

'I have looked everywhere that can be looked'

Bloomsday 60

Edward O'Kane

Cavanacor Gallery, Lifford

'I have looked everywhere that can be looked' was a two-person exhibition with my son, David O'Kane, held in 2011 at Cavanacor Gallery, Lifford, County Donegal to celebrate the centenary of Brian O'Nolan's birth. From the front window of the gallery I could look out across the border to Strabane, O'Nolan's birthplace. The spire of the church in the Bowling Green draws the eye to the house where he was born. It seemed a particularly appropriate location to hold the exhibition.

The exhibition screened David's film *Babble*, a trilingual conversation between Flann O'Brien, Franz Kafka, and Jorge Luis Borges which was also screened at *100 Myles: The International Flann O'Brien Centenary Conference* in Vienna in 2011. A painting of mine from the exhibition was used on the cover of *The Short Fiction of Flann O'Brien*, edited by Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2013).

Although photographs exist of Brian O'Nolan, I feel that there are few which sum up the essence of the man. The surprising movie and still photograph record of the first *Bloomsday* Odyssey go some way towards capturing this essence by recording the June day in 1954 when O'Nolan, Patrick Kavanagh, Anthony Cronin, A. J. Leventhal, and friends embarked on their chaotic celebration of Joyce.

The present painting, 'Flann O'Brien,' concentrates on a high contrast, graphic depiction of the group from that day. The image I chose for the painting shows the participants lined up to confront the viewer: the resulting image also reminds me of the striding figures in the poster for the film *Reservoir Dogs*. Even in a pared down, reduced form, the images of O'Nolan and Kavanagh are instantly recognisable.



'Flann O'Brien'
Edward O'Kane

61 X 45 cm acrylic on canvas, 2011