

City shows off its art treasure

By **CLAIRE C. DOYLE**

CURRENTLY on show in the main hall of the building on Pery Square is the permanent collection of the city art gallery. While it is, as its name suggests, permanently in the gallery, it is not always so conveniently hung for inspection.

Included in the collection is the famous "Chairplanes" oil painting by Jack B Yeats, and "Fields by the Sea" by the internationally renowned artist, William J Leech - creator of the much loved "Goose Girl", "Convent Garden" and "Umbrella", all of which hang in the national gallery.

A dark, almost angry looking portrait of Sean Keating, whose own painting of "Simple Folk" is also part of the permanent collection, currently hangs in pride of place in the gallery. Executed in just one sitting by his friend William Orpen, the subject with piercing, black eyes could almost be said to be Emily Bronte's Heathcliff, were it not for his drawn and haggard figure. While some critics of the portrait complain that the hands are unfinished and amateurish,

it can be argued that this feature merely adds to the strength of the technique used.

An exceptionally attractive painting in the collection is "Christmas Gifts" by Margaret Clarke, which was given as a gift itself to the gallery in 1948 by the artist.

Depicting a young girl with eyes like pools and bobbed hair, clutching a dollar bill, the painting is given life and interest by the addition of a suspended wooden aeroplane, a clay, mossy pot of geraniums, and a stack of hard-back novels. The bubbled, faded wall-paper in the background and shiny, velvet curtains, create atmosphere while also adding texture.

A striking, landscape oil-painting of Powerscourt by George Barret (1728(32) - 1784) was acquired by the gallery in 1948 and remains an important painting in the collection.

Depicting the scene of the enormous waterfall, there is a remarkable contrast between with light sky and flaming clouds with the surrounding hillside woods and gloomy valley.

Two paintings with similar styles, in so far as the individual subjects in each are heavily outlined in black, are Evie Hone's "A Walk in the Woods at Marley" and Grace Henry's

"Top of the Hill". Both are oils and were painted in the early decades of the century. The distinctive styles in each lend an air of graphic art.

One of the most cherished paintings in the collection is the portrait of local author, Kate O'Brien. Painted by James Sleator, it was donated to the gallery in 1965 by Kate herself.

The collection will remain where it is for a while, and so a visit to see our city's collection is worth while and strongly recommended. Glossy post-cards of a number of the paintings have recently been made available and can be purchased at the gallery. While entry is free, donations are naturally much needed if the gallery is to continue and improve with time. A quaint clay house on the right near the door is the novel receptacle for fiscal support.



Margaret Clarke's Christmas Gifts, an oil-on-linen painting, a gift to Limerick from the artist.

HSI COLLEGE



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