

Kathleen Fox: Chronicler of Irish History

By Deirdre Kelly

‘Walking through Harcourt Street onto the Green and I was overwhelmed by this great cloud of khaki yellow soldiers and in the centre, a little streak of dark green.’

The artist Kathleen Fox (1881-1963) recalled this extraordinary scene in an interview a few months before her death in 1963. She was referring to the Easter Rising of 1916 when Irish volunteers stood up to the British authorities to fight for an Independent Ireland, an event which divided even the most ardent nationalists of the time. The ‘little streak of dark green’ Fox refers to, were the green uniforms of the two commanders of the Irish Citizen Army, Michael Mallins (1886-1916) and Countess Constance Markievicz (1868-1927). The other ordinary working men wore their own clothes, some had hats, others bandages covering their wounds. In contrast, the well-fed uniformed soldiers of the British Army seemed incongruous against such a tiny streak of green.

Fox’s painting, *The Arrest of Countess Markievicz* is a unique social document chronicling a pivotal moment in Irish independence.¹ Having set off to collect ‘messages’ for her family at 2 o’clock on Sunday 30 April, 1916, she came upon The Royal College of Surgeons, St. Stephens Green and recognized the female figure at the head of the group of bedraggled, exhausted men as the same woman who had frequented the School of Art in the evenings with her husband and son.² ‘She was a jolly sort of character’, Fox mused, ‘she used to come and amuse herself...she wasn’t seriously an artist...but she used to come in and talk to everybody.’³

Fox’s dismissal of Markievicz’s abilities as an artist are telling and reveal an interesting insight in how she felt about her own chosen pathway in life. She had achieved a scholarship from the School of Art and was either teaching or painting, so took her work seriously. While

¹ Muriel Brandt’s (1909-1981) painting, *The Breadline 1916*, is also based on actual scenes at the time and is house in the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.

² Some accounts claim that the ‘messages’ were actually for the rebels, a claim disputed by Fox herself.

³ Kathleen Fox in conversation with Nora Niland in a taped interview, 1963, kindly supplied by Fox’s granddaughter, Susanna Pym to the author.

she knew of Markievicz and contemporaries, Willie (1881-1916) and Padraig Pearse (1879-1916), she had no time for what she termed 'that sort of thing', that is, political agitation. Fox was determined to make her mark and her art work for her. At the time she could not have known that her infamous painting would earn her the nickname 'little rebel'.

Yet, there was a lot more to this woman who had already excelled in enameling and stained-glass, wood and metalwork and would later record another momentous event in 1922 in *Ruins of the Four Courts*. She would also expand her versatility to portraiture and still-life. She served as William Orpen's (1878-1931) studio assistant, forging a name for herself winning awards in international Arts and Crafts exhibitions, becoming an accomplished and respected artist in several fields, while harboring a sad and painful private life.

Before

Kathleen Fox was the daughter of Captain Henry Charles Fox, a cavalry officer of the Kings Dragoon Guards and Mary Rebecca (Mamie) Coakley and was brought up in an Anglo-Irish upper middle-class Catholic tradition in Glenageary, Dublin. She was born on 12 September 1881 in Swanscombe, Dartford Borough, Kent. She went to school in at St. Mary's, Ascot, an independent Catholic boarding school and Loreto Convent, Dalkey before deciding to follow her dream and join the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (DMSA) ⁴. In 1902 she became one of William Orpen's star pupils when he returned to teach.⁵ The move to pursue art as a career must have been a big decision, given her background and family lineage. A photograph of students from the school in 1909 shows Fox in the back row with a group of esteemed colleagues, including stained-glass artist, Michael Healy (1873-1941), sculptor, Albert Power (1881-1945) and Margaret Crilley (Clarke 1881-1961) artist and teacher.⁶

⁴Stillorgan Genealogy and History website and her gravestone in Glasnevin Cemetery cite her year of birth as 1881 not 1880 as commonly noted. <https://www.youwho.ie/foxedward.html>

⁵ www.nival.content.oclc.org/digital/search/searchterm/Kathleen%20fox Her number on the register is 7719 and her address is listed at Glathule Lodge, Glenageary in April 1903 and she is listed as twenty which adds to the confusion over her age. In the 1916/17 register she is listed correctly as 37.

⁶ Nicola Gordon Bowe and Elizabeth Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movements in Dublin and Edinburgh 1885-1925* (Irish Academic Press: Dublin, 1998), p. 81.

Fox excelled under the tutelage of Oswald Reeves (1870-1967), the English born metal worker, enamellist and designer who taught at the DMSA from 1902 to 1937. Most of the outstanding figures of the Arts and Crafts movement studied under the excellent tutelage at the school. Alfred E. Child (1879-1935), also born in England taught stained-glass techniques and later went on to join an Túr Gloine, Sarah Purser's ((1848-1943) collective. Fox succeeded in several disciplines and received a well-rounded education on the varying skills and expertise associated with each specialty, winning both national and international awards for her work. In 1906 she exhibited with the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland, demonstrating her abilities with wood, displaying a wooden footstool in mahogany carved in deep relief with a foliate arabesque pattern.⁷ The following year, her work in enamel won the prestigious Gold Medal in the 1908 National Competition held annually in South Kensington, open to all students of the British Commonwealth. Fox produced a small goblet or vase 'Going to the Feast' made by champlevé enameling where channels or recesses are cut into the enamel and filled with fluid. The enamel is then polished smooth while the metal outlines the recesses that have created the colourful patterns. Fox's design consisted of a procession of draped figures in a rich subdued colour that also went on to be exhibited in the V & A exhibition of award-winning work in 1908 and subsequent exhibitions in 1909 at Kodak Gallery, London and 1922 in Ireland at the Aoenach Tailteann exhibition.⁸

In 1909 she created a stained-glass window of St. Tobias for St. Joseph's Church, Glenageary. 1910 found her continuing success. Her contribution to the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland exhibition was another outstanding contribution. 'Shaving Mirror with pendant on copper stand, with zodiacal design' won her both School and National Competition prizes. The design consisted of the constellation Orion and its Dog star beaten and hammered in silver and copper, the mirror standing on a high base. Orion draws his right arm back, holding his bow and arrow surrounded by his stars, a sword at his side, while a little shield hangs from the mirror engraved with Canis Major, known as the Dog star. The result is a highly accomplished piece of work.

⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

⁸ Ibid, p. 134.

Before leaving the School of Art to travel abroad, Fox returned to painting and executed and produced *Science and Power*, a witty take on her friend, Albert Power's commission to work on the statuary for the Royal College of Science (now Government buildings).⁹ The construction of the museum can be viewed through the skylight where scaffolding is visible, while the monumental presence of the statues is conveyed starkly against the sculptor's diminutive form. Orpen's influence is especially evident in the handling of the statuary as can be seen in his painting, *Reflections: China and Japan* (1902), which portrays the confident, masterful brushwork allowing the porcelain Japanese figure to emanate from the painting. Quick, authoritative highlights suggest the shiny, delicate object that is carried through into the Chinese bowl, both reflected onto the polished surface of the table. Clearly defined muscles and sinews in Fox's statuary using similar small highlights and brushwork contrast against the subtle features of the figure resting his chin in his fist. The statues embody the classical Renaissance effigies of Michaelangelo, displaying the confidence and boldness of someone who could only have trained under a supreme craftsman. *Science and Power* exhibited in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1911 and was Fox's first work shown there.

She travelled to Paris and Belgium and exhibited several paintings completed there, including *Old Bruges*, in private collection, and *Fish Market, Bruges* (1911), housed in the Limerick City Gallery of Art. It was exhibited alongside works by Dermot O'Brien (1865-1945), George AE Russell (1867-1935) and Frances Baker (1873-1944) at The Hall, 8 Merrion Row, Dublin in 1914.¹⁰ Her style in these examples is more impressionistic, as figures are merely suggested with quick brushstrokes or blobs of paint delineating movement and busyness. This instinctive execution, attention to small detail and keen observance would stand her in good stead for what was to come, her most important assignment yet.

⁹ Hugh Lane Gallery, cat.no.1019.

¹⁰Copy of catalogue from Diana Beale Archive, grand-daughter of Edward McLysaght (1887-1986), former Director of Manuscripts at The National Library and long-time friend of AE Russell's. She spent seven years researching AE's paintings and her family kindly gave access to her files to the author. Interestingly, it was Fox's sole contribution to the exhibition and the price charged, £30.0.0. far exceeded any of the other works, even of the President of the RHA, O'Brien.

During

In 1963 Nora Niland, then County Librarian for Sligo, spoke to Fox about her painting, *The Arrest of Countess Markievicz*, on behalf of the committee of the Sligo County Museum and Library who purchased the artwork in November 1962. It had undergone many adventures since Fox first executed thumbnail sketches on 30 April 1916, and Niland was keen to gain as much provenance as possible. Accordingly, she interviewed Fox and asked her to relate her recollections of the momentous event. This was to prove imperative as Fox died a few months later.

She had returned to Ireland to take up her three year teacher training position in the School of Art at the beginning of the First World War. Her address for the academic year 1916-17 is 34 Wicklow Street and she is noted as being a 'Free student with scholarship'.¹¹ Her life was a busy one, between lecturing, teaching and doing her own work in between. On the afternoon of Sunday 30 April, 1916, she left her family home to run an errand and took a taxi into the centre of the city. Like the majority of citizens that week, she was unaware that there was anything untoward occurring. However, as she turned into Harcourt Street, in front of the Royal College of Surgeons, she immediately understood the momentous nature of the situation in front of her. Ordinary people, like herself, were out and about doing ordinary, everyday things when an extraordinary scene developed before them. Fox conveys this moment of drama in a number of ways in her painting. Discarded bikes are thrown haphazardly in the right foreground as people were told to hurry on and an apparently hastily abandoned car cuts across the centre background, which draws the viewers' eye and links the onlookers on the right with the officer commanding the soldiers on the left.

Markievicz and her fellow commander, Mallins, reluctantly succumbed to rebel leader Padraig Pearse's call for their surrender and they went out the side door of the building in York Street where they met Captain Harold de Courcy Wheeler of the King's Rifle Corps, and ironically a distant cousin of the Gore-Booths, Markievicz's family.¹² They had held the College

¹¹ www.nival.content.oclc.org/digital/search/searchterm/Kathleen%20fox

¹² Patrick Quigley, *Sisters against the Enemy: Countess Constance Markievicz and Eva Gore-Booth, 1916-17* (Liffey Press: Dublin, 2016), pp 42,43. Wheeler's wife, Selina Knox, was the daughter of Hercules Knox of Rappa Castle, Co. Mayo and first cousin to the Gore Booths.

since Monday, but hoisted the white flag of surrender Sunday morning as Pearse instructed to save further bloodshed. When Markievicz handed over her rifle to Wheeler, she said, 'I am ready'. He asked her if she would prefer to be driven to Dublin Castle under escort given their family links, but she replied negatively, 'No I shall march at the head of my men as I am second in command, and shall share their fate.'¹³

Hastily, Fox made thumbnail sketches on whatever material she could find, old scraps of paper in her pocket, comparing the scale of relative groups and heights of buildings as she stood watching and taking in everything around her. She later worked up these thumbnails into the full painting in her studio. Photographs taken at the time record the accuracy of her composition. It is painted on an impressive scale (182 x 140cm), accentuating the importance of the event she is conveying. The grand Palladian façade of the Royal College of Surgeons with its imposing pediment supports the three statues that embody the spirit of the building; Athena, on the left, the goddess of wisdom and war; Asclepius, in the centre, the god of medicine; and Hygiea, to the right, the goddess of health. The white flag of surrender is hard to distinguish, but appears to flutter at the right hand of Asclepius, the middle statue. As Fox pointed out, it was important to emphasize the white flag of surrender and not defeat.

Onlookers group on the right as children gesticulate to their parents in wonderment. Niland asked Fox what the general feelings were among this group as they witnessed the dramatic arrest. She believed the majority were confused, not understanding why what she called 'those poor little boys' were being attacked. Most of the spectators were drawn to the impressive figure of Markievicz, a woman in uniform, towering over the smaller figure of Mallins. It was so strange to see any woman in trousers as the Victorian spirit still instilled, and much more so remarkable to see a woman in uniform. However, Fox felt that most of the crowd recognized Markievicz as she was popular among the poor. She had befriended the wives of the Citizen Army and had sent them out to the Wicklow hills for sake-keeping at her

¹³ Wheeler's account of his part in the Rising and Markievicz's arrest is available at <http://www.findlaterbook.com.chapter9.html>

own expense. She was also well known because of her work with the poor during the 1913 Lockout.¹⁴

Fox could not understand why this relatively small group of unarmed boys could not have been arrested by the police instead of a huge swathe of British soldiers and it made her question her hitherto ambiguous feelings about the Rising. Because of this, when she returned to Art College following the Easter holidays, she found a strange atmosphere pervading. She was met by close friends denouncing the 'awful behaviour' of the insurgents, and found herself re-assessing her own feelings towards them. She thought them magnificent and from that day felt a change in the way the College was run by what she termed the Vice Regal Lodge and officials considered very pro-British.¹⁵ Grace Gifford (1888-1955), a friend and contemporary whom she also painted, told her of her final few hours with Joseph Mary Plunkett (1887-1916), one of the leaders of the Rising who was executed on 3 May. Her story of how they only had one hour together as husband and wife, while a guard watched over them in Plunkett's cell stayed with Fox.¹⁶ The empathy she felt with her friend and what she had witnessed herself, made her much more aware of political feelings. This is how she earned her nick-name 'little rebel'.

Afraid of consequences, she decided to keep her painting secret and told no-one except her friend, Albert Power. She felt so strongly about the unfairness of the situation that she had witnessed she expressed her empathy in the only way she could, and that was by including herself in the work. Just above the group of spectators to the right with the woman and children are two trees, and standing to the left of the left-hand tree is a woman in a straw hat. That is Kathleen Fox, but instead of looking at the scene unfolding, she is looking out directly at the viewer, challenging us to look back, to see what she has seen and to feel what she is feeling, bewilderment, horror and sympathy. Ostensibly, as Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch points out, at first glance, the painting looks like an objective visual documentation of the event, but

¹⁴ Quigley, *Sisters against the Enemy*, p. 7. Constance had received an income from Lissadell House upon her marriage.

¹⁵ Roy Foster, *Vivid faces* (Penguin: London, 2014), p. 69. Foster says that the DMSA was actually a lesser elitist institution than the RHA.

¹⁶ Gifford could recall the cold, unfriendly eyes of the guard for the rest of her life, Fox revealed.

by including herself in it, staring out at us the viewer, Fox's work becomes subjective.¹⁷ 'It was something I had to put in,' Fox said, 'not looking towards Markievicz'.¹⁸ By including herself in this way, Fox can be compared to Jan Van Eyck (c1395-1441) whose subtle signature in *The Betrothal of the Arnolfini* (1434) exemplifies how an artist, although witness, becomes a part of the story of what he is witnessing and therefore subverts objectivity. This would have been a familiar trope to Fox as Orpen created images within images, often doing so through the use of mirrors reflecting the artist himself looking out at the viewer. In this case, Fox was unable to use a prop to reflect back to the viewer, so instead used herself.

Her work remained secret in her own studio as she did not dare tell her family what she was doing. Her brother was a prisoner of war in Germany and while serving in the most conservative regiment in the British Army was always nicknamed 'Major Sinn Fein' as he was regarded as pro-Irish.¹⁹ Perhaps he may have been more understanding than others in her family like her brother-in-law who was a commanding officer in Ireland, but she dared not take the risk of confiding in anyone. Instead, she worked steadily in her studio, studying every soldier as the scene would have been presented, seeking expert opinion on uniforms, using models to pose and sketch the buildings for accurate dimensions and heights. To paint such a picture was 'a clandestine act' and it took months to complete.²⁰ Meanwhile, Fox retraced her footsteps through St. Stephen's Green, noting and observing people's gestures and reactions.

When the painting was finally completed, she faced a dilemma. Given the turbulent atmosphere at the time, she believed that it was too dangerous to keep. She therefore, gave it to a fellow student, Frank Rigney who was leaving for America to work as an illustrator, and there it remained while Fox got on with the rest of her life.

¹⁷ Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Ireland's art, Ireland's history: representing Ireland, 1845 to present* (Creighton University Press: California, 2007), p. 141.

¹⁸ Fox in conversation with Niland, taped interview.

¹⁹ Stillorgan Genealogy and History website. Charles Vincent Fox (1877-1928), Scots Guard escaped from Germany in 1919. An account of his escape, 'The Boche Baffled' was written by his sister, Mary Valentina (1880-1928).

²⁰ John Turpin, 'Irish History Painting' in *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (1989-90), p. 242.

After

Fox worked between Dublin and London trying to establish herself as an artist and while continuing her training at the DMSA, kept a studio in London. She met and married a British soldier, Cyril Pym in 1917 and looked forward to a brighter future, but he was killed in action within a month of their marriage and the following year, Kathleen gave birth to a daughter, Joan A., Theresa Pym in Croyden, Surrey.²¹

After the death of Cyril and faced with bringing up her daughter alone, Fox decided to concentrate on the more lucrative side of portraiture. Her self-portrait from c1920, shows an accomplished hand and is more complicated and nuanced than it first appears. She is depicted standing in a drawing-room or sitting-room, in front of a chimney piece. It may be her home, Brookfield, Milltown, Dublin which she inherited from her aunt, Lizzie Lydia MacNally as this is her address for the 1917/18 DMSA register. The room's furnishings, a chandelier, delicate ceramics and embroidered antimacassars, indicate an upper middle-class establishment. The edge of the canvas and easel is just visible to the right-hand side of the painting as Fox looks out into a large mirror. Her gaze, directly fixed at the viewer recalls her stance in *The Arrest of Countess Markievicz* and makes her position more than mere convenience. There are also several more paintings or mirrors depicted with the larger one directly over Fox's right shoulder showing a group of people arguing or discussing something. These may be real people or imaginative reflected in another mirror (Orpenesque), thereby challenging perceptions of reality.

Fox's reputation for portraiture was growing and in 1921 her work was shown at the New English Art Club, the Royal Academy and the Royal Hibernian Academy. Her portrait of Lady Rosamund Robertson-Gallwey (1899-1972) showed alongside Orpen and Sir John Lavery (1856-1941) at the National Portrait Society. She was invited to paint one of the most controversial figures of the period, The most Rev. Dr. Daniel Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne (1864-1963). He had been a moderate nationalist when he left Ireland for Melbourne in 1913, but like many Irish people, including Kathleen Fox, the repercussions from the 1916 Rising had transformed his mild views into ardent passion. He spoke out about Irish freedom and

²¹ Joan studied at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and was a noted soprano.

challenged the Australian Prime Minister's attempts to introduce conscription during the First World War, and was regarded as being complicit in the defeat of two referendums on the subject. The *Baltic*, the ship carrying the archbishop was intercepted by the British Navy before it could sail to Ireland in 1920. This was due to a directive from Prime Minister, David Lloyd George that Mannix was not allowed back to his native land. Close to the Irish shore on 8th August where huge crowds awaited Mannix's arrival after triumphant speeches in America for an independent Ireland, two Scotland Yard detectives and a naval officer boarded the ship. They informed Mannix that he was not allowed to land in Ireland nor in Liverpool, Manchester nor Glasgow, all viewed as Irish strongholds. Instead, he landed in Penzance in Cornwall, donned the nickname, 'The Pirate of Penzance', and thence travelled to London with the help of a fellow Bishop and friend staying at a retirement home of priests run by the sisters of St. Joseph, the Nazarene.²²

Against this highly charged background, Fox saw her opportunity to once again document Irish history in the making. Mannix proved a challenging sitter, however, due to his popularity and innumerable visitors. Thinking of her close friend from college, Albert Power, she invited him to London to make a cast of Mannix while she was trying to paint him. In her interview with Niland, she recounts an amusing story of Power arriving off the ship from Ireland with just a chisel and some tools in his pocket. She met him in Euston Station where he had no luggage and no clay, so she immediately improvised. Fox was friends with Lady Kathleen Scott (1878-1947), the widow of explorer Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912) and an imminent sculptor herself. She took Power to Scott's house and studio. Power was not impressed and proceeded to critique the work before him, oblivious to the company he was in, disclaiming each piece as having 'a wrong nose or eye'. Fortunately, both Scott and Fox found the situation highly amusing and Power got his clay. The resultant model bust was made into marble back in Dublin and bought by Melbourne for £500.²³

²² Brenda Neill, 'Daniel Mannix: the Republican Archbishop who took on the British Empire' in *Irish Times* (24 Sept., 2015) <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/daniel-mannix-the-republican-archbishop-who-took-on-the-british-empire-1.2364797>

²³ The bust now sits in the Mannix Room of the Archdiocese Museum and is signed Ailbe de Paor, Power's name in Irish.

Meanwhile, Fox took her painting back to her own studio and worked on it. It depicts Mannix in three-quarter pose, turned to the left against a gold background which shimmers in contrast to the dark regalia. His gaze is dreamy and introspective while his head is beautifully rendered, showing his jawline, hollow cheek and determined mouth. He wears a gold ring on the ring finger of his right-hand which rests on a fur draped on the arm of the throne-like chair. The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1921 and now resides in The Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin to whom Fox herself donated it in 1937.

On 14th April, 1922 anti-treaty forces seized the Four Courts in Dublin, unhappy that the contentious Anglo-Irish treaty signed in London in December the previous year had been ratified by Dáil Éireann in January 2022. Lloyd George issued the provisional Irish Government an ultimatum due to the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson, the Ulster Unionists' military advisor, so they bombarded the building with shells hoping to force the occupiers out. A large explosion, possibly accidental within the building occurred near the Public Records Office and the ensuing fire practically destroyed the building. The anti-treaty supporters surrendered on 22nd June, thus launching the bitter Irish Civil war. Once again, like an ace reporter, Kathleen Fox found herself in the right place at the right time and painted, *Ruins of the Four Courts* depicting the aftermath of the horrendous blaze. Her viewpoint is across the river with the building positioned in the top right of the canvas, designed to sweep the viewers' eyes over the bridge, directly into the destruction. The dome is missing while the empty shells of buildings beside the Four Courts indicate the remnants of the recent War of Independence. It is populated by two figures, hastily positioned leaning between the two trees in the foreground. The brushwork is reminiscent of her Belgian work, spontaneous and loosely applied paint without much attention to detail. She is more intent on capturing the emotion and horror as the building becomes a metaphor for what she feels watching former friends now become enemies. It is therefore quite impressionistic and interestingly contrasts with the same scene done previously to the fire which is now held in the University of Dublin.²⁴ In the earlier work, Fox's style is tighter and crisper with clearly defined detail, but without humans. This gives it an eerier almost portentous feel, as if she could sense the drama that would unfold.

²⁴ Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Ireland's art, Ireland's history*, p. 148.

During the remainder of the 1920s she divided her time between Dublin, London and Nice where her younger sister, Grace Mary (1883-1956) resided. In 1930 she exhibited an enamel plaque in an exhibition of Irish art at the Musée d'Art Ancien in Brussels.²⁵ In 1931 Grace's husband, Colonel John Frederick MacKay, died in Nice aged 56. His widow joined the Order of the Daughters of Charity, Mont Boron, Nice, becoming Sister Veronica and remained there until her death in 1956 at the Carmelite Monastery.²⁶ Fox continued exhibiting with the RHA up until 1937 and when she returned in 1944 her subject matter had reverted to flower-studies and still-lives, with which she now seems to be mostly associated with. As in all her work, the paintings are highly accomplished and skillfully executed, although the subject-matter is not as dynamic as earlier compositions. One exception was *Those of yesterday*, a beautiful depiction of domestic serenity where a child sits reading in bed. A woman, her mother possibly, sits to the side with another child at her feet.

In 1945, she painted Albert Power in side profile with sculptures visible in the background. The paint is loosely applied as if she had to hurry to capture her subject. It is a poignant study, but it not clear whether it was executed after Power's death that year and thus a memorial, reflecting on their long artistic friendship together. She donated the painting to the Hugh Lane Gallery the following year when another reminder of her past life appeared.

Frank Rigney, the illustrator who had taken *The Arrest of Countess Markievicz* to America for safe-keeping wrote to Fox to tell her that the painting had been located, and on its way back to Ireland. She then received a letter from the Department of External Affairs to say that it had arrived at Alexander Basin, Dublin Port. She explained to Niland that she did not know why it was returned through the Department of External Affairs or who told them of its existence. It seems unlikely, however that it was coincidental as the thirtieth anniversary of the Easter Rising approached and a centenary exhibition marking the death of Thomas Davis (1814-1845), the Young Ireland revolutionary was planned for the National College of Art. It was too late to include the painting in the catalogue, but it was hung prominently on a screen alongside Orpen and other historical work. The President Sean T. O'Kelly (1882-1966), a veteran of the Rising was especially interested in it. Not surprisingly, the State made an offer to Fox to buy

²⁵Fellow exhibitors included Sir John Lavery and modernists Mainie Jellett and James Humbert Craig.

²⁶ Stillorgan genealogy and history website.

the work, but she was not tempted, and thus it remained in her home until Nora Niland approached her in 1962. She continued working and in 1953 was included in an exhibition of contemporary Irish work in Aberystwyth, Wales and exhibited at the RHA up until 1957. Her final work was dear to her heart when she designed the stations of the cross for the Jesuit House of Studies in Milltown near her home where she died peacefully on 17th August 1963.

An astute and highly accomplished versatile artist, always aware of her own craft; a documenter of significant historical moments, Kathleen Fox was a gifted Irish female artist who deserves greater recognition and her own place in history.