

LANDSCAPES + SEASCAPES

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sean Fingleton was born in Malin, Co. Donegal. He has been exhibiting his paintings in Ireland and abroad for almost thirty years. Since 1985 he has been based at Temple Bar Gallery and Studios, where he also took part in a two in a two-person show with Ronan Walsh in 1986. Among his recent exhibitions have been: CAS at the Lavitt Gallery, Cork (2001), *Stitches and Ditches – Works from the Irish Museum of Modern Art*, Enniskillen and Carrick-on Shannon (2000); *Lifescapes – Recent Acquisitions*, Irish Museum of Modern Art (1999-2000); *Works from the Gordon Lambert Collection*, Irish Museum of Modern Art (1999); *Sean Fingleton and Richard Long*, Kells, Co. Meath (1999); *Four Painters*, Backstage Gallery, Longford (1999); *Twelve Landscape and Seascape Painters*, Stour Gallery, Warwickshire (1999). He has also shown work regularly at Taylor Galleries, Dublin, Cavanacor, Gallery, Donegal, Dye House Gallery, Waterford and since 1994 his paintings have featured in the annual RHA exhibition in Dublin.

Fingleton has been the recipient of several awards and bursaries (including in 1986 a GPA Award) and has twice been a prize-winner at the annual Claremorris Open Exhibition. His work features in many major public collections including the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Irish Arts Council, Department of an Taoiseach and the European Parliament, Strasbourg. Among other collections which include Fingleton's work are Aer Rianta, Allied Irish Banks, Bank of Ireland, GPA Group, Jury's Hotel, Limerick University, University College Dublin, the Royal Hospital, Gloucester, UK, and St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin.

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This publication coincides with the exhibition LANDSCAPES and SEASCAPES at Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, November 2nd - December 1st, 2001.

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The distinctive conditions of the Irish landscape have long been the primary influence on the work of Sean Fingleton. Repeatedly returning to areas of special fascination (the majority in County Wicklow and his native Donegal), Fingleton paints a panoply of rural images with almost unremitting vigour, his many coastal scenes, country roads and forest edges each rendered in all the dense particularity of the here-and-now.

The endless variations in how landscape appears are of central significance in Fingleton's recent 'Landscapes and Seascapes' and throughout his entire body of work. Fingleton's preferred way of working is to paint directly from the landscape itself whenever possible and the existential excitement involved in this activity gives his work, to borrow a phrase from Tom Paulin, a "meltfresh, newpainted, all-in-the-moment quality". Seamus Heaney, discussing the nature poetry of John Clare, has spoken of a "totally alert love for the one-thing-after-anotherness of the world" and similarly in Fingleton's painting the urgency and unpredictability of the elements, and crucially the quick-changing vitality of the Irish weather, are made vividly present. In works such as 'Country Road, Donegal', a scene which elsewhere might be constructed in terms of an imagined natural permanence (an example perhaps of "the beautiful and permanent forms of nature" sought by Wordsworth) instead seems to find its inspiration from movement and change; the endless coming and going of cloud-cover or the perpetual gusting of the wind insist that even the static aspects of the actual landscape become in Fingleton's painting free, fluid and open to influence. The expressionistic gestures and the generous application of thick oils turn country roads into rivers of light-capturing paint; perhaps in an echo of Van Gogh, everything in Fingleton's paintings seems, in Robert Hughes's phrase, "swept up in a current of energy".

We see in these works the "vibrant massing of paint with a life of its own" which David Sylvester has seen in Constable – despite the more obvious affiliations with northern European expressionists from Munch and Kokoschka to Leon Kossoff, Fingleton shares with Constable a "miraculous combination of flickering aliveness and brooding gravity" – but ultimately what evidence of life can be found among the subjects of the pictures? For the most part, these scenes are utterly devoid of human presence; it is the land itself which is of interest to the artist, with only cattle or horses occasionally interrupting the intense concentration on earth, sea and sky. Though it is likely that these paintings are tuned into the idea of the abandoned landscape which has haunted Irish painting for generations, the determinedly eco-centric stress of the works seems rather to celebrate and 'preserve' in painting places where the influence of human society is, at most, marginal. Perhaps, in that the prefix 'eco' derives from the greek 'oikos' meaning 'home', both the former notion of displacement and the latter prizing of isolated natural places can be accommodated in our appreciation of the paintings.

In many of Fingleton's works to date the emphasis has tended to be on turbulent encounters with landscape and the elements but in some recent works there is evidence of a nascent stillness, an ebbing of the tide that in other images has crashed relentlessly into rocks. Yet even as the brushwork becomes somewhat more restrained and the surface of the paintings significantly calmer, the works retain all the power of the present moment. Fingleton's lasting skill, as Beckett identified in Jack B. Yeats, is in capturing "desperately immediate images" of the Irish landscape.



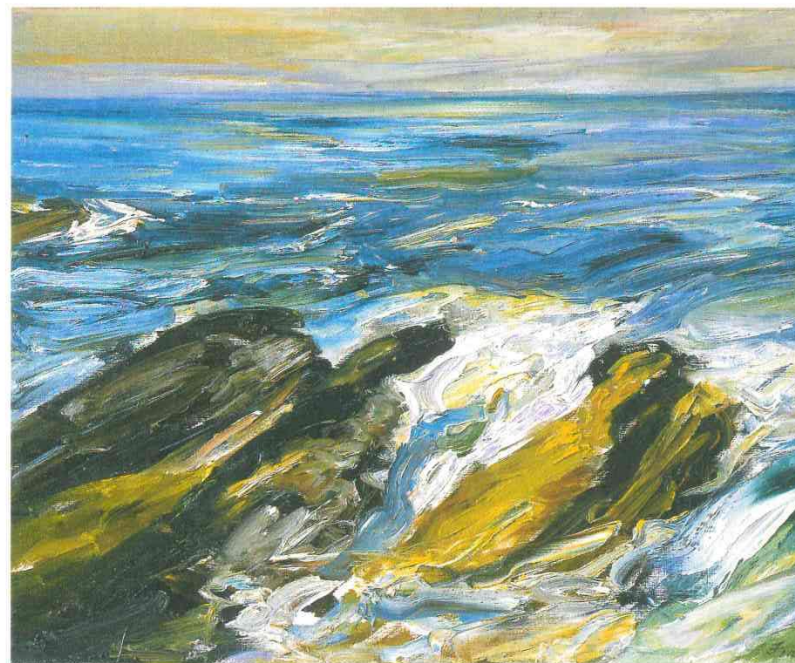
34 inches x 42 inches
Oil on canvas



24 inches x 30 inches
Oil on canvas



28 inches x 38 inches
Oil on canvas



18 inches x 24 inches
Oil on canvas