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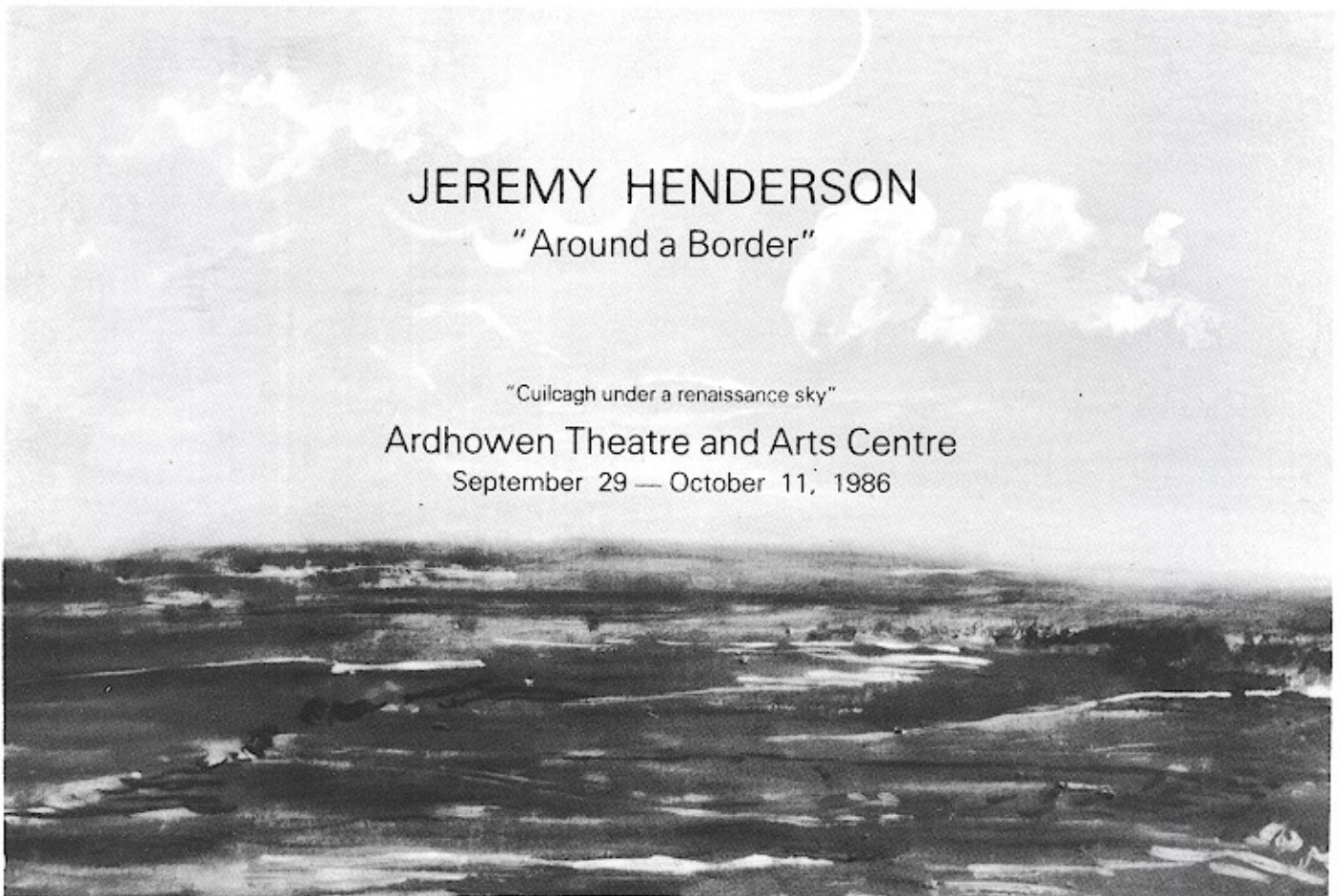
Ardhowen Theatre and Arts Centre  
Dublin Road  
Enniskillen  
Open 10.00 a.m. — 4.30 p.m.: Monday to Saturday



JEREMY HENDERSON  
"Around a Border"

"Cuilcagh under a renaissance sky"

Ardhowen Theatre and Arts Centre  
September 29 — October 11, 1986





## JEREMY HENDERSON

### Biography

Born 1952 in Enniskillen and lived in Fermanagh until 1972.

Studied at Northern Ireland Polytechnic,  
Kingston Polytechnic and Chelsea School of Art.

Lives and works in London.

I first encountered Jeremy Henderson's work at an exhibition in London in 1980 of Irish Art in the Seventies. It was part of the 'Sense of Ireland' festival and the point of the exhibition called 'The International Connection' selected by the eminent critic Cyril Barrett, was to stress the points of connection with the concerns of making art in the contemporary world and to break the mould of thinking of Irish art in terms purely of traditional values and of qualities like lyricism and romanticism. Jeremy Henderson's work then was abstract and shared in the coolness and wit that Barrett identified as common to an otherwise very disparate group. So when about five years later, Jeremy contacted me during one of his visits home to Lisbellaw, I was startled to see the extent to which his work had changed when he showed me his large sombre and expressive drawings all concerned with the landscape of the Fermanagh border area. My immediate reaction was to seek comparison with the works of other artists and the two that occurred to me immediately were Jack B. Yeats and the young Tyrone artist Clement McAleer. On reflection I think the comparison with McAleer was misleading as, although the subject of the work is superficially similar, they diverge widely in terms of tone and intention. However I think the other analogy still valid. Jeremy's account of his own work 'In my paintings the time of day is indeterminable, the weather changeable, something has happened or is about to happen' could equally apply to the late work of Yeats.

As a subject landscape is the cliché of Irish art. It is difficult to perceive the landscape of the west of Ireland other than through the vision of Paul Henry, not to mention the legion of followers. Thus for serious artists like Henderson or T. P. Flanagan the subject poses special problems and dangers. To state the obvious these landscapes are not careful delineations of picturesque landscape; they are essentially emotional and concerned with ideas about the nature of art and intended to stimulate and provoke rather than reassure. Here are his own comments on them:

"These paintings show expansive vistas of no identifiable place but an amalgamation of images from memory which are not intended to be interpreted as the fashionable mythological view of landscape, no arcadia or world of sagas.

The visual geographical location of my work is the Irish border, however psychologically it is the border landscape of the chthonian and conscious worlds. I attempt to imbue my paintings with layers of meaning. People can peel away any combination of mixed metaphors or symbols they wish like skin.

The composition of this work alludes to elements visible in Dutch landscape painting of the 1730's and 40's, for example, I have utilised its depth of chiaroscuro and exaggerated rolling skies producing a quiet dynamism in the picture plane. The clouds are at once amorphous and anamorphous, creating fertile play between the abstract and representational, the ambiguity of form perhaps containing an embryo, the curve of a breast or swimming sperm.

The painting surface is like the mediaeval alchemist's melting pot, a metaphor for procreation. Paracelsus, the 15th century philosopher and alchemist, said 'A tree throws out its meaning without the aid of the alphabet'. With all the connotations inherent in that image to draw or paint a tree is a dilemma. Through the act of painting I hope to render a tree with some metaphysical quality, alternatively, I know a tree is just a tree, even a painted tree".

TED HICKEY 1986  
Keeper of Art, Ulster Museum.