



PAT HARRIS

*Tracings*

Taylor Galleries Dublin

2 November - 18 November 2006

Flower, 2005, 90x75 cm, oil on linen



## Why With The Rose

Pat Harris? No. Oh, I know who you mean. I've met the man and I know his work. In fact, I've loved his subtle effective paintings since the afternoon I saw them first. But Pat Harris? No, the singular won't do. There are at least *three* Pat Harrises.

In truth I might have come late to the art of Pat Harris. It's less than a decade since I first bought one of his landscapes, a headland crowned with heavy cloud, a hint of the waves. Fair enough, perhaps – because in a way Pat Harris came late to the art of Pat Harris. Or rather he came slowly. But by taking his time (and I appreciate the forces that conspired to influence this, his time as a night student etc) he has come to the point where we, his admirers, have learned that we can read each of his new exhibitions as chapters in a book whose plot is driven forward by the fuel and engine of a sensibility that is both brave and tender.

And in these shows we're likely to discover examples of the three Pat Harrises. (You could make a case for adding to this number the draftsman and the portraitist.) We'll find land- and seascapes, quietly observed and recorded, and shared afterwards like a secret. We'll find his unadorned studies of fruits and vegetables (pumpkins, pears, gourds, lemons, quinces and fungi), and we'll find his examinations of and interrogations of cut flowers (roses, amaryllis), standing in or leaning against the lip of their container.

Pat Harris admits readily that one element of his work is an ongoing homage to the late Charles Brady, that masterful composer of delicate, small still lifes and other set pieces, a lamented shade who liked to play up his tough New Yorker origin ('Hey, kid, still doin' the poems?' 'I'm doing a bit,



Charlie.' 'Atta boy, keep at it, keep pluggin' away.'). We know Charlie Brady returned to certain subjects (the telephone directory, burnished ricks of hay) but if we consider his more characteristic offerings of the bits and pieces of ordinary days – a bus ticket, an envelope or wallet, a friend's daughter's white sneaker, his eye-drop boxes – as minor milestones, we can see that Pat Harris's returns to and reprises of a small number of objects with all their associations and ramifications evince a journey Charlie's milestones might have been marking or measuring. Many of Pat Harris's paintings are composed in the style of his mentor (and indeed *his* mentors – Morandi comes first to mind) with their horizons of a tabletop and the foregrounding of a carefully centred object. Indeed Pat Harris's pears enlarge and elaborate a detail of Charlie Brady's *Studio Table 1* (1991) with its yellow ripeness balanced before a typical light tan or taupe backdrop. I believe Pat Harris's first 'flower' series corresponded with the beginning of Charlie's final illness (he died in 1997) and the first onslaught of his own father's Alzheimer's.

A memorial theme persists in Pat Harris's latest exhibition. He continues to probe, to see and see into, all the while reiterating a confidence in things as they are, in the world as it is. But the new paintings reveal the courage embodied in his option for a smaller scope of reference, his ever more refined sense of nuance. The horizon has begun to lose its edge. He has broken that line and broken through its divisive order. For all their apparent variety – these white and red flowers, the vase that's been transformed into an urn, the ghostly, just-there tracks of stalks and petals shyly sneaking to the wings, the red and green and yellow pears, the stacks and stags off the Mayo coastline – these paintings represent one vision. They are essays on the inner life of now familiar objects into which Pat Harris is delving like someone who's trying to find the words for silence, someone trying to utter the ineffable.

Pat Harris's apprenticeship, his long and careful study, has enabled the poise and assuredness of this work. Cézanne, we're told, still poverty-stricken but intent on the pursuit of his life's great work, advised young painters to feel and perceive nature, to organize their perceptions of it, and to express themselves deeply and with order – that is, *classically*. In this regard, Pat Harris is a classical painter. His hand is equal to his eye – and to his heart.

His is, essentially, an intimate art – its subjects, motifs and landscapes ones with which he's intimately acquainted – but it is an art, too, which *intimates*, that is, makes known the range of feelings those objects and places trigger or release. Yet for all the poignant force of Pat Harris's suggestion, the layers of emotion his paintings embrace, in his steady gaze and from his point of view, his work is firmly rooted in the actual of which, as Thoreau attested, a true account is the purest poetry. For Robert Frost the *fact* is 'the sweetest dream that labour knows'.



Another American writer Willa Cather decided, The roses of song and the roses of memory, they are the only ones that last – and the lyrical fluency of Pat Harris's brushwork – his brush with, you might say, the present and the past, as he *re-members* it in a catalogue of loss, a set of scriptures of trust and trusted matter – is a steady, and steadying, accomplishment.

It's true that it eschews, for the most part, social, public and political exigencies. But, yes, his depictions of the still unhealed, sixty years later, scars in the landscape, those shell-craters near Ypres, south west of his home near Antwerp, however much they chime with the bog pools in fields by the banks of the Belderg in north Mayo, help to keep alive the horror of a world at war, the unforgotten ache of no man's land. And, yes, his haunting, delicate 'Gold Watch', a beautifully unpretentious painting in the current show, wafting like gossamer across the canvas, conjures a whole biography and a kind of social history as it deputises as an emblem of his father's life.

Instead, Pat Harris's art and concerns are more responsive and responsible to private imperatives, those ends that seek that it be, and be allowed to be, itself, its self at its best.

Those roses of Ms Cather's summon a verse by one Johann Scheffler (1624-77), a religious German known as 'Angelus Silesius', which Borges enlisted as a definition of poetry and, we might add, of any art.

It reads

*Die Rose ist ohne Warum.  
Sie blühet weil sie blühet.  
Sie achtet nicht ihrer selbst,  
Fragt nicht, ob man sie siehet*

and might be submitted as

*There's no why with the rose.  
It blooms because it blooms.  
It cares nothing for itself  
Nor ever asks if it be noticed.*

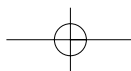
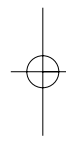
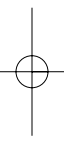
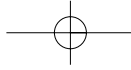
Because his paintings are distinguished by an equal modesty and an equally rare beauty, I believe in the trinity of Pat Harris. I say Yes to the various Pat Harrises.

*Peter Fallon  
Loughcrew  
September 2006*

*Peter Fallon's translation of The Georgics of Virgil has recently been republished in Oxford World's Classics.*

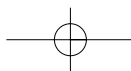
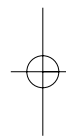
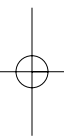
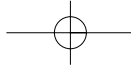


Red pear, 2006, 60x75 cm, oil on linen





Pear, 2006, 60x75 cm, oil on linen



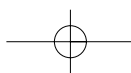
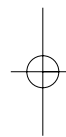
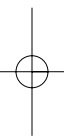
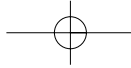
White flowers, 2005, 120x100 cm, oil on linen



Nashi II, 2006, 60x75 cm, oil on linen



Soft pear, 2006, 60x75 cm, oil on linen





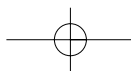
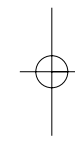
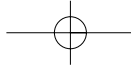
Flower, 2006, 120x100 cm, oil on linen



Gourd , 2005, 60x75 cm, oil on linen



Blue vase, 2005, 130x100 cm, oil on linen



Flower, 2006, 100x120 cm, oil on linen





Red chair, 2005, 120x100 cm, oil on linen





### List of plates:

Page 5, Flower, 2005, 90x75 cm, oil on linen.

Page 7, My father's watch, 2002, 40x50 cm, oil on linen.

Page 8, Rock at Kilgalligan, 2004, 75x90 cm, oil on linen.

Page 9, The last spade of summer, 2005, oil on linen.

Page 11, Red pear, 2006, 60x75cm, oil on linen.

Page 13, Pear, 2006, 60x75cm, oil on linen.

Page 15, White flowers, 2005, 120x100 cm, oil on linen.

Page 17, Nashi II, 2006, 60x75cm, oil on linen.

Page 19, Soft pear, 2006, 60x75cm, oil on linen.

Page 21, Flower, 2006, 120x100 cm, oil on linen.

Page 23, Gourd, 2005, 60x75 cm, oil on linen.

Page 25, Blue vase, 2005, 130x100 cm, oil on linen.

Page 27, Flower, 2006, 100x120 cm, oil on linen.

Page 29, Red chair, 2005, 120x100 cm, oil on linen.

Page 30, Rock, 2006, 43x53 cm, charcoal on paper.

Page 35, Stack, Glenloos point, 2004, 60x70 cm, oil on linen.

Plates 8, 30 and 35 were painted while on a fellowship at the Ballinglen arts foundation, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo.

Pat Harris was born in Dublin in 1953 and studied at the National College of Art and Design from 1973 to 1978. He was awarded a scholarship at the College and, subsequently, a number of Belgian Ministry of Education and Dutch Culture Scholarships which gave him the opportunity of studying at the National Higher Institute of Fine Arts, Antwerp, where he graduated in 1981.

He lives in Tielrode, Belgium and teaches painting at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp.

#### **Solo Exhibitions:**

- 1979 Gallery Danthe, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1982 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 1986 County Museum, Temse, Belgium
- 1985 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 1989 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 1992 Gallery Brabo, Mercator Building, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1995 Arts Centre Spinoy, Mechelen, Belgium
- 1996 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 1996 De Zwarte Panter, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1999 The Linen Hall, Castlebar, Ireland
- 1999 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 2000 Gallery S65, Aalst, Belgium
- 2001 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 2002 Sint - Jorispan, Elzenveld, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2003 Gallery S65, Aalst, Belgium
- 2003 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 2004 The Fenton Gallery, Cork, Ireland
- 2005 Fendresky Gallery Belfast, Ireland
- 2006 Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Ireland
- 1979 Living Art, Dublin, Ireland
- 1980 Works on Paper, Angela Flowers Gallery, London, Great Britain
- 1981 Figurative Image, Tulfarris Gallery, County Wicklow, Ireland
- 1983 Eva, Limerick, Belfast, Dublin, Ireland
- 1985 Figurative Image, Dublin, Ireland
- 1986 The Other Head, Miller/ Browne Gallery, San Francisco, USA
- 1986 Eva, Limerick, Ireland
- 1987 "Disposition '87", Brussels, Belgium
- 1990 Images from Ireland, European Commission, Brussels, Belgium
- 1991 Figurative Image, Dublin & Brussels
- 1992 National Self- Portrait Collection of Ireland, Boston, USA
- 1993 Selected, 'Europe - Prize for Painting, Oostende, Belgium
- 1996 Eigse Carlow, Arts Festival Carlow, Ireland
- 1996 NCAD, 250 Drawings, Gallagher Gallery, RHA, Dublin, Ireland
- 1997/2001/2004/2005 Boyle Arts Festival, Boyle, Ireland
- 2000/'01/'02/'03/'05/'06 Royal Hibernian Academy, Annual Exhibition
- 2001 EV+A, Limerick, Ireland ( curator Salah M. Hassen)
- 2001 Passages from Ballinglen, List Gallery, Swarthmore Collage, Pennsylvania, USA
- 2002 Aisling Gael, The Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge, Co Kildare, Ireland
- 2002-2003 Living Landscape: European Topographies, West Cork Arts Centre, Ireland
- An Tuireann Arts Centre, Isle of Sky, Scotland
- Inverness Art Gallery and Museum, Inverness, Scotland
- Iona Gallery, Kingussie, Scotland
- 2004 Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast, Ireland
- 2004 In the time of shaking, Irish artists for Amnesty International, IMMA, Dublin, Ireland

- 2005 Across Boundaries, various venues,Ireland  
2005 A Moment in Time, Temple Bar Galleries, Dublin,Ireland  
2005 SIAR 50,Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland

**Collections:**

Pat Harris's work is included in a number of public and private collections including:

The Arts Council of Ireland,  
The Irish Museum of modern Art, Dublin,  
The Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin,  
The Contemporary Irish Arts Society,  
The National Self-Portrait and Contemporary Art Collection Limerick,  
University College Dublin,  
The Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo,  
The Boyle Civic Art Collection, Boyle, Co. Roscommon,  
St Patrick's Hospital, Dublin,  
The A.I.B. Collection, Dublin,  
A & L Goodbody, Dublin,  
The Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland  
Office of Public Works, Ireland  
AXA Ireland  
The University of Antwerp, Belgium.

**Bibliography:**

**Reviews:**

Kate Robinson, "The search for new cultures"  
Sunday Independent, 10/9/81  
Rose Doyle, "A Dubliner in Antwerp" Irish Times, 30/06/83  
Brian Fallon, "Pat Harris at the Taylor", Irish Times, 1985  
Desmond MacAvock, "Two shows at the Taylor Gallery"  
Irish Times, 6/9/1989  
Sally Sadler, "An Irish Exile in Flanders" The Bulletin,  
Brussels, Dec. 1990  
Pat Harris, Interview with P.S.E., The Nieuwe Gazet, Oct. 1993  
Aidan Dunne, "From Mayo to New Mexico" Irish Times, 9/11/1999

Mark Ewart, "Four Series" Irish Times, 14/8/2000  
Aidan Dunne, "A painter's building blocks" Irish Times, 8/11/ 2001  
Aidan Dunne, "The subtle art of turning one art into another" Irish Times, 29/10/2003  
Alan Good, "Artists' work on display" The Irish Examiner, 12/11/2004

**Books and Catalogues:**

NCAD Decade Show, The National College of Art and Design,  
1985, ISBN 1 870225227  
Pat Harris, Galerij Brabo, Mercator, 1992  
NCAD 250, Drawings 1746-1996, National College of Art and Design, 1996, ISBN 1 87022520 1  
Modern Art in Ireland, Dorothy Walker, The Lilliput Press,  
1997, ISBN 1 874675775  
Pat Harris, Pumpkins and other things,  
Taylor Galleries Dublin, 1999  
Pat Harris, Paintings from North Mayo,  
Taylor Galleries Dublin, 1999  
Pat Harris, Where the horses walk, Taylor Galleries Dublin, 2001  
EV-A 2001 expanded, Gandon – Editions,  
2001, ISBN 0946846 12X  
Living Landscape: European Topographies,  
West Cork Arts Centre, 2002, ISBN 1 904354 03 3  
Pat Harris Passings, Taylor Galleries Dublin, 2003  
Circa, "Painting in Ireland now" Aidan Dunne,  
2004, ISBN 0263-9475  
In the time of shaking- Irish artists for amnesty international,  
Art for Amnesty, 2004, ISBN 0-9547258-0-8  
Across Boundaries, OPW, 2005, ISBN 0-7557-7092-7  
SIAR 50, Irish Museum of Modern Art,  
2005, ISBN 1-903811-51-1



### **Acknowledgements**

My thanks to Peter Fallon for his beautiful essay.  
Pat and John Taylor for their continuous support.  
Frederik Bogaert for the photography.  
Linda Ruttelynck for her advice and support in getting this catalogue together.