



343. Mick O'Kelly, *Nomadic Kitchen*, 2005–07, a participatory art event in the Vila Nova Favela, São Miguel, São Paulo

(1991–95) and at Wheatfield Prison, Clondalkin, Dublin (1991). If that early activity revolved around place and the ownership of it, later work deals with homelessness, identity, racial prejudice and sustainability, often in more practical ways. Examples of this include a van, kitted out to feed the homeless, which he installed in TBG+S in 2005 for his solo exhibition, and *Nomadic Kitchen* at Vila Nova, São Miguel, São Paulo in 2006. His contribution to *Breaking Ground*, the art project devised as part of the Ballymun Regeneration programme, was to make working beehives from models of the demolished tower blocks.

O'Kelly has had solo exhibitions in Dublin, especially at the Gallery of Photography, where he was included in the inaugural exhibition at the new gallery in 1996, at Lahti in Finland, Frankfurt, London and Santa Monica in California. He was commissioned by the Public Art Development Trust to make artwork for Pier 4A at Heathrow Airport, and for *An Leabhar Mór/ The Great Book of Gaelic* (2002), and he was one of the artists included in *L'Imaginaire Irlandais* in Paris in 1996.

O'Kelly's work is in the collection of the Arts Council (qv) and in many private collections. CATHERINE MARSHALL

SELECTED READING *A New Tradition*, 1990; Paul McAree (ed.), *Breaking Gound*, 2001–2009 (Dublin 2009).

O'MALLEY, TONY (1913–2003) (qv AAI III) [267, 344], painter. Tony O'Malley was born in Callan, Co. Kilkenny. His father, a native of Clare Island, Co. Mayo, moved to Callan where he and his wife raised a family of four children. From a young age, O'Malley drew and painted, but for his generation and background a career as an artist was not an option. He joined the Munster and Leinster Bank as a clerk in 1934. During this time he received various postings in the provinces and used his spare time to continue his passion for drawing and painting. There are a number of extant works on paper from this period.

In the early 1940s, O'Malley was diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent the next decade alternating between periods of convalescence, during which he painted full-time, and periods of employment, dictating a return to a part-time approach to art. O'Malley received no formal art education but the influence of

Cézanne and van Gogh, known mainly through reproduction, can be seen in work of this period.

In 1955 O'Malley visited St Ives in Cornwall for the first time. St Ives was known then as a vibrant centre for post-war British abstraction. Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth had settled in the town, as had artists like Bryan Winter, Patrick Heron and Terry Frost. O'Malley attended the St Ives' Loft School, run by the painter Peter Lanyon, to whom he became very close. He returned to St Ives again in 1956 and 1957 and, in 1958, left his bank job on health grounds to apply himself fully to painting. In St Ives, O'Malley had discovered abstraction (qv) – not the formal abstraction of the surrounding British School, but a sense of abstract geometry and structure within the landscape itself. He was close in sensibility to Lanyon, a native of Cornwall, and O'Malley spoke of a Celtic spiritual bond in their work (he frequently signed his work using the Irish form of his name, Antoine Ó Máille) [2].

O'Malley became increasingly frustrated by rigid, conservative perceptions of the visual arts in Ireland which, in the 1950s, were still dominated by Dublin and warring Modernist and academic factions.

In 1960 O'Malley moved permanently to St Ives, for him the perfect base from which to build a practice and maintain his health. In 1961 he suffered a heart attack and spent the initial phase of his recovery with his friends, the Redgraves, well-known for their support for artists in the area, although later, at the insistence of Patrick Heron, he joined him at Heron's house, Eagles Nest. He was to finish his recuperation at Trevaylor House, the home of Nancy Wynne Jones (qv). He knew Wynne Jones through her partner, Conor Fallon, the sculptor and son of the poet Padraic Fallon, whom O'Malley knew from Wexford when he was employed in the bank there.

O'Malley moved easily from representational to abstract forms, seeing them both simply as a different emphasis to suit what was being pursued in the subject. His work practice established itself very quickly in St Ives, with daily sessions of observational drawing and studio painting. His style in that period involved flattening the subject, whether person or landscape, and his palette was in the sombre range, composed of browns, greys and blacks. O'Malley generally worked his oils on board (hardboard in the main); the hard surface offered resistance to the brush and carried the struggle of its making. In 1964 Peter Lanyon tragically died at the age of forty-six in a gliding accident; O'Malley was deeply affected by the loss. That year O'Malley made a painting on Good Friday. Each year, thereafter, he would make an elegiac painting on that day, which for him carried associations of pagan Ireland as well as more modern Christian history.

In 1969 the Arts Council of England offered O'Malley a subsidized studio and cottage in St Ives; as a result, Seal Cottage became his home for the next twenty years. The studio was in a large old sail loft above Porthmeor beach. So dedicated was his practice that in 1981 he was painting in the corner in a space the size of a generous kitchen table, surrounded by his output of over a decade.

In 1973 Tony O'Malley married the younger Canadian painter Jane Harris and they worked productively alongside



each other, although never collaboratively, for the remainder of his life. Yearly, they would travel to the nearby Isles of Scilly and later, farther afield, to spend lengthy periods of the winter sketching and painting. The light of the Scilly Isles and perhaps Jane Harris's palette saw a widening of the spectrum of colour O'Malley employed. These Scilly works were mainly painted in gouache with free-flowing flips, from figurative studies of his wife to abstract renderings of swarms of birds in flight, and even more abstract representations of bird song. In the mid-1970s, the O'Malleys began to travel annually to the Bahamas to visit Jane's family. If the light of Scilly was to open the door of colour, the experience of the Bahamas was to take it off its hinges.

There is a breath to O'Malley's oeuvre that is unique in twentieth-century Irish art. Pencil, watercolour, gouache and oil were further widened in their application to paper, canvas and board and were joined by found objects in the three-dimensional constructions that form in themselves a separate body of work. His art was as challenging in figuration as it was in abstraction, crumbling the barriers of Modernist progression to which his generation was so attached.

O'Malley's subjects equalled the range of his style. The historical aspect delved into the implements and the labour of the farmed field, and back into the reaches of Celtic myth and Norman settlement. He was profoundly interested in music, both the heritage of Irish folk music and the music of bird song. Similarly, landscape (qv), figure, still life and Christian imagery

(see 'Religion and Spirituality') all came under his purview. He worked the surfaces of his paintings in a variety of ways, particularly using a scalpel to score the surface of his hardboard ground to create a ridged and active picture plane.

In 1981, in one of the first acts of official recognition of his work, the AC/ACE (qv) invited O'Malley to form an exhibition. Entitled *Miles Apart* and containing twenty works, the show contrasted ten works from his native Kilkenny with ten works executed in the Bahamas, and travelled to five venues throughout Ireland. In 1978/79 his work was championed by the artist, agent and collector George McClelland, and O'Malley established a relationship with the Taylor Galleries, with whom he was to exhibit regularly from then on. The mid-1980s saw the consolidation of his reputation, with an AC/ACE retrospective exhibition shown in the UM, DHG and CAG. A documentary on O'Malley's life, *Places Apart*, directed by Muiris Mac Conghail, was produced and broadcast by RTÉ in 1982.

The O'Malleys returned to live in Callan, close to his birthplace, in 1990. Though now in his late seventies, there was no let up in his production. In 1993 he was elected a *Saoi* of Aosdána (qv), the highest award that could be bestowed by his fellow artists. Other awards included an honorary doctorate from TCD (1994) and the IMMA/Glen Dimplex Award for sustained contribution to the visual arts in Ireland (1999).

Tony O'Malley died in his ninetieth year, while working on one of the largest canvases he ever attempted. His work was

344. Tony O'Malley, *Inagua Bahamas*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 152.4 cm, private collection



345. Daniel O'Neill, *Family*, 1970, oil on board, 45 x 60 cm, Crawford Art Gallery

posthumously celebrated in a retrospective exhibition at IMMA in 2005, curated by Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith. O'Malley's work is in all the major public collections in Ireland and in the collections of the AIB and BoI. A gallery devoted to his work will form part of the new premises to which the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, plans to move in the near future. PATRICK T. MURPHY

SELECTED READING Brian Lynch (ed.), *Tony O'Malley* (Berkeley and London 1996; repr. Dublin 2004); Peter Murray, *An Irish Vision: Works by Tony O'Malley*, exh. cat. Kennedy Center, Phillips Collection (Washington DC and Kinsale 2000); Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, Catherine Marshall and Brian Fallon, *Tony O'Malley: Retrospective*, exh. cat. IMMA (Dublin 2005).

O'NEILL, DANIEL (1920–74), painter. Born in Belfast, O'Neill was the son of an electrician. When he left school at the age of fourteen, he too trained as an apprentice electrician, working in the Belfast shipyards and as a housepainter on building sites. An early interest in art led O'Neill to take life-drawing classes at the Belfast College of Art, where he befriended the painter Gerard Dillon (qv). He also worked

for a time in the studio of fellow Belfast artist Sidney Smith. After the 1941 air raids on Belfast, O'Neill salvaged wood from the destroyed buildings and experimented with wood carving. His first exhibition, a group show, was held that year at the Mol Gallery in Belfast. In 1943 he had a joint exhibition with Dillon at the Contemporary Picture Galleries in Dublin, and the following year he moved to London, painting and, once again, working on building sites. In 1945 O'Neill was taken on by the Victor Waddington Gallery in Dublin, which showed his first solo exhibition in 1946. The gallery provided him with an income that allowed him to paint full-time for a number of years. Three years later he visited Paris, where he saw the work of older contemporary painters such as Vlaminck and Utrillo.

In his foreword to the *CEMA Loan Exhibition of Paintings 1944–52*, the poet John Hewitt wrote:

It is easy enough to recognize Daniel O'Neill's individual quality, but a much more difficult matter to define it. The critic may call him an out and out romantic; he may assert that O'Neill's vision is narrow but deep; that his colour range is restricted but subtle; that he treats his pigments

with affection ... that his work has both a sensory and a sensual quality; that, though his subjects have, above all, a lonely poetry, he handles with most confidence the great common-places of being: birth, death, love, belief, wonder.

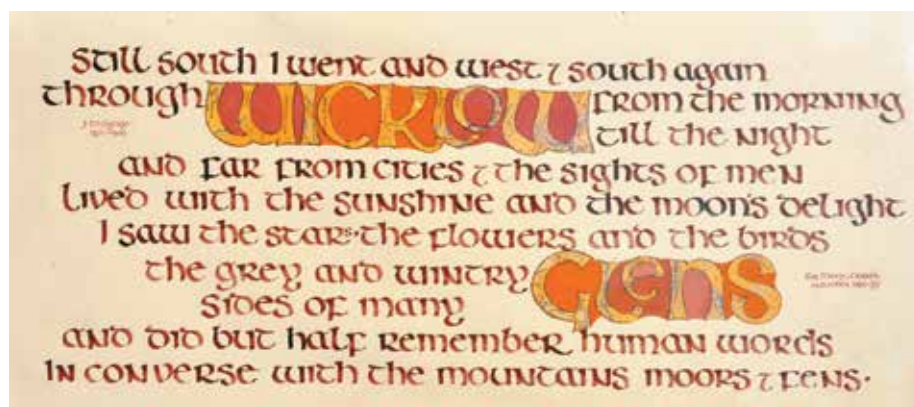
O'Neill's painting *Family* (part of the Great Southern Collection at CAG) [345] depicts two women – one holding a child – leading a group of people along a dark road. As with most of O'Neill's paintings, the date, location or identity of the people is not specified. At one level, it can be read as depicting a family in the west of Ireland making its way home at dusk along an unlit road. The painting can also be read perhaps as evoking the plight of refugees, fleeing from a conflict. His painting *Birth* dates from 1952 and is filled with that same characteristic sense of morbidity and foreboding. In 1950 an exhibition of new Irish painting was shown at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston. Selected by the director of the Institute, the exhibition included works by O'Neill, Gerard Dillon, Louis le Brocqy, Nevill Johnson and Colin Middleton (qqv).

O'Neill returned to Ireland in the early 1950s, where along with Gerard Dillon and George Campbell (qv), he became a member of the Ulster Contemporary Group. He settled with his wife and child in the village of Conlig, Co. Down, where Campbell and Dillon were also living and working. However, O'Neill's restless nature did not allow him to settle for more than a few years in any one place. In 1958, the year he represented Ireland at the Guggenheim International, he moved again to London, and travelled also on the Continent. In 1968 he was in Dublin, designing sets and costumes for Seán O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*. Although an exhibition of his work at the McClelland Gallery in 1970, his first one-person show in eighteen years, was a commercial and critical success, the closure of that gallery the following year as a result of the 'Troubles' affected the artist badly. He died in Belfast four years later, at the age of fifty-four. PETER MURRAY

SELECTED READING Anne Marie Keaveney, 'Daniel O'Neill', in Marshall, 2005, pp. 50–58.

O'NEILL, TIMOTHY (b. 1947), calligraphic artist. O'Neill is such an important figure, as advocate, artist, teacher and lecturer on calligraphy and its history, that it is difficult to conceive of the practice in modern Ireland independently of him.

A member of the De La Salle brothers for a number of years, O'Neill taught art at the order's school, Saint Benildus College, Kilmacud, Dublin where his teaching nurtured pupils such as Denis Brown, one of the most distinguished of the next generation of Irish calligraphers. Monastic life and historical research (MA in Medieval History, NUI, 1979) complemented his attraction to the manuscript work of early and medieval Ireland. Speaking at an IRCHSS workshop at the School of Humanities, UCD on 12 March 2012 (published as an internet video by Mick Liffable, 25 March 2012), O'Neill acknowledged the influence on his own work of page design in the books of Kells and Durrow. He went on to discuss the challenges facing a present-day calligrapher, one of which was adapting historical scripts for contemporary use and reconciling script styles



associated with different languages in the text of a modern manuscript.

O'Neill's self-taught mastery of this and other aspects of calligraphy, and his association with Liam Miller of the Dolmen Press, led to important commissions, such as the design and illumination of an altar missal to mark the centenary of the Cistercian Abbey at Roscrea (1978), and a Gospel Book in memory of Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich for St Patrick's College, Maynooth (1994). Shorter but equally distinguished projects included addresses to Pope John Paul II (1979, 1988, 1997), from the Irish government to President Bill Clinton (1995), from Offaly County Council to President Barak Obama (2011), and many collaborative works with Seamus Heaney, one of which was commissioned by the poet as a gift to the RIA and later became a limited edition.

Although most of O'Neill's work can be described as calligraphy, there is an important conceptual element in it. An early example of this can be seen in *Prelude* (1980) [346], his manuscript version of a poem by J.M. Synge, in which the words 'Wicklow' and 'Glens', in the insular style, are not drawn but cut from Ordnance Survey maps which reference all the mountains, glens and youth hostels frequented by the artist and owners over a designated period. This aspect of his work is again evident in his interlace design for British Airways which formed part of their World Images series in the 1990s. O'Neill's image, named 'Dove' for St Columcille, was widely used by the company and was seen worldwide on the tailfins of twenty-four planes (1997). A temporary public art project, *Sea Angels*, was installed around the village of Derrynane, Co. Kerry (2001) and O'Neill designed two postage stamps to commemorate the Plantation of Ulster (2009). Informed by his thorough knowledge of early medieval manuscripts, in 2010 O'Neill reconstructed, for the NMI, several pages of the eighth-century *Faddan More Psalter*, found in a bog near Birr, Co. Offaly. A contributor to *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford 1987) and to *An Leabhar Mór/ The Great Book of Gaelic* (2002), O'Neill also featured in *Art in Ink: Contemporary Irish Calligraphy* (Chester Beatty Library, 2007).

O'Neill has designed medals for An Garda Síochána and has worked for TCD and the NLI. He was the Burns Scholar at Boston College in 1995 and was awarded the Clans of Ireland

346. Tim O'Neill, *Prelude* by J.M. Synge, 1980, handmade paper with pieces of Ordnance Survey maps, 30 x 90 cm, private collection