

The Cover

The Doctor's Visit

This oil on canvas by Leo Whelan (1892-1956) is reproduced by kind permission of the National Gallery of Ireland (Catalogue no. 4462). This cover is sponsored by Glaxo.

Leo Whelan was born in Dublin in 1892 and educated at Belvedere College. He studied painting at the Metropolitan School of Art under William Orpen, who was to influence him considerably, as indeed he was also to do with many of Whelan's contemporaries among whom may be included James Sleator, Sean Keating, Patrick Tuohy, Margaret Clarke and Kathleen Fox. It has been argued with some justification that the power of Orpen's personality to influence his students was detrimental to the development of their own art. This may have been particularly true of Patrick Tuohy, who in later years, felt himself inhibited by the towering shadow of Orpen. Some of the listlessness of Whelan's work may also, perhaps, be attributed to an obsessional observance of the technical restraints Orpen imposed upon his own work to good effect, but which did not always work to advantage for less talented artists. Whelan was elected an ARHA in 1920 and RHA in 1923. He was best known for his portraiture and his output was large, though, the only example of his portraits in the National Gallery is *Rory O'Connor, Revolutionary and Soldier (1883-1933)*, a rather bland study that emphasises many of Whelan's shortcomings as a painter.

The Doctor's Visit shows the artist's cousin as a patient in bed in his parent's home in Eccles Street, Dublin. The artist's mother is sitting by the bed, and his sister, in the uniform of a Mater Hospital nurse, waits expectantly at the door for the doctor who is about to enter. The event is real and won the Taylor Art Scholarship for Whelan in 1916. It depicts a scene that was common in Dublin society in the first half of the twentieth century.

The following sources have been consulted in preparing this note: Le Marivel, A and Wynne M. National Gallery of Ireland — Acquisitions 1982-83. The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin 1984. p.45; Arnold B. Orpen. *Mirror to an Age*. Jonathan Cape. London. 1981. p. 163.

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