Art, antiques & collecting

Three Paul Henry paintings to lead Whyte's sale

Sylvia Thompson

Irish art will be to the fore over the coming weeks with sales at Whyte's, deVeres and Adam's

Paul Henry, Harry Kronen, Nano Reid and John Shinnors are just some of the names whose work will appear at Whyte's upcoming important Irish art sale, the first of this year's Irish art auctions.

"Usually, our auction coincides with Adam's and deVeres and people come in to view all the art in one day, but this year, we're the first," says Peter Whyte.

The Whyte's sale, on March 3rd at 6pm in the Freemason's Hall on Molesworth Street, Dublin, will be followed by deVeres' Irish art auction on March 25th, with Adam's taking place a day later.

Whyte says he expects the Paul Henry paintings – of which there are three – to be among the most in demand, and they are expected to sell well. Henry's west of Ireland landscapes are some of the best-known Irish paintings and fetch the highest prices.

The painting, Lake and Mountains in Connemara (estimate €250,000-€350,000) has not been for sale since 1979, at which time it sold for €2,000.

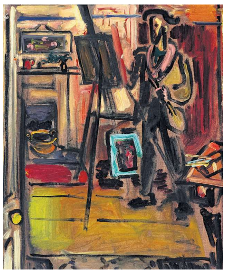
Whyte also points to Through the Door (€10,000-€15,000) as an important work by Nano Reid.

"Reid's paintings have been increasing in value in the last few years and this one is a portrait of the artist George Campbell in his studio, which was shown in the 1950 Venice Biennale," he says. That year was the first time that Ireland sent entries to this international art exhibition, and 12 works by Nano Reid and 12 works by Norah McGuinness were put on show.

Reid and McGuinness were prominent modernist painters at the time, exhibiting regularly with the Society of Dublin Painters and at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art. Their work had also been show in Britain and France, and in the Exhibition of Contemporary Irish Paintings, which toured the United States in 1950.

Speaking more generally, Whyte says that landscapes without figures in them are less popular now than they used to be. A small painting by Sean McSweeney, entitled Yellow has an estimate of €1,500-€2,000, while a Maurice McGonigal piece, entitled Kerry Sunset, has an estimate of €2,500-€3,500. Yet, he notes that more unusual night-time scenes of the west of Ireland by Irish artist Ciaran Clear, such as Moonlight (€4,000-€6,000), have increased in value in the past few years.

A bronze sculpture entitled Shell (€1,500-€2,000) by Sonja Landweer, the Dutch artist who lived most of her life in Ireland, is one of a range of sculptures in the Whyte's auction.



Clockwise from above: Mountains in Connemara by Paul Henry (€250,000-€300,000); Through the Door by Nano Reid. (€10,000-€15,000); Sir John Lavery's painting of his wife Hazel and daughter Eileen in Boden Hall, Cheshire

Lost landscapes

Over at deVeres, a declining love for certain types of landscape paintings has also been noted.

"There has been a move away from traditional landscape paintings by artists such as James Humbert Craig and Frank McKelvey," says Rory Guthrie from deVeres, which will host its first Irish Art valuation day in several years at its premises on Kildare Street, Dublin, tomorrow, from noon to 3pm.

Guthrie says new collectors are more interested in contemporary living artists such as John Shinnors, Donald Teskey and John Doherty.

"The 19th- and 20th-century landscape paintings were more suited to period homes with antique furniture. But new collectors want modern paintings which mirror their modern interiors," says Guthrie.

He expects that 20-30 people will come along for a chat tomorrow to discuss potential sales of their paintings.

"We decided to hold it on a Sunday so people would be free to come. But it's quite informal. People don't need to bring in their paintings as we are happy to talk through them and arrange to go out to see works afterwards," he says.

Nicholas Gore-Grimes, art director at Adam's Fine Art Auctioneers, says that while the same artists crop up again and again at auctions, clients are more discerning now.

"People are more interested in quality works by these artists," he says, echoing the same names cited by Guthrie. He is however, also conscious that the work of many living artists doesn't yet appear in the secondary auction market.

"Demand will be there for artists such as Diana Copperwhite when they do come up for auction in the next few years," he says. He also mentions Willie McKeon (1962-2011) as an Irish artist whose work sells well at auction.

Adam's will be holding valuation days for Irish art, antiques, jewellery and watches in Cork (February 27th), Dublin (February 28th) and Belfast (March 10th) in advance of their forthcoming auctions.

The Lavery family

Finally, the English fine art auctioneers Sworders in Stansted Mountfitchet, is selling a portrait by renowned Irish artist Sir John Lavery (1856-1941), as part of the sale of the contents of the Cheshire country house Boden Hall on March 4th.

Entitled La Belle Mère (£180,000-£250,000/€216,000-€300,000), the oil on canvas is a double portrait of Lady Hazel Lavery, his American wife, and his daughter Eileen, from his first marriage to Kathleen MacDermott.

Growing up in boomtown Chicago, Hazel Martyn was considered to be the most beautiful girl in the midwest, and her portrait later appeared on Irish bank notes for much of the 20th century. Passionate about politics, she is also remembered for her friendship with the Irish politician Michael Collins.

The painting was last on the market more than three decades ago.

Whytes.ie; sworder.co.uk

What did it sell for?

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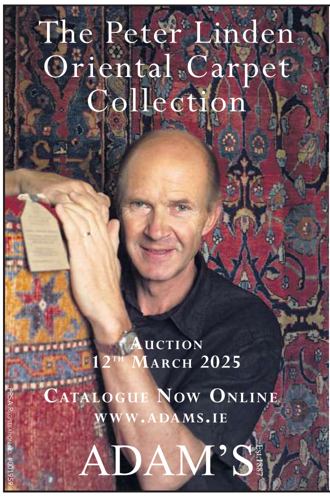
Auction house: O'Reilly's

Irish school, 18th-century, Portrait of a lady and child
Hammer price: £7,680 (€9,231)
Auction house: Bonhams



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