



# Foreword

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THIS VOLUME OF *IRISH ARCHITECTURAL AND DECORATIVE STUDIES* IS PUBLISHED TO coincide with the long-anticipated landmark exhibition – *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840* which opens on St Patrick’s Day 2015 at the Art Institute of Chicago. Curated by Christopher Monkhouse – whose lifelong interest in the art, architecture and decorative arts of Ireland was fostered by his friendship with my parents, Desmond and Mariga Guinness, and with the Knight of Glin – this is the first exhibition to explore so comprehensively the rich and complex art and culture of Ireland in the long eighteenth century. As many of you will know, the show was put together at the Knight’s urgings; he had argued for such a display for many years. It will be a truly sensational affair and will fulfil the Knight’s dream for a ‘major exhibition on Ireland’s decorative arts of the eighteenth century which would ... waken up the world to a staggering array of art that was manufactured in Ireland during this period’. He would no doubt be both surprised and delighted at the scale and ambition of the display: over 300 objects and a floor space of 15,000 square feet (about half the size of Carton House).

Given our important role in the show’s genesis, it is appropriate that the Irish Georgian Society has been closely involved in the organisation of the exhibition. William Laffan, of this parish, has acted as advisor to the show and has co-edited the catalogue, which builds on research published in the pages of this Journal and of its earlier incarnation, *The Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*. This volume of the Journal complements the Art Institute’s own catalogue for the exhibition.

*Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840* takes a firmly internationalist stance, arguing that Irish visual culture must be set in the context of European and North Atlantic economic and artistic networks. Essays in this volume of the Journal reflect this approach, and were specially selected in order to discuss in more detail objects included in the exhibition. Angela Alexander explores the cabinetmaking trade in post-Union Dublin;

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*John Michael Wright (1617-1694), PORTRAIT OF SIR NEIL O’NEILL (d. 1690) (private collection)  
included in the exhibition IRELAND: CROSSROADS OF ART AND DESIGN, 1690-1840 at the Art Institute of Chicago, 2015*

Fiona Ahern chronicles the business of an eighteenth-century Dublin coach manufacturer; Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber describe the rich visual heritage of the celebrated Edgeworth family, while Tom Dunne examines the complex iconography of the Irish harp. In keeping with the international dimension of the exhibition, William Laffan and Brendan Rooney publish a fascinating letter from the Franco-English artist Phillipe de Louthembourg to Jonathan Fisher in Dublin, and Zoë Coleman reflects on the construction of Irish identities at nineteenth-century world expositions.

As well as its special thematic focus, this volume further departs from tradition by inviting the exhibition's curators to select and describe a favourite object from the display: Christopher Monkhouse chose a silver dish ring made by Charles Townsend in Dublin in 1772 (recently acquired by the Art Institute), while Leslie Fitzpatrick unlocks the provenance of a fine Georgian appointment book.

Following recent launches of the Journal hosted by our chapters in Limerick, Cork and London, it is most appropriate that this volume will be launched in Chicago a week after *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840* opens. Sadly, my father Desmond is not well enough to attend, but extends his warm appreciation and thanks to the Art Institute and all the exhibitors. This exhibition can be seen as a culmination of his and the Knight of Glin's researches in Ireland that started over fifty years ago. From their foundation work, many authors and academics have been inspired to collate large amounts of original and diverse research that continues to flourish. It is exciting that this exhibition is being held thousands of miles from Ireland. It is a reflection of Chicago's important place in the Irish world, going back 200 years, touching indeed upon the edge of the 'long eighteenth century'. I sense that several long-term cultural circles have now been closed to perfection, and I want to thank the Art Institute, Christopher Monkhouse and his team – notably Leslie Fitzpatrick – and the contributors to this Journal.

Back in Dublin, in April we will be holding a major conference on subjects arising from the Chicago exhibition, and, specifically, collecting and the country house. The event will explore how collections were formed and subsequently dispersed, and asks what should be done, if anything, when major country house collections are threatened with sale.

I am delighted to welcome the remarkable achievement of the five-volume Yale / Royal Irish Academy *Art and Architecture of Ireland*, truly a landmark of scholarship. Congratulations to all involved. Also recently published is the handsome and scholarly volume, *Three Centuries of Irish Art*, edited by Peter Murray, highlighting the great depths of the collection of the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork.

Finally, I regret to note that Conor Lucey, who has been an exemplary editor of this Journal, is stepping down. I speak for our supporters worldwide in thanking Conor for his diligence, knowledge and good sense. I am, however, delighted that the distinguished scholar of the Irish landscape, Finola O'Kane, has agreed to take up the baton. This Journal will be safe in her hands.