

George Wallace: *Reflections On Life*
Dementia inclusive in-home resource



Introduction

This resource focuses on the Print Gallery exhibition George Wallace *Reflections On Life*. This document is designed as an aid to carers and health professionals.

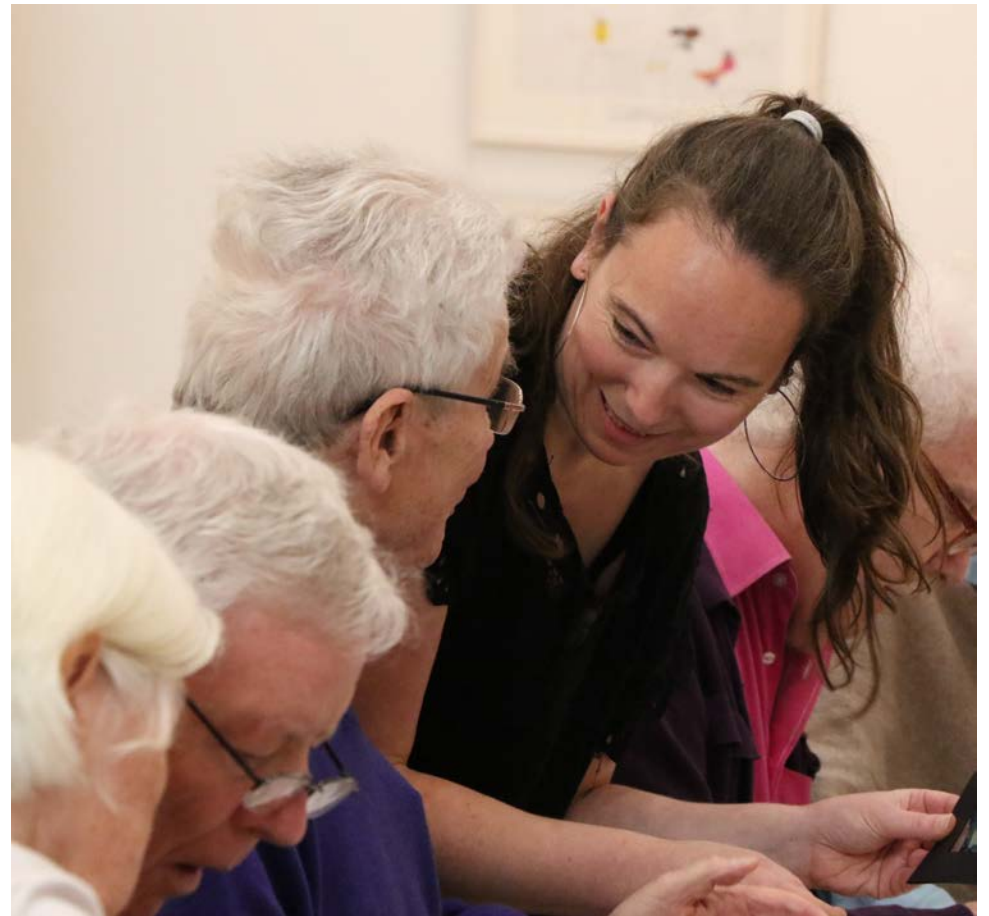
We have put this resource together to help participants access and enjoy the works through discussion and practice-based exercises. This document can be used as a pre-visit resource or for those of you who won't have the opportunity to see the show. To further explore the works, you can book a discussion and practical session with a member of the Gallery's education team via Zoom. See **page 12** for more details.

For this resource, we have focused on three key artworks in the exhibition.

Using this Resource

For a full and comprehensive guide to leading a session using our resources, we would recommend that you look at our general, in-home resource on our website.

[National Gallery of Ireland Dementia inclusive in-home resource](#)



Who was George Wallace?

Introduction

George Burton Wallace (1920 – 2009) was an Irish artist known for his sculptural and graphic work. His graphic work in particular, including etchings, monotypes, woodcuts and drawings created over 50 years, are the subject of an exhibition called *George Wallace Reflections on Life* that is taking place at the National Gallery of Ireland in 2020.

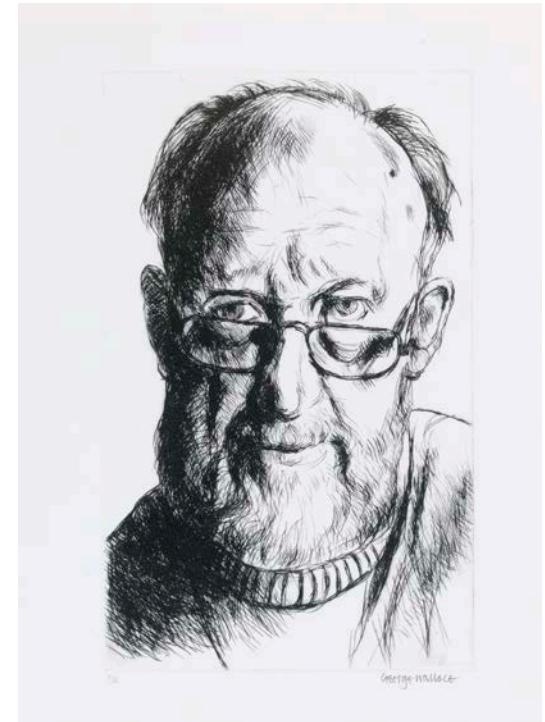
Early Life

George Wallace was a Dubliner, he was born on Monday the 7 of June 1920. George was an only child and he amused himself by drawing. Some of his early drawings featured armies and soldiers. He was sent to boarding school at quite a young age, first to Aravon in Bray and later, aged 14 to St. Columba's College in Rathfarnham. George studied philosophy at Trinity College, but continued to make artworks such as small wooden sculptures. While at Trinity College, he met his wife Margaret Howe. George and Margaret were married in 1946. In that same year Wallace decided to study art and he enrolled in the West of England College of Art.

Artist and Teacher

When George graduated from art college in 1949, he took a job teaching art at Falmouth College of Art in Cornwall. During this time, he was exhibiting his work in Ireland and the UK. In 1957, he emigrated with his family to Canada. He worked as a schoolteacher initially and showed his work at galleries in Toronto. In 1959, he began teaching part-time at McMaster University in the city of Hamilton, Ontario, becoming a full-time member of staff in 1960.

George Wallace tended to focus on powerful themes such as grief, loss and pain caused by war and oppression. He would portray these themes in facial expressions. He also had a great knowledge of the Bible and was fascinated by the key stories of the Christian faith. These stories feature heavily in his work. Wallace showed that he had a sense of humour in his Monoprints. He collected newspaper images of aspiring business people and used them as his starting point for a series of satirical prints.



Christ walking in the Garden



Christ walking in the Garden, 1971

- This is an etching produced by George Wallace.
- This is a scene from Christ's Passion.
- The scene takes place in a rubbish-filled park.
- The figure of Christ can be seen walking barefoot with hands outstretched.
- The 'No Litter, No Loiter' sign suggests that the rule of law has broken down.
- One of the boxes has the lettering 'Paradise Fruit'.

Points of discussion

- Wallace sets the scene in a 1970s suburb. How do you feel about Wallace's reimagining of this biblical story?
- Christ's surroundings are very grim. Do you think that the artist is trying to symbolize the bleak fate that awaits him?
- It is interesting that Wallace portrays Christ wearing ordinary clothes pacing rather than in solemn prayer. Does this make Christ seem more human?
- The rubbish symbolises materials that have been cast aside. Is Wallace suggesting that humanity is casting Christianity aside?
- The crucifix can be seen in the chain lock fence. Do you think this is a clever use of imagery?

Early Afternoon



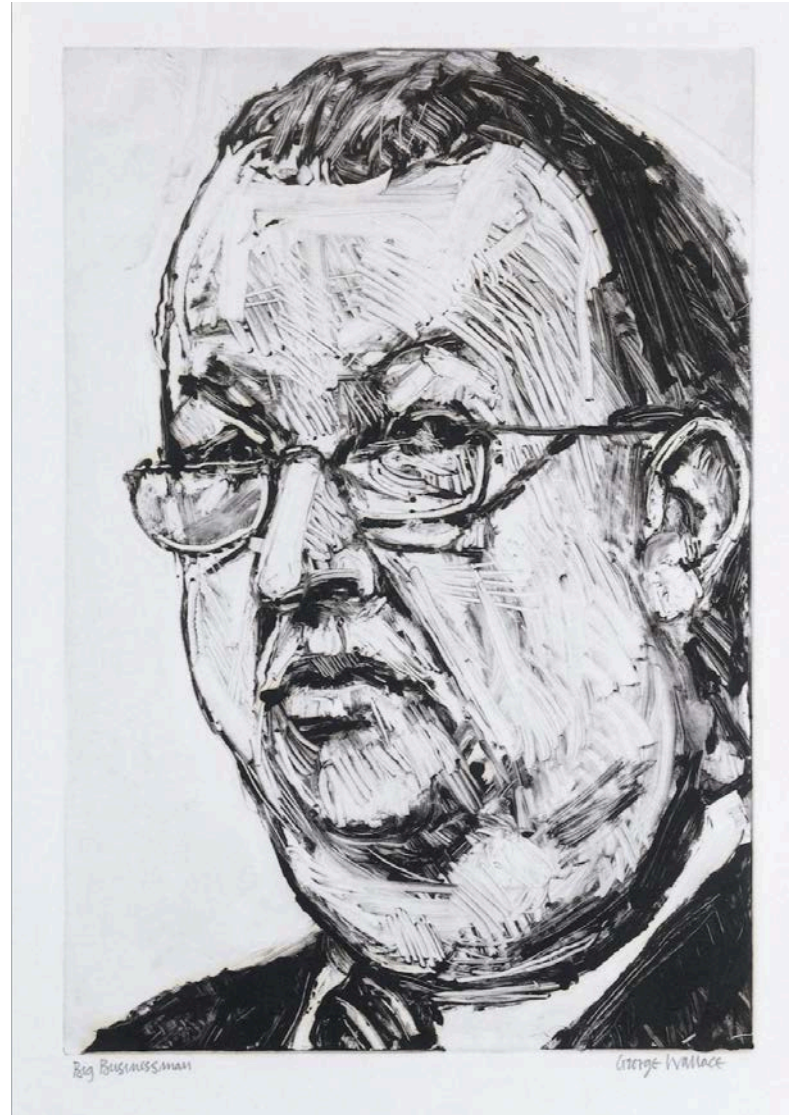
Early Afternoon

- This is an etching produced by Wallace in 1995.
- This Image was part of a series of images called *Summer Shadows, Summer Dreams*, produced by Wallace in 1995. There are twelve images in the series and they mainly depict people watching television.
- In this image we see a couple in a state of undress.
- It has been suggested that the couple are watching a soap opera in the early afternoon.
- The glow of the television places a spotlight on them.

Points of Discussion

- The name of this series of prints is *Summer Shadows, Summer Dreams*. Does this image give us any clues as to why the series is so called?
- Is this a positive or a negative portrayal of ordinary life or is it a bit of both?
- Why do you think Wallace portrays his figures in this way?
- Do you think Wallace is poking fun at people who are obsessed with soaps operas?

Big Businessman



Big Businessman

- This a Monoprint that Wallace produced in 1992.
- This was also part of a series of prints depicting businessmen.
- Wallace used the 'mug-shots' of aspiring business people in Canada's national newspaper *The Globe and Mail* as the starting point for his series of satirical prints.
- The original image was blown up many times larger than the original passport sized photographs.
- Wallace's focuses on the fleshy chins and receding hairlines of recently promoted company directors and bankers.

Discussion Points

- How you feel looking at this portrait?
- Wallace described these 'portraits' as giving an impression of both 'self-involvement and alienation'. Do you agree?
- Is there an air of grandiosity and self-importance about this person and do you think Wallace is trying to ridicule these traits?
- What to you think of the style Wallace employs, does the portait look realistic?

Practical Session – printmaking

Materials Needed: A soft pencil (2B), a sheet of paper and a portrait from a newspaper

Printmaking is an artistic process based on the principle of transferring images from one surface onto another. George Wallace was a master **printmaker** and produced woodcuts, etchings, monotypes and lithography. In this practical session, we will demonstrate how to create a very simple print.

Step 1.
Cut out an image of a head or heads from the newspaper



Step 2.
Flip the image over and use your pencil to cover all over the reverse of the of the newspaper



Step 3.

Flip the image back over again and place it on a white sheet of paper. Go over the lines with a pencil



Step 4.

Take the newspaper cutting away and you'll find that the graphite from the pencil has made an impression on the paper.



More Information

If you would like more information about our dementia inclusive services at the National Gallery of Ireland or if you want to arrange a Zoom call, contact Caomhán Mac Con Iomaire in our Education Department

(T: 01 6633507 | E cmacconiomaire@ngi.ie)