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Hughie O'Donoghue, Oil and Water I, 1999/2000

**ARTIST**

Hughie O'Donoghue (b.1953)

**TITLE**

Oil and Water I

**MEDIUM**

Oil on canvas

**DATE**

1999/2000

**SIZE**

80  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 74  $\frac{3}{4}$  in : 205.0 x 190.0 cm

**INSCRIPTIONS**

Signed, titled and dated by the artist verso

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired directly from the artist  
Purdy Hicks Gallery, London

**LITERATURE**

This painting is closely related to Oil and Water, 1999, Hughie O'Donoghue, edited by Jo Baring, Lund Humphries, London, 2023, p.94, fig.12 (col. illus)

**REFERENCE**

AC23-31

*"The first paintings I made of bodies were in 1984-5. I had two criteria that I decided to adhere to. Firstly, they would be life-size or larger so that the relationship to the viewer would be intimate. The second criterion was that the images would emerge out of the physical process; that is, the pushing and spreading of paint across the canvas, scoring into it, lifting and removing paint, rebuilding it, adding glazes and scumbles. I was aware of the long tradition of figure painting that was still practised in Britain, the tradition of the 'observed' figure where an artist would paint a posed model in a room, who might well be naked. Nothing, to me, seemed more unnatural than this. What I was after was something different, something visceral which was about how it feels to be in a body but also something that announced itself simply as what it was - paint. I was looking to achieve a tension between the image and the 'material'.*

*The core of the paintings was invariably flake or lead white oil paint, a warm white, dense, heavy and solid, extremely opaque and now illegal unless you are a picture restorer. The tones of white were built up as layers that were added and subtracted over time as I made decisions and intuitive corrections. I did not know what the painting was going to look like before I made*

*it so there was a tension built into the working process. I had good days when I thought I had made progress but I also had bad days when I would leave the studio despondent after having removed more paint than I had added and the painting was looking less interesting than when I had begun the day's work. I believed in this process though, understanding that an essential ingredient of making a painting is the risk of failure - art is not a demonstration of skills or talents but a process of trying to speak directly. At some point a painting would 'turn a corner' and start to look like it did not need too much more input from me. Then began the difficult process of finishing the painting, the knowing-when-to-stop part. I found and still find that this takes time, simply looking at the painting and getting some emotional distance from it. There are strategies that you can use like turning the painting to the wall for a while or looking at it on its side so that you see it with fresh eyes as a thing, not just an image. The painting represents its subject but it does not illustrate it so it needs to be judged on its own terms."*

Hughie O'Donoghue, *The Visceral Body*, Hughie O'Donoghue, edited by Jo Baring, Lund Humphries, London, 2023

## Hughie O'Donoghue

Born in Manchester, England, in 1953, Hughie O'Donoghue's Irish heritage and deep connection to his roots have had a profound influence on his artistic expression. His exploration of personal and collective memory is highly individual and he is considered amongst Ireland's most important artists.

O'Donoghue's work primarily revolves around the human figure, depicted on occasion in introspective, contemplative poses. His often vibrantly coloured paintings are richly layered, generally large in scale and are characterised by elaborately textured surfaces and a particular use of the medium. There is significant depth and emotional resonance in his works and his charcoal drawings display an uncommon technical dexterity.

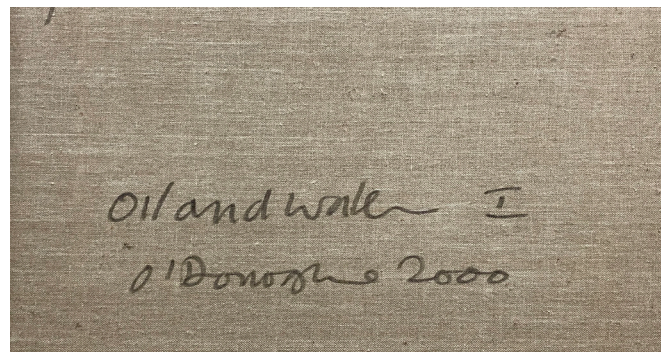
One of the most significant aspects of O'Donoghue's oeuvre is his exploration of the themes of identity, memory, and history. The artist frequently draws on historical events, mythological narratives and personal experiences, presenting a complex and multifaceted compendium of works. O'Donoghue's ability to merge the personal and the universal on a grand scale allows viewers to engage with his art in a practically immersive fashion.

Several museums have given O'Donoghue solo exhibitions including Haus der Kunst, Munich; Imperial War Museum, London; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; The Gemeentemuseum, The Hague and The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. He was artist in residence at the National Gallery, London from 1984-85.

Throughout his career, O'Donoghue has created notable series of works. His early, monumental series *Sleeper* and *Red Earth* interpret the history of the ground itself, exploring what the soil may hold and why: examining the bodies placed in it or that may have fallen or otherwise come to be there.

The discovery of his father's war diaries led to the series *A Line of Retreat*. Interpreting moments from the soldier's experiences throughout the Second World War became a starting point for a prodigious consideration of that period through the medium of richly surfaced paint and heavy carborundum etchings. O'Donoghue's ability to merge history and personal experience frequently creates a compelling, resonant narrative.

ARCHEUS / POST-MODERN are principal dealers in Hughie O'Donoghue's early works and his graphic works.



**The following institutions hold his work:**

Arts Council of Great Britain

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

British Museum

Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

Cleveland County Museums, Middlesbrough

Crawford Art Gallery, Cork

Djanogly Art Gallery, University of Nottingham

Dublin City Gallery, Hugh Lane, Dublin

Eton College, Windsor, Berkshire

Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Gemeentemuseum, Den Haag, Netherlands

Huddersfield Art Gallery

Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin

Hunt Museum, Limerick

Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow

The Imperial War Museum, London

The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin

Mayo General Hospital

Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor

National University of Ireland, Cork

National University of Ireland, Galway

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

The National Gallery, London

The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle

St John's College, University of Oxford

Trinity College Dublin

Trinity Hall, Cambridge

Ulster Museum, Belfast

Victoria Art Gallery, Bath

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven



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