

Charcoalogy | 19 May - 17 June

Gerard Byrne

Gerard Byrne Studio

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Gerard Byrne Studio presents *Charcoalogy*, a remarkable collection of forty-five large scale charcoal drawings on canvas of Dublin, Paris, London, Brighton and Hove, and Singapore by Ireland's foremost Modern Impressionist, Gerard Byrne.

Coinciding with National Drawing Day (20th May) – an initiative of the National Gallery of Ireland which aims to encourage creativity and celebrate the tradition of draughtsmanship – this collection comprises a series of urban scenes primarily featuring architectural scenes of cities where the artist lived and worked in recent years.

For centuries, drawing was fundamental to the production of art and design, a method of metamorphosis which brought artistic vision to life. Yet, in an era of increasingly digitised art, conceptual drawing and visualisation, draughtsmanship is in danger of becoming the skill of a bygone generation. Considered a Modern Impressionist, Gerard Byrne's creative process embodies the expertise of his artistic forebears, beginning with a freehand charcoal sketch drawn directly onto the canvas. While known primarily for his finished oil paintings, Byrne sometimes chooses to leave a sketch as it is, in its loose, expressive, monochromatic form. Once playfully called 'stop paintings', in that they are halfway between creative conception and finished oil painting, these drawings offer not only a glimpse into Byrne's artistic practice, but an insight into his artist's eye.

Believing that beauty is to be found in the everyday, Byrne looks to his surroundings for inspiration, being attracted by the complexity and form of architecture. His drawings pay homage to the architectural heritage of the Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian, and Regency areas so emblematic of Dublin, London, and Brighton and Hove: ornate mouldings, bay windows, elaborate, arched doorways and gable-end chimneys.

Charcoalogy showcases the evocative spontaneity, complex perspective, and dynamic interplay of light and shade so characteristic of Byrne's plein-air (outdoor) works. He sketches in person, on site, without the aid of photos or prints. Yet, despite this inherent spontaneity, his charcoal drawings are skilfully and faithfully intricate.

We are proud to exhibit this collection which represents Gerard Byrne's innate talent and perspective. In an ever-changing world, it serves to remind us that artistic endeavour has always been about leaving marks. The architectural heritage highlighted in these works resulted from the vision and foresight of draughtsmen, designers, and planners. Its preservation and celebration are crucial to our understanding of the past. Byrne's drawings acknowledge those artists and mark makers who came before him – both in execution and representation – and will remain to be as appreciated in the future as much as the past structures they so expertly and beautifully portray.

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