



## Artwork of the Month

Patrick Hennessy RHA (1915-80)

*Bird Still Life*, 1973

Oil on canvas

63 x 87 cm

Donated to UCC by Marie Cavanagh, 1995

*Bird Still Life* can surely not have escaped the attention of anyone checking in or out a book at the Boole Library Customer Information Desk. It is an extraordinarily compelling work. The viewer is instantly embroiled in a process of recollection, attempting to deduce the ancestry of this fusion of styles and inspirations. The picture plays with the traditions of trompe l'oeil painting and the popular still life genre, in which the bird classically appears as dead game. The presence of apples before the theatrical backdrop of a downy sky recalls the surrealist painter Magritte, although the work lacks the humour of the Surrealist. Indeed if one were to look for a meaning beyond these inanimate objects, the bird perching fleetingly on the rim of the bowl, the ageing apples and the black cloth all point to a gloomy emphasis on the transience and brevity of life. Only the strangely inert sky offers an artificial sense of light relief.

The remarkable draughtsmanship and handling of paint of the Cork-born artist, Patrick Hennessy, cannot fail to impress. Hennessy takes great pleasure in depicting different textural qualities, intentionally selecting a glazed porcelain bowl in which there are reflections from a nearby window, polished apples with yellowing skin, intricate embroidery and the fraying edges of a piece of cloth and the detailed grain of the table. The still life is meticulously painted with a photographic degree of realism, a 'cold precision' (Terence de Vere White), that is unnerving. 'The resemblance of the whole arrangement to a photographer's studio is part of the game of teasing expectations of fact in such a truthful looking painting.' (UCC Art Collection Catalogue, William Gallagher).

*Bird Still Life* will be in the Glucksman in an exhibition of work from the UCC Art Collection from February to April.

There is currently a small oil painting by Hennessy entitled *The Marrakech Roses* on display in the O'Rahilly Building as a part of *Art on the Move*, an exhibition of artworks from the CIE Collection. Many of the paintings, including work by Maurice MacGonigal, William J. Leech, Gerald Dillon, Patrick Collins and Norah McGuinness, have never been on public display. This exhibition will close on 28 February.

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