

The activity and work of artist/printmakers, while of great interest to a few of us, is periferal for the most part to the Irish “art world” and certainly well outside the preoccupations of the public at large.

Occasionally for a day or so a print can move centre stage.

In 1984 a small monoprint of mine, exhibited at the annual Exhibition of Visual Art sparked a local and for a day a national controversy.

The short lived notoriety did not greatly effect me, and to the extent that it did, was beneficial. (eg. I went up in the estimation of some local grandees believing as they did that I had engineered the controversy).

Not so with my mother who was boycotted by former colleagues in the local golf and bridge clubs, an experience that led to a certain realignment of friends and attitudes.



Picketing EVA this Wednesday.

□ Picture: JOHN F. WRIGHT

Gallery picketed as EVA art row flares up again

By LEADER REPORTER

AN UNREPENTANT Mr. Richard Coughlan — the city cafe owner who attempted to deface an award-winning graphic print, which he labelled “pornographic” in the EVA Exhibition — this Wednesday, led a picket outside the Municipal Art Gallery, where the display is being staged.

Men and women carried protest placards.

On Thursday last Mr. Coughlan, owner of the Treaty Cafe in Nicholas Street, tried to spray paint on a print by Limerick artist Richard Lilburn which won the £500 graphic prize in the exhibition.

Mr. Hugh Murray, EVA



Flashback: Mr. Murray (left), and Mr. Coughlan face to face last Thursday.

chairman, prevented Mr. Coughlan from spraying the picture with paint and struggled with him. Mr. Coughlan did succeed in breaking the glass covering the print and causing damage to the work.

Statement

No Garda action has been taken as a result of the incident to date, but Mr. Murray told the *Limerick Leader* that they would be furnishing the Gardai with a statement outlining the incident. Detectives at Edward Street are investigating the matter.

This Wednesday, Mr. Coughlan and a number of others picketed the gallery. One of the pickets carried a number of exhibition catalogues.

He explained that they were showing the reproduction of the “offending picture” to “people over 18” who requested to see it.



From the forceps to the chains of office, monoprint, 30x20cms

1994

**Picture
Exclusive
on attack
on prize
exhibit**



Mr. Coughlan (back to camera) encounters resistance.

DRAMA IN CITY ART GALLERY



□ **Report: CONOR KEANE**

□ **Pictures: OWEN SOUTH**

DETECTIVES AT EDWARD STREET were this Friday investigating a Limerick cafe-owner's attempt to destroy an award-winning drawing at the EVA Exhibition in the Municipal Art Gallery at Pery Square because he thought it was pornographic.

The Limerick Leader had received information that the attack was imminent and was present in the gallery this Thursday when Mr. Richard Coughlan of the Treaty Cafe, Nicholas Street, broke the glass in the frame of the exhibit by Limerick artist David Lilburn.

As the glass broke, Mr. Hugh Murray, chairman of the exhibition committee, rushed at Mr. Coughlan and pushed him away from the drawing as he was about to spray it with paint.

Mr. Murray and Mr. Coughlan scuffled as Mr. Coughlan continued to try to deface the drawing. Mr. Murray managed to prevent further damage to the exhibit, which was slightly torn, but in doing so he and Mr. Coughlan fell to the floor.

An attendant at the library then came to Mr. Murray's aid and order was restored.

After that a loud conversation ensued between Mr. Murray and Mr. Coughlan.

Mr. Coughlan: "That is absolute filth. I have a daughter of 15 and she is a member of this library and I will not allow her to see that . . . it's disgusting . . . a man with an erect penis . . . do you call that art?"

Mr. Murray: "I have three children of my own and they have been in here and I have no objection to that. You are entitled to your point of view but that does not mean that you can destroy other people's property".

These and similar exchanges passed between the two men for some time. Mr. Coughlan demanded to be arrested "for causing wilful damage".

Comments

Mr. Murray replied that he would not humour him by having him arrested.

At the time of the incident - just before 5 p.m. - there were several people in the gallery, including a nun and a priest. Both left hurriedly when they saw what was happening.

Mr. Coughlan to the Limerick Leader that he wanted to destroy the picture because he considered it pornographic.

"I want to be charged with destroying it and I want the Corporation charged for allowing it to be displayed - it's nothing but filth", he declared.

The drawing by David Lilburn won £500 in the graphic section of the exhibition and had been purchased by Mr. Paul O'Reilly of the Limerick School of Art and Design for £60. It is entitled "Towards from the Forceps to the Chains of Office".

Its companion piece "From Duivendrecht to Daragh", has been purchased by Mr. Ruari Quinn, Minister for Labour, for £60.

Some damage was caused to the drawing and a small hole was punctured in the drawing by the broken glass.

Mr. David Lilburn, the artist - an audio-visual technician at N.I.H.E. - told the Limerick Leader this Friday: "My initial reaction is one of amazement, not that someone did not like the drawing but that they went to such lengths to destroy it".

He said that it was a pity that someone wanted to destroy it as it was an original print and could not be reproduced.

In reply to the charge that the work was pornographic, Mr. Lilburn replied: "It is not pornographic, it is part of the nature of art that it is up to an individual to react to what he sees".

“I particularly enjoyed the painting of Richard Slade and David Lilburn. I awarded a prize to the latter. Both these artists were conspicuously using the figure itself - and not just the substances of painting - as a means of expression.

This expressive, though non-expressionistic, use of the figure connects with its rediscovery through drawing, something apparent in the successfully laborious work of James Savage and Joanna Robertson’s impressive yet oversized picture, circumstance. These images clearly parallel a tendency in English art which is, in part, a reaction to the dirty woolly wake of Neo-Expressionism, namely the revival of “hard-won” imagery and traditions, of ways of depicting the figure rooted in empirical accuracy.

It will be clear from what I have said that I believe good art involves an imaginative response to natural form - anatomical and landscape - in the context of a vigorous and lively sense of tradition. Good art, in other words, is rooted in drawing, not in some historicist conception of a modernist continuum of ever-evolving styles.

Nonetheless I agree with Clement Greenberg that aesthetic quality is established by results, never through methods or means...”

from Peter Fuller’s introduction to the EVA’84 catalogue

Limerick artist's major award

By LEADER REPORTER

LIMERICK artist, David Lilburn, has won the major graphics award in the Limerick Exhibition of Visual Art which will be opened on Friday, October 19, at 8 p.m. by Minister for Labour, Mr. Ruairi Quinn.

David Lilburn took the graphics award with his piece entitled "From the Forceps to the Chains of Office." He will be presented with a cheque for £500 also. A native of Limerick city, he now lives at Rien Roe, Adare, and works in the communications department at NIHE.

Over £100,000 worth of artistic work from 250 different artists comprising 350 works were submitted for this year's exhibition.

In the end adjudicator, Peter Fuller from Britain selected 55 pieces representing the work of 44 artists to go on exhibition in Limerick.

Declined

He declined, however, to nominate any piece for the £500 sculpture award as he felt that the standard was not high enough.

The patrons open award of £1,000 was won by Downpatrick artist Jim Manley for two paintings, "The Battle of Maghere" and "Sweeney's Flight."

Dublin artist, Camille Souter, won the £500 painting award with her "Over November Fields."

A series of lectures will also take place in conjunction with the exhibition which will be open to the public from October 24 to December 13.

Local artists exhibiting in EVA '84 include: Brenda Andrews, Wolfe Tone Street, Limerick; Michael Fitzpatrick, Newmarket-on-Fergus; Charley Harper, James Savage and James Sheehy, Limerick School of Art and Design; Edmund Leahy, Emly, County Tipperary; Henry Morgan, Cappamore; Tom O'Brien, Rathbane; John O'Donoghue, Cappamore; Richard Slade, Corbally and Lorraine Wall, Ennis.



Peter Fuller, adjudicator, EVA '84.

Artist raps attack attempt

AN award-winning Limerick artist, David Lilburn, yesterday condemned an attempt by a man to destroy an "original piece of art" in the EVA Exhibition currently being staged at the city's art gallery.

Mr. Lilburn won a £500 prize for a monotype drawing in the graphic section of the exhibition. He said that he was "surprised and depressed" by the attack. "If people do not like the idea that sexuality should be dealt with at all the I am not surprised that people react unfavourably to it," stated Mr. Lilburn. He rejected an allegation that his drawing was "pornographic and a disgrace."

The allegation was made by Mr. Richard Coughlan, a Limerick cafe owner, who went to the exhibition and attempted to destroy the painting by smashing the glass frame.

Ald. Jim Kemmy, chairman of the Limerick Corporation Art Gallery Advisory Committee, pointed out that the committee's present policy would not be changed by the incident.

Man attacks 'pornographic' art exhibit

From Arthur Quinlan, in Limerick

AN attempt was made at the Limerick Municipal Art Gallery last night to destroy a controversial graphics exhibit which won for the artist, Mr David Lilburn (34), of Limerick, a prize of £500 in the recent Exhibition of Visual Art.

A visitor to the gallery smashed the glass on the painting and was about to spray it with paint when he was restrained by the chairman of the EVA committee, Mr Hugh Murray.

Later Mr Richard Coughlan (50), a cafe owner, of Nicholas Street, Limerick, who is a collector of historical manuscripts, books and objects of art, told *The Irish Times* that he went deliberately to the gallery to destroy the exhibit.

"It has nothing to do with art," he said, "as it is one of the lowest forms of pornography imaginable." He told gardai, whom he called to the gallery, that it represented a man masturbating, and he wanted the committee arrested on a charge of showing pornography. He also requested that he be arrested on a charge of causing malicious damage so that he might be able to bring to the notice of the court the reason for his act.

David Turner

Cost Examiner