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# Art Appreciation

**Tony Black**

The People's College Art appreciation class has been taking place for many years now in one of Dublin's real treasures, the Hugh Lane Gallery on Parnell Square just across from the People's College. The classes are held on Saturday mornings from 11am to 12 noon. The attendance is always very good and the standard of lectures is excellent. Over the years a number of us have been attending the classes every year. I think I speak for us, all when I say the weekend is not complete without our visit to the gallery. A lot of friendships have been forged over the years. We have lost some dear friends along the way and we have also gained many more.

The gallery itself is a most uplifting building to visit and especially on a Saturday morning when it has this magic feeling of entering a treasure trove of beauty and creativity. The lecture could be on the history of stained glass or a look into the world of the graffiti artists that have turned the art world on its head. The reaction and comment after a lecture is often varied and sometimes even argumentive but never disengaged. If on a given Saturday morning, a lecture and the artist or genre in focus connects with how you feel or maybe what's happening in your life, the result can be stimulating and sometimes, as I have experienced, inspirational.

Our reaction and emotion to art, as has often been explained

to us, is very much a personal response. Probably the most enduring lesson I have learned in all my years attending the Art Appreciation classes is that my opinion on a piece of art, or that of any of my fellow students, is as valid as anyone's in assessing how the said piece connects with me emotionally or not. It has given me the confidence to go into a gallery anywhere in the world and enjoy or critique or laugh or cry at whatever I happen to encounter.

On Saturday mornings in the Hugh Lane or afterwards, over a pot of tea in a favourite coffee shop, I often think to myself in how many other cities across Europe are people doing the same or similar classes in the great art galleries of the world. It's such a civilised and beautiful way to spend a Saturday morning, you just feel that you are part of something greater. I think I'd call it culture.

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*Avenues into Modern and Contemporary Art is a course co-ordinated by Jessica O'Donnell, Collections Curator of the Hugh Lane Gallery. It consists of a series of slide illustrated art history lectures and tours. The over-arching theme this year is The Artist as Witness: Migrations. Some of the forthcoming lectures include the Artist as Witness: World War I, Artist in Focus Barry Flanagan, Artist in Focus Jeff Koons and What is Performance Art? The course is limited to 50 participants.*

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## Ireland in a World of Revolution

**John Dorney**

The lecture series, 'Ireland in a World of Revolution', sought to put Ireland's experience in the pivotal decade of 1912-1923 into an international context. Ireland experienced nationalist revolution, civil wars and partition, but far from being unusual in European terms, Ireland's experience was typical of many new European states after the First World War.

John Dorney in the opening lecture sought to place Ireland in context, showing that, under the pressures of the Great War, four great empires fell apart in Europe – the German, Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian – leaving behind a host of new states that fought along ethnic, nationalist, religious and social lines to determine a new order. Ireland in that sense was part of a much wider story.

Donal Fallon traced the relationship of Ireland to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, while Fionnuala Walsh compared and contrasted women's revolutionary mobilisation in Ireland with female experiences elsewhere. Darragh Gannon spoke about the influence of the Irish abroad on events in Ireland, while Brian Hanley teased out the importance of class in Ireland in the events of 1916-1923. Finally, William Mulligan rounded off the series with a talk on how peace was made in Europe after 1918 and how Ireland fitted into the new order of independent nation states.

This stimulating series of lectures was well attended and received, and marked a new departure for the People's College, one which it is hoped will be repeated in the future.