



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

Irish Studies

Course Syllabus

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SS118 INTRODUCTION TO ART IN IRELAND

6 ECTS/3 US Semester Credits

COURSE OBJECTIVE

Ireland has a rich and vibrant artistic heritage, extending back to c. 3500 BC; this course traces the development of Irish art beginning with decorated megaliths and the exquisite corpus of Irish Bronze Age gold work, before turning its attention to the introduction of Celtic or La Tène art styles into Ireland around the 4th century BC. Following the Roman conquest of western Europe, the Classical roots of La Tène art re-emerge as a dominant element in Irish art of the first few centuries AD and continue, as a core element in the motif-book of early Christian art, in to the 7th and 8th century. Dominated by fantastical animals, Germanic art of Dark Age Europe was also incorporated into Insular art styles. An appreciation of style, symbolism and iconography in Early Christian art is integral to this module and treated in relation to the sublime artistic achievements of the 'Golden Age' of Irish art such as illuminated manuscripts, ecclesiastical metalwork such as the Ardagh Chalice and Irish high crosses. In addition to its aesthetic appeal, in revealing cross-cultural influences and the more arcane concerns of its audience, early Irish art provides a unique window on the past that can be explored through iconographical analysis.

This course includes a workshop, a guided Field Trip to the National Museum and the Book of Kells Exhibit in Dublin. This is an integral part of the course where students will have the opportunity to view the objects they will be studying 'in the flesh' as well as a range of comparanda.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. In-depth knowledge of Irish art from the prehistoric period to the 'Golden Age' of the 8th century AD
2. Understanding of the broader European context of Irish art during this period
3. Understanding of the role of symbolism and iconography in Irish art of the period through case studies

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 Decoding early Irish art; an introduction to iconographical analysis

Passage grave art: The earliest art from Ireland

FIELD SEMINAR: NATIONAL MUSEUM (Guided tour of exhibits relevant to the course) & **BOOK OF KELLS EXHIBITION**

Week 2 Bronze Age goldwork

La Tène art: The earliest art of the Celts

The art of pagan, Celtic Ireland

The Iron Age to Early Christian transition

Week 3 Understanding Early Christian art

Week 4 The symbolism of the Ballinderry Brooch – a case study

Early Irish ecclesiastical art: monks, pilgrimage and continental influences Introduction to Germanic and Byzantine art

Case studies from the 'Golden Age' of Irish Art – the Tara Brooch and the Ardagh Chalice

‘The Work of Angels’: illuminated manuscripts
Irish High Crosses – origins, influences and iconography

COURSE TEXTS

Essential Reading

A course Reading Pack, containing both short articles, book chapters and e-books, will be provided in pdf format on Blackboard.

Additional Recommended Reading

- Bourke C. 1995. From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Insular Art held in the Ulster Museum, Belfast, 7-11 April 1994. HMSO Belfast.
- Cahill, M. 1983. Irish Prehistoric Goldworking. In M. Ryan (ed.), *Treasures of Ireland. Irish Art 300BC – 1500 AD*, 18-23. Dublin. Gavin, F. (2013) 'Insular Military Style Silver Pins in Late Iron Age Ireland', in F. Hunter and K. Painter (eds), *Late Roman Silver Within and Beyond the Frontier: the Traprain Treasure in Context*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 415-426.
- Hawkes, J. (ed.) 2013, *Making Histories: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Insular Art*, Stamford: Paul Watkins.
- Henderson, G. 1987. *From Durrow to Kells: The Insular Gospel-books 650-800*. London.
- Hourihane C. 2001. *From Ireland Coming: Irish art from the early Christian to the late Gothic period and its European context*. Princeton.
- Jones, C. 2007. *Temples of Stone: Exploring the Megalithic Tombs of Ireland*. Dublin
- Megaw, R and Megaw, V. 1989. *Celtic Art. From its beginnings to the book of Kells*. London.
- Moss, R. 2007. *Making and Meaning: Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Insular Art held in Trinity College Dublin 25-28 August 2005*, 167-184. Four Courts Press, Dublin.
- Newman, C., Gavin, F. and Mannion, M. (eds) 2017. *Islands in a Global Context. Proceedings of the Seventh International Art Conference, held in the National University of Ireland, Galway, 16-20th July, 2014*, Dublin: Fourcourts Press.
- Spearman R.M. and Higgitt J. 1993. *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Insular Art, Scotland 1991*. Edinburgh.
- Stout, G. 2002. *Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne*. Cork.
- Wallace, P.F. and Ó Floinn, R. (eds.) 2002. *Treasures of the National Museum of Ireland*. Dublin.
- Youngs, S. (ed.) *The Work of Angels, Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork, 6th-9th centuries AD*. London

REQUIREMENTS FOR CREDITS

1. Attendance and participation at all the scheduled lectures **and** seminars.
2. One essay of 1,500 words minimum on subject assigned by the course tutor.
3. Slide test and MCQ examination of the material covered in the scheduled lectures **and** seminars.

COURSE PROFESSOR

Dr Mags Mannion

Dr Mags Mannion holds a doctorate in archaeology from the National University of Ireland, Galway where she currently lectures with the Department of Geography and Archaeology. Her research interests include the art and artisans of the Iron Age and Early Christian and Viking periods in Ireland. Dr Mannion has presented her research at both national and international conferences and has published a number of papers on her research and published a book *Glass beads from Early Medieval Ireland: Classification, Dating, Social performance*. Mags also co-edited the conference proceedings volume from the seventh international conference on Insular art held at NUI Galway, *Islands in a Global Context. Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Insular Art*, held at the National University of Ireland, Galway, 16-20 July 2014. She regularly participates in Irish heritage events presenting demonstrations and workshops on medieval bead making, body ornament and symbolism and performance.