

Panorama Europa

May 15 — Nov 1, 2026 | The Glucksman, Cork, Ireland

'Panorama Europa' presents the work of ten Irish artists who engage with traditions of European painting to explore contemporary identities and wider societal issues. The selected paintings, tapestry, sculptures and drawings reference works from Pre-Renaissance to Impressionism. The exhibition invites you to reflect on these art histories and consider how artists draw on diverse pictorial tropes to create new modes of representation.

'Panorama Europa takes' its name from a commissioned work for the University College Cork art collection by artist Claire Halpin which was developed in partnership with the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for EU Integration and Citizens' Rights. This complex painting evokes renowned works of art across a present-day canvas of events. As with all the works on display in the exhibition, history and tradition become grounds for reclamation and caution, reminding us to remember, and renew, the past.

After Gainsborough Lady in a Landscape presents a seated female figure in a garden setting, echoing the structure of 18th century portraiture. The figure, dressed in an elaborate pink gown, sits slightly off-centre on a green cushion. Facial features are only loosely articulated, giving her an ambiguous, almost ghostly presence. The surrounding landscape is lush yet unsettled. Paint is applied in loose dabs, drips, and smears, creating a surface that feels in constant motion. The environment feels as if it is forming and falling apart, heightened and surreal.

This work is a direct reference to the 18th century British painter Thomas Gainsborough, in whose portraits the sitter often becomes blended into the natural landscape surrounding them. This melding of subject and environment was seen as interpretation of the sitter's identity, aligning refinement with the beauty of nature and signifying the intertwining importance of land ownership and status.

In *After Fragonard The Joys of Motherhood* a woman and child are set within a soft, pastel, blue-toned environment. The central figure stands slightly turned, wearing a pale dress, while a small child leans close to her side. Their faces are simplified and somewhat mask-like, with rosy cheeks and minimal detail, giving them a doll-like and slightly uncanny appearance. The surrounding space is filled with loose brushstrokes in blues, whites, and greens, creating a sense of instability.

This work is based on *The Joys of Motherhood* by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, an 18th century Rococo painting that presents an idealised image of maternal affection. Fragonard's work sought to explore themes of love, intimacy, and leisure and his figures often belong to an imagined aristocratic world in which labour, class inequality, and social tension are absent.

In *After Boucher, The Abduction of Europa* a female figure with blonde hair wearing a short pink dress sits atop a bovine creature. She is flanked on either side by accompanying figures who, like her, dissolve into the surrounding ground through the artist's use of fluid, seeping brushstrokes. At the feet of the central figure is the impression of a young child or cherub gazing upwards.

The work draws on *The Abduction of Europa* by François Boucher, a Rococo painting which depicts the mythological story of Europa being abducted by Zeus, who has transformed himself into a bull. In Boucher's version, the scene is theatrical and sensual, Europa surrounded in soft drapery and a beautiful landscape depicting the act of abduction and sexual violence through a divine and deceptive lens.

Figgis' reinterpretation of these works unpacks how inherited cultural narratives surrounding gender, power and myth are reconsidered today. By loosening the figures and allowing them to blur into their surroundings, Figgis disrupts the aesthetic pleasure that characterises these paintings and suggests that these canonical scenes are not neutral, but rather embedded with histories of domination and representation that can be questioned and reimagined.