

## John Behan

Born in Dublin in 1938 and now living and working near Galway city where he continues to vary his style of expression, John Behan is firmly established as a sculptor of international stature. After an apprenticeship in metal work and welding, the foundations for Behan's success were laid in the sixties, when he trained in London and Oslo and began to exhibit widely. But he also had a wider artistic vision, which saw him challenge the elitism of the art establishment and seek to popularise art. He was a founder member of the New Artists' group in 1962 and Dublin's innovative Project Art Centre in Dublin in 1967 and in 1970 established the Dublin Art Foundry with Peter O' Brien.

In 1972 Behan was awarded The Gold Medal at the Oireachtas Exhibition and in 1973 was selected as a member of the Arts Council. Behan was elected an associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1973, a member of Aosdana in 1978 and elected a member of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1989. In 2000 Behan was conferred Doctor of Literature by National University of Ireland, Galway, was awarded the ESB Silver Medal RHA 2005 and the IB Jorgensen Award 2006. Behan has had solo shows at the Hallward Gallery, Dublin, Ashford Gallery RHA, Gordon Gallery, Derry, Taylor Gallery, Dublin, Cork Art Society, Kenny's Art Gallery, Galway, Bell Gallery, Belfast, Octagon Gallery, Belfast, Sean Desmond Gallery, New York and The Project Arts Centre, Dublin. Behan's commissions include 'Circle of Birds', The Hospice, Harolds Cross, Dublin, 2006, 'Golden Birds', Four Seasons Hotel, Dublin, 2003, Equality Emerging, Salmon Weir, Galway, 2001 'Arrival', UN Plaza, New York, 2000 'Twin Spires', NUI, Galway 1999 and 'Famine Ship', Murrisk, Westport, Co. Mayo 1997.

Behan's work is held in the Public Collections of The Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork, The National Gallery of Ireland, The Arts Council Collection and The Irish Club London.

Celebrated for his early bull sculptures - described by playwright Brian Friel as '**enormously solid artefacts, 4-square on the earth, confident, assured, executed to a point of absolute completion**' - Behan's style is still evolving and growing. In a general sense he can be credited with playing a major part in the development of sculpture in Ireland over the last forty years.

A film documentary of John Behan's work entitled 'Famine Ship' was broadcast in Ireland and the U.K. in 1999 and is distributed in North America by The Cinema Guild Inc. and the rest of the world by Network Television. The poet and Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney has said of the artist: "There is something psychologically salubrious about John Behan. It is as if you are encountering what the Upanishads call the ancient self, something previous to an underlying individual character, some kind of psychic bedrock."

For further information [www.thekennygallery.ie/artists/behanjohn/](http://www.thekennygallery.ie/artists/behanjohn/)