

Conversations at the Casino

An Exhibition of Portraits from the State Art Collection

Casino at Marino | 30 June to 30 October, 2016

Conversations at the Casino is an exhibition that features a selection of portraits from the State Art Collection which is managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW). The exhibition on temporary display in the Casino features 47 portraits by 32 artists. There are historic and contemporary paintings, original prints, sculpture and drawings on display. The portraits are of figures from different spheres of Irish life - the arts, sport and politics. The included artworks span five centuries - from a School of Rembrandt portrait dating to the 1630s to portraits created in 2016. The first venue for the exhibition of portraits was Farmleigh Gallery where over 80 artworks were on display. The exhibition will travel to various OPW historic properties over the next few months in different formats and it will change to suit the scale of the individual interiors.

The Casino is the first historic property to participate in the touring exhibition diary. The curator's concept is the creation of an imaginary dialogue taking place between the people in the portraits when the Casino is closed to visitors. The exhibition offers visitors an imagining of conversations that might take place between figures in Irish history such as Lord Chesterfield, Lord Edward FitzGerald and Henry Grattan; between Patrick and William Pearse and the eight women in David Rooney's series of 1916 prints; between Roy Keane, Aristotle and GB Shaw, and between all the other diverse figures who are gathered in the Casino, as well as the artists who created their individual portraits.

Works by many well-known Irish artists are included in the exhibition such as Louis le Brocquy, Rita Duffy, James Hanley, Margaret Corcoran and Brian Fay alongside works created by artists in earlier stages of their careers.

Portraiture is a distinct artistic genre. The capturing of a good likeness is traditionally considered the key to what makes a successful portrait. Within the genre, there are different styles of portraiture - formal portraits that are painted to mark the sitter's political significance or social status and portraits that are traditionally commissioned to mark lines of succession. Other portraits are informal or intimate, commissioned as mementoes of loved ones, such as portrait miniatures.

The impact of the invention of photography on portraiture was significant as it became possible for people to obtain visual records outside the discipline of the commissioned portrait. However, un-commissioned portraits created by artists as artworks in their own

right, independent of the sitters' identities, have always existed and continue to do so. Portraiture has remained a dynamic art form because it is a genre that is about much more than just capturing resemblance. It is about the exchange that takes place between the artist and the sitter. A strong portrait demonstrates the artist's ability to explore the essence of character through their own unique creative vision using their technical skills in whatever artistic medium they choose to work in.

Conversations at the Casino brings together a diverse range of artistic styles and offers visitors to the exhibition an opportunity to explore the genre of portraiture as they wander from room to room in the Casino. Visitors can imagine conversations taking place between the sitters and the artists - across art forms and across time. Following on from other recent contemporary art projects at the Casino, this exhibition enables visitors to explore one of Europe's finest 18th century neo-classical buildings in a unique way.

There are over 16,000 historic and contemporary artworks in the OPW managed State Art Collection on display in over 400 locations nationwide. Over 90% of the collection is on view to people who visit and work in public buildings. It is the most widely dispersed art collection in the country. Portraits in Leinster House, Dublin Castle, Royal Hospital Kilmainham and Áras an Uachtaráin are on permanent view to visitors to those buildings, as are the portraits in OPW's national historic properties.

We invite you to explore the exhibition, to interpret the portraits in your own way and to join in the conversation.

If you have any queries about the State Art Collection, please email artmanagement@opw.ie