



*Horse Mirrored, Cow Girls; Sheep Boys (1995), bronze sculpture by Barry Flanagan at Hugh Lane Gallery.*



## an artful tour of dublin

a journey from the idyllic county wicklow into the heart of dublin promises art, literature, beauty and more

BY CHRISTOPHER HANN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DARREN MCLOUGHLIN

One evening this past spring, a few hundred art lovers gathered, wine glasses in hand, at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, a formal 17th-century compound in Dublin's west end originally built as a royal hospital. The occasion was the opening of "Cut-Outs and Cut-Ups," an exhibition of collages and other works of art produced, a century apart, by Hans Christian Andersen and William S. Burroughs.

Huh?

The Danish author of everyone's favorite fairy tales and the Pied Piper of America's Beat Generation hardly seem to have much in common. And perhaps that's the point, for these days the art scene in Dublin is full of surprises. Although it's not easy competing for attention in art circles when you share a continent with the likes of Paris, Rome, London and Madrid, Dublin today is more than holding its own. The gallery scene is thriving, and this summer the city's biggest museums promise some blockbuster special exhibitions. "The environment for art in Ireland has obviously been terrific the past 10 years," says Josephine Kelliher, the owner of Rubicon Gallery, a contemporary art venue in the city center.

To help you see for yourself, we constructed three daytrips that will guide you from pocket-size galleries to Ireland's most venerable museums. And to ensure that you experience some of this magnificent country along the way, we launched each trip from The Ritz-Carlton Powerscourt, the newly opened Palladian estate less than 15 miles south of Dublin in Enniskerry, County Wicklow, in the shadow of the Great Sugar Loaf mountain.

### THE GALLERIES/BY THE SEA

**The journey:** This drive takes you to the east coast, overlooking the Irish Sea and Killiney Bay. You'll drive along impossibly narrow, serpentine roads, high above the water, to the lovely medieval town of Dalkey, whose steep hills contain a colorful assortment of spectacular homes, including one owned by U2's Bono.

*From Enniskerry, head east to Bray, then north along R119. Past the town of Shankill, R119 turns right onto Seafield Road, known locally as Coast Road.*

**The destination:** Be sure to stop in Dalkey, home to several small but worthy galleries, including Dalkey Arts Gallery

getaway



(19 Railway Road; 3531 284-9663), the Tramyard Gallery (14 Castle St.; 3531 235-1346) and the James Gallery (7 Railway Road; 3531 677-4599), the elder among them, founded in 1984 (five years ago, owner Pat Hopper opened a sister location in Dublin). All three specialize in Irish artists. Dalkey Arts sells the colorful, distorted cityscapes of Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin. The Tramyard sells charcoal drawings of horses by Paddy Lennon, considered Ireland's foremost equine artist.

You could easily spend a full day in Dalkey, as this sophisticated small town is filled with shops, pubs, restaurants and its own 15th-century castle. But Dublin beckons. From Dalkey, take the N11 north and you can reach the city center in 30 minutes. Dublin is an eminently walkable town — and tricky to negotiate by car if you're unaccustomed to driving on the left side of the road — so find a parking

shopping mall (see sidebar); and the Rubicon, across from St. Stephens Green (see sidebar). All present solo exhibits on a regular basis.

**THE ART OF THE WRITTEN WORD/BY THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**The journey:** This roundabout route to Dublin takes you through old Irish countryside, past small towns with small-town names like Stepaside and Ballyboden, and into the expanding suburbs of Dublin.

Irish monks. Two rooms of displays trace a path through Irish history as chronicled by a formidable roster of poets, dramatists, journalists and novelists, including Nobel Prize winners William Butler Yeats (1923), George Bernard Shaw ('25), Samuel Beckett ('69) and Seamus Heaney ('95). Upstairs, in the Gallery of Writers, you'll find dozens of portraits and sculptures of Irish writers, from Jonathan Swift to Oscar Wilde to James Joyce and beyond.

From the Writers Museum, walk back down O'Connell Street (you'll pass the jaunty statue of Joyce at Earl Street) and across the river to 400-year-old Trinity College, which counts among its distinguished alumni Swift, Wilde and Beckett. Inside

museum dedicated to world cultures and religions. (If your feet are begging for a rest by now, take a seat on one of the benches next to the circular lawn outside the library.) Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, born in New York in 1875, made his fortune in mining. But his passion was collecting gems of another sort: ancient European and Persian manuscripts, books, bibles and finely wrought examples of calligraphy. One such manuscript, "The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra," was written on palm leaves in India in the 11th or 12th century. His collection of Biblical papyri dates to the second century. His 260 Korans, many



Left to right: The Dublin Writers Museum; Rubicon Gallery; and The National Gallery of Ireland.

garage and set forth on foot.

The full roster of Dublin's galleries is far too plentiful to list here, but we'll begin at the Oriel Gallery (17 Clare St.; 3531 676-3410), just around the corner from the National Gallery of Ireland. Founded 40 years ago by Oliver Nulty — his son, Mark, runs it today — the Oriel advertises as Ireland's oldest independent art gallery. Within its three tastefully appointed floors have hung works by such luminaries of Irish art as Jack Butler Yeats, Paul Henry, Walter Osborne and Sir John Lavery. The Oriel has also cultivated its own roster of Irish artists, among them the late Markey Robinson of Belfast, whose long affiliation was documented in a book Nulty published in 1997, *Markey: 30 Years at the Oriel Gallery*.

Other Dublin galleries worth noting (and within close proximity) are the Green on Red (26-28 Lombard St. East; 3531 671-3414); the Douglas Hyde at Trinity College (see sidebar); the Solomon in the Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, a tony

*From Enniskerry, head north on R117 toward An-naghaskin. Just past Stepaside, turn left on Blackglen Road, then right on Grange Road, to R113 heading west. This will take you to Naas Road (R110), which leads directly to Dublin's west end.*

**The destination:** There may be no other city in the world that so reveres the written word, so why not a Dublin Writers Museum (3531 872-2077)? A restored Georgian mansion at 18 Parnell Square, just a 10-minute walk up wide O'Connell Street from the River Liffey, the museum honors a literary tradition that traces its roots to sixth-century poets whose work was preserved in manuscripts copied by early

the Old Library (3531 896-1661), the second-floor Long Room is famous for its barrel-vaulted ceiling and 38 marble busts. The floor-to-ceiling shelves in the Long Room hold 200,000 of Trinity's oldest books, but it is a single volume that draws the crowds.

The Book of Kells, completed about A.D. 800, is considered one of the world's most magnificent illuminated books. A manuscript of the four gospels written in Latin on vellum, its colorful pages contain intricately drawn figures and elaborated text. Visit during off-peak hours to get a good look at the two volumes normally on display.

From the Trinity campus, it's a short walk to Dublin Castle and the Chester Beatty Library (see sidebar), Ireland's foremost

of them painstakingly illuminated, comprise one of the largest such collections outside the Middle East.

Beatty moved to Ireland in 1950. When he died in 1968, he left his collection — some 66,000 pieces — to the people of Ireland. The happy result is the Chester Beatty Library.

**THE MASTERS/BY THE MOTORWAY**

**The journey:** No fooling around on this most direct route to Dublin. The itinerary calls for a full day of browsing through two of Ireland's most prominent repositories of art. 'Tis best not to dally.

*From Powerscourt, pick up R117 in Enniskerry heading east to N11. Turn onto N11 north — it will change to M11, then back to N11 — and follow it into Dublin's city center, about a 30-minute drive.*





James Gallery  
in Dalkey.

**The destination:** This year the Hugh Lane Gallery (also known as the Dublin City Gallery; see sidebar) celebrates its 100th anniversary in grand fashion. Starting June 26, the Gallery will present the original collection of Impressionist paintings donated by Lane, a champion of Irish art at the turn of the 20th century. Although Lane's bequest of 39 paintings was intended to inspire the founding of a modern art museum in the city, this summer's special exhibit represents the first time all the works will hang in Dublin since 1913, including Manet's *La Musique aux Tuileries* and Renoir's *Les Parapluies*.

You can't leave the Lane Gallery without peeking in on Francis Bacon's studio. The eccentric artist, born in Dublin in 1909, worked most of his adult life in

London, in a space of unsurpassable messiness — just as he liked it. When Bacon died in Madrid in 1992, his sole heir donated the studio and its contents to the Hugh Lane Gallery. The museum catalogued the contents — some 7,300 paint-splattered items in all — and reproduced the clutter in its entirety, giving visitors a rare insight into the artist's workspace. "I feel at home here in this chaos," Bacon once said, "because chaos suggests images to me."

Don't get lost in the clutter, though, because your next stop is the National Gallery of Ireland (see sidebar). You could spend an entire day at the museum on Merrion Row, whose collection encompasses masterful works from the 14th to the 20th centuries, including paintings by Caravaggio, Monet and Picasso. The National Gallery houses the city's most comprehensive collection of iconic Irish artists. An entire gallery is

devoted to Jack Butler Yeats, the brother of the Nobel laureate and Ireland's most acclaimed artist of the 20th century. Note, especially, Francis Darby's *The Opening of the Sixth Seal*, an 1828 statement on slavery in the form of an apocalyptic scene, and the exquisite landscapes of Thomas Roberts, the 18th-century Irishman who compiled an astonishing body of work before his death in 1778, two months shy of his 30th birthday.

The sheer sweep of the National Gallery's collection is unmatched throughout Dublin. If there is one venue not to be overlooked on your artful tour of the city, this is it. ●

Although it's not easy competing for attention in art circles when you share a continent with the likes of Paris, Rome, London and Madrid, Dublin today is more than holding its own.

#### a dublin art crawl

Here's a sampling of the special art exhibits you'll find in Dublin this summer.

#### CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY

"Arts of the Book," a new permanent exhibit on the reopened first-floor gallery, features illuminated European manuscripts, Chinese jade books and Japanese woodblock prints (Dublin Castle; 3531 407-0759).

#### DOUGLAS HYDE GALLERY

June 6–July 24, a solo exhibit by the American abstract painter Thomas Nozkowski (Trinity College; 3531 896-1116).

#### HUGH LANE GALLERY

June 26–Sept. 14, "Hugh Lane Centenary," bringing together 39 Impressionist works from the original Hugh Lane bequest for the first time in Dublin since 1913 (Charlemont House, Parnell Square North; 3531 222-5550).

#### IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Through June 29, "Cut-Outs and Cut-Ups," a collection of collages and other works by the 19th-century Dutch writer Hans Christian Andersen and the 20th-century American writer William S. Burroughs.

June 25–Sept. 8, "Miguel Barceló: The African Work," an exhibit inspired by the artist's travels to Mali, in West Africa.

Through Aug. 4, "10,000 to 50: Contemporary Art from the Members of Business to Arts," celebrating 20 years of support for the visual arts in Ireland.

Through Oct. 12, "Ulla von Brandenburg: Whose Beginning Is Not, Nor End Cannot Be," an exhibit by the German artist who works in a variety of media, from drawing to video to performance (Royal Hospital, Military Road; 3531 612-9900).

#### THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND

Through Aug. 10, "Impressionist Interiors," more than 45 paintings and drawings by artists such as Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas and Cassatt depicting the rise of modern apartment living in 1860s Paris (Merrion Square West; 3531 661-5133).

#### RUBICON GALLERY

June 19–Aug. 16, "Point of No Return," an exhibit by six contemporary artists (10 St. Stephens Green; 3531 670-8055).

#### SOLOMON GALLERY

Through June 17, a solo exhibit by the Irish painter and sculptor Margaret Egan (Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, South William Street; 3531 679-4237).