

ROBERT J SCOTT LANDSCAPE & WILDLIFE ARTIST OF INTERNATIONAL STATURE

A Retrospect in Remembrance

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ROBERT J SCOTT was born in Arva on the Leitrim-Cavan border in the early 1930's. He was educated in Derrylane Primary School, Royal School Cavan and Trinity College Dublin. He pursued further post-graduate studies at the University of Leicester majoring in Mathematics and Education. He entered the teaching profession and loved every moment as a teacher/mentor and eventually he became Headmaster of St Edmund's School in Norfolk. His sporting life was a significant part of his youth, playing rugby and cricket. In later life, he took a keen interest in golf. We often talked about education and in these discussions the notion of sport and its significance on the school curriculum came to the surface. Long before Howard Gardner's notion of Multiple

■ One of Robert's many wildlife paintings



■ Robert Scott at home in Riversdale

Photo: Tony Fahy

Intelligences became fashionable, Robert Scott understood the notion of a kinaesthetic intelligence and the importance in education of a focus on the harmonious development of mind, body and spirit in educational pedagogy as pivotal concerns in the *cura personalis*.

By this time another intelligence, another gift was emerging in Robert's development that of a spatial artistic intelligence under the tutelage of an old master painter, Jack Harrison. He decided that painting might be his causeway out of the more orthodox profession of teaching. But he dedicated himself to both worlds and set about mastering the craft of painting. He would not

have used the word 'mastering' because it betokens complacency: he used to say art was always seeking without absolutely finding or attempting to break down the wall between what you can see and what you can express. Robert's work was now gaining a momentum of extraordinary freshness in technique, all the while pushing out the frontiers of perfection with attention from art lovers in Europe, Japan and the US. As he once commented, he wandered around the British Isles searching for Utopia but he did not have to search beyond the heartland of his youth.

He returned to Ireland and to Leitrim where he spent many happy and glorious years in Gulladoo, Carrigallen, and with his sister, the late Violet Thomas at Riversdale House and Leisure Centre, near Ballinamore. One thinks of Constantine Cavafy: *"In those few fields or streets of your childhood there, no matter where you roam, you will live and die"*. Robert's second sister Faye Rosemond, lived nearby, in Carrigallen. She too had that creative temperament of the artist as a music teacher. Madge lives in Arva and a brother Basil resides on the home farm by Arva Lake. Robert would often quote a poem from



■ Robert's painting of Drumeela Chapel

Wordsworth in appreciation of the love and care that he received so generously from his sisters entitled: *To my Sister*.
"Each minute sweeter than before,/ The redbreast sings from the tall larch/ That stands beside our door./ There is a blessing in the air, Which seems a sense of joy to yield/ To the bare trees, and mountains bare,/ And grass in the green field."

And London Bridge was as familiar to him as Aughoo Bridge and on occasions, he would evocate another of Wordsworth's poems and memories of long forgotten walks Upon Westminster Bridge:
"The city now doth, like a garment wear/ The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,/ Ships, towers, domes, the-

atres, and temples lie/ Open unto the fields and to the sky,/ All bright and glittering in the smokeless air".

In Ireland, Robert's exhibitions continued in Dublin, Carrick-on-Shannon, Sligo, Galway, and all over the West of Ireland. In these wonderful years of artistic endeavour, his creativity was touched with fire and inflamed with Leitrim landscapes and wildlife habitats. He was drawn back to the classroom and Leitrim and Sligo VEC Schools were blessed with his well attended art classes for pupils and parents. Robert's last Art Exhibition was in The Barrel Store, Carrick-on-Shannon, where he brought down the final curtain publicly on his

■ Robert's workspace at his home in Riverdale, Ballinamore *Photo: Tony Fahy*



■ One of Robert's many town paintings

work. I am reminded of Van Gogh's final words to his old friend Theo: *"My soul is like a house with a few wisps of smoke coming from the chimney- the passer-by does not know what a great fire is blazing within"*.

Robert passed away earlier in 2017 and is survived by his son, Malcolm, who is a solicitor in England. Robert was most pleasant and sincere and reflected a personality that became brighter as one drew nearer. To this genial, intelligent and affable soul, I say farewell and thank you for the memories and the gift of your art. Like Van Gogh, he saw the poor and the less advantaged as being worthy of admiration as much as emperors; he perceived the magic garments that the rest of the world could not and he knew that making the world a better place for others is surely a powerful source of meaning:

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