

Evie Hone RHA (1894-1955)

Stained Glass Artist

Evie Hone was born on 22 April 1894 in Dublin and came from a comfortable, wealthy well known Anglo-Irish land owning artistic family. Her father, Joseph Hone, was a malster and founder of Minch Distillery in addition to being a director of the Bank of Ireland. Her mother, Eva Eleanor Robinson, who died two days after Evie was born, was the daughter of Sir Henry Robinson KCB and granddaughter of the 10th Viscount Valentia. Evie Hone was also related to artist Nathaniel Hone the Elder (1760-1819) who was a founder member of the Royal Academy in London and his great grand nephew, artist Nathaniel Hone the Younger (1837-1917) and their art is well documented.

Evie Hone as a young girl suffered infantile paralysis and this ill health was to plague her for the rest of her life. At eleven years of age whilst helping to decorate the Church of Ireland altar table in Taney for Easter, she fell and this disability was with her at different levels constantly, sometimes bad and sometimes unbearable.

Her health had to take first preference and as she was lame she needed constant physical assistance and after intensive and prolonged treatment in Harley Street she went abroad with her governess to Ouchy in Switzerland for eighteen months.

After that she moved to London to concentrate on art whilst still attending Harley Street specialists and began to study at Westminster School of Art under Walter Sickert (1860-1942) a distinguished Post-Impressionist artist who left the School of Art shortly afterwards. Evie however tired of the other lecturers and left to join evening art classes by Byam Shaw (1872-1917) whose paintings hang in many English art galleries. It was early days for Evie but she always had to battle with her illness with the aid of a helper and she transferred to the Central School of Art in London studying under Bernard Meninsky (1881-1956) a well known figurative and landscape artist mainly in oils. She enjoyed this study and was encouraged by Meninsky to go to Paris to continue her studies.



Ken Ryan inspects Evie Hone's St Brigid window in St Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea, prior to restoration

Evie went to Paris in the summer of 1920 and was later joined there by her artist friend Mainie Jellett (1897-944) who she knew from the Westminster School of Art and they were to study and paint together over the next ten years in Paris. Initially they studied under Andre Lhote (1885 -1962) an artist who was specialising in cubist art. Evie and Mainie

after two years approached Albert Gleizes (1881-1953) a cubist and modern artist and they requested that he would take them on as students but he was still searching for artistic fulfilment himself and was not interested in taking on these mature students. However after a lengthy interview with the two polite persuasive persistent ladies he finally agreed

reluctantly to accept them. It is said that both the students and master influenced each other in their exhaustive search for artistic excellence between the years 1921 and 1931 where every year the three spent about five months together in Paris with their abstract cubist art, in addition to lengthy annual trips to Spain.

In 1924 Evie Hone and Mainie Jellett had a joint art exhibition at the Dublin Painter's Gallery in Stephen's Green but Evie was then being drawn towards stained glass design and she approached Sarah Purser (1848-1943) for advice who discouraged her and suggested that she might join A E Child's School of Art in Dublin but this was not successful. Back in London, Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) an accomplished book illustrator advised her to continue with her interest in stained glass and that further art study was not necessary for her and she should seek out a stained glass craft-worker. Artistic doors were open to Evie Hone because of her privileged upbringing and wealthy family connections and she was welcomed by the Establishment as a committed art student but such introductions were unavailable to other impoverished gifted students of art.

Evie approached and was welcomed by established stained glass artist Wilhelmina Geddes in London who already had Irish commissions to her credit including the St Christopher window in St Ann's Church, Dawson Street. Evie began to interpret her art into stained glass designs and began to paint and fire her glass works in the kilns and have the panels leaded up into their artistic compositions. She took her completed panels to Roland Holst, a famous stained glass artist and director of the Ryksakademie in Amsterdam. Holst was initially uninterested but when he saw her stained glass work he was suitably impressed and encouraged her to continue her creations in this artistic medium.

On her return to Ireland, she again approached Sarah Purser of An Túr Gloine



Photo: Joze Vrtel

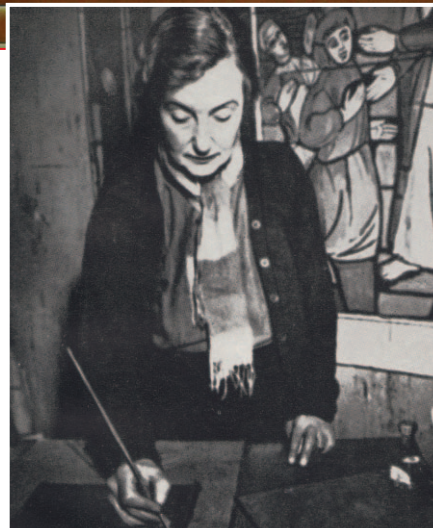


Photo: Stella N. Frost

Top: My Four Green Fields, Stained Glass 1938 by Evie Hone RHA for the Irish Pavilion in New York's World Fair, restored and fitted in 1990 by Abbey Stained Glass Studios in Government Buildings, Dublin
Above: Evie Hone RHA at work in her studio.

(The Tower of Glass) with her completed panels and later her persistence paid off when she joined this group of artists in 1933 and remained there for the next ten years. She worked alongside the established stained glass artist Michael

Healy RHA who created masterpieces for St Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea from 1904 to 1944 amongst very many other prestigious projects. Michael Healy, a late artistic starter due to dire poverty, was twenty years older than Evie but they respected each other's different styles. Michael gave her every encouragement and they shared the services of Tommy Kinsella, the lead glazier who fabricated their completed works. Evie was a deeply religious person and in 1937 she converted to Catholicism and was welcomed by The Archbishop of Dublin who was also President of Blackrock College.

Evie Hone's extensive stained glass commissions in Ireland and abroad spanned from 1934 in Ardcarne Church of Ireland, Roscommon to 1955 All Hallows, Church of England, Northamptonshire. Her most famous 1949 work is the magnificent nine light altar window in Eton College Chapel depicting both The Crucifixion and The Last Supper. Another huge window that she designed in 1938 for the Irish Pavilion, New York's World Fair is My Four Green

Fields commissioned by the Irish Government. This represents the Crests of the Four Provinces of Ireland and we at Abbey Stained Glass Studios, Dublin, were engaged by the OPW in 1990 to restore it and relocate it on to the main staircase of Government Buildings in Charles Haughey's term of office. It is impossible to do justice to this extraordinary stained glass artist in an article such as this but her well documented artworks are never too far away, to be seen in Churches throughout the country.

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