



William Crozier: The Edge of the Landscape

West Cork Arts Centre: 15 July to 31 August 2017

Opening on Friday 14 July at 7.00pm. Curator's Talk with Seán Kissane, co-curator, at 6.00pm

Irish Museum of Modern Art: 13 October 2017 – 31 December 2017

West Cork Arts Centre and the Irish Museum of Modern Art are delighted to present a major retrospective of the Scottish-born, Irish artist William Crozier (1930-2011). Taking place from summer 2017 to spring 2018, the exhibition will be shown in two parts, the first at the West Cork Arts Centre and the second at IMMA. Best known in Ireland for the lyrical landscapes he made close to his home in West Cork from the mid-1980s, this exhibition presents these familiar works by Crozier against a backdrop of his early work inspired by the Existentialist movement and the anxieties of the post-war period.

Profoundly affected by post-war existential philosophy, Crozier consciously allied himself and his work with contemporary European art throughout the 1950s and 1960s, towards painters such as Jean Dubuffet, Pierre Soulages, Hans Hartung and Nicolas de Staël. His visits to Paris in 1947, 1950, and 1953 were formative experiences: *“To be in Paris then was to be at the centre of the world. Anyone who was not young in 1949 and who did not sit in the Café de Flore or the Deux Magots, where Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were as gods, simply cannot appreciate the sheer excitement that enveloped the young of Europe emotionally, physically and intellectually.”*

The landscape became the source of visceral paintings: instinctive, animated brush strokes convey the primitive energy Crozier unearthed in the natural world, a darkly animistic union with environment. For Crozier, ravaged landscapes symbolised the torment and fear of the post-war condition at the heart of existentialism. In the introduction to Crozier's 1961 Drian show, G. M. Butcher wrote, *“if there is one thing that Crozier wishes to get across in all his painting, it is a mood of fear, anxiety, unease. This is his personal reaction to the world as it is - where savagery is only just beneath the surface.”*

In the early 1960s the human figure, often in skeletal form, entered Crozier's imagery, though often interred in blasted landscape or, as in the work of the 1970s, it is flayed, skeletal, and screaming. Crozier visited the notorious Bergen-Belsen extermination camp in the 1960s, which left an indelible mark on him. Reference is made to historical atrocities, as in Flanders Fields (1962; National Gallery of Ireland), but also to contemporary political events such as the Northern Troubles, as seen in Crossmaglen Crucifixion (1975) that weave concerns of religion, violence and society.

Only ten years separate these images of traumatized humanity from the luxuriantly colourful works inspired by the landscape of West Cork. From the 1980s, when he divided his time between studios in West Cork and the UK, Crozier's painting of the landscape blossomed with an extraordinary radiance. His early skill as a colourist reaches its zenith in paintings that capture the essence and appearance of the West Cork landscape in ways immediately recognisable to the viewer, but they are also concerned to capture a landscape during a period of great physical and social change. Crozier believed that when painting the Irish landscape he must, "Tell the truth. Say it simply."

These two major exhibitions show the continuum that runs through all of Crozier's work. What emerges is a fascinating narrative that reveals that, far from there being a transformation from the earlier, darker imagery into the apparently hedonistic later landscapes, there is a remarkable continuity of purpose and mindset in William Crozier's work that connects 1950s Britain and Ireland with the concerns of the new millennium.

A new major publication will accompany the exhibition. New research by Mark Hudson, Katharine Crouan, Seán Kissane, Riann Coulter, Enrique Juncosa, and Sarah Turner draws upon unpublished sources to explore the meaning of Crozier's work and locate his distinctive art within Scottish, British and Irish contexts.

Notes to Editors

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This touring exhibition has been mounted in collaboration with Piano Nobile gallery, London, and Flowers Gallery, London. Piano Nobile will also present an exhibition of Crozier's earlier works at their Kings Place, Kings Cross, gallery space to run simultaneously with the IMMA iteration of *William Crozier: The Edge of the Landscape*.

William Crozier

William Crozier was born in Glasgow to Irish parents and educated at the Glasgow School of Art (1949-53). On graduating he spent time in Paris and Dublin before settling in London, where he quickly gained great notoriety for his work. By 1960 William Crozier was widely seen as one of the most exciting artists in London. Soho was his habitual haunt with fellow raconteurs William Irvine, Robert MacBryde, Robert Colquhoun, and intermittent comrades Francis Bacon, William Turnbull, and Eduardo Paolozzi. His first solo exhibition was in 1960 at the Drian Gallery, followed by another in 1961, and then three shows in consecutive years from 1962 at Arthur Tooth & Sons. In 1964 the Arts Council included his paintings in the exhibition Six Young Painters with David Hockney, Peter Blake, Allen Jones, Bridget Riley and Euan Uglow. In 1975 Crozier was grouped alongside Francis Bacon in the important exhibition Body and Soul at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Crozier taught at the Bath Academy of Art, the Central School of Art and Design, the Studio School in New York and finally at Winchester School of Art. In 1973 he became an Irish citizen, having been born to Irish parents, and lived between homes in West Cork and Hampshire. In 1991 the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork and the Royal Hibernian Academy, of which he was an honorary member, curated a retrospective of his work. Crozier was awarded the Premio Lissone in Milan and the Oireachtas Gold medal for Painting in Dublin in 1994. In 2005 Crozier celebrated his 75th birthday with a major exhibition in Cork to celebrate the European Capital of Culture.

Crozier's work has recently been purchased by the National Gallery of Ireland, the Scottish National Gallery, the Imperial War Museum and Ireland's Great Hunger Museum, Connecticut.

West Cork Arts Centre

West Cork Arts Centre was established in 1985 in Skibbereen, Co. Cork. It is a publicly funded arts facility that creates opportunities for the people of West Cork to have access to, and engagement with, local and global arts practice of excellence.

It supports a multi-disciplinary arts programme with a focus on contemporary visual art. It is a resource and development agency, providing expertise and physical and human resources to assist artists, other arts organisations, groups and individuals to realise arts projects.

It is committed to exploring new and innovative ways of combating the challenges facing audience development and participation, and the development of opportunities for artists, especially in relation to those located in rural communities.

Irish Museum of Modern Art

IMMA aims in all its activities to create for the public an enjoyable and engaging experience of contemporary art. It achieves this through a dynamic and changing programme of exhibitions and education programmes based in its home at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and working with partners nationally and internationally. As the national institution for contemporary art IMMA is committed to supporting artists' work, and works with artists and partners to support the development, understanding and enjoyment of contemporary art in Ireland.

IMMA is the home of the national collection of modern and contemporary art and takes responsibility for the care and maintenance of this national resource. We ensure that it is accessible to visitors to IMMA and beyond through exhibitions, collaborations, loans, touring partnerships and digital programmes.

Image

William Crozier, 1930-2011, *Figure in Landscape* c. 1972. Oil on canvas, 172 x 172cm. Image courtesy of Piano Nobile, Robert Travers (Works of Art) Ltd.

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