

Major new additions to Plassey's national collection

By **DYMPHNA BRACKEN**

WORK by local artist Tom Shortt is among the 15 new self-portraits represented in the national self-portrait collection, at the university.

The collection also includes a linecut from Jim Sheehy who teaches in the Limerick School of Art and Design.

Mr Sheehy studied and worked as a print technician in New York for 14 years before returning to this country.

The new works bring the total number of self-portraits in the collection to 210, an increase of 87 since the first volume of the catalogue was published in 1989.

The collection is one of only two public self-portrait collections in Europe, the other being at the world-famous Uffizi gallery in Florence.

The self portraits have been executed in a wide variety of materials including stained glass, sculpture, collage, oils, photography and works on paper.

There is equal variety in the artists' approach; some have chosen the tradition from of head and shoulders while others have attempted to abandon their external features in order to portray themselves in more abstract terms.



At the launch of the new additions to the national self-portrait collection at the university were; Philip Flanagan, chatting to local artist Samuel Walsh.

The 1994 additions include works by Tom Shortt, John Breakey, Anne Donnelly, Celia Harrison, Patrick Hennessy, Fergal MacCabe, Martin MacKe-

own, Mark pepper, Leo Whelan and Mexican born, Alphonso Montreal.

Mr Shortt, whose photographs of Limerick were shown in the city art gallery,

in 1991 has donated a black and white photograph entitled: 'Self-portrait with Bishops and Priests Thurles'.

The only piece of sculpture this year is a bronze head of artist Philip Flanagan.

His commissions include the memorial to the eleven people who died during the remembrance day bombing in Enniskillen.

He has also sculpted portraits of many well-known Irish personalities, among them Charles Haughey, Seamus Heaney and Dave Boy McAuley.

As always the artists have risen to the challenge of making a self-portrait in a variety of different ways.

James Hanley has depicted himself under water; Rosaleen Davey has painted herself in the man-

ner of an early renaissance portrait, and Chris Wilson has included in his picture many of the themes which have preoccupied him as an artist living and working in northern Ireland.

The national self-portrait collection was established in 1977 when the university purchased 15 portraits from the late John Kneafsey, a manager with the Irish Independent and an enthusiastic collector.

Since 1982, the university has annually invited Irish artists to contribute self-portraits to the collection resulting in a unique record of the visual arts in Ireland.

The board of trustees is composed of various distinguished members from the arts world. Among them are; the director of the national gallery of Ireland, the keeper of the Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts, the directors of the Arts Council of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the president of the Royal Ulster Academy of Arts and the director of the Ulster Museum, under the chairmanship of the president of the university, Dr Ed Walsh.

The board has not established guidelines that might artificially inhibit, but has sought to bring together a collection which reflects the spectrum of the visual arts on the island.

Over the years further additions are carefully introduced and the self-portraits of noted deceased artists are acquired as they become available.

Mostly contemporary, the collection also includes works from the past; these are mainly from the early part of this century although a portrait by the landscape artist John Butts, dates back to around 1760.



At the new additions launch to the national self-portrait collection at the university was Jim Sheehy, lecturer Limerick School of Art and Design.