

The suggestion that there are affinities between modern international art – particularly non-figurative art – Neolithic morphology and the geometric and zoomorphic ornamentation of the High Crosses, though not new, is interesting, but it is ‘as dangerous as it is absurd’ to invoke that affinity to justify the proposal to uproot and transplant monuments for show in an exhibition where their very presence will testify to their loss of significance as memorial landmarks of historical and archaeological interest and of local veneration.’<sup>951</sup>

This recalls Atkinson’s comment about the importance of the specificity of landscape in the British modernists’ appropriation of archaic art.<sup>952</sup>

Scott had early on gained the support of Charles Haughey, then minister of Finance. As one of the ‘Young Turks’ cultivated by Seán Lemass, he had ambitions to be seen as a patron of the arts. Haughey was the Honorary President of Rosc, and officially opened the exhibition. He began his speech by reinforcing the nationalist agenda of the Celtic section. It was, he said, an ‘event of profound interest and pride for an Irishman indicating as it does his country’s significant contribution to the world art evolution.’<sup>953</sup> The exhibition would ‘make our capital city an international forum of artistic discussion’.<sup>954</sup> He dedicated much of his speech, however, to an attack on those who he considered to have thwarted the exhibition – and, by association, Irish economic progress– citing ‘hysteria’, ‘obscurantism’ and ‘plain, simple moral cowardice’. He also rehearsed the charge of ‘elitism’: ‘The heritage of the past does not belong to the archaeologists but to the community. The community permits the archaeologist special access to its monuments so that he may study them ... but this licence should not be mistaken for some sort of proprietorial right.’<sup>955</sup>

In the end, four of the five controversial monuments joined the museum artefacts and other important loans, including Trinity College’s Book of Kells, on display at the National Museum.

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<sup>951</sup> Niall Montgomery in ‘Haughey rode down decision on monuments says architect’, *Irish Times* November 4, 1967. ‘It seems as dangerous as it is absurd to separate an object from the thought that produced it...’, The quote is from James Johnson Sweeney’s ‘Introduction’ to *African Folktales and Sculpture* edited by Paul Radin with the collaboration of Elinore Marvel (New York : Pantheon Books Inc., 1953). This is reported in the *Irish Times* article as *African Folktales and Scripture*.

<sup>952</sup> Atkinson, ‘Imaginative Reconstruction,’ 148.

<sup>953</sup> ‘Rosc Opened by Haughey: Controversy mentioned’, *Irish Times*, November 13, 1967.

<sup>954</sup> ‘Rosc Opened by Haughey: Controversy mentioned’, *Irish Times*, November 13, 1967.

<sup>955</sup> Quoted in Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 31.

The OPW were unable to move the Carndonagh Cross without damage resulting.<sup>956</sup> While the smaller objects could be displayed in cases (see below), the large stone monuments posed a problem, particularly those (like the Turoe Stone), which had been prised from their settings by OPW workmen. Gibney and Scott's solution was to create mini-environments for them, such as the conspicuous black and white wooden cube from which the Turoe Stone priapistically emerges (Fig. 153). Other items had less elaborate plinths; the absent base of the Tau Cross was suggested by its being placed on a trapezoid of white plaster, for example. (Fig. 154) We might see these interventions, including the lighting design, along with the concerns to create a 'neutral' space for display, as further evidence of the design efforts required in order to render 'abstract' and 'universal' such familiar and historically distinctive objects. Though much smaller than the RDS hall, the transformation of this space into a 'white cube' (or cylinder) took considerably more intervention but was doubly necessary. The space itself was highly rhetorical: elaborately decorated and also very clearly a 'museum' venue. Thus this visitor would be unsurprised to see ancient artefacts here and would encounter them as familiar museum objects. Their transformation into 'art' would have been easier in the unconventional setting of the RDS, surrounded by 'other' artworks. Gibney's setting had to decontextualise the objects from the very museum environment in which the visitor was encountering them.

The overall effect of the controversy was that Scott and Sweeney's curatorial vision was somewhat curtailed. Only five figurative stone carvings from private lenders could be shown in the RDS, with the larger and more 'abstract' stones, such as those from Newgrange or Clonmacnoise kept at the National Museum.<sup>957</sup> As Shortt writes, powerful as these were 'as a source of inspiration, they did not support Sweeney's theory of the continuity of human expression as convincingly as did the excluded monuments.'<sup>958</sup> Some attempt was made to

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<sup>956</sup> Carndonagh is not illustrated in the catalogue, but the author-credit to Liam de Paor for his descriptive note on the Cross remains in the preliminary notes to the Celtic section.

<sup>957</sup> The five carvings displayed in the RDS were listed in the catalogue as: a three-faced head from Corleck, Co. Cavan, first century CE, height 32 cms; The 'Tanderagee' figure, early iron age, Armagh Cathedral (originally found in Co. Down); a three-faced head from Woodlands, Co. Donegal, first century CE, height 52.5cms; and two early Iron Age heads, Co. Armagh. Rosc catalogue pp 133-134. The Tanderagee figure and the two Armagh head were lent by the Dean and Chapter of Armagh Cathedral. The spelling 'Tanderagee' in the catalogue is unusual, the townland after which the figure is named is more commonly spelled Tandragee. These carvings, particularly the Corleck head, had been important in Louis le Brocquy's own work. See Louis le Brocquy, *The Head Image: Notes on Painting and Awareness* (exhibition catalogue), Dublin: IMMA, 2007.

<sup>958</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 85.

create a dialogue between these and the modern art work. Sensibly, they were displayed in the 'vestibule' which Patrick Scott had created (Fig. 155). The smaller volume of this space was on a more appropriate scale for the five small sculptures. Scott displayed the heads alongside modern portrait heads, placing them on simple white stands so that their eye level met the viewer's gaze directly. The early Iron Age Tanderagee Man from Armagh Cathedral was placed on a white cube plinth, much lower than the other figures, emphasising its squat proportions.

It is surprising that the catalogue did not attempt to redress the situation and create visual affinities between ancient and modern, as Read and Sandberg had done by pairing images. This is probably because the design of the catalogue was already well advanced by the time the monuments row broke out. While the majority of the photographs of the Celtic objects were closely cropped and silhouetted against a white background, it is curious to note that each of the controversial monuments is represented in the catalogue by a photograph of it in situ with little or no attempt to remove or disguise its environment (Fig. 156a). This is particularly odd in light of the efforts gone to, mentioned above, to decontextualize the stone monuments in the Museum installation.

### **Graphic affinities**

Modernist art critic Clement Greenberg described Wildbur's catalogue as a 'good-looking, painstakingly scholarly and extremely efficient catalogue reproducing every item in both sections'.<sup>959</sup> (Figs 137-141 and 156a-160). The catalogue was made up of three main sections: the modern exhibition, the Celtic material and a reference section of modern artists. Significantly, the Celtic section took up more than one third of the catalogue.<sup>960</sup>

Although printed in black and white, with the exception of the cover, the catalogue makes extensive use of different materials. Three types of stock are used for the pages: in the main

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<sup>959</sup> In fact, one of the three Newgrange stones was not reproduced, but it was listed. The catalogue was relatively expensive at 10 shillings but appears to have had at least one reprint: of the three catalogues found in designers' archives, only one has an index of artists on page 216, this is blank in the other two. Anecdotally, Jarlath Hayes's daughter Susan joked that, 'there must have been one of these [catalogues] in every house in Ireland. Three, if you were arty'. Susan Waine, pers. comm. May 5, 2017. The three catalogues examined belonged to Jarlath Hayes, Bill Bolger and Robert Dawson; only Hayes's had the index.

<sup>960</sup> Of the 218 pages, the modern exhibition accounts for 102 pages; the Celtic material, 66 pages; and the reference section of modern artists, 24 pages. The pages 3, 217, and 218 are blank. In some copies, page 216 is also blank, see note above.

body of the book, documenting the modern and Celtic work, papers alternate between a glossy white for all pages with photographs, and a textured matte grey paper which is used for captions and other text. (Figs 138 & 139) Photographs and text are kept separate in this section, further emphasising the intention for a primarily aesthetic or formal engagement with the objects. In the final section, the Modern Painting Reference, both text and image are printed on the glossy white paper (Fig. 140). The choice of stock for the nine leaves of preliminary pages is arresting: it is bright yellow in colour, with a noticeable bluish fleck in the grain adding texture (Figure 141). The pages are heavier than the rest of the catalogue and give off an almost golden glow, which may well have been intended to evoke the abundance of gold in the Celtic section.<sup>961</sup>

The front and back covers of the catalogue feature an image of the 'Rosca device' painted by Patrick Scott (Figs 136 and 137). Several writers have pointed to the apparent interpretation of the word 'Rosca' in this symbol. Yvonne Scott writes, 'The brilliant, deceptively simple solution perfectly interpreted the Irish word "Rosca" which translates both as "the poetry of vision" and "a battle cry": the abstract symbol is suggestive both of an eye and an open mouth'.<sup>962</sup> Christina Kennedy infers the same symbolism and chooses to see all of the ambitions of the exhibition itself within it:

Scott's *Small Rosca Symbol* created a syntax between ancient past and modernist present in terms of individual self-expression and positioned the universality and modernity of ancient 'Celtic' forms among the natural progenitors of abstract art. The image ... conveyed the essence and timelessness of the stylised and near-abstract forms found on the carved stones and metalwork of ancient Ireland, while being at the same time a positive and progressive statement on Irish identity.<sup>963</sup>

When Shortt interviewed Patrick Scott in 2009, the latter claimed that he had not been aware of the name Rosca or its meaning when he prepared the image and 'did not intend that it should have any reference to an eye: he "just sat down and did something"'. The design was totally abstract.<sup>964</sup> Certainly Scott's devices for the covers of the three subsequent Rosca

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<sup>961</sup> Given the number of pages and the range of stock used, it could not have been bound in sections and the perfect binding has not fared well. The cover is film-coated and this has also worn badly in most cases and become detached in places from the glossy coated paper beneath.

<sup>962</sup> Scott, 'From the "Ridiculous" to the Sublime', 50-51.

<sup>963</sup> Christina Kennedy, 'Patrick Scott and James Johnson Sweeney,' 74-75.

<sup>964</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 19. This dismissal of intentionality or content is typical of the how the later Scott (the painter) spoke about his design work. See for example his comments on the ClÉ livery in Chapter One.



exhibitions do not appear to have any representational or symbolic dimension. By contrast, the lettering on the cover (also by Scott) does make an allusion to the calligraphic quality of Gaelic script. The letters are not in the Irish alphabet (note the roman form of the R and S), but rather seem to reference the palaeographic heritage while also having something of the swagger of the lettering in late-1960s pop graphics.<sup>965</sup>

The catalogue was printed (letterpress) by Hely Thom,<sup>966</sup> apparently in Plantin, a typeface that Hely's had in their catalogue of text faces. This is based on the typeforms used in books printed by Christopher Plantin in Antwerp in the sixteenth century and thus it was robust enough to retain its character when printed on a range of stock, including the very soft, absorbent, yellow paper described above. Of the modern sections, Shortt notes, the 'absence of colour plates limits an assessment of the exhibited paintings. Printing of colour plates was extremely expensive in 1967 and budgetary restraints prevented their use.'<sup>967</sup> From a formalist point of view, the lack of colour images could actually be seen as an advantage to the design of the catalogue, facilitating a strong visual unity within and between the two sections. In the modern sections, the black and white photographs add a degree of conformity to the work of so many disparate artists; and also muted the differences between the very wide range of materials (limestone, leather, gold, wood, bone) among the Celtic objects, as well as linking the two sections together in formalist terms.<sup>968</sup> A uniform grid also helped to create continuity.

In the modern section, one artwork per artist had a full page to itself, while the other two or three works by each of the artists appeared, four to a page, in the reference section at the back of the catalogue. In the Celtic section, images of up to four items were also reproduced on one page. This means that the relative scale of the objects was lost and that an

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<sup>965</sup> When Raymond Kyne took over the design of the catalogue cover in 1984, he turned this distinctive logo into the main cover device.

<sup>966</sup> This was not surprising, as George Hetherington, the chairman of Hely Thom, was an active member of the Signa board and the company was a regular source of design work for Signa. Even without the connection, Hely Thom were best placed to produce this kind of design-led job, having an extensive range of typefaces (both hot and cold metal) as well as state-of-the-art finishing technology, and experience of volume production (unlike, for example, the design-conscious but smaller scale Three Candles and Dolmen Presses).

<sup>967</sup> Shortt, *The Poetry of Vision*, 19.

<sup>968</sup> This effect becomes obvious when one compares the original catalogue to the reproduction of the Celtic objects in Shortt's book. His decision to source recent images of the objects makes them seem almost gaudy and jarring by comparison with the uniformity in the Rosc '67 catalogue.

equivalence of size is implied, see for example page 152 (Fig. 156b) where objects ranging in size from 111.5 cms to 14.7cms each occupy roughly a quarter of the page. This echoes Nana Leigh's comment about Sandberg's graphic treatment of the photographs of primitive and modern objects in the *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud* at the Stedelijk in 1955. As noted above, the Rosc '67 catalogue does not make use of paired images to explicitly suggest affinities between modern and Celtic. Instead, Wildbur's treatment of the Celtic section creates affinities between the Celtic objects themselves, while also rendering them unfamiliar. Unlike the modern art, none of the Celtic objects was specifically photographed for Rosc, so Wildbur (like Bolger at Gael Linn) had to make do with pre-existing photographs of the objects. This is one explanation for the fact that the majority of the photographs of objects have been closely cropped and are presented flat against the reflective white of the page (Fig. 157b). Another reason, of course, is to decontextualize and defamiliarise them. By removing the distraction of their specific, subjective, historical context the objects are rendered as universal, objective and abstract.

On page 132-3 for example (Fig. 158), three of the heads displayed in the RDS –Tandragee Man and the two first-century, three-faced heads from Counties Cavan and Donegal– are shown alongside a bronze figure of St Canice (c.800CE). All four photographs have been taken with strongly directional lighting to make the carving easier to see and to highlight shadows. All have been lit from top left, and one wonders if this coincidence dictated their grouping together on one page. The composition implies a communication *between* the objects, rather than presenting a single composition, a static image. Figure numbers are placed relative to the images in a logical reading position. (Figure 159 is a good example) Curiously, this serves to keep the objects 'floating' in space, rather than anchoring them on a grid. One of the factors contributing to this is the treatment of the 'absences' in the objects. In Figure 160 (page 156), top right, is a mask in miniature of a cow's head, (first century BCE) part of a group of bronze objects (Cat. 187). The mask has been damaged and Wilbur has cut (or more probably painted) out these holes so that the white of the page shines through. In presenting these 75 heterogeneous objects spanning over 4,000 years, as cropped, shadow-less shapes; in graphic, high contrast, black and white photographs; anchored on gridded, shining white space, their difference and heterogeneity is diminished. They become complementary and equivalent elements in a modernist typographic landscape. Nevertheless, it should be

remembered that this is a fairly standard strategy of modernist graphics and not just of formalist propaganda. One good example is Piet Zwart's design for the Nederlandsche Kabelfabriek catalogue in 1926, (Fig. 161) where an apparently unremarkable metal cable is made extraordinary through object photography that plays with scale, designed use of white space and dynamic placement. The significance of the design of the Celtic section is that it creates an affinity between the objects that denies the duration of time, they are for all time and of no time. They are modern.

### **From Celtic Modern to Celtic Consciousness: art criticism, postmodernism and the decline of Signa**

One outcome of Rosc was that it popularised a new set of Celtic motifs for Irish designers to employ. Liam Miller recalled the 'novelty' of the encounter at Rosc '67, saying of the Celtic world:

It was a world of artefacts, many of which might have been the product of the new age of skills in gold and silver which accompanied the art of the new book decorators – old skills which in the 1967 Rosc Exhibition in Dublin were re-discovered for us in all their Art Nouveau richness.<sup>969</sup>

One of these objects was the lunula, already mentioned in relation to Damien Harrington's 1969 CTT cover. It became emblematic of Dorothy Walker's attempt to link prehistory and modern art. Figure 162 shows an advert for the magazine *The Arts in Ireland*, edited by Walker and designed first by Signa's Raymond Kyne and then, from the second issue, by the Dutch designer Jacques Teljeur, who had joined the consultancy in 1967. The advert appeared in the first issue (Autumn 1972) and was therefore most likely by Kyne. It uses Victor Hammer's American Uncial, all lowercase, for the title of the magazine, as Kyne did for the masthead (Fig. 163).<sup>970</sup> The advert juxtaposes one of Patrick Scott's 'Goldpaintings' series (*Goldpainting 57*, 1968) with a golden collar, found in Gleninsheen, Co. Clare, dating from c.700BCE which had been exhibited in Rosc '67. This graphic equivalence reflected a key part of Walker's writing about her friend Patrick Scott's work. She drew strong parallels between

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<sup>969</sup> Liam Miller, 'Fresh Images Beget: Art Nouveau & Irish Books', cited in Andrew Kuhn, "'Make a Letter Like a Monument": Remnants of Modernist Literary Institutions in Ireland', in *Modernist Afterlives in Irish Literature and Culture*, edited by Paige Reynolds, (London: Anthem Press, 2016), 107. This probably dates to the early 1970s, so he was picking up on the contemporary rediscovery of Art Nouveau.

<sup>970</sup> Teljeur replaced it with Times New Roman, also all lowercase.

his painting, particularly the Goldpaintings (1964 onwards), and Irish Celtic objects. In 1978, for example, she wrote:

Patrick Scott in his personal pre-occupation with geometric abstraction and his sensual appreciation of gold leaf on raw canvas, has effected the fusion of abstract mathematics and physical aesthetic beauty which is a criterion of powerful art; and in particular of the early Bronze age gold ornaments of Ireland, uniquely elegant and fine among objects of archaic art anywhere.<sup>971</sup>

The article included a line-drawing, by Walker's son Simon, of an incised gold lunula from the National Museum collection dating from c1800 BCE.<sup>972</sup>

The advert anticipated, and presented visually, the same argument. Walker's direct association between Celtic and contemporary (modernist) Irish art was a characteristic of indigenous Irish art criticism in the late 1960s and through the 1970s, as discussed below. On the one hand it could be seen as a postcolonial strategy that linked contemporary Ireland back to a precolonial era, on the other, it was (also) a strategy that presents modern Irish art as having a long pedigree and therefore not in conflict with national distinctiveness. Given that both Scott and Walker were members of Signa, it is not unreasonable to consider that this philosophy also informed that firm's design work.

### **Criticism of the Celtic in modern art and design.**

In this chapter I have not discussed at any length the extensive negative criticism of Celticism in modern art and art writing. However, it is useful to briefly summarise it here and to ask to what extent it can also apply to graphic design. The emphasis on the Celtic in modern Irish art has been criticised on the grounds that it was 'retrogressive', 'protectionist and reactionary'<sup>973</sup>, that it was a neo-traditionalist avoidance of historical reality, and that it was 'tied both to the art market and to a rudimentary idea of Irish nationalism'<sup>974</sup>. The nature of industrial or graphic design production, its difference from fine art, means that these

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<sup>971</sup> Dorothy Walker 'Indigenous Culture and Irish Art', *The Crane Bag*, Vol.1, No.2 (Special Issue on Nationalism), (1978), 51. The date printed on the cover of this issue of the journal (designed by Louis le Brocquy) is 1971, but it is clear from the biographical notes at the end that it should read 1978. Issue No. 1 has the correct date, 1978, on its cover.

<sup>972</sup> This appears to be the lunula found at Ross in Co. Westmeath which featured in the Rosc '67 catalogue (no. 167). Walker was a member of the Rosc '67 committee.

<sup>973</sup> Tom Duddy, 'Irish Art Criticism: A Provincialism of the Right?' *Circa*, No. 35 (July-August, 1985), 15.

<sup>974</sup> Kennedy, 'Storm in a Teacup', 122.

criticisms can't be transferred directly. However, it is worth examining each of these comments in order. It would certainly not be fair to say that Celtic modernist design was retrogressive or protectionist. There is no evidence that the mobilisation of Celtic content is anyway impeded, for example, Harrington's fluency in the language of international modernism. Signa's avowed rejection of 'high tariff protection'<sup>975</sup> and its work for agents of Lemassian modernisation as well as the export context of much of the design discussed in this chapter negate any suggestion that it might be 'protectionist'. The question of whether the design discussed is 'reactionary' or, more leniently, evidence of a neo-traditionalist avoidance of historical reality, is less clear cut.

The mobilisation of Celtic sources in modernist design drew from the idea of the 'modern primitive' in modern art. Whether or not that indicates a shunning of contemporary realities is open to discussion, certainly several of the writers cited in the Rosc case study would argue that it does. There are two possible reasons for an 'avoidance' of history: decolonisation or denial. The first of these has already been outlined as one of the appeals of the past, especially the Celtic past, for the new Irish State: by connecting the post-colonial nation with the pre-colonial past, an unbroken tradition of national culture could be suggested which legitimated the claim to nationhood and erased colonial influence. The second strategy could be seen to take different ideological forms as different 'realities' were denied in the post-war decades. The celebration of enduring Celtic culture could be seen to deny the precarious nature of the nation in the 1950s, while by the late 1960s, a recourse to ancient history (especially a pre-sectarian one) could be seen as a desire to avoid the reality of political violence in the North of Ireland. It is important to remember when judging design of this period, that it was above all, overtly concerned with constructing a *positive* image of Ireland at home and abroad.

The final critique listed above is of the Celtic mode of criticism in modern art. It comes from Róisín Kennedy who has acknowledged that the 'positioning of Irish art within a peculiar native context' meant that the 'social and political context of the works of art was neglected in favour of generalised discussion, which privileged a positive and coherent national image

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<sup>975</sup> Signa catalogue, 1965, unpaginated.

above any real elucidation of Irish art'.<sup>976</sup> The reason she gives for this is that Irish critics were, 'fulfilling an ambassadorial role for Irish culture abroad. The exhibitions on which they were writing were part of the Irish State's drive for recognition as an independent nation with a unique culture.'<sup>977</sup> Thus Irish modern art (and art criticism) was fulfilling the same functional role that Chapters 1 and 2 identified as central to design: promoting the modernity, yet distinctiveness, of modernising Ireland.

She outlines some of the reasons why Celtic modernist art was 'problematic for a postmodern generation' of artists and critics: its 'apparent conciliatory relationship to the state and the public ... seemed to fly in the face of the movement's supposed rejection of bourgeois values.'<sup>978</sup> By contrast, Celtic modernist design *overtly* aimed to promote and explain the modernising state to the public and the wider international community. The deployment of Celtic sources was certainly pragmatic, though not cynical, in an immediate appeal to both home and export markets. The strategic avoidance of 'hackeneyed' symbolism allowed designers (and their clients) to co-opt pan-Celtic motifs as symbols of specifically Irish modernity in a way that was easily understood. There are limitations, then, in using an art historical lens to look at design. For example, one of the critics Kennedy cites, Tom Duddy, has castigated Dorothy Walker and Brian O'Doherty for attempting to 'force a particular content upon Irish painting [which] insinuates, in a racist sense, that the sensibility of Irish people, including artists, is not disposed to express itself in conceptual, formal, or abstract modes, and has not lent itself easily to interpretation in such modes.'<sup>979</sup> Duddy noted these critics' tendency to 'read off... signs of the Celtic past' from modern Irish art.<sup>980</sup> In graphic design, neither criticism can be levelled, Scott and le Brocqy's design work is replete with (Celtic) content, although it is often abstracted. There was no need to *infer* a Celtic atmosphere: there was direct and emphatic invocation of Celtic sources, *giving itself to be read* as an Irish modernism.

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<sup>976</sup> Kennedy, 'Made in England', 486.

<sup>977</sup> Ibid.

<sup>978</sup> Kennedy, 'Storm in a Teacup', 122.

<sup>979</sup> Tom Duddy, 'Irish Art Criticism: A Provincialism of the Right?', 15.

<sup>980</sup> Ibid.

This chapter set out to demonstrate that international modernist design was already well established in Ireland before the advent of KDW. It also complicated the simple binary between ‘vernacular’ and ‘international’ graphic design, drawing attention to the varieties of ways in which so-called ‘Celtic’ sources were de- and re-contextualised as part of modernist designs. The literary critic Terry Eagleton was one of the first theorists to explicitly locate the use of Celtic sources as an example of a broader search for the authentic primitive in the modernist literary Avant-Garde. He notes that it is ‘a commonplace that revolutionary nationalism unites the archaic and the avant-garde, inflecting what is in fact a nationalising project in the rhetoric of ancient rights and pieties.’<sup>981</sup> Eagleton confines his study to the Celtic Revival and to the early years of the Free State (his latest example is Joyce’s *Ulysses*, published in 1922), where he finds this process exceptionally conservative and limiting of artistic expression. He laments that formal innovations had to be dressed in Celtic garb. There are strong echoes here of the idea of ‘conservative modernism,’ an ‘attempt to maintain continuity with the past while simultaneously being contemporary’.<sup>982</sup> By contrast, what this chapter has demonstrated is an opposite visual strategy, albeit with broadly similar aims of projecting an image of national distinctiveness and modernity. The designers and their patrons emphatically endorsed modernisation (sometimes to the detriment of the heritage they invoked, as witnessed by the treatment of antiquities at Rosc ’67). As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, and the next chapter will develop, the Celtic Primitive (as opposed to the Gaelic) allowed for a new symbolic Irish identity, one which was modern, European and ecumenical. Eagleton writes, ‘Nationalism is a desire to be modern on one’s own terms; and since one is not yet modern, those terms can be nothing but traditional.’<sup>983</sup> Perhaps in the confident presentation of ‘archaic’ content in high modernist form, we can see that Irish design was, as the Celtic modernist designers visually contended, *already modern*, not just *modernist*. In keeping with the ‘pragmatic nationalism’ discussed in the previous chapter, one could see Celtic artistic heritage as an ideological national resource, which —like peat bogs, or dairy cattle— could be exploited for economic advancement.

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<sup>981</sup> Eagleton, ‘The Archaic Avant-Garde’, 285.

<sup>982</sup> John Heskett ‘Design in Inter-War Germany’ in *Designing Modernity: the arts of reform and persuasion 1885-1945*, edited by Wendy Kaplan. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 261.

<sup>983</sup> Eagleton, ‘The Archaic Avant-Garde’, 285.

The final chapter takes up the idea of the Celtic as a way of signalling a distinctive modernity, focusing in particular on translations of early-Christian manuscript tradition into modern typography.



## **‘Our Final Sign’<sup>984</sup> typographic negotiations of tradition and modernity in Ireland, 1951-1979.**

‘...the Irish language is the most distinctive sign of our nationality.’<sup>985</sup>

### **Introduction**

This final chapter returns to claims made in the previous chapters about the relationship between modernisation, national projection and design, and teases out one key issue: the question of the visual representation of language in Ireland. Throughout the three decades covered in this thesis (1949-1979), debates raged in Ireland about the so-called ‘modernisation’ of the Irish language and its visual form, culminating in the official endorsement of Romanisation in 1965. These debates were articulated in analogous rhetorical terms to those about modernisation and modernism in design.<sup>986</sup> Echoing Hobsbawm’s famous observation that ‘...objects or practices are liberated for full symbolic use when no longer fettered by practical use’,<sup>987</sup> the very debates about its replacement seem to have inspired designers to engage with the symbolic potential of the Irish alphabet, as this chapter will show.

Brian Ó Conchubhair describes the dilemma of Irish language campaigners during the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in terms that were later used by CTT and the Arts Council, among other modernisers in the 1950s and 1960s: how ‘to embrace the modern world, to be “European”, cosmopolitan, and outward-looking without jettisoning all that they

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<sup>984</sup> As noted in the Introduction, this phrase is borrowed from a line in Michael Hartnett’s poem, ‘A Farewell to English’ (1974): ‘For Gaelic is our final sign that; we are human, therefore not a herd’.

<sup>985</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge. The Restoration of the Irish Language,’ (Baile Atha Cliatha: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1965), 15.

<sup>986</sup> See for example, *A View of the Irish Language*, edited by Brian Ó Cuív (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969). On Gaelic typography see the numerous articles by Dermot McGuinne and his *Irish Type Design: A History of Printing types in the Irish character*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992.)

<sup>987</sup> Eric Hobsbawm ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’ in *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Canto, 1983), 4.

held dear and true, their distinctive language literature, and culture.<sup>988</sup> Thus we find that the mid-twentieth century debates about projecting a modern but distinctive Irish identity through design were prefigured in the Celtic Revival. Expressed in typographic terms, in both periods, Romanisation promised modernity and European identity, while retention of the Gaelic maintained cultural distinction.<sup>989</sup>

A central figure in this chapter is the typographer and publisher, Liam Miller, who complicated apparently easy distinctions between ‘authentic Irish’ and ‘modern Roman’. An architect by training, Miller set up the Dolmen Press in 1951 to publish the work of his contemporaries. A scholar of typographic history and a follower of William Morris, Miller’s press rapidly gained a reputation for typographic excellence.<sup>990</sup> In his writing, he sought to insert history into the mythological constructions of ‘Irish type’, questioning nationalist assumptions about authenticity. His many ‘hybrid’ typographic solutions embody his attempts to reimagine Irish typography as modern, distinctive and international. Miller was very influential in Irish design and connected to all the designers so far discussed.<sup>991</sup> I contend that his ideas about the modernity and universality of early Irish lettering were fundamental to the development of Celtic modernist design. Miller’s theory on typography was sophisticated and evolved over time; however, in short, Miller proposed semi-uncial as a compromise between roman and Gaelic. While uncial forms had (contentiously) inflected earlier type designs in the Irish character,<sup>992</sup> Miller went further, endorsing modern uncial typefaces not specifically designed for setting Irish. This was related to his argument, based on a nationalist reading of palaeographic history, that the early-Christian Irish manuscript

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<sup>988</sup> Brian Ó Conchubhair, ‘The Gaelic Font Controversy: The Gaelic League’s (Post-Colonial) Crux,’ *Irish University Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1, (Spring-Summer, 2003): 46-63.

<sup>989</sup> Ó Conchubhair summarises the situation for proponents of the Irish language, which he calls the ‘(post-colonial) crux’, thus: ‘Abandoning the Gaelic font risked losing their distinctiveness on the written page, but retaining the font risked isolating them from the outside world and submitting to intellectual and cultural suffocation.’ Ó Conchubhair, ‘The Gaelic Font Controversy’, 54.

<sup>990</sup> See *The Dolmen Press: A Celebration*, edited by Maurice Harmon, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2001).

<sup>991</sup> He was a member of ICAD from 1961 and employed many fellow members to work on projects for the Dolmen, particularly on the ‘jobbing’ work they engaged in from the later 1960s. Miller was also a member of the Stamp Design Advisory Committee, founded Clé, the Irish Publishers’ Association, and worked with KDW to establish the Kilkenny Book Design Awards in 1977. In his work as design advisor to the Catholic Church after the reforms of Vatican II, Miller’s aesthetic arguably reached the majority of the population, still largely mass-going Catholics, who encountered his Roman Missal on a weekly basis.

<sup>992</sup> Particularly those by George Petrie in the mid-nineteenth century and by Colm Ó Lochlainn in the 1930s, discussed below.

hand was the direct origin of the modern roman.

This chapter demonstrates that by the 1970s, uncial had replaced Gaelic as the axiomatic typographic means of expressing Irish identity. This was most evident in the 1978 Design an Irish Typeface competition. I argue that this was because the Gaelic had been branded 'old fashioned' by the modernisers and 'unauthentic' and 'untypographic' by designers like Miller. The chapter thus traces the changing form of typographic Irishness. It introduces the idea of the Irish language as a marker of national distinctiveness before briefly outlining the history of the so-called 'Irish character' and of 'Gaelic type'. It goes on to detail the debates about Romanisation in a long historical context before examining the Celtic modernist approaches proposed by Miller and his contemporaries in the light of a reconsideration of Irish identity occasioned by entry into the EEC.

### Physiognomies of print

'Racial or cultural difference —apparently distinct but in truth identical with one another— demanded the production of racial types in the physiognomies of print as much as in the physiognomies of people.'<sup>993</sup>

Throughout the thesis, anxieties about Irish 'distinctiveness' and 'authenticity' have recurred. Both these terms are also important in framing the debates about typographic design discussed in this chapter. In fact, as Saussure established, the 'differential nature of the sign' is fundamental to making meaning.<sup>994</sup> A belief in essential difference is also vital to the idea of the nation.<sup>995</sup> While Anderson stressed the importance of a sense of similarity ('community') he also noted the importance of 'boundaries, beyond which lie other nations' in defining a sense of nationhood.<sup>996</sup> Ireland's claim to nationhood had always rested on an argument about 'Irish exceptionalism, the ways in which the Irish are believed to be utterly

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<sup>993</sup> Seamus Deane, 'Control of Types, Types of Control: The Gothic, the Occult, the Crowd' in *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>994</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure: 'in language there are only differences, without positive terms.' Quoted in 'Jacques Derrida' by Jonathan Culler in *Structuralism and Since*, edited by John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 166. Culler develops the implications: 'Identity... is made purely relational'.

<sup>995</sup> See for example, Tim Edensor *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 24-27.

<sup>996</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

distinct from the English and other Europeans.<sup>997</sup> This distinction or difference is not fixed, and the signs of authentic (and inauthentic) Irishness evolve and shift over time. One sign, the Irish language, has had a particular tenacity as a marker of both difference and authenticity. However, by the late nineteenth century, Irish was in serious decline as a spoken language and none of the largely urban, middle-class nationalist leaders were native speakers, though most had learnt Irish as a revolutionary gesture. English was the *de facto* vernacular for a large majority of the country.<sup>998</sup> So, from the beginning of modern nationalism, the role of the language was largely as a *symbolic* marker of difference (to English and the British). The most important popular revival movement of the late nineteenth century was the Gaelic League, established in 1893.<sup>999</sup> Douglas Hyde, founder of the League, gave his famous speech 'On the necessity of de-Anglicizing Ireland' in *English*.<sup>1000</sup>

The idea of hierarchical difference is often invoked by writers on the politics of scripts, drawing attention to the interlinked practices of standardisation and 'othering'.<sup>1001</sup> This is at the heart of Anderson's argument about the standardising impact of printing, which effectively stratified formerly equal dialects into 'high' and 'low', depending on whether they were used as print languages.<sup>1002</sup> It is also used as a methodological tool in studies of 'typographic landscapes' where researchers examine the relationship between 'vernacular' or 'standardised' lettering as boundary or identity markers.<sup>1003</sup> The limitation of such an

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<sup>997</sup> Michael Cronin, 'Minding Ourselves: A New Face for Irish Studies,' *Field Day Review* Vol. 4 (2008), 176.

<sup>998</sup> 'By the time the [Gaelic] League was founded in 1893, 99% of the people of Ireland could speak English, while 85% of them could not speak Irish.' Brian Ó Cuiv, 'Irish in the Modern World' in *A View of the Irish Language*, edited by Brian Ó Cuiv, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969), 128.

<sup>999</sup> An examination of advertising from their newspaper, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, edited by the future leader of the 1916 Rising, Patrick Pearse, illustrates the lack of Irish, in roman or Gaelic, certainly in advertising pages. As John P. Strachan and Claire Nally have noted, there was a distinct reluctance to set any more than a few words in Gaelic, even in an Irish language newspaper, because of the reality that very few could actually read fluently. John P. Strachan and Claire Nally, *Advertising, Literature and Print Culture in Ireland, 1891-1922*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 88.

<sup>1000</sup> As Alan Bliss writes, the significance of the Gaelic League was that 'for the first time the language was seen as an essential element in Irish nationality, a reinforcement of the distinctiveness of the Irish people and a means of making it *visible* to all.' (Emphasis added) Alan Bliss, 'The Standardization of Irish,' *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 5, No. 2, *Irish Language and Culture: An tEagrán Gaelach* (1981), 77.

<sup>1001</sup> See for example Katie Salen, 'Surrogate Multiplicities: Typography and the Age of Invisibility,' *Visible Language*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (2001): 132-153.

<sup>1002</sup> Anderson, 'Origins of National Consciousness' in *Imagined Communities*, 37-46.

<sup>1003</sup> Johan Järlehed, 'Ideological Framing of Vernacular Type Choices in the Galician and Basque Semiotic Landscape,' *Social Semiotics* Vol. 25, No. 2 (April, 2015): 165-199.

approach is that it assumes an equivalence between different forms of vernacular (and presumably, 'standardised' forms as well). In the Irish case, this would limit a discussion to a binary difference between using roman letterforms or those based on the Irish alphabet. While this chapter does address this question of Romanisation, it is equally concerned with teasing out the ideological difference *between* the different non-roman (or not-quite-roman) typefaces and letterforms.

The history (and historiography) of the Irish alphabet and Irish type is itself replete with examples of the ideologically determining differential nature of the sign and with the rhetorical trope of authenticity.<sup>1004</sup> In the following brief overview of the development of Irish typefaces, I emphasise those instances where this is most apparent, while Liam Miller's comments on each of these help to explain his approach to Irish typography.

What became known as the Irish alphabet derived from a demotic version of the Early Christian semi-uncial hand, usually called Irish minuscule. It has eighteen characters and retains the semi-uncial form of several letters, notably t, d, f, g, and the dot-less i. Its most distinctive characteristic is the mark of lenition, the dot or 'buailte' (literally, a punch) over certain consonants.<sup>1005</sup> By the end of the ninth century there were two manuscript hands in use in Ireland; the historian E.W. Lynam distinguished them simply as 'round' and 'pointed'.<sup>1006</sup> (Figs 164 and 165) The first was a continuation of the Early Christian —and, ultimately, Roman— semi-uncial, which had arrived in Ireland with the first missionaries in the fifth century. It was used to write the Book of Kells (a Latin manuscript) in circa 800CE and remained a formal hand even while the 'pointed' Irish minuscule, a demotic variation, emerged alongside it. The latter is more angular and has a vertical emphasis. It was primarily used for writing in the Irish language.<sup>1007</sup> Miller compared the two forms to the development

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<sup>1004</sup> It is impossible to give an objective 'overview' of the historical development of Gaelic typefaces without engaging with the historiography and the ideological debates that informed the writing of that history.

<sup>1005</sup> The mark is also called a seimhiú, meaning to soften.

<sup>1006</sup> E.W. Lynam, *The Irish Character in Print, 1571-1923* [Facsimile of the 1924 edition, with an introduction by Alf MacLochlainn, Keeper of Printed Books at the National Library of Ireland], (Shannon: The Irish University Press, 1969), 1.

<sup>1007</sup> See Timothy O'Neill *The Irish Hand: Scribes and Their Manuscripts from the Earliest Times to the Seventeenth Century with an Exemplar of Irish Scribes*, (Mountrath, Co. Laois: Dolmen Press, 1984).

of roman and italic writing in Italy, noting that the peculiarity of the Irish case was that the first printing types for the Irish language were modelled on the italic rather than the roman.

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Unlike other European languages, Irish was not standardised by printing. The first printing in Ireland was in the English language, the printing press having been introduced into Ireland as a tool in the English monarchy's campaign to convert the Irish to English ways of language, dress and religion.<sup>1009</sup> In 1537 Irish was effectively banned in Ireland by royal edict<sup>1010</sup> and printing was carried out in Dublin from 1551 in the English language for propaganda purposes, using labour and materials brought over from London.<sup>1011</sup> Thus the first books and proclamations were printed by Humphrey Powell and his successors using textura, some italic and a set of initial letters of Dutch or German origin (Figs 166a and 166b).

The Tudor attempts to suppress the Irish language had already given it a powerful charge as a symbol of resistance. It is surprising, then, that the first printing in Irish was also done at the behest of the Crown, when Queen Elizabeth commissioned *Aibidil Gaidheilge agus Caiticiosmá* (Alphabet and Catechism) in 1571 (Fig. 167). This aimed 'to convert many of the ignorant sort'.<sup>1012</sup> It seems clear that Elizabeth believed that if the Irish could be converted to the reformed faith, even it needed to be done through the Irish language, then it would then be an easier task to 'civilise' them in other ways.<sup>1013</sup> Writing of the conventional ascription of the emergence of 'modern Ireland' to the Tudor and Stuart colonisation of Ireland, Joe Cleary

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<sup>1008</sup> Liam Miller 'Irish Lettering and Gaelic Type,' *Forgnán*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (February, 1962), 24.

<sup>1009</sup> See for example, Nicholas Canny, 'Early Modern Ireland, c. 1500-1700' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, edited by Roy Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991):104-160. See also Andrew Murphy, 'Reading Ireland: Print, Nationalism and Cultural Identity', *The Irish Review*, No. 25 (Winter, 1999 - Spring, 2000): 16-26, and *Elizabeth I and Ireland*, edited by Brendan Kane and Valerie McGowan-Doyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>1010</sup> Tony Crowley, *Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland 1537-2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>1011</sup> The first press was established by Humphrey Powell, nephew of the King's Printer, Thomas Berholet. On the history of printing in Ireland, see Marc Caball and Andrew Carpenter, *Oral and Print Cultures in Ireland 1600-1900* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010); E. McClintock Dix, *Printing in Dublin Prior to 1601* (Dublin: Three Candles Press, 1932), first published 1901, and Vincent Kinane, *A Brief History of Printing and Publishing in Ireland* (Dublin: National Print Museum, 2002).

<sup>1012</sup> Sir James Ware's *Annals of Ireland, 1571*, quoted in McGuinne *Irish Type Design*, 7.

<sup>1013</sup> Mathew Staunton has called this type a 'Trojan Horse', in 'Trojan Horses and Friendly Faces: Irish Gaelic Typography as Propaganda,' *La Revue LISA/LISA e-journal* Vol III, No 1, (2005).

asserts that ‘Gaelic culture by that same move is aligned with the medieval, with the pre-modern, the archaic and the maladapted; with all those things whose inevitable fate it was to be vanquished by modernity.’<sup>1014</sup> The ‘otherness’ of the Irish language was underscored by the decision to set the text in a typographic character that invoked the manuscript hand. This also suggested an archaic quality in a context where printing in England was moving away from blackletter towards roman and italic types (although blackletter remained standard for printing bibles).<sup>1015</sup> Elizabeth’s commission established the long-standing view of the Irish language as typographically exotic and archaic, incontrovertibly *different* to what was could be used to set English. In Chapter Two, I quoted Declan Kiberd on the tendency for Irish nationalists to accept the fact of their ‘otherness’ but to turn negatives to positives. The same is true of Irish typefaces.

Lynam noted that this Reformation use of an Irish type prompted a Counter-Reformation reaction from the exiled Irish monks on the continent ‘to make another Irish type from which to print Catholic books for circulation in Ireland.’<sup>1016</sup> Lynam perceptively linked nationalist and religious motivations, suggesting that although ‘religious propaganda was their main object, it may be that they aimed too at preserving what they would regard as a national inheritance against the all-pervading roman type of the invader.’<sup>1017</sup> The first such type to be produced was cut in for the Franciscans in Louvain in 1611 (Fig. 168). For Lynam this was ‘the first legitimate printed letter, for it was designed by Irish scholars from Irish manuscripts.’<sup>1018</sup>

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<sup>1014</sup> Joe Cleary, ‘Introduction: Ireland and Modernity’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, edited by Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>1015</sup> Daniel Berkeley Updike, *Printing Types, Their History, Forms, and Use: A Study in Survivals*, (Cambridge [Mass.]: Harvard University Press; London: Humphrey Milford; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 88-93. In fact, the text was printed in a hybrid typeface, primarily made up of a roman, combined with italic capitals and lower-case a, with some specially cut distinctive Irish characters. Dermot McGuinne has identified the roman as ‘the existing popular fount of Pierre Haultin.’ McGuinne, *Irish Type Design*, 8. He also quashed the suggestion that the Irish sorts were actually Anglo-Saxon characters produced by John Day in 1567, which had been asserted by E. McClintock Dix in 1901 and was subsequently repeated by Liam Miller in ‘Ireland’s abc’, *Ireland of the Welcomes*, Vol. 8, No. 5 (January-February, 1960), 17-18.

<sup>1016</sup> Lynam, *The Irish Character in Print*, 3

<sup>1017</sup> *Ibid.* Lynam’s use of ‘roman’ is slightly anachronistic, the majority of printing in Ireland in the 1600s was still largely in blackletter. This points to the broader context of his book, a defence of the Irish character as the appropriate type for the new Irish State in 1924.

<sup>1018</sup> Lynam, *The Irish Character in Print*, 6. Probably following Lynam, Colm Ó Lochlainn calls this ‘the first really Irish type’ in ‘Irish Script and Type in the Modern World,’ *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, No. 7 (1932), 10. Miller calls it the ‘first true Gaelic type design’ in ‘Irish Lettering and Gaelic Type’ *Forgnán*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (February 1962), 24.

Even the more measured McGuinne calls it ‘the first truly Irish type’.<sup>1019</sup> Unfortunately for later designers, it was made in circumstances where considerations of legibility or aesthetics were less important than those of expediency and authenticity. The characters were based on an ‘authentic’ model, the handwriting of Bonaventure O’Hussey, the Irish Franciscan whose catechism it was first used to print in 1611. While it was quite normal to base types on manuscript hands, the circumstances in Louvain were unusual: the type was based on one person’s handwriting and punches were apparently cut by someone who was unfamiliar with other samples of Irish handwriting. Miller considered that as a type design, ‘the result was disastrous as the punch cutter, obviously unfamiliar with either the Irish language or Irish calligraphy, produced an exotic type which intensified the peculiarities in his model and resulted in a spiky, ill-fitting and uneven design of poor legibility.’<sup>1020</sup> Again, as in the case of the Queen Elizabeth type, the very circumstances of the commission—which suggested that there was such a radical, symbolically loaded, *difference* between the Irish alphabet and the Latin that it was necessary to go to the expense and trouble of cutting a new face for Irish—would have encouraged the punch-cutter to find the model ‘novel’ rather than a variation on a familiar form.

The idea of the Louvain type as an ‘authentic’ form of Irish type endured. It became the prototype for both Catholic and Protestant cuttings of Irish type for the next 150 years. In fact, its apparent authenticity meant that deliberate improvements could not be made, nor could it naturally evolve with changing tastes. The symbolism of *historical continuation* of the alphabet was favoured over legibility or typographical aesthetic.<sup>1021</sup> The association of this form with Roman Catholic and anti-colonial printing, as well as a residual association with ‘authenticity’, meant that these ‘weak originals’<sup>1022</sup> came to be powerfully associated with national authenticity in the struggle for independence. There was very little variation in the design of the Irish type, and by the late nineteenth century and the Irish language Revival, there were still only a handful of different typefaces commonly available in the Irish

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<sup>1019</sup> McGuinne, *Irish Type Design*, 23.

<sup>1020</sup> Miller, ‘Irish Lettering and Gaelic Type’, 24.

<sup>1021</sup> Liam Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet, Designed & Cut by Michael Biggs; with a note on Irish lettering by Liam Miller*, (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1960), unpaginated.

<sup>1022</sup> Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet*, unpaginated.



alphabet.<sup>1023</sup> Notwithstanding beautiful antiquarian revivals of a more rounded semi-uncial form, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century it was the Louvain-derived form that predominated. To some extent, this was because the boundaries between language, letterform and alphabet had become blurred in the mythology of the nationalist cause, as Mathew Staunton has demonstrated.<sup>1024</sup> In the 1850s, the Anglo-Irish antiquarian, George Petrie, designed what Miller and others consider the first properly typographic alphabet for printing in Irish, based on semi-uncial forms.<sup>1025</sup> A version was produced for and owned by the Dublin University Press in Trinity College (Fig. 169).

When the new Catholic university was set up, by the Catholic cardinal John Henry Newman, another type was required. To have used type owned by and associated with what was viewed as the Protestant opposition, was, in the words of Newman's associate, John Edward Pigott, 'therefore quite of course out of the question in works to issue from the Catholic University Press...'<sup>1026</sup> Petrie was directed to make a new face that derived from minuscule rather than uncial palaeographical sources. It was this pointed form of 1858, with its Catholic credentials that became the dominant form of the Irish character in print and was extensively mobilised in the Gaelic League's programme of de-Anglicization (Fig. 169).<sup>1027</sup>

In addition to the political motivations for stagnation in type design, there were economic reasons. Given the relatively low numbers of consumers of Irish type at any time, there was little incentive for the major foundries to go to the expense of creating new typefaces. In the early part of the twentieth century, the main providers all offered effectively the same face, called 'Gaelic', based on the Newman (Figs 170a and 170b). This seems to have compounded

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<sup>1023</sup> See McGuinne, *Irish Type Design*, 118-133.

<sup>1024</sup> Staunton, 'Trojan Horses and Friendly Faces'.

<sup>1025</sup> Miller wrote in 1972 that George Petrie, 'sponsored the cutting of the finest type designed solely for printing in Irish'. Liam Miller, 'The Heirs of Saint Columba: Publishing in Ireland', *Times Literary Supplement*, March 17, 1972. In 1960 he wrote, 'only the Petrie type in Dublin University approaches a satisfying solution of the typographical problem'. Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet*, unpaginated. Colm Ó Lochlainn, according to his son Dara, took Petrie as the starting point for his Colum Cille/Colmille typeface, discussed below. Dara O Lochlainn, 'Irish Scribal Work as an Inspiration for New Type Design' in *Black Art*, Vol. 11, No. 9 (1963). In 1932 Ó Lochlainn described Petrie's as 'a beautiful face'. Colm Ó Lochlainn, 'Irish Script and Type in the Modern World,' *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, 7 (1932), 11.

<sup>1026</sup> John Edward Pigott writing in 1856, quoted in McGuinne, *Irish Type Design*, 119.

<sup>1027</sup> See Ó Conchubhair, 'The Gaelic Font Controversy'.

the situation whereby the idiosyncrasies of the typeface were comprehended as characteristics of the alphabet and any variation viewed as deviant.<sup>1028</sup> In the 1930s, Colm Ó Lochlainn made two attempts at producing a modern Gaelic face. The first was his collaboration with the Austrian typeface designer, Victor Hammer, to produce 'Baoithín', (Fig. 171) a set of Gaelic characters to complement Hammer Uncial.<sup>1029</sup> Ó Lochlainn designed A,B,D,G and T 'in proper Irish scribal form, gave all five vowels an acute accent, and aspirated (dotted) B,C, D, E, G, M, P, S,T.'<sup>1030</sup> His second design was also based on the semi-uncial form (Fig. 172). Colum Cille (or Colmcille) was produced with Stanley Morison for Monotype from 1932 to 1939.<sup>1031</sup> It was not an economic success. Morison wrote to Ó Lochlainn in 1939. 'You are at present our only customer [for the Gaelic], and I cannot tell you how we prize you.'<sup>1032</sup>

While Ó Lochlainn's Three Candles had both Baoithín and Colum Cille, very few Irish printers were prepared to invest in either, given the limited market of Irish speakers, especially as roman type could be, and commonly was, used for printing in Irish, with a h used to replace the bualite. In the case of the Colum Cille typeface, Monotype machines tended to be owned by book publishers, rather than the newspaper and jobbing printers who would have carried out the majority of printing in Irish. A small enterprise operating almost always in the red,<sup>1033</sup> Dolmen could not afford the capital outlay for a Monotype caster, while Miller's arts and crafts sensibility probably also influenced his preference for founders' type. The matrices of Baoithín were lost when Klingspor was destroyed during the Second World War so that when

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<sup>1028</sup> On the limitations of printing in the Irish language, see Seán Jennett, 'Clónna Gaelaça: Irish Types: 1571-1958.' *The British Printer* (February, 1958): 50-55.

<sup>1029</sup> Produced by Klingspor from 1921, it is also called Hammerschrift or Hammer Unziale. Miller used Hammer's uncials extensively, as discussed below. On the background to Hammer's typefaces see Alexander Lawson, 'Hammer Uncial', *Anatomy of a Typeface*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990), 35-46.

<sup>1030</sup> Ó Lochlainn, quoted in McGuinne, *Irish Type Design*, 138.

<sup>1031</sup> See McGuinne 'Colum Cille' in *Irish Type Design*, 134-162. As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, I have followed the spelling used in the particular source cited. On the variations in the name of the face, see Dermot McGuinne, 'From Colum Cille to Colmcille', paper delivered to The Printing Historical Society conference, Dublin (30-31 March, 2017). I am very grateful to Dr McGuinne for sending me a copy of his paper and for his help in clarifying several points in this chapter.

<sup>1032</sup> Quoted in McGuinne, *Irish Type Design*, 157.

<sup>1033</sup> See Andrew A. Kuhn "'Make a Letter Like a Monument": Remnants of Modernist Literary Institutions in Ireland' in *Modernist Afterlives in Irish Culture*, edited by Paige Reynolds, (London: Anthem Press, 2016): 93-111, especially pages 98-111. Kuhn notes on page 98 that 'solveny vexed' the Dolmen Press.

Miller set up Dolmen he, like other Celtic Modern designers, was forced to compromise — or innovate (Fig. 173).

Economic factors combined with ideological in the campaign to romanise Irish printing. This was part of a wider movement towards the ‘modernisation’ of the Irish language which saw the distinctiveness of the Irish alphabet and orthography as a bar to popularising the language. Seán Jennet summed up the problem in the *British Printer* in 1958:

...to create new text faces and a range of display faces... ...is a pipe dream and not likely to be realized. The alternative is much more simple and practical. It is no less than to abandon the Irish letter. Though I love it, I cannot in reason argue that it has a place in modern society. It can never now achieve anything like the variety of design and expression that modern conditions demand, and its use only serves to keep the printing of Gaelic out of the mainstream of European and American typographical progress.<sup>1034</sup>

The keywords in this account are ‘practical’, ‘modern’ and ‘progress’. The modernisation of the language partook of the same symbolic vocabulary as did the concurrent Programme of Economic Development. For many in the language reform movement, too, the Irish alphabet was one more obstacle to reviving the Irish language. Behind this was the recognition that the language was in mortal danger of extinction: that forty years of independence had failed to deliver the Irish linguistic and cultural renaissance envisioned by the revolutionary founders of the nation. The state might have begun to improve in economic terms, but the nation was, in Diarmaid Ferriter’s words, widely felt to be a ‘cultural failure’.<sup>1035</sup>

## **A symbolic crisis: modernisation as a remedy for the decline of the Irish language**

While the overall percentage of the population able to speak some Irish had increased slightly from 21.2% in 1946 to 27.2% in 1961, the country was still far from the ‘Irish-Ireland’ that the 1916 leaders had confidently expected to be the consequence of independence.<sup>1036</sup>

Tony Crowley has linked the linguistic policy of the State to the other forces of ‘stagnation’ in

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<sup>1034</sup> Jennett, ‘Clónna Gaelaíca’, 53.

<sup>1035</sup> Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, 540-1.

<sup>1036</sup> Statistics from the Central Statistics Office, available online at:

[http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1961results/volume9/C\\_1961\\_VOL\\_9\\_T3.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1961results/volume9/C_1961_VOL_9_T3.pdf) See also Crowley, *Wars of Words*, especially Chapter Seven, ‘The Languages of the Island of Ireland, 1922–2004’: 164–206.

the late 1940s and early 1950s: 'linguistic, economic and social policies were causing misery and leading nowhere except to the exit provided by emigration.'<sup>1037</sup> As with the economy, modernisation was understood to be the remedy. Irish, which had not been standardised by printing, was standardised by the Civil Service from 1958-1965.<sup>1038</sup>

Measures to standardise orthography and script were initiated in the late 1930s.<sup>1039</sup> The first result of this was the publication of *Litriú na Gaeilge* (Irish Spelling) in 1947 which 'simplified' the spelling.<sup>1040</sup> 1958, the year Lemass and Whitaker launched 'Economic Development', saw the publication and formal adoption of 'An Caighdeán Oifigiúil' (The Official Standard) for the Irish language.<sup>1041</sup> It comprised two parts, *Litriú na Gaeilge* to which was now added a new grammar, *Gramadach na Gaeilge*. Standardisation was also one of the aims of the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language. Made up exclusively of Irish language enthusiasts, the Commission was established in response to the worrying decline in Irish speaking in the Gaeltacht areas, recorded by the 1961 census.<sup>1042</sup> The Commission reported in 1963-4 and its recommendations, together with the Government's responses, were published as the White Paper, 'Athbheochan na Gaeilge' (The Restoration of the Irish Language) in 1965. This document reflected the prevailing ethos of modernisation and was

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<sup>1037</sup> Crowley, *Wars of Words*, 176.

<sup>1038</sup> Murphy has pointed to the anomaly of Irish in Anderson's thesis, 'As a language used primarily for spoken communication, Irish failed to find a place among what Anderson has characterised as the 'languages-of-power' effected by print.' Andrew Murphy 'Reading Ireland: Print, Nationalism and Cultural Identity,' *The Irish Review* No. 25 (Winter, 1999 - Spring, 2000), 21. Even today, the three major dialects (canúintí or canúints) have equal status. This is probably because the capital, Dublin, does not have an official dialect of its own, not having been a stronghold of the language.

<sup>1039</sup> Crowley, *War of Words*, 175.

<sup>1040</sup> It could be argued that by abandoning an admittedly cumbersome, abstract grammatical spelling structure in favour of something closer to phonetics, though not actually phonetic, it actually made learning the language more difficult. Arndt Wigger pointed to the problems brought about by 'simplifying' the spelling – notably the loss of commonality in parts of the verb, noting that 'the learner has to pay for his "simplified" spelling with a more complicated grammar.' Arndt Wigger 'Irish Dialect Phonology and Problems of Irish Orthography', *Papers in Celtic Phonology* edited by Dónall P. O Baoill (Belfast: University of Ulster, 1979) 195. Cited in Alan Bliss 'The Standardization of Irish,' *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 5, No. 2, *Irish Language and Culture: An tEagrán Gaelach* (1981), 79.

<sup>1041</sup> This was led by Séamas Daltún, Chief Translator of the Oireachtas Translation Section. Houses of the Oireachtas, 'History of the Translation Service', available at

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/a-misc/Rannog1.htm>

<sup>1042</sup> Mary E. Daly, *Sixties Ireland: Reshaping the Economy, State and Society, 1957–1973* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 220. Crowley writes that the main concern in the census was the decline in speakers in the Gaeltacht areas, traditionally viewed as the place from which the revival would emerge. Crowley, *War of Words*, 177.

concerned with ‘adapt[ing] the Irish language to the complex needs of modern life.’<sup>1043</sup> It advocated ‘strengthening the social and economic life of the Gaeltacht,’<sup>1044</sup> the use of ‘modern public relations’ and media techniques to raise interest ‘among young people in particular,’<sup>1045</sup> as well as ‘modern teaching methods and facilities’.<sup>1046</sup>

Among its recommendations was the use of the new medium of television to promote the language. In 1966 this led to *Buntús Cainte*, a revolutionary Irish language course initially aimed at primary schools, but rapidly picked up by adult learners (Figs 174a-c). Its novelty included the format, it comprised records, leaflets, a book and a five-minute RTÉ television programme shown each weekday at 6.25pm. As its popularity grew, newspapers such as Dublin’s *Evening Herald* began to reproduce the text of each evening’s lesson alongside the television listings. The programme was devised by the Franciscan Colmán Ó hUallacháin in collaboration with Gael Linn and designed and illustrated by Bill Bolger. It attempted to provide a solution to the ‘image problem’ facing the Irish language which, since the establishment of the Free State, had come ‘to be seen as the preserve of the careerist and the job-hunter.’<sup>1047</sup> Myles na gCopaleen brilliantly satirised such ‘professional’ Irish speakers in 1940:

They (being men) have nuns’ faces, wear bicycle clips continuously, talk in Irish only about *ceist na teanga*<sup>1048</sup> and have undue confidence in Irish dancing as a general national prophylactic... Hence some self-consciously intellectual citizens are anxious to avoid being suspected of knowing Irish...<sup>1049</sup>

The basic concept in *Buntús Cainte* was that the new words were introduced by being overlaid on a humorous cartoon, based on experiences of a modern family group and their friends and neighbours. Rather than the rural, traditional way of life that had predominated in Irish language texts, the characters in *Buntús Cainte* took the bus and bought nylon blouses. The cartoons were described approvingly by Rory Egan in the *Irish Independent* as

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<sup>1043</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge’, 14.

<sup>1044</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge’, 8.

<sup>1045</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge’, 10.

<sup>1046</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge’, 14

<sup>1047</sup> Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O’Brien*, (London: Grafton Books, 1989), 122.

<sup>1048</sup> ‘The Language Question’, in other words, the prospect of restoring the Irish language as the everyday tongue of the nation.

<sup>1049</sup> Myles Na gCopaleen, letter to ‘Irishman’s Diary’, *The Irish Times* (1940). (Quoted in Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 123).

‘almost deviant’ (Fig.174b).<sup>1050</sup> Asked to design a book that children would want to read, Bolger’s cover evoked the Saturday afternoon cowboy serials of his own youth (Fig. 174a). His title sequence was distinctly up-to-date and youth-oriented (Fig. 174c). Cropped photographs of the mini-skirted female presenters appeared to dance around the distinctive lettering in time to the upbeat pop music. Indeed, the title sequence generally was reminiscent of pop music programmes, and was far removed from the world of Irish dancing and bicycle clips. The programme’s relatable content, humorous visual approach and overall sense of modernity were very well received.<sup>1051</sup>

## Modernisation and Romanisation

The most significant implication of the White Paper for design was, however, its ‘intention to encourage the adoption of standardised forms and of the Roman script throughout the administrative and educational systems.’<sup>1052</sup> The Commission’s recommendations on typography were of a piece with its general modernising thrust. Recommendation 149 stated:

That, in the opinion of the great majority of the Commission, the Roman script should be the one used in the reading and writing of Irish from the child's first acquaintance with these in the primary school; that pupils in the higher classes should be given some practice in reading Irish in the Gaelic script, in order that they may be able to read the works published in that script since the revival movement began.<sup>1053</sup>

The White Paper accepted the recommendation.<sup>1054</sup> This marked the triumph of the Romanisation side in a long-running battle over the ‘authentic’ typographic form of the Irish language.

In his investigation into vernacular lettering in contemporary Galician and Basque signage, Johan Järlehed quotes Kathryn Woolard’s observation that ‘minoritized languages tend to rest their authority on a conception of “authenticity,” whereas the authority of hegemonic

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<sup>1050</sup> They were based on a family group and their associates, who included ‘Seamus the shifty neighbour ... on a fruitless quest for a wife’. Rory Egan, ‘Whatever happened to Buntús Cainte?’ *Irish Independent*, May 07, 2006.

<sup>1051</sup> See for example the evidence presented in ‘Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers: Buntús Cainte Lessons,’ *Dáil Éireann*, Vol. 230 (8 November, 1967)..

<sup>1052</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge’, 14.

<sup>1053</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge’, 106.

<sup>1054</sup> ‘Athbheochan na Gaeilge’, 106. In fact, the gradual replacement of Gaelic with roman type in school texts and in examination papers was first announced in 1963.

languages generally relies on “anonymity.”<sup>1055</sup> Järlehed suggests that the vernacular typographic form is marked, while the ‘standardised’ typographic form is unmarked, which returns us to the differential nature of the sign. This also pertained in Ireland to some extent, as noted above, with both sides agreeing on the exceptional —or exotic— nature of the Irish language and its typographic form.<sup>1056</sup> However, it would not be fair to say that the roman was understood as ‘unmarked’. For the modernisers in the 1950s and 1960s, roman signified *modernity* and international standardisation, and they understood these as positive, desirable qualities, not neutral ones. In the earlier debates over Romanisation, the designation ‘English’ ‘was used interchangeably with ‘Roman’, as Dermot McGuinne has shown.<sup>1057</sup> As late as 1978, the Fianna Fáil T.D. Gerard Brady used ‘English’ for roman in his plea for the reversal of Romanisation: ‘Maybe the change-over was to facilitate the printers or the typewriting companies but many people have found the change-over to the English script very difficult.’<sup>1058</sup> There is a strong parallel between this equation of roman with

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<sup>1055</sup> Kathryn A. Woolard, ‘Language and Identity Choice in Catalonia: The Interplay of Contrasting Ideologies of Linguistic Authority,’ in *Lengua, Nación e Identidad: La Regulación del Plurilingüismo en España y América Latina*, edited by K. Süsselbeck, U. Mühlischlegel, and P. Masson, (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2008), 306, (Quoted in Järlehed, ‘Ideological Framing of Vernacular Type Choices in the Galician and Basque Semiotic landscape,’ 174).

<sup>1056</sup> The publisher Sean O hEigheartaigh, a proponent of the roman, conceded ‘a certain decorative value, [in the Gaelic] but this is largely the charm of the unexpected and the unusual; It is the glamour of the kilt and the bagpipe and the thatched cottage...’ ‘Gaelic or Roman?’ Letters to the Editor, *The Irish Times*, October 15, 1951.

<sup>1057</sup> Dermot McGuinne ‘Simply a Dot’ *Visible Language*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (Winter, 1997): 88-107; and ‘The Roman V. the Irish Character’ in *Irish Type Design*: 163-193. From the mid-eighteenth century, both Protestant reformers and nationalists began to use the term ‘English’ to describe the roman form. On the title page of his 1736 book *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, set in roman for English and italic for Irish, James O’Gallagher wrote that the book was set in ‘English characters’ and went on to explain that issues of availability of type and familiarity in reading will explain why ‘Irish sermons should come clothed in English dress...’ (Quoted in McGuinne, ‘Simply a Dot’, 95). Likewise, the Protestant Hibernian Bible Society considered in an 1823 report on the ‘Printing of the Bible in the Irish Language and Character’ that ‘the Irish character affords facilities for the expression in print... of the Irish language, which the English character does not...’ (Quoted in McGuinne, ‘Simply a Dot’, 97). By 1828, the rhetorical charge of ‘Englishness’ associated with the roman character, could, for the Protestant reformer Christopher Anderson, neutralise the nationalist connotations of the Irish language itself, effecting a kind of typographic translation. He wrote: ‘an expedient presented itself, ... that if this Irish language was to be tolerated at all in the British dominions through the medium of books, it must only be by using the English or Roman *letter*.’ (Quoted in McGuinne, *Irish Type Design*, 95). The translation potential of typographic form was taken up in the 1960s by Liam Miller when he used uncial to give English text the semblance of Irish.

<sup>1058</sup> Udáras na Gaeltachta Bill, 1978: Second Stage (Resumed). *Dáil Éireann Debates* Vol. 309 No. 6 (15 November 1978). It is worth noting again the largely symbolic dimension of the Irish language and its typography. The majority of the debate was conducted in Irish; Brady began his speech with a line in Irish apologising for not having much of it, before switching to English. It is unlikely that he read much Irish text.

English and the concurrent association among its critics of modernisation with Anglicisation, noted in previous chapters.<sup>1059</sup>

The roman form was unequivocally the choice of the modernisers. The veteran Fianna Fáil Senator, Tomás Ó Maoláin's speech at the debate on the 1965 White Paper used all of the key words of modernisation: 'Roman script is in line with modern development.' 'It is the modern method of printing.' It was defended on 'practical' terms: 'newspaper space and book space is saved because quite a lot more Roman type can be got into a page or a column than Gaelic script'.<sup>1060</sup> Senator Owen Sheehy-Skeffington agreed, endorsing the technical problems of setting for 'modern typographical devices such as linotypes and so on'. Roman script, 'though less beautiful, is a more convenient and a better vehicle for printing.'<sup>1061</sup>

Among the most vocal and influential advocates for the roman was the Irish language scholar Brian Ó Cuív, whose very name was a manifesto for a modern orthography, there being no letter 'v' in the Irish alphabet.<sup>1062</sup> Following on the recommendations of the White Paper to utilise radio and television for Irish language promotion, Ó Cuív was commissioned by RTÉ to act as a consultant on the Government's proposal to prepare 'an authoritative study of the

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<sup>1059</sup> In Chapter Two I quoted Joe Cleary's observation that in conventional nationalist accounts of Irish history, 'Modernisation ... is conterminous with the Anglicisation of the island...'. Cleary, 'Introduction: Ireland and Modernity,' 3. Staunton has noted a correspondence between those members who supported the retention of the Irish character and those who had criticised Michael Scott's modernist bus garage, Busáras, in 1953. Mathew D. Staunton, 'Types of Irishness: Irish Gaelic typography and national identity', in *The Book in Ireland*, edited by Jacqueline Genet, Sylvie Mikowski and Fabienne Garcier (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 150.

<sup>1060</sup> Tomás Ó Maoláin, *Seanad Éireann Debates*, Vol. 60, No. 5 (11 November 1965), Páipéar Bán um Athbheochan na Gaeilge, 414. Ó Maoláin had been a TD from 1927-32 and was nominated by De Valera to the Seanad in 1957. His last point is contentious: Staunton calls it 'wrong on all counts', as Romanisation requires the addition of extra 'h's instead of the diacritical buailte. (Staunton, 'Types of Irishness,' 151). However, most cuttings of 'Gaelic' were poorly kerned and required a lot of space between lines to accommodate a dotted capital. Thus a well-set page of roman might well take up less space.

<sup>1061</sup> Owen Sheehy Skeffington, *Seanad Éireann Debates*, Vol. 60, No. 5 (11 November 1965), Páipéar Bán um Athbheochan na Gaeilge.

<sup>1062</sup> The more common Irish spelling is Ó Caoimh (O'Keeffe). His father, Shan Ó Cuív, had changed the family name as part of his 1907 proposal for 'a simplified form of Irish spelling using ordinary Roman type with a few additional symbols.' Ó Cuív Senior had apparently defended the spelling by citing thirteenth-century Irish precedents, another example of finding the archaic already modern. See Brian Ó Cuív, 'Notes on the Illustrations' in *A View of the Irish Language*, edited by Brian Ó Cuív (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969), 150. Despite his modernising agenda, Ó Cuív was well connected to the Republican old guard, having married Éamon de Valera's daughter, Emer, in 1941.



history and significance of the Irish language.<sup>1063</sup> This research was broadcast as a series of Thomas Davis radio lectures in 1966 and published as *A View of the Irish Language*, edited by Ó Cuív in 1969.<sup>1064</sup> His essay, 'The Changing Form of the Irish language', in this volume reads as a summary of the case for the 'modernisation' of the Irish language which he explicitly linked with Romanisation. He lauded 'efforts to rationalise and stabilise Irish in order to bring it more into line with other better-known languages'.<sup>1065</sup> He was harshly critical of the Gaelic League, which he framed as one of the agents of conservatism and romantic, sentimental, nationalism at the founding of the State:

In vain did [advocates of the roman form] argue on practical, financial and pedagogic grounds against the continued use of Gaelic script for everyday purposes. Sentiment won the day and Gaelic script remained, to be, unknown to them, an added burden to schoolchildren who thus had to learn to read and write two scripts instead of one.<sup>1066</sup>

He argued that in the last two decades there had been a more 'realistic approach to the problem' and that there was now 'general agreement' that the 'Gaelic type should be laid aside to take its place with Ogam as something belonging to another era...'<sup>1067</sup>

The design of the book's cover provides a good example of how much graphic design in Ireland in the 1960s operated outside the fixed binaries of the Romanisation debate, pointing to the fact that tradition and modernity are always interlinked (Fig. 175). The cover takes Ó Cuív's illustration of a fifth-century Ogam inscription from page 23 of the book and reimagines it as the dial of a radio, seamlessly linking ancient and modern communication technology, as did the radio broadcasts themselves.<sup>1068</sup> The circular motif suggests again the indicator on a radio dial, but it is also a 'Fáinne', the ring-shaped badge that announced an ability (or a willingness to try) to speak Irish, an object which was extensively endorsed in the White Paper. Overall, the cover suggests a potential correspondence between the past and the future *missing* in the rhetoric of the book's text.

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<sup>1063</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, Preface, in *A View of the Irish Language*, edited by Brian Ó Cuív (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969), unpaginated. The Thomas Davis lectures are the equivalent of the BBC's Reith Lectures.

<sup>1064</sup> The book was described by Desmond Fennell in *The Irish Press* as 'a fruit of the White Paper on Irish'. Desmond Fennell, 'Language Essays' *Irish Press*, (August 16, 1969).

<sup>1065</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, 'The Changing Form of the Irish Language' in *A View of the Irish Language*, edited by Brian Ó Cuív (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969), 22.

<sup>1066</sup> Ó Cuív, 'The Changing Form of the Irish Language', 26.

<sup>1067</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1068</sup> I am grateful to Clare Bell for first drawing my attention to this book and its distinctive cover. The observation that the Ogam reads as a radio dial is hers.

*A View of the Irish Language* was printed by the Stationery Office, which tendered for clusters of projects from different printers and designers and rarely credited either. Given that Liam Miller was the consultant on the visual essay that concludes the book,<sup>1069</sup> it is tempting to imagine that he may have had a hand in its cover. The 'radio' device and the hand lettering is more illustrative than one finds in Miller's other book covers, although the centred layout, use of the golden section, and the classical roman letterform are typical of his work.<sup>1070</sup> Whether or not he was responsible for it, such a simultaneous accommodation of tradition and modernity leads us onto to a consideration of Miller's considerable contribution to new ways of thinking about being Irish typographically.

## **We have always been roman**

While he did not fully endorse his friend Ó Cuív's wholesale Romanisation, referring in several articles to the dangers of a new 'Roman conquest'<sup>1071</sup>, it would be wrong to suggest, as many writers have done, that Miller was 'vehemently opposed to the Romanisation of Irish typography'.<sup>1072</sup> He argued in 1964 that 'there is right on both sides' of the Romanisation debate.<sup>1073</sup> In fact, his writings and his many experiments with hybrid typefaces constantly draw attention to the historical contingency of the apparently 'natural' distinction between roman and Gaelic. In keeping with the broader spirit of Celtic modernism, of which he was an animating force, he sought to find Irish heritage already European and modern. Miller pointed to the fact that the attempt 'to be "different" and ... drawing inspiration from

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<sup>1069</sup> Ó Cuív, 'Notes on the Illustrations', 142.

<sup>1070</sup> There appears to be no record of this commission in the Dolmen Press Archive at the University of North Carolina at Wake Forest. Susan Waine and Bill Bolger, both of whom worked alongside Jan de Fouw at different times, speculated that it might be by him, though no record appears in the De Fouw archive in NIVAL.

<sup>1071</sup> See for example, Miller, 'Ireland's abc' and 'A Gaelic Alphabet'.

<sup>1072</sup> Derval Tubridy, "'A Hazardous Venture" The Dolmen Press' in *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English, 1891-2000*, edited by Clare Hutton and Patrick Walsh, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 586. See also Olivia Fitzpatrick *The Dolmen Press 1951-1987: catalogue of an exhibition* at the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Ulster at Belfast, 11-22 March 1991. (Belfast: Library, University of Ulster, 1991).

Anne Brady also writes that he 'disapproved of the Romanization of Irish typography' in her biography of Miller, *The Bookmaker*, (Bethesda, MA: Wild Apple Press, 2005), 8. I am grateful to Anne Brady and her publisher, Jim Wilder, for giving me a copy of this text, which is based on her BA thesis at the University of Reading.

<sup>1073</sup> Liam Miller, 'Publisher's Note', loose insert into *An Béal Bocht* by Myles na gCopaleen (Dublin: Dolmen, 1964).

bastard sources,' accounted for the failure of the more than twenty 'misguided' Gaelic typefaces made since 1571.<sup>1074</sup> In an article for *Ireland of the Welcomes*, Miller wrote in praise of Colm Ó Lochlainn's 'highly legible and beautiful letter' and hoped that its influence might 'spread and inspire something better than the spiky and debased forms which for the past hundred years or so have represented the printed word in Irish.'<sup>1075</sup> Miller wrote numerous essays on issues relating to Irish typography from 1958 to 1985, in all of these he found fault with the spiky 'Gaelic'; endorsed modern, European uncial typefaces, particularly Hammer Uncial, and claimed an Irish origin for the contemporary roman lowercase. In all these respects, he was echoing views expressed by Colm Ó Lochlainn,<sup>1076</sup> however, the context of Romanisation/ modernisation debates which had entrenched the binaries between roman and Gaelic, gave an added urgency to Miller's writing and made his views seem more radical than had Ó Lochlainn's thirty years earlier.

Miller's aesthetic was greatly influenced by the British Arts and Crafts and early twentieth-century private press movement.<sup>1077</sup> He favoured typefaces by Morris, Stanley Morison and Eric Gill. Like Morris, he 'loved and soaked himself in the post-incunabula period of Garamond and Jenson'.<sup>1078</sup> Miller's page design was inspired by the humanist modernism of Morrison and especially Gill. While Miller's layout was often deliberately historicist, using drop caps (usually Hammer Uncial) and an opening chapter head in roman caps, his commitment to legibility, materials and judicious use of white space and relationship of text and image meant that his designs were recognised as being more modern than contemporary Irish book publishing (Figs 176a and 176b).<sup>1079</sup>

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<sup>1074</sup> Liam Miller, 'Publisher's Note', loose insert into *An Béal Bocht* by Myles na gCopaleen (Dublin: Dolmen, 1964).

<sup>1075</sup> Liam Miller, 'Ireland's abc', 19.

<sup>1076</sup> Notably in Ó Lochlainn's 1932 essay for the 'Irish Script and Type in the Modern World' in the *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*.

<sup>1077</sup> See Robin Skelton 'Twentieth-Century Irish Literature and the Private Press Tradition: Dun Emer, Cuala, & Dolmen Presses 1902-1963,' *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Winter, 1964): 368-377. Miller was a member of the William Morris Society.

<sup>1078</sup> Jarlath Hayes, 'Obituary for Liam Miller' in Harmon, *Dolmen Celebration*, 142.

<sup>1079</sup> See for example the praise he received from the judges of the Kilkenny Design Workshop Book Design Awards in the late 1970s, records of which can be found in the KDW files at NIVAL, including IE/NIVAL KDW/EX/108, 64, 80 and 77.

Miller was not a fluent Irish-speaker and his press mainly printed books in English so he only rarely had an opportunity to practically promote the semi-uncial models of Gaelic that he endorsed in his writing. In 1953 he published David Marcus's English translation of Brian Merriman's late eighteenth-century comic poem, *The Midnight Court*, then banned by the censor (Fig. 177).<sup>1080</sup> Miller set this in Morison's Poliphilus type, based on Francesco Griffo's 1499 face, with initials in Centaur by the American Bruce Rogers, based on a type cut by Nicolas Jenson in the 1470s. More significantly, he borrowed from the Dublin University Press at Trinity College a fount of Petrie's type to set titles in Irish.<sup>1081</sup> The illustrations ('headpieces and vignettes') were cut in wood by the stone carver Michael Biggs, marking the beginning of a long collaboration between the two men. Biggs had trained, circa 1951-2, at Ditchling with Gill's last apprentice, Joseph Cribb.<sup>1082</sup>

According to Miller in 1954 'a private obsession with Ireland's heritage of lettering' led him to approach Biggs to cut an alphabet of the eighteen letters used in Irish.<sup>1083</sup> This followed Colm Ó Lochlainn's, and ultimately Petrie's example, in designing a modern Gaelic that evoked the semi-uncial tradition. Only 200 proof copies were printed, apparently to secure the copyright (Fig. 178). The term 'cut' here, refers to linocut rather than cutting in metal or wood, so the 'type' was actually an illustration of a *design for* a typeface. The Gaelic Alphabet was subsequently printed as a Dolmen Chapbook in 1960 with a note on the Irish lettering by Miller (Fig. 179). This time the letters were cut in wood. In fact, Biggs's Gaelic Alphabet never became a typeface proper, it was never mass produced in any format, save as a printed reproduction. The letterforms conformed to a pattern that would become standard in post-White Paper Irish typefaces and lettering, and was already noted in Chapter Two in relation to Kerrygold packaging. Only a few of the letters take a specifically semi-uncial form: the d, g, and t, the i is not dotted and the e is open like the Greek form. Letters r and s have alternates for the characteristic (if confusing) Irish forms. The remainder of the letters use recognisably

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<sup>1080</sup> 'This poem, English translations of which were banned in Ireland at that time, escaped the attention of the censors even though its publication was signalled by a literary luncheon.' Robin Skelton 'Twentieth-Century Irish Literature and the Private Press Tradition', 372.

<sup>1081</sup> See the Colophon of *The Midnight Court* (Dublin: Dolmen, 1953).

<sup>1082</sup> In fact, in a letter to Daphne Whelan, who wrote her BA thesis on Biggs at NCAD, the carver John Skelton noted that Biggs's godfather had been Evan Gill, Eric's younger brother. John Skelton to Daphne Whelan 25 June, 1995. I am grateful to Daphne Whelan for sharing a copy of this letter with me.

<sup>1083</sup> Liam Miller, *Dolmen XXV*. (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1976), 31.

roman lower-case forms, albeit with the less conventional script a. In fact, there appear to have been two versions of the letterform. The ones published in the pamphlets vary slightly from those on a poster, also entitled ‘A Gaelic Alphabet by Michael Biggs’, published by Dolmen with illustrations by Jan de Fouw (Fig. 180). The shapes of these letters, with their flared terminals and slightly curved ascenders more closely approximate Biggs’s carved letters.

Miller’s note accompanying the 1960 publication clearly sums up his philosophy in relation to the development of Irish typefaces, although he was less pointed in his criticisms of the Louvain-Newman-Gaelic lineage than in later writings. His opening line, ‘The Gaelic or Celtic Uncial alphabet has come down to us from the superb calligraphy of the monastic scribes of Ireland’s golden age’<sup>1084</sup>, subtly challenged the claim to authenticity of the peculiar form that had become fossilised as ‘an Chló Ghealach’, the Newman-derived ‘Gaelic’. Miller’s historical acuity meant that he was able to cut through the romantic rhetoric that imagined ‘remote and improbable’ origins for the Irish characters.<sup>1085</sup> ‘In fact’, he wrote, ‘these letter forms have their origins in the Roman alphabet adapted by the scribes to a national mode, based on their own tools and materials.’<sup>1086</sup>

He elided the minuscule and the semi-uncial origins in describing Petrie’s Dublin University type as one of ‘the old Gaelic types’<sup>1087</sup> and his endorsement of the uncial as Irish was radical—even today, there are those who categorise uncial as ‘pseudo-Gaelic’.<sup>1088</sup> Throughout the essay he also absorbed the Gaelic into the Celtic/Uncial, this reflects his attempts to situate Irish design history in a wider European context.<sup>1089</sup> The Irish form, he wrote, ‘was spread through Europe by Irish missionaries... From this Gaelic alphabet Charlemagne, the mediaeval

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<sup>1084</sup> Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet*, unpaginated.

<sup>1085</sup> He cites Sir James Ware’s *Irish Antiquities*, which also provided the ‘traditional letternames and symbols’ used in the specimen of Biggs’s lettering. Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet*, unpaginated.

<sup>1086</sup> Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet*, unpaginated.

<sup>1087</sup> As noted above, the Dublin University type did not conform to the conventions of nationalist hegemony, being based on the rounded semi-uncial, rather than the pointed minuscule.

<sup>1088</sup> See for example the categorisation by publisher and Unicode expert Michael Everson on his website, Evertyp.com, ‘Gaelic Typefaces: History and Classification’ (Version 1.5, 2000-06-19), <http://www.evertyp.com/celtscript/fonhist.html>

<sup>1089</sup> Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet*, unpaginated.

Emperor, first learned to read.’<sup>1090</sup> In the eighth century Charlemagne commissioned the re-standardisation of Latin semi-uncial writing which had developed such distinct local variations that it was in danger of dividing into mutually incomprehensible vernaculars, such as had happened with spoken Latin’s fragmentation into the precursors of the Romance languages.<sup>1091</sup> The resulting Carolingian Minuscule is the origin of the modern roman lowercase.<sup>1092</sup> Thus Miller’s is a bold claim, one that he would make more explicitly in another essay in 1960, that Charlemagne’s having learned ‘his ABC from Irish tutors’, the Carolingian hand ‘indicates its origin in the many Celtic characteristics it possesses.’<sup>1093</sup> He effected a brilliant switch by suggesting that rather than having to be *romanised*, the Irish letter was roman *avant la lettre*. Having claimed the roman, or at least Carolingian, as Irish, Miller was then able to appropriate contemporary European uncial faces as authentic Irish types.<sup>1094</sup>

This thinking informed his idea of a modified version of Times New Roman for Irish setting, designed in conjunction with the Irish printer William Britain.<sup>1095</sup> New types were made for letters f, t, d, and b which were aspirated in Irish with a dot, or buailte (Fig. 181). The letters f and t were redrawn in an uncial form, whose lower ascenders prevented the awkward juxtaposition of dot and letter. This functional accommodation of both modernity and tradition is characteristic of Miller’s approach. The elegant solution avoided the ‘unsightly’ setting of Irish in ordinary roman which, Miller complained, produced a printed page that looked ‘as if a handful of “aitches” [had] been scattered over it.’<sup>1096</sup> The new face was named

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<sup>1090</sup> This was more fully developed in his essay, ‘The heirs of Saint Columba: Publishing in Ireland’, *Times Literary Supplement*, March 17, 1972.

<sup>1091</sup> Donald Jackson, ‘The Carolingian Minuscule’, *The Story of Writing* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), 62-73.

<sup>1092</sup> See David Sacks, *The Alphabet* (London: Hutchinson, 2003), 179.

<sup>1093</sup> Miller ‘Ireland’s abc’, 18.

<sup>1094</sup> On another occasion, Miller linked the ‘Irish’ uncial to blackletter and to Gutenberg: ‘In Ireland, in the fifth to the eighth centuries A.D., the Uncial or Celtic letters evolved from the Roman forms and later still, with the spread of the Irish missionaries through Europe, the Uncial form they brought with them formed the basis for the development of the German black letter which inspired the earliest type designs.’ Liam Miller, Unpublished lecture notes, used for ‘Design in the Arts & Crafts’ Course, Termonfechin, Co. Louth August 1958. Trinity College Dublin, Freyer Collection, OLS L-1-405 no.15

<sup>1095</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter 11, ‘The Roman v. the Irish Character’ in Dermot McGuinne’s *Irish Type Design*: 163-193.

<sup>1096</sup> Liam Miller, ‘Ireland’s abc’, 20. A similar problem occurs in Welsh, where the frequency of the letter y makes certain typefaces, designed with English or Latin in mind, unsuitable for setting Welsh. See for example Alistair Crawford ‘Bilingual Typography’ in the Welsh magazine, *Planet* No.33 (August 1976). Crawford reproduces

‘an Cló nua-Rómanač’ (the New Roman Type) a pun on Times New Roman. It had only one substantial outing, in the Dolmen Press edition of Myles na gCopaleen’s 1941 satirical novel *An Béal Boct* in 1964 (Fig. 182).

Miller’s endorsement of European uncial typefaces was more influential. In his 1960 essay on Biggs’s type, Miller wrote: ‘In Germany, Victor Hammer, a fine typographer, has ... produced a satisfying uncial face, and a weaker, but pleasant, design (Libra) from the Amsterdam foundry is also current.’<sup>1097</sup> Sjoerd de Roos’s 1937 Libra was already popular for Irish display type setting, at least in part because (unlike Hammer Uncial after the demise of the Baoithín matrices) it had a set of Gaelic alternates (Fig. 183). It appeared in the catalogues of many of the printers in Dublin in the 1950s.<sup>1098</sup> Jarlath Hayes used it to good effect in advertising, as in his 1959 advert, written by Bernard Share, for Donnelly’s sausages (Fig. 184). One of the advantages of the uncial faces is that they could be used for either Irish or English language setting. In fact, they had a particular resonance in English, conferring on the English text a kind of Irish accent. (See figure 185, an advert for the fashionable boutique Collette Modes in *Ireland of the Welcomes*). This effect is akin to what Barthes referred to as the ‘italianicity’ of the name ‘Panzani’.<sup>1099</sup> Thus the ‘shape’ of the letters conveys a significance (Irish language) which overpowers the fact of their content (English language). Again, this effect is dependent on the recognition of the uncial and the Irish language as non-standard, as Other. This exoticism is precisely what the modernisers were trying to avoid by adopting roman forms, and rendering the Irish language ‘everyday’.

The inspiration for both Libra and Hammer Uncial can be understood in a broader context of modernist experiments with ‘universal’ alphabets, such as Herbert Bayer’s, designed at the

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examples of English and Welsh set in Gill Sans to demonstrate ‘the pronounced effect of the letter Y in Welsh and the increased spacing which occurs, decreasing legibility,’ 24.

<sup>1097</sup> Miller, *A Gaelic Alphabet*, unpaginated.

<sup>1098</sup> Bill Bolger’s archive contains dozens of type catalogues from the 1950s, mostly stamped ‘O’KBs’. From these it appears that the agent in Ireland for the Amsterdam Foundry was Spicers in Henry Street. A photograph of the typefaces Mistral and Libra (including Libra Gaelic) is glued onto one of the blank pages in the back of the Dublin Illustrating Company (DICo) Ltd catalogue which is labelled 1955 (this has been amended to 1957). This suggests that Libra was probably added to their catalogue around 1957.

<sup>1099</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The Rhetoric of the Image’ *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 32-51.

Bauhaus 1926 and based on basic geometric elements: circles and lines.<sup>1100</sup> However, both de Roos and Hammer looked to the past, rather than to timeless geometry, for their pure, primitive, original. Jan Middendorp notes that Sjoerd de Roos was ‘strongly opposed to what he jokingly called “anti-capitalism”.’<sup>1101</sup> When approached to design a single-case alphabet, he looked back to before the Carolingian emergence of mixed upper and lowercase, to the roman uncial.

Hammer had used the semi-uncial form as his starting point for his typeface, designed in a modernist spirit of internationalism. In his 1943 ‘manifesto’, he wrote: ‘With this uncial typeface I am aiming at a letterform which eventually may fuse roman and black letter, those two national letter forms, into a new unity’.<sup>1102</sup> From Ó Lochlainn, Miller knew that Hammer had used the Book of Kells as one of his sources and this made it a more appropriate choice than the popular Libra for his nationalist purposes as well as his aesthetic preferences.

Miller’s first use of Hammer’s uncial seems to have in been the sample he printed for a course he delivered on ‘Design in the Arts and Crafts’ at Termonfechin Co. Louth in 1958 (Fig. 186).<sup>1103</sup> This was credited as American Uncial, although subsequently Miller only ever referred to the type as Hammer Uncial.<sup>1104</sup> In his lecture notes for the course, he wrote: ‘The only type which derives directly from our native letter forms is the Uncial type of Victor Hammer and for that reason I have chosen his type to use at the practical demonstration to

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<sup>1100</sup> Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, *the abcs of the bauhaus: the bauhaus and design theory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993). Jan Tschichold and A.M. Cassandre also designed single-case universal alphabets.

<sup>1101</sup> Middendorp notes, ‘Not surprisingly, Libra became a huge success in Ireland, where a renewed national consciousness was taking shape.’ Jan Middendorp, *Dutch Type*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2004), 46.

<sup>1102</sup> Victor Hammer, *Manifesto: Type Design in Relation to Language and to the Art of the Punch Cutter* (1943) (Maple Shade, New Jersey: Pickering Press, 1987), 13.

<sup>1103</sup> This was presumably at ‘An Grianán’, a residential education centre for women under the auspices of the Irish Countrywomen’s Association, sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation which had opened in 1954 and ran various courses and seminars. See Brian P. Kennedy, *Dreams and Responsibilities*, 72.

<sup>1104</sup> The nomenclature of Victor Hammer’s various versions of an uncial type is confusing. Alexander Lawson explains that Hammer’s first type was cut based on his drawings in 1921 and produced by the Kilngspor Foundry in Offenback, which named it Hammer Unziale. ‘But although it was successful at the foundry, Hammer never liked or used it.’ (38). He designed another version which was first produced in 1943 in 12 point by the Dearborn Foundry and called American Uncial. Hammer then took the designs back to Klingspor who produced the new version in 1951. In 1956, when Klingspor were bought over by Stempel ‘the type was dubbed Neue (‘new’) Hammer Unziale, as the very first Hammer Unziale of 1921 was still available.’ (43). It was for the first Klingspor Hammer Uncial that Ó Lochlainn made Baoithín. Miller seems to have bought the Stempel Neue Hammer Unziale, although he referred to it always after 1958 as ‘Hammer Uncial’.



follow.’<sup>1105</sup> It is interesting that he did not cite Colum Cille as derived from native letterforms. Already he was making a case for the non-Gaelic, semi-uncial as authentically Irish. In this there are distinct echoes of the primitive aspect of Celtic modernism noted in Chapter Three. This is also evident in his increasing use of the term ‘Celtic’, rather than ‘Gaelic’, to describe the ‘native’ letterform. Later in the year, Miller first used Hammer commercially in one of his Dolmen Chapbooks, *Angel Songs*, a book of poems by Rainer Maria Rilke translated by Rhoda Coghill (Fig. 187).

### ‘A Letter Like A Monument’:<sup>1106</sup> typographic commemoration

1966 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, the mythic foundation moment of the Irish Republic. In the following section, I demonstrate how from the mid-1950s onwards Biggs and Miller’s use of uncial in their extensive commemorative commissions served to promote that letter as an appropriately modern-yet-national form.

While preparing his 1960 essay on Irish letters, Miller was working on another ‘private obsession’, a commemorative edition of the *Easter Proclamation of the Republic, 1916* (Fig. 188). Unlike other commemorative reproductions of the text,<sup>1107</sup> Miller chose not to echo the layout, hierarchy or typography of the original document. Instead, it seems, he wished to give the text a typographic patrimony worthy of its status as a founding statement of the Irish Republic. It is clear that Miller held the original Proclamation in high esteem, writing that the ‘Proclamation of the Republic made at Easter 1916 is Ireland’s Declaration of Independence, setting down the principles which guided the founders of our modern state.’<sup>1108</sup> In addition to the two reproductions of the text discussed below, in 1965 Dolmen published *Yeats and the Easter Rising* by Edward Mallins which included an image of a version of the 1916

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<sup>1105</sup> Liam Miller, unpublished lecture notes, used for ‘Design in the Arts & Crafts’ Course, Termonfechin, Co. Louth August 1958. Trinity College Dublin, Freyer Collection, OLS L-1-405 no.15

<sup>1106</sup> I have borrowed this title from Andrew A. Kuhn’s essay on the Dolmen and Cuala presses. It comes from Pdraig Colum’s poem on the Book of Kells, published by Dolmen in *Ten Poems* in 1957. Andrew A. Kuhn, ‘“Make a Letter Like a Monument”: Remnants of Modernist Literary Institutions in Ireland’, in *Modernist Afterlives in Irish Literature and Culture*, edited by Paige Reynolds (London: Anthem Press, 2016): 93-110.

<sup>1107</sup> See James Mosley, ‘The Image of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic 1916’, (January 6, 2010)

Typefoundry blog, <http://typefoundry.blogspot.ie/search?q=proclamation+1916>

<sup>1108</sup> Liam Miller, *The Easter Proclamation of the Irish Republic, 1916* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1975), unpaginated.

Proclamation.<sup>1109</sup> The 1960 edition situates the Proclamation in a suitably historical past: the style points to the earliest of printed books, Renaissance incunabula. The text was presented as a small (6" x 4") eight-page booklet, bound in fawn paper-covered boards, perhaps suggesting vellum. The body text was printed in black, with blue and red titling and initials, in 16 point Poliphilus type. This typeface was a revival of a Renaissance type cut by Francesco Griffo for Aldus Manutius in the 1490s. Inside, the typographic hierarchy was significantly different from the original setting of the Proclamation (Fig. 189). In common with its source, the 1960 edition makes the words 'Irish Republic' the most important text (Fig. 190). In the original, this was done through size and weight; Miller's setting used size and colour, setting the words in red. In an important departure, the addressees of the Proclamation, 'Irishmen & Irishwomen', were given a much greater status in Miller's version, the words printed in red as a heading on the first facing page. Perhaps this records the transformation of the Proclamation from functional document, announcing the Republic, to historical record, testifying to an historical declaration from which independence could be dated. Using red for these two key phrases creates a link between the two and draws attention to the national character of the Proclamation, highlighting through colour the three instances of 'Irish' in its opening lines.

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<sup>1109</sup> The circumstances of the printing of the original Proclamation of the Irish Republic in 1916 have been well documented and a summary may suffice here. The key texts include: John O'Connor *The Story of the 1916 Proclamation* (Dublin: Anvil Press 1999), Linda King 'Text as Image: The Proclamation of the Irish Republic', in 'History, Technology, Criticism: A Collection of Essays', Supplement to *Circa*, No. 98 (Winter, 2001) and James Mosley 'The Image of the Proclamation'. The Proclamation was composed and printed in great haste and secrecy over Easter Weekend, 1916 on the Wharfdale Press in Liberty Hall used by James Connolly to print *The Workers' Republic* newspaper. The text was set in a roman type, identified by Mosley as a nineteenth century typeface commonly used in posters, 'Antique No. 8 of the typefounders Miller & Richard of Edinburgh.' Where there was not enough of the No. 8, the compositors improvised by utilising letters from other founts of type (especially for the letter 'e'). This gives the text its familiar uneven texture that together with the damaged types used to print the heading, provides the distinctive typographic 'shape' of the Proclamation (King, 'Text as Image'). Mosley writes: 'the evident technical imperfections make one all the more aware how risky the whole enterprise was.' Despite the haste, secrecy and danger surrounding its production, some attempts were made to add typographic variety, but aesthetic considerations were not of primary importance. The heading 'POBLACHT NA H EIREANN' was printed in a simple sans serif type. A second, more ornamental display face with bent arms and curved serifs was used in the next lines. Further variation was provided by the alternation of size and length of line in the heading. The hierarchy of information suggests that the most important phrase is IRISH REPUBLIC. These are the largest words on the sheet, and again use a bold sans serif. Liam de Paor noted that the words in Irish in the original Proclamation are printed in a roman rather than a Gaelic face. Liam De Paor *On the Easter Proclamation and Other Declarations*. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 31. This was undoubtedly due to lack of availability of type rather than any ideological stance on Gaelic typography.

Between 1960 and Miller's second setting of the Proclamation in 1975, Michael Biggs had been at work defining the typographic form of commemorative lettering in Dublin. Among many other examples, he designed and carved the lettering for the plinth of the statue of Thomas Davis (1966), the plaques commemorating 1916 in the GPO (1961) and the Garden of Remembrance in 1979 (Figs 191-193). In all of these he explored variations on the uncial in the Dolmen Chapbook. Biggs's innovation was not always well received – Myles na gCopaleen wrote of the GPO plaque, 'It is hard not to comment on the Gaelic script, but the M looks like a ram coming straight at the reader with his horns down, while the N seems to be in the last stages of polio'<sup>1110</sup>. Probably Biggs's most important commemorative commission was the lettering for the monument at Arbour Hill, started in 1959 and completed in 1964 (Fig. 194). This was the site where fourteen of the leaders of the 1916 Rising had been buried after their execution, including the seven signatories of the Proclamation. A proposal for the memorial was submitted to the Arts Council for their advice in late 1953. The original idea was to carve and then gild the names of the leaders on an ashlar wall at the back of the site. 'This, it was thought, would be more impressive than any other inscription'.<sup>1111</sup> The final design appears to have been recommended by the Arts Council. On the letter, the word 'wall' is circled and 'declaration of The Republic in Irish and English' is pencilled. A later memo recommended that 'the 1916 Proclamation in Irish and English be put in incised lettering filled in either side of the cross on the Ashlar wall and that Gaelic lettering be used for the Irish version of the Proclamation'.<sup>1112</sup> This cleverly allowed the state to eschew representation or overt Republican symbolism in an inevitably contested commemoration. It even avoided a focus on the individual names of the executed men buried at Arbour Hill.

This solution invites comparison with one of the most famous instances of monumental lettering in a commemorative setting: Maya Lin's 1982 Vietnam War memorial in Washington D.C. Most of the commentary on Lin's monument has focused on the idea of using *names to stand in for bodies* which is understood as a purely abstract approach to commemoration. It

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<sup>1110</sup> Myles na Gopaleen, 'Look at this!', *Irish Times*, 3 May 1961.

<sup>1111</sup> Letter from Minister of Defence, Oscar Traynor to the Arts Council 18/12/53. Arts Council Archive, 33458/1953/2 CE252.

<sup>1112</sup> Memorandum to Minister of Defence, Oscar Traynor, January 6, 1953. Arts Council Archive, 33458/1953/2 CE252.

provides a good example of how the material use of lettering or typography is often written about as if it were the *antithesis* of symbolism. Daniel Sherman for example, argued that the ‘meaning of this form of commemoration resides in the very lack of meaning, the reduction of signification to a vast aggregation of names.’<sup>1113</sup> Sherman isn’t suggesting that the monument doesn’t signify – instead he’s drawing attention to the modernist idea of the rejection of symbolism as a kind of symbolism, discussed in Chapter One. Sherman has argued, following Thomas Laqueur, that Lin’s decision to eschew representation and instead to simply inscribe the names of the dead in the order in which they fell, without rank or title is akin to abstraction and ‘a distinctly modern form of commemoration.’<sup>1114</sup>

James C. Scott contrasted Lin’s memorial to that commemorating the World War II battle of Iwo Jima, a three-dimensional version of a famous photograph. Scott saw the latter as a ‘canned’ or determinist representation while suggesting that the Vietnam memorial was ‘open’: its abstract quality allowed for personal interpretation and engagement.<sup>1115</sup> Similarly, the text of the Proclamation *stands in* for the body of the nation as well as the bodies of the seven signatories buried there. The use of the Proclamation text —as text— refocuses the attention on the intent of the Rising, rather than on the evidence of its initial failure —the bodies of its dead leaders— while also avoiding the potentially closed symbolism of figurative or mythological iconography.

It is significant that so many of Biggs’s commemorative carvings are in English, rather than Irish. As noted already, the uncial form, unlike the Gaelic, was flexible enough to comfortably accommodate both languages, indeed uncial seems to have the effect of ‘translating’ English into Irish, an idea which Miller used to good effect in his 1975 edition of the Proclamation (Fig. 195). This was set entirely in Hammer Uncial and at first glance seems an emphatic attempt to fix the text as both ancient and Irish. The hierarchy of information echoed that of the 1960 edition, with a few significant differences. Apart from the change of tone signalled by the use of uncial, the Irish language was given prominence, ‘Poblacht na hEireann’

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<sup>1113</sup> Daniel J Sherman, ‘Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France,’ *The American Historical Review* Vol. 103 No. 2 (April, 1998), 444.

<sup>1114</sup> Sherman, ‘Bodies and Names’ 443.

<sup>1115</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, & London: Yale University Press, 1998), 355-6.

usurping 'Irish Republic'. The typographic semantics of this document could suggest a desire to securely historicise the sentiments of 1916, perhaps in contrast to contemporary expressions of republicanism then playing out in the North of Ireland. But Miller also understood Hammer's Uncial as contemporary and universal, not simply ancient and national. In the pamphlet issued to promote the 1975 edition, Miller effectively incorporated Hammer's typeface into the Irish tradition:

In our presentation of this historic text as a booklet we have sought to echo the traditions of the earlier golden age when our island was the treasury of Europe's cultural heritage. The text of the Proclamation is set by hand in Victor Hammer's uncial type, in itself a reflection of our nation's contribution to letter design.<sup>1116</sup>

Three years earlier, in 1972, on the eve of Ireland's accession to the EEC, Miller wrote an article for the *Times Literary Supplement* on modern Irish publishing. He entitled it 'The Heirs of Saint Columba', characteristically situating the modern profession in an unbroken line back to the Early Christian Church. His presentation of the Celtic as a precedent for modern Ireland was explicit: 'Columba's departure to Iona heralded the first great Irish export drive into Europe'.<sup>1117</sup> The idea of entry into the EEC as a 'return' is also evident in another project overseen by Miller in 1972, *Sampla*, a promotional book for CLÉ, the Irish Publishers' Association. This contained samples of nine different contemporary Irish books. The publication was designed by Bill Bolger in Verbiage. For the cover, he drew an uncial form, loosely based on Hammer (used for the CLÉ logo, Fig. 196), which is arranged to suggest a face (Fig. 197). In the introduction, Bernard Share, now secretary of CLÉ wrote, 'Ireland's fertile literary talent... finds expression in both Irish and English, a combination of nationality with a wider universality which expresses the outlook of a country moving towards a firm renewal of contacts with a Europe upon which she has in the past exercised a formative cultural influence.'<sup>1118</sup>

Millers' statement of Ireland's centrality to Europe's cultural heritage finds echoes in Biggs' design for decimal banknotes issued between 1972 and 1978.<sup>1119</sup> (198-200) Decimalisation was another event framed as signalling the 'modernisation' and internationalisation of

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<sup>1116</sup> National Library of Ireland Ephemera Collection, Dolmen 42.

<sup>1117</sup> Liam Miller, 'The Heirs of Saint Columba'.

<sup>1118</sup> Bernard Share, Introduction, *Sampla: a selection of new writing under the imprint of nine Irish publishers*. (Dublin: CLÉ/Irish Book publishers' Association, 1972), unpaginated.

<sup>1119</sup> Biggs was part of a consortium called 'Servicon', which included the painter Patrick Hickey.

Ireland. The notes celebrated Irish literary heritage, and the semantic potential of type and lettering, using various Irish books and manuscripts as visual backgrounds. Biggs designed the lettering for the notes and suggested some of the manuscript sources. These notes were criticised in the press for their 'backwards look' and for the inauthenticity of their Irishness. A good example of the criticism is Liam de Paor's attack on the five pound note in the *Irish Times* of October 1976. De Paor saw the design as simply a throw-back to the Celtic Revival. 'The whole design is interesting as a kind of throw-back to attitudes which prevailed earlier in the century, when, just before the achievement of independence, Irish design felt it necessary to go back beyond the many centuries of the connection with England and find models in ancient Ireland.'<sup>1120</sup> He drew unflattering comparisons with Yeats's coinage commission, as had been done with Gerl's stamps: 'the first coinage of the Irish Free State had been firmly based on modern Ireland –depicting animals which symbolised Irish life of the twentieth century rather than the ninth.'<sup>1121</sup> In another echo of the response to Gerl's stamp designs, De Paor found the international sources of the 'Celtic' artefacts inauthentic.

Its motifs are from the Psalter of Ricemarch (a Welsh manuscript), backgrounds of text from the Book of Durrow (quite likely written and illuminated in Northumbria ...) and the Book of Kells (... possibly produced in Scotland) and a 'portrait of Eriguenga, the Irish philosopher at the court of Charles the Bald...'<sup>1122</sup>.

De Paor failed to grasp the central point; two years after Ireland joined the EEC, Biggs situated Irish heritage as central to European experience rather than peripheral. As in Miller's reminder of the Irish origins of the roman alphabet, in the decimal notes, Ireland's pre-colonial Europeanness was being celebrated, linking past and future in a new, optimistic, construction of nationalism.

A final example demonstrates how, by the mid-1970s, uncial had replaced Gaelic as the typographic sign of Irishness. In 1978 Letraset, manufacturers of rub-down lettering for use in layout, and Kilkenny Design Workshops held a competition to design a typeface with an 'Irish character' for reproduction as Letraset 'Instant lettering'. The competition emerged from the Irish Book Design Awards established the previous year. Miller had been one of the founders of the Awards and was also the first recipient, for *Dolmen XXV*, a catalogue raisonné

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<sup>1120</sup> Liam De Paor, 'A look at the new fiver', *Irish Times*, October 19, 1976.

<sup>1121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1122</sup> Ibid. Charles the Bald was Charlemange's grandson.

of the Press. He was one of the judges on the Irish Typeface competition, alongside graphic designer Raymond Kyne (formerly of Signa), the President of the Society of Designers in Ireland, and the British designer Colin Brignall, International Type Development Manager at Letraset.

The brief was very open: ‘What constitutes the Irishness of a typeface is a matter for the designer’s intuition as much as historical precedent, and is not defined in the conditions of the competition.’<sup>1123</sup> However, it was clear that Letraset were looking for a typeface with ‘distinction’, perhaps as a replacement for *Libra* and *American Uncial*: ‘the organisers anticipate that the winning alphabet will be suitable for wide application in identifying Irish goods and services throughout the world.’<sup>1124</sup> It is clear from the publicity material, designed by Richard Eckersley at KDW, that ‘Irish character’ was closely associated with Hammer’s *American Uncial*, used to as display type on the call for entries and one of the leaflets announcing the winners (Figs 201-202). All four winning entries were uncial, rather than Gaelic faces, although the overall winner, *Céilí*, offered alternates.

The competition attracted seventy-three entries from Ireland, Britain and America. Twenty-four designs were shown in an exhibition at the KDW shop in Dublin. The judges were not impressed by the standards, each of them criticising lack of skill and/or ‘creativity’ in the submissions, especially those from students. Miller wrote that while a large number of the entries ‘derived directly from ... historical forms, I felt that too few approached the problem posed in the very open brief with sufficient imaginative freedom.’ The winner of the £250 prize was the British-based designer Hermann Hecht for his typeface, *Céilí*. A German-Jewish émigré, Hecht had worked in the studio of the graphic designer Hans Schleger (*Zero*) in London.<sup>1125</sup> It is not clear why he entered this particular competition, he did not design any other typefaces and does not appear to have had any connection with Ireland.<sup>1126</sup> *Céilí* was

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<sup>1123</sup> Text from the brochure calling for entries. Early Printed Books Collection, Trinity College Dublin, OLS L-2-922 no.4.

<sup>1124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1125</sup> Email from Hermann Hecht’s, daughter Ruth, April 28, 2017. As a refugee, Hecht didn’t have a passport and was thus unable to travel to Dublin to collect his prize.

<sup>1126</sup> Email from Hermann Hecht’s, daughter Ruth, May 1, 2017

used to set the heading of the official brochure Liam Miller designed publicising the winners (Fig. 203).

Three other faces were highly commended, Carrick and Kilfane, both by Willie Curran, and Tuam Uncial by Jarlath Hayes. In fact, Hayes had begun this by 1974 and had already used it on book covers (Fig. 204). However, for the competition he designed the full set of characters. His starting point was Helvetica Bold, which he traced by hand, photographed and then began to manipulate (Figs 205a-206). He took a slice off the top and bottom, making the characters more squat, flared the terminals, and narrowed some of the connecting strokes. It is as if Hayes 'found' the uncial origin in the axiomatic modernist typeface, something which no doubt pleased Miller. More than any other example discussed in this thesis, Tuam Uncial seems to me to answer the question facing the modernisers in the post-war decades. It coherently reconciles the symbolism of national distinctiveness (by reference to the early Christian past) with modernity (the roman form and the specific example of Helvetica).

This chapter set out to examine the relationship between modernisation and Romanisation debates. It demonstrated the limitations of binary distinctions between roman and Gaelic by suggesting that the uncial form offered a 'third way', constructed by Miller as both Irish and European, a useful metaphor for Ireland's new identity as a member of the European Community.



## Conclusion

This thesis has argued that design in Ireland from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s was increasingly understood by a modernising elite as a means and a metaphor of modernisation. Bodies such as Córas Tráchtála and the Irish Management Institute saw modern design as a way to stimulate exports and also as a way out of the clichéd symbolism of nationalism, associated with Protectionism. The symbolism of modernity took several forms in design. These included the straightforward adoption of the visual language of international modernism, and the related embrace of the rhetoric of organisation, including early information graphics such as graphs and tables. It also incorporated the adoption of roman faces for Irish, understood as part of measures to ‘standardise’ Irish orthography. The idea of standardisation is to *limit difference* and I contend that these graphic strategies could be understood as inculcating a ‘banal modernity’, in the sense that Billig uses the term ‘banal nationalism’. They were encountered ‘everyday’, in the design of trains and post office vans, in the display of information, in the text of school books, and the design of packaging. In their ubiquity and lack of national distinctiveness they contributed to a sense of Ireland as axiomatically, unproblematically modern, ‘like everywhere else’. That this was the intention was made particularly evident in the rhetoric of the Romanisation debate.

The advocates of modernisation could equally embrace national distinctiveness, hackneyed symbolism and traditional form when attempting to sell ‘Ireland’ in particular markets. This knowing occupation of a traditional stereotype actually announces modernity, like the tourist image, such ‘authenticity’ could only be recognised, and reproduced, when it was no longer ‘everyday’. I noted a similar paradox in relation to Irish type design, where the triumph of Romanisation in everyday Irish typography meant that the ‘special’ character of the Gaelic alphabet (transferred to or ‘discovered’ in the uncial typefaces) became more visible and more semantically valuable.

One of the contributions of this thesis makes to the developing field of Irish design history is its attempt to identify and trace ‘Celtic modernism’ in mid-twentieth century Irish graphic design as a negotiation of the absolutes of standardisation or distinction. Unlike the closely related ‘vernacular modernism’, I argued, Celtic modernism is broad enough to cover the

different approaches to negotiating tradition and modernity discussed in the thesis. It was dependent on a reformulation of the Celtic as both proto-modern (abstract, primitive) and international (pan-European) and so the thesis calls for a reconsideration of the idea of the archaic (and the Celtic) as reactionary and nationalist.<sup>1127</sup> Equally, an examination of the design issues related to the peculiar status of the Irish language in the mid-twentieth century demonstrates how the character of apparently ‘international and universal’ modernism was adapted to local conditions and is thus a small contribution to the expanding body of writing on national modernisms discussed in the Introduction.<sup>1128</sup>

### Further research

The research undertaken for this thesis was largely a matter of uncovering and recovering, rather than theorising existing material. One of the most pressing methodological problems was deciding which examples to include and exclude. To paraphrase E.H. Carr’s famous summary of the historian’s challenge, which examples were ‘historical’ designs and which were simply designs, ‘from the past’?<sup>1129</sup> This was made more challenging given my reluctance to reproduce traditional art and design historical approaches of canon formation and my commitment to thinking about ‘everyday’ design. In practice, the banal reality that so little everyday design survives, and only a fraction of what does can be attributed to a particular company or even year of production, tended to limit the methodological difficulty. It also encouraged me to broaden the range of objects to be examined in the thesis which proved appropriate given the interdisciplinarity of mid-century designers in Ireland. Another way of deepening the possible sources was to include the wider discourse around design in Ireland in the period and to map that onto the concurrent and well documented debates around modernisation. This proved rewarding, as there was a clear interplay between the two, pointing to my conclusion that modern design offered a means and a metaphor of modernisation.

One outcome of this research has been the recognition that, despite my initial reluctance,

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<sup>1127</sup> See for example Terry Eagleton, ‘The Archaic Avant-Garde’ in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish culture* (London & New York: Verso, 1995).

<sup>1128</sup> For example, Kjetil Fallan, *Designing Modern Norway: A History of Design Discourse* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>1129</sup> E.H. Carr, ‘The Facts of History’ in *What is History?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

there is a need for an ‘old-fashioned’ survey history of Irish graphic design in the twentieth century which future research can add to or challenge. It is a pressing issue, as very little of the mid-century Irish graphic design is being preserved, despite the best efforts of institutions like the National Irish Visual Arts Library and the online, designer-led 100 Archive.<sup>1130</sup> Without a respected ‘key text’, museums, libraries and archives have no guide to the significance of apparently banal and unimportant artefacts; and design historians have no published evidence to support their argument for preservation of what appears ephemeral. The recent announcement of the indefinite closure of the Ephemera Collection as part of renovation plans at the National Library is a worrying precedent. The Library’s defence that many of the objects have been digitised undermines the importance of the *materiality* of graphic design to the researcher.<sup>1131</sup>

There are some positive signs, however, of an increased recognition of the value of design history in Ireland. The success of Linda King and Elaine Sisson’s book has prompted publishers to take Irish design history seriously. The popularity of the Little Museum of Dublin, established in 2011, which celebrates the everyday material culture of the city, has also done much to publicise the value of material and visual history. The museum’s policy of well-publicised open calls for donations is replicated by the ambitious National Treasures project a joint venture between RTÉ and the National Museum, on which Linda King is an advisor. This aims to establish ‘a peoples’ archive’, by ‘seeking out ordinary objects cherished by people and families throughout the country, which reveal an aspect of Ireland’s history, culture and experience’.<sup>1132</sup>

It is clear that the issues raised in this thesis continue to have relevance. For example, in the uncertainty caused by Brexit, Ireland’s identity as a staunchly pro-European nation has returned to prominence. In this ‘decade of commemoration’, the most divisive anniversary is yet to come: that of the Civil War (1922-23). Apparently in anticipation of 2022, representational and figurative imagery has been eschewed in favour of typographic

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<sup>1130</sup> <http://www.100archive.com/>

<sup>1131</sup> See <https://www.nli.ie/en/accessing-prints-drawings-ephemera.aspx>

<sup>1132</sup> <https://nationaltreasures.ie>

solutions which directly echo those of Miller and Biggs fifty years ago. What Sherman called the ‘distinctly modern form of commemoration,’<sup>1133</sup> the typographic sign, was the dominant motif of the 2016 celebrations. Significantly there was no ‘symbol’ for the year-long state-led commemoration. Instead Dublin design studio Zero G created an elegant and restrained typographic identity (Fig. 207). The inspiration for the identity is hinted at in the background image just visible in some of the iterations —a facsimile of the 1916 Proclamation.<sup>1134</sup> In fact, this was the preeminent sign throughout the generally reflective rather than triumphalist celebrations. Liam Miller would no doubt approve.

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<sup>1133</sup> Daniel J Sherman, ‘Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France,’ *The American Historical Review* Vol. 103 No. 2 (April, 1998), 443.

<sup>1134</sup> The Proclamation also featured in more everyday commemorations. In an apparent attempt to echo the flag ceremonies that Billig discusses in US high schools, the government introduced a nation-wide Proclamation Day project run in primary schools. This saw members of the army travel to every primary school in Ireland and deliver, with much ceremony, a facsimile copy of the 1916 Proclamation. The text was then read aloud and schools were encouraged to follow up by writing and, crucially, *designing* their own Proclamation. The resources provided by the Department of Education for teachers included detailed information on typefaces and a link to James Mosley’s 2010 Typefoundry articles on the typographic nuances of the different facsimile copies of the Proclamation. <https://www.scoilnet.ie/go-to-primary/proclamation-day/>

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Head of Department of Visual Communication, NCAD.

Archive of Bernard Share, copywriter and editor of *Campaign*, founder Verbiage Enterprises,  
Secretary CLÉ, (Share's personal archive included the Verbiage Archive).

#### *Company archives*

Institute of Creative Advertising and Design

An Bord Bainne / The Irish Dairy Board (renamed Ornuia in 2015)

#### *State and public collections*

An Chomhairle Ealaíon /The Arts Council of Ireland

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