



HISTORIES OF BRITISH ART

1660-1735 RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION

ABSTRACT: DARRAGH O'DONOGHUE

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'Irish naïve painting in the first half of the 18th century'

In the period covered by this conference, when academies and the Grand Tour were shaping assumptions about art-making and education, some of the most striking examples of Irish 'naïve' art were actively patronised or acquired by the very Anglo-Irish landowners who, with their classical education, might be expected to reject works deficient in mathematical perspective, anatomy, modelling etc.

Most of these paintings were in those genres – portraiture, landscape and animal painting – generally favoured by aristocratic patrons, much to the chagrin of proselytisers of academic art. So what is the difference between a 'naïve' painting and a 'professional' one? Why would educated patrons hang 'naïve' paintings on their walls? What is conventional and what original about these works: for instance the anonymous *Kilruddery Hunt* affixes cut-out figures to its painted surface? What was the reception of these works? Do we know anything about their painters (most of these works are currently unattributed)? How do they fit in with the theoretical models of 'naïve' art proposed by modernist critic Wilhelm Uhde in the 1910s-1940s, or 'outsider art' formulated by Roger Cardinal in 1969? What is its relationship to folk art, and contemporary 'naïve' paintings from the rest of Britain and Europe?

Using English antiquary and diplomat Thomas Dineley's *Observations on a voyage through the kingdom of Ireland* (1681) as a starting point, this talk will explore the paradoxical status of the 'primitive' artwork by looking at key works of Irish naïveté from the first half of the 18th century, which are contemporaneous with the first, halting attempts to develop artistic training and patronage in Ireland. This survey will discuss their shared characteristics, different contexts of production and reception, and relation to 'Gaelic' producers of 'naïve' imagery such as Sean Macataor and Diarmuid Ua Cartha.