

Sir Hugh Lane (1875-1915)

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This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the death of [Hugh Lane](#). He was born in County Cork in 1875 and was brought up in Cornwall, England and went on to become an apprentice painting restorer and later became a successful art dealer in London. He maintained contact with Ireland and his aunt [Lady Gregory](#) through regular visits to Coole, Co. Galway. There he came in contact with family and friends who became the nucleus of the Irish cultural renaissance of the early 20th century.

Lane became one of the foremost collectors and dealers of Impressionist paintings in Europe. Among those works purchased by him were *La Musique aux Tuileries* by [Manet](#), *Les Parapluies* by [Renoir](#) and *Sur la Plage* by [Degas](#). His dream was to establish a permanent art gallery in Ireland. To this end he opened the [Municipal Gallery of Modern Art](#) in 1908 in Harcourt St., Dublin.

This was a temporary premises and the gallery extended in 2005 is now in Parnell Square North. For his “service to art” in Ireland Lane was knighted in 1909 at the comparatively young age of 33.

Hugh Lane died on board the ill-fated [RMS Lusitania](#) on 7th May 1915 age 39. Following his death a long dispute between Dublin and London resulted over the ownership of his valuable art collection. Difficulties and delays in finding a permanent home in Dublin for his collection resulted in him loaning his collection to the [National Gallery](#) in London and he subsequently made a will leaving them to London. However, before he left for the United States in 1915 he added a codicil to his will in which he changed his mind and left his paintings to Dublin, the document was signed but not witnessed. A British commission set up in 1929 decided they should not be returned to Dublin. However, following representation from Lady Gregory and Irish Taoisigh including [WT Cosgrave](#) and [John A. Costello](#) a compromise was reached in 1959 whereby the collection would be shared between Dublin and London.

The John Paul II Library this year received a donation from the Bord Failte Library of Dublin Corporation’s *Statement of the claim for the return to Dublin of the 39 Lane bequest pictures now at the Tate Gallery, London*. The booklet is compiled and edited by John J. Reynolds, Curator of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art and Civic Museum, Dublin and published in 1932. The title page also records “This is a Codicil to my last Will to the effect that the group of pictures now at the London National Gallery which I had bequested to that institution I now bequeath to the City of Dublin”. The booklet outlines Hugh Lane’s will and efforts to set up an art gallery in Dublin and background to the dispute.

[Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane](#) is owned and managed by Dublin City Council and admission is free.

References

Statement of the claim for the return to Dublin of the 39 Lane bequest pictures now at the Tate Gallery, London.

Wikipedia

Dublin City Gallery the Hugh Lane website