



O'Malley Clan Association Monthly Newsletter

This month's highlights

- Time to plan for Limerick 2019!
- Get in touch and share your stories!
- Tony O'Malley, one of modern Ireland's most important artists
- About the O'Malley Clan Association
- A proud O'Malley in Bahrain!

Time to plan for Limerick 2019!

The dust has settled, (hopefully), in Westport in County Mayo, after it was invaded by so many O'Malleys at the end of June, and its now time to begin the planning for next years Clan Rally in Limerick

Have you got suggestions as to what events you'd like to see at the rally? where you'd like to go? If you do, drop us a line at omalleyclanireland@gmail.com and we'll pass them along! We're looking forward to next June already!!



Welcome to the new O'Malley Clan Association Newsletter

Welcome to our new newsletter from Clan Chief Brigid O'Malley

Many, many, many thanks to all who have supported the new O'Malley Clan Association Newsletter. It is a pleasure to have you all on board and we hope you will find it an interesting and informative read. We will be sending you a copy of the newsletter by email and you can also find it on our website. We hope you will find it an interesting and informative read. We will be sending you a copy of the newsletter by email and you can also find it on our website.

The New US Ambassador to Ireland Mr Kevin F O'Malley

The O'Malley Clan Association has been pleased to welcome the new US Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Kevin F O'Malley, to the US Embassy in Dublin. Mr O'Malley is a member of the O'Malley Clan and has a long and distinguished career in the US government. He has served as a member of the US House of Representatives and as a member of the US Senate. He is a proud O'Malley and we are delighted to have him as our new Ambassador to Ireland.

Get in touch and share your O'Malley Heritage!

Have you got an article or old photographs that you'd like to submit for future editions of "O Máille" The O'Malley Clan Association Newsletter.

We'd love to hear from you wherever you're based around the world. Old photographs and stories to go with them, old letters, family trees or just an arti-

cle that you'd like to share with the rest of the clan. Drop us a line and We'll get right to it!



Tony O'Malley, Artist



A Self Portrait from 1989

O'Malley, Tony (Anthony) (1913–2003), painter, was born 25 September 1913 in Bridge Street, Callan, Co. Kilkenny, eldest of two sons and two daughters of Patrick O'Malley, a commercial traveller for Singer sewing machines, and his wife Margaret (née Ryan), from the Callan area, who ran a small shop in the town. His father, a native of Clare Island, Co. Mayo, who first arrived in Callan on business trips, was a Sinn Féin activist who went pro-treaty in 1922. Through his mother's family there ran a current of Parnellite anti-clericalism. O'Malley felt lifelong affinities for both strands of his heritage, the Gaelic West and what he called 'Norman Ireland'; the landscapes, monuments, and ethos of both traditions haunted and fuelled his imagination.

Banking official; illnesses; early figurative painting Educated in Callan in a convent school (1918–20), and in the Christian Brothers' school (1920–31), O'Malley entered the Munster and Leinster Bank (M & L) in 1933. For the next quarter-century he pursued the career of a transient minor banking official, posted to a series of locations in different parts of Ireland, the earliest being Ennis, Co. Clare (1933–9), the Grafton St. branch, Dublin (1939), and Monaghan town (1939–40). In 1940 he enlisted in the Irish army, motivated by a 'primal...patriotic' impulse to defend Ireland's right to be neutral (O'Regan, 10). Stationed in spartan conditions at Portobello barracks, Dublin (1940–41), he contracted pleurisy and pneumonia; after treatment in St Mobhi's military hospital, he was discharged from the army on grounds of ill health. Resuming his employment with the M & L, over the next several years (1941–5) he worked in branches in Kenmare, Co. Kerry; Buttevant, Co. Cork; Limerick city; Mountrath, Co. Laois; and Dublin. Diagnosed with tuberculosis, he underwent a major lung operation in St Vincent's hospital, Dublin, after which he convalesced at home in Callan (1945–6). Plagued by chronically poor health for the rest of his life, he was administered the last rites of the catholic church upwards of six times. While working in the M & L branch in Wexford town (1946–7), he relapsed; after two more lung operations, he recuperated in a sanatorium in Kilkenny city (1947–50), and in Linden House, a convalescent

Tony O'Malley, Artist (continued)

home in Blackrock, Co. Dublin (1950).

O'Malley began drawing at a young age; his earliest known work is a precocious rendering of a garden in Callan (1928). In early adulthood he drew occasionally, but never regarded himself as an actual or potential artist. During his serious illness and recuperation of the latter 1940s he began to paint regularly and compulsively, using whatever materials were available. He executed his first oil, a still life, while convalescing in Callan in 1945. Amid the shortages of the postwar period, he made his own oil paints from materials bought in farmers' stores. He painted landscapes, still lifes, and portraits, and sketched the wards and grounds of the institutions in which he was confined, and the people he observed therein. Discharged as cured in 1950, he rejoined the M & L, working successively in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford (1951–3), Arklow, Co. Wicklow (1953–7), and New Ross, Co. Wexford (1957–8). He continued to draw and to paint, energetically, prolifically, but furtively, evading as well he could the incredulity and ridicule of work colleagues and housemates; working late into the nights in lodging-house bedrooms, he stored completed works in suitcases, wardrobes, and under the bed. Purchasing his first motor car when transferred to Arklow in 1953, he drove throughout counties Wicklow and Kilkenny on solitary weekend sketching excursions.

Entirely self-taught as an artist, O'Malley developed a strongly individualistic, figurative, quasi-expressionist style (averse to 'isms', he preferred the term 'expressive'), rendering images in a manner that seemed best to him to capture what he saw and felt. Executed in low-keyed, muted tones, his paintings were deeply felt projections of his own brooding, solitary psyche: sombre, stark, lonely, and unprettified. Representative examples are three bleak winter landscapes, depicting Aughrim, Co. Wicklow (1953; Crawford Art Gallery, Cork), Arklow (1953), and New Ross (1957). While eschewing alignment with any one school, either historic or contemporary, O'Malley absorbed an eclectic mix of influences (known to him almost entirely in reproduction): Cezanne, Vlaminck, German expressionism, and the Fauves. Van Gogh was both an influence and an inspiration, whom O'Malley 'venerated...as a painter of struggle' (IMMA, 12). One of his most striking early images, 'Van Gogh, winter (from a dream)' (1961; Lewis Glucksman Gallery, UCC), is an expressionist depiction of the Dutch master's head set against a desolate wintry landscape, trapped within cell-like field walls until liberated by the act of painting.

Burning of the kelp on Clare Island



Tony O'Malley, Artist (continued)

Although he exhibited on several occasions, O'Malley was largely ignored by critics, galleries, and collectors; most of his early work was never seen publicly till the blossoming of his reputation in the 1980s. His attendance for three weeks at an informal summer painting school in the thriving artists' colony at St Ives, Cornwall (1955), was both liberating and revelatory; more valuable than the instruction was the empathy and society of kindred artistic spirits working in an appreciative environment. He returned to St Ives for a painting holiday in 1957. Feeling ever more insistently the urge to paint, frustrated in the numbing routine of the bank, stifled by the intellectual dearth and aggressive philistine conformity of small-town provincial Ireland, but alien by social class and temperament from the pseudo-sophisticated Dublin art scene, O'Malley was close to physical and emotional breakdown. Retired from the M & L Bank on health grounds and granted a small pension, he continued to live in New Ross (1958–60). An unhappy love affair, and the death at age 39 of his brother Matty, threw him into serious depression, rendering him incapable of painting for a time.

St Ives; abstract styles; varied subjects and media After much prevarication, O'Malley emigrated to St Ives in May 1960, and made Cornwall his home for the next thirty years. Though flourishing emotionally and artistically in the congenial setting, he remained indifferent to artistic fashion, continuing at first to work in his low-toned figurative manner when abstract styles were prevalent among St Ives artists and internationally, then developing his own version of abstraction just as British art re-embraced figurativism. His figurative images of the early 1960s included many Cornish seascapes, such as the gouache 'East wind – Easter (St Ives harbour)' (1961). The artist's studio, and land and sea as observed through the studio window, were recurrent motifs, as in 'Self-portrait, winter, heavy snowfall at Trevaylor' (1962–3; NGI), and 'Window, St Ives, Easter (portrait of Pamela)' (1961), the latter skilfully combining studio still life, portraiture, and landscape. Shortly after opening his first solo exhibition, O'Malley suffered a severe heart attack (May 1961). After hospitalisation and recuperation, he lived with several other artists in Trevaylor House, near Penzance, a large stone structure on ten acres of garden and woodland, with studios in converted outbuildings (1962–6). Thereafter he had residences in Penzance and St Ives, before moving in 1969 into Seal Cottage in St Ives – his home for the next twenty-one years – and obtaining an Arts Council studio in a converted sail loft nearby overlooking Porthmeor Beach.

The four years in Trevaylor were the defining period of O'Malley's career, during which he substantially expanded his understanding of the possibilities of art. Chiefly under the influence of his friend Peter Lanyon (1918–64), a noted Cornish landscapist working in St Ives, he gradually began painting landscape in an abstract manner. In O'Malley's estimation, Lanyon had broken 'the appearance barrier', had pierced 'through the outer skin into the underneath' (IMMA, 28). Abstraction, O'Malley discovered, 'enabled you to get under appearances', and thereby express 'essences' (O'Regan, 14); landscape art could not only depict the outer world, but also express the inner, capturing associations as well as appearances. With his art remaining rooted in reality, lived experience, and close observation of natural forms, O'Malley preferred to describe his new style as 'non-figurative' or 'non-objective', rather than abstract. In this new visual idiom he created an art that was suggestive rather than descriptive, intuitive rather than ratiocinative, and embodied memory, metaphor, and multi-layered meanings.

In his Trevaylor paintings O'Malley employed a severely dark palette, avoiding monotony with subtle gradations of tone, and expressing a tragic vision in spare, austere images, that seem metaphorical of mortality, mutability, sorrow, and loss; critic Brian Fallon referred to O'Malley's 'black period' (Lynch, 102). Especially striking are two elegies for Lanyon, who died from injuries suffered in a gliding accident: 'Hawk and quarry in winter – in memory of Peter Lanyon' (1964; Crawford Art Gallery, Cork), and the more abstracted 'In memory of Peter Lanyon' (1964). Both images suggest a flight and a fall:

Tony O'Malley, Artist (continued)

a free, creative, but doomed spirit soars defiantly over the yawning abyss, but death's triumph is inevitable and absolute. The two works are part of a series evoking birds of prey, especially the windhover (bird imagery is a recurring motif throughout O'Malley's oeuvre), often as ambivalent emblems of the daemonic. In 'The hawk owl' (1964) and 'He searches winter, the windhover' (1965; IMMA collection), does the artist identify with the watchful raptor, or eye him warily in fear or in awe? Another series of works evokes 'winter silence', in abstract patterns of differing compositional character, some freely expressive, others more formally structured.

Over time O'Malley worked in a motley of abstract styles, moving freely amongst them, sometimes adapting technical elements of certain international styles to his own aesthetic, and never entirely abandoning figurative painting. After first leaving Trevaylor, in the latter 1960s he painted in styles more abstracted but less morose, and employing higher tones. The two companion tondos entitled 'Bird song cycle' (1966) are bright feathery vortexes, evoking the rhythms of bird song, one in prevalent blue tones, the other in red. The cornfield series of summer 1966 flirts with the 'all-over' composition associated with abstract expressionism. Other works treat landscape as sets of abstract masses, in a personalised version of colour-field painting. In a characteristic compositional motif, O'Malley often sectioned his picture plane into compartments – quarters, thirds, halves, or otherwise – whether explicit or implicit in definition; such sectioning might evoke window panes (a development of his studio window motif), field patterns ('St Canice's' (1971); 'Autumn, St Martin's Island' (1971)), cabinets, or wardrobes ('Armoire, Suisse' (1973)).

From his early career in the 1940s O'Malley's preferred medium for painting was oil on wooden board; making the choice initially for reasons of economy, he came deliberately to favour board over canvas, enjoying the sensation of painting on the hard, resistant surface, and appreciating the textures that it allowed. In the mid 1960s he began frequently to scratch, incise, or score the board, either before, during, or after the application of paint, either by way of adding detail to the image, or to achieve textural effects. The practice became a signature element of his technique, often evoking stone-carving or metalwork.

Folly in Spring



Tony O'Malley, Artist (continued)

Throughout his career O'Malley drew incessantly and spontaneously, using a remarkable variety of surfaces and materials, and producing a prodigious graphic corpus (estimated in the mid 1990s at over 20,000 works) that he called his 'visual diary': a minute pictorial record of his daily routine, the activities in which he engaged, the people, things, and landscapes that he saw. After his adoption of abstract painting styles, he continued to draw figuratively from nature, accumulating a store of images that could be abstracted in his paintings. Highlights of his graphic work include hospital sketchbooks from 1961, Cornish landscapes from the Trevaylor period, and an extraordinary sequence of sketchbook drawings in black conté, executed in a fever of creative energy during a month's visit to Clare Island (1970).

Although alienation from the pervasive catholic religiosity of mid-twentieth-century Ireland was a significant factor motivating O'Malley's emigration to Cornwall, his art was permeated with a mythic, mystical, and hermetic quality, informed by a personal, syncretic spirituality. ('I've always regarded painting as a purely sacramental thing...a great mystery...You work on it day after day and then suddenly something happens, a revelation' (IMMA, 15)). An infrequently practising catholic, he acknowledged varied influences: Christian (both catholic and protestant), Celtic pagan, Irish and Cornish folk traditions, Eastern religions, pantheism, animism. Zen Buddhism, with its emphasis on immediate experience, and the realisation of the subjective through contemplation of the essence of the objective, had a special appeal. His philosophy of art was influenced by the Zen-based, Japanese concept of *shibui*, which perceives beauty in the imperfect, the unfinished, the rough-hewn. Also central to his aesthetic was a concept he called 'inscape', deriving the term from Gerard Manley Hopkins (qv), but giving it his own idiosyncratic meanings (and including the term in titles of works): 'the subjective side of painting, and subjectivity itself' (IMMA, 28); landscape as perceived in the mind, not on the retina; the inner essence of a thing, in contrast with 'outscape', its outer appearance.

In the early 1960s O'Malley began the practice of executing a painting every year on or about Good Friday, addressing the theme of redemptive suffering, usually with reference to the passion of Christ; this series of 'Good Friday paintings' includes some of his most profound and meditative images. An especially moving example is 'Wooden collage, Good Friday' (1968), in which fragments of driftwood are nailed to a grey board (painted so as to resemble slate) in a vaguely cruciform pattern, around which the board is incised in an oval pattern; the resultant image suggests both a Celtic cross, and the visage of the tortured Christ, crowned with thorns. The piece represents another important aspect of O'Malley's oeuvre, his assemblages, which he termed 'constructions'. Fashioned from a variety of found materials – wood, nails, string, thread, fishing net, wire, screws, bolts, feathers – the constructions can be grouped into three categories: collage, in which thin objects are applied to a two-dimensional painted surface; three-dimensional, high-relief panels; and free-standing sculptural pieces, meant to be viewed in the round. Executed prolifically over the last four decades of O'Malley's career, the constructions supremely exhibit the inventiveness and whimsicality of his artistic imagination.

Marriage; Bahamas; late styles; recognition In 1970 O'Malley met Jane Harris (b. 1944), a Canadian artist resident in St Ives, with whom he soon developed a close personal and professional relationship. They married in June 1973, and spent a two-month painting honeymoon in Switzerland, O'Malley's first excursion outside Ireland or Britain. The couple, who had no children, shared the Porthmeor studio, and painted together on frequent travels to other locations. From the early 1970s they made regular spring visits to St Martin's in the Isles of Scilly, and for fourteen consecutive years wintered in the Bahamas (1974–87), where the climate suited O'Malley's precarious health. In 1977 they purchased a small labourer's cottage in Physicianstown, Co. Kilkenny, near Callan, as a summer home, escaping the seasonal influx of tourists to St Ives. Thus, O'Malley painted every year in four distinct environments: Cornwall, Scilly, Kilkenny, and the Bahamas. Responding to the brilliant sunshine, lush verdure, and vivid colours of the latter location, he radically heightened the luminosity of his paintings and brightened his palette (often working in acrylic). His early Bahamas pictures are flooded with dazzling light; in

Tony O'Malley, Artist (continued)

time he developed a fuller tonal scale that captured the richness of the islands' colour, sun, and shadow. He also expanded his chromatic range in treating Cornish and Irish landscape. For the practical reason of easier transport of finished works, in the Bahamas O'Malley usually painted on canvas, and soon began using the surface more frequently when painting elsewhere.

For the rest of his career O'Malley's prevailing style was a lyrical abstraction, his dominant moods either a vivacious, exuberant joyousness, or a quiet, reflective serenity. His occasional figurative work celebrated domestic life, friendship, and simple pleasures, in a bright, linear, naïve manner. In 'Bahamian butterfly' (1979), he adapts to the subject a favourite device of building an abstract composition around a central vertical spine, which here corresponds to the segmented body of the insect, outward from which fans a rich mottling of colour, corresponding to the insect's wings. 'Mid-summer window and moths' (1992; DCGHL) treats a related subject in muted but varied tones appropriate to the fauna, and the Irish and evening setting. The 'Bird Lake' series of the mid 1980s responds to the teeming fauna of the Bahamas with a high-toned, impressionistic treatment, and a fervid, all-over composition. The contrasting 'Clare Island greys' (1984) subtly harmonises low tones to evoke the topography and weather of the location.

O'Malley enjoyed some success in the 1960s and 1970s showing work in solo and group exhibitions in St Ives and London; a 1975 travelling exhibition that showed in south-western England, Belfast, and Dublin, marked his first significant exposure to Irish audiences. Widespread recognition came in the 1980s. He was awarded the Douglas Hyde Gold Medal by the Arts Council of Ireland at the 1981 Oireachtas exhibition, and was the subject of an insightful RTÉ television documentary, 'Places apart', directed by Muiris MacConghail (1982). He began exhibiting regularly at the Taylor Galleries, Dublin, and was featured in several solo and group travelling exhibitions, most significantly the major thirty-year retrospective, 'Tony O'Malley: painter in exile', which showed in Belfast, Dublin, and Cork (1984). He was first represented in the Rosc exhibition in 1988. Elected to Aosdána as a founding member (1981), he was invested saoi (1993). In 1989 he was made an honorary member of the RHA, received an O'Malley award for painting (named after Helen Hooker O'Malley (qv)) from the Irish American Cultural Institute, and won the *Guardian* Art Critic's Award for painting.

Tony & Jane



Tony O'Malley, Artist (continued)

In 1990 O'Malley and his wife left St Ives and moved permanently to Physicianstown. Having ceased their yearly trips to the Bahamas, they made regular winter painting visits to Lanzarote (1988–99). On a trip to St Lucia (1992), O'Malley painted two abstract canvases evoking the sensation of sound: the brightly coloured daylight image 'St Lucia – Caribbean forest parrot chatter', and the darker-toned 'Night music, night singer, Gros Islet, St Lucia'. In the late 1990s he adapted his style, technique, and working methods to the physical restriction of deteriorating eyesight. Inspired by a feature of his extensive Physicianstown garden, he executed a series of expressionistic 'pond paintings'. In a new departure, he produced colour prints using the carborundum process, which were printed and exhibited by the Graphic Studio, Dublin. He received an honorary D.Litt. from TCD (1994), won an IMMA/Glen Dimplex award for lifetime achievement in the visual arts (1999), and was granted the freedom of Kilkenny city (2000). International exposure came in retrospective exhibitions in the Kunsten Museum of Modern Art, Aalborg, Denmark (1999), and at the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, USA (2000).

O'Malley died 20 January 2003 at his home in Physicianstown. A retrospective was mounted at the IMMA (2005), a selection from which was exhibited at the Tate St Ives (2006). The Butler Gallery, Kilkenny city, has staged posthumous exhibitions of his visual diaries (2005), and his constructions (2010).

Assessment A man of many contradictions, O'Malley was shy, introvert, and intensely private, but with a restless, passionate, impulsive dimension to his character. Devoted in his friendships, he was lively and gregarious in sympathetic company. An insatiably curious, widely erudite, and deeply reflective autodidact, he had an astonishingly retentive memory for places and events, and reminisced with an eloquent turn of phrase and an eye for the revealing detail. Professing an intuitive, non-theoretical, fundamentally romantic philosophy of art, he acknowledged the importance of craftsmanship and technical discipline, but also asserted the necessity of emotional engagement, and conceived the artist as agent of an inspiration that transcended the conscious and premeditated. Regarding art as a way of living, and of expressing what is lived, in which every piece fashioned by the artist captures a moment, he never discarded anything; his oeuvre comprises over 9,000 catalogued works. The manifold variety, in style and mood, that characterises the oeuvre likewise derives from the same relentless pursuit of the singular truth of the immediate, epiphanic moment.

Bahamian Butterfly 1979



Tony O'Malley, Artist (continued)

The popular esteem that O'Malley enjoyed late in life rested largely on a public image of benign old age, his genuine lack of pretension, and the accessibility of the bright, sunny paintings of his later period. Ignored was the full depth and range of his lifetime work, especially the darkly unsettling, profoundly challenging images of the 1960s that are the height of his achievement. His true importance has been identified by leading critics. Brian Fallon deems O'Malley 'the finest Irish painter of his generation' (Fallon (1994), 176), whose 'whole career can be read as a comment on Irish art and more generally on Irish life and culture as they have shaped themselves since the nineteen-twenties' (Fallon (1984), 9). To Brian Lynch, O'Malley is 'in some senses...the representative artist of post-independence nationalist Ireland' (Lynch (2005), 11). Though the bulk of his work is in private collections, examples are held in the NGI, the DCGHL, Crawford Art Gallery (Cork), Ulster Museum (Belfast), UCC, and the Arts Council of Ireland collection; he is the most extensively represented artist in the permanent collection of the IMMA.

From the Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography

Clare Island 1951





The O'Malley Clan Association
Mary Jane O'Malley (Hon Sec)
2 Main Street
Newport
Co. Mayo
Ireland

Email: omalleyclanireland@gmail.com

Website: www.omalleyclan.ie



www.facebook.com/omalleyclan



@clanomalley

The O'Malley Clan Association aims to reach out to O'Malleys from all around the world and foster links between the O'Malleys around the globe and the clan at home here in Ireland.

The Clan Association formed in 1953 has been connecting O'Malleys around the world in The US and Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, South America, and anywhere else you can think of for over 60 years now.

We hope with our new website, and newsletter, that We can go from strength to strength in our aim to connect all the O'Malleys around the world.

A proud O'Malley in Bahrain!

Here's Kayaan Daniel O'Malley.

Looking well isn't he!

I particularly like the cuffs!

We got an email from Kayaan's dad Michael, who lives in Bahrain along with Kayaan's mum Huma Vachha from India.

They were on a visit to Mumbai to see Kayaan's Indian relatives and He got measured up for his first suit.

I think they did an exceptional job!

This guy is going to be a heartbreaker!

If you'd like to see your relatives featured in O Máille, drop us a line by email and We'll get right back to you.

