

In the showcase are examples of glass, silver, porcelain and linen damask. The long tradition of fine metal working can be seen in examples of pre-historical gold jewellery, excavated in Northern Ireland, in the silver salver, made in 1715 for a County Down family (Arms of Savage and Hall), and in a selection of jewellery made during the last year at the Ulster College of Art and Design. There are two coloured glass decanters, made in Belfast in the early 19th century and two engraved drinking glasses, bearing the inscription "Commemorating King William III and the Revolution of 1688" and "The immortal memorary". The taller glass is mid-eighteenth century: the smaller one is rather later and shows how eighteenth century traditions and motifs were carried on into the next century. The tradition of fine craftsmanship and delicate detail is seen again in the example of Belleek porcelain, dating from the end of the nineteenth century. Manufacture started in 1858 and the factory, which is still in existence today, soon became famous for the production of porcelain of exceptional thinness and delicacy of detail and colour. All the finer work was, and is, produced entirely by hand. Another industrial art demanding precision and care is linen damask. The example on show was hand-woven in Strabane in 1812. The linen industry was well-established in Northern Ireland by the early eighteenth century, and still flourishes today. The Museum has an extensive collection of linen damask and textile machinery, of Irish lace, crochet and embroidery. A reference collection of Irish furniture has recently been started and already includes several important specimens.

We hope that you may come to Belfast and see the rest of the collections, including Archaeology, Local History, Technology and Natural Sciences.

THE ULSTER MUSEUM is a National Museum for Northern Ireland and its collections represent all aspects of our life, our history and our culture.

The first museum in Belfast was founded in 1821 by the Belfast Natural History Society and the original building of 1830 is still standing. The City Art Gallery was opened in 1890, and the Museum annexe in 1892. The first section of the new City Museum and Art Gallery was opened in 1929 and after the last war, two new museums were founded, the Ulster Folk Museum (1958) and the Transport Museum (1962).

The Belfast Museum became the Ulster Museum in 1962, when the Northern Ireland Government assumed responsibility for it. A new building programme was immediately launched, and the extension to the Museum is due to open in the early 1970's. Currently, the time of most of the staff is devoted to preparing collections and displays for the "Big Day". There are departments of Antiquities, Local History and Technology, Natural History and Art. They all specialize in Irish and Ulster material against a background of more general reference collections. At this stage in the Museum's history, the establishment of organised National Collections is of paramount importance and much of our work is devoted to acquisition and preparation of exhibits.

THE ART COLLECTION specializes in Contemporary Art from all over the world, in Irish art of all periods, and in seventeenth century Dutch, Flemish and Italian painting. There are also collections of costume, linen damask, tapestries, and of eighteenth century Irish furniture, silver and glass. There are also collections of watercolours and ceramics. Exhibitions play an important part in our activities.

The present selection of exhibits comprises seven paintings from our Contemporary Collection, a more traditional painting, and some examples of craftsmanship, ranging from the Pre-Christian era to the present day. The

1. "Portrait of César" by the Dutch artist, Karel Appel, is a portrait in a very modern idiom, but none-the-less recognisable as a picture of a particular person. The other works are all abstract: the purest and most classical in style is
2. Max Bill's "Condensation towards Yellow". Bill is a Swiss artist and his work is probably better known on the continent than it is here. He studied at the Bauhaus from 1927-1929: although the work on exhibition here was painted as recently as 1965, it forms an important link with the early development of the Modern Movement in art.

Another artist of the same generation, who has worked mostly abroad, is the Hungarian artist Victor Vasarely. He was born in Hungary, but now works and exhibits in Paris, and although belonging to an older generation of artists, is still extremely influential among younger painters and is closely associated with the development of "Op Art". In the last decade, he has shown pictures in Buenos Aires, Paris, Caracas, Cologne, Milan, London, New York and Helsinki.

3. "Geta" is composed entirely in whites, blacks and greys. The artist manages to create a feeling of uncertainty about the plane of the picture. After long inspection it no longer appears flat, shapes project themselves and recede, so that the flatness of the canvas is overcome, and it is this contrast between the known fact that the canvas is flat, and the way in which it seems to move backwards and forwards and re-arrange itself, which makes the picture so exciting. Max Bill used colour to achieve the same end and in his picture, the cool colours seem to come forward and the bright hot colours to recede in the most unexpected way. Vasarely has achieved an even more subtle movement while denying himself completely the use of colour. This tendency to abandon strong colours or to use very plain flat surfaces, instead of the usual texture of paint, is shown clearly in two other works on show, both by South American artists, Soto and Camargo. One can see in the Karel Appel a typical post-war use of heavy paint, dripping down the canvas in great blobs and runs, but the colours themselves are bright, simple and direct, unlike the delicately fused harmonies of earlier painting. In the Max Bill the bright colour is there, more vivid than ever, but all the texture and appearance of paint has disappeared and the artist has tried to almost deny the paint-like quality of his medium; it is flat and regular as if it were cut out of sheet-plastic. In the Vasarely, the colour has disappeared and in the Soto and Camargo
4. the paint plays a secondary role to the construction. "Relief No. 141" is in the form of a picture, but uses projecting shapes to create pattern and line, instead of using brush strokes. Being three-dimensional, the work offers the possibility of many different viewpoints and seems to move and change with the spectator's own
5. movement. Soto's "Silvered Square" exploits the movement of the spectator to make the picture appear to shimmer. If one moves from side to side in front of the painting, the black squares seem to wobble against the background, and the one silver square adds a sudden exciting irregularity to the effect.

Over recent years, artists have become increasingly interested in creating an impression of movement and most of the works shown here demonstrate this more or less. One of them "Moving Light" by Le Parc, actually does move. It is really just an elaborate projector, creating constantly changing patterns, with lines of light: the effect of course is not completely accidental. The speed at which the patterns move and the forms they take, are determined by the construction of the "machine", for one can hardly describe it any more as a "picture". Le Parc is another South American artist and is currently living and working in Paris. He is a member of the Group for Research into Visual Art, which is centred in Paris. In 1966 he won a major award for painting at the Venice Biennale, and in the same year was included in the very influential "Op Art" Exhibition in Germany.

7. William Scott's "Painting" is an example of a modern abstract picture by an Ulster artist who is now established as a painter of international repute. Scott was educated in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, and at the Belfast College of Art, before going on to the Royal Academy schools in London. He has worked on the continent and in America. A retrospective exhibition of Scott's Work was shown at the Venice Biennale in 1958. He won first prize in the John Moor's Exhibition in 1961.

8. Another Ulster artist in more traditional vein is William Conor, whose sketch "Riveters" shows a typical scene in the Belfast dockyards during the last war. Conor who died this year, was famous and popular in the North of Ireland for his romantic evocation of the industrial and back-street life of the region. He lived and worked in Belfast throughout his long life, apart from a period of a few years in America.