

"We entered a cabin. Stretched in one dark corner, scarcely visible from the smoke and rags that covered them, were three children huddled together, eyes sunk, voices gone, and evidently in the last state of actual starvation..."

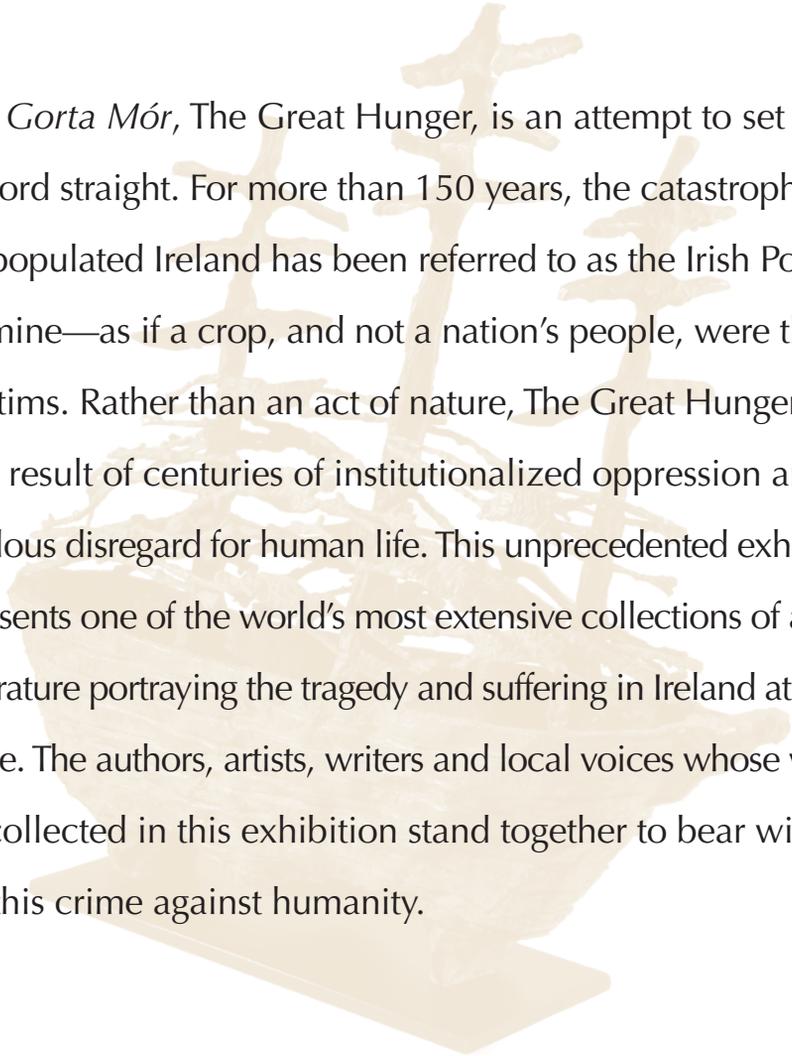
*from William Bennett, Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland, 1847*



# IRELAND'S GREAT HUNGER

AN GORTA MÓR: THE QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY COLLECTION

Consulate General of Ireland | 345 Park Avenue, New York | May 21- September 3, 2010



*An Gorta Mór*, The Great Hunger, is an attempt to set the record straight. For more than 150 years, the catastrophe that depopulated Ireland has been referred to as the Irish Potato Famine—as if a crop, and not a nation’s people, were the victims. Rather than an act of nature, The Great Hunger was the result of centuries of institutionalized oppression and callous disregard for human life. This unprecedented exhibition presents one of the world’s most extensive collections of art and literature portraying the tragedy and suffering in Ireland at that time. The authors, artists, writers and local voices whose work is collected in this exhibition stand together to bear witness to this crime against humanity.

It is critical that the Great Hunger be remembered accurately. In the 150-plus years since the Great Hunger, this tragedy has been downplayed and frequently distorted by Anglo historians and sympathizers. Too often it has been described as a disaster caused by the bad luck of a naturally occurring potato blight. British authorities, then responsible for ruling all of Ireland, were quick to agree, and thus took no responsibility for this epic disaster that claimed the lives of 1.5 million Irish people. Thanks to recent historians, such as Christine Kinealy, we now know that more than adequate food existed in Ireland; food exports from the country actually increased during the famine years.

If only British authorities had possessed the will and compassion to deliver this food to the starving Irish. But British Government indifference resulted in the worst calamity ever to befall Ireland. It was not until 1997, 150 years after Black '47, that a British prime minister, Tony Blair, acknowledged that the British bore some responsibility for this terrible tragedy.

Irish-Americans must continue to publicly document this worst tragedy and human rights abuse in Ireland's history—and to question those who even today seek to obscure the real causes of this human disaster.

**John L. Lahey, Ph.D.**

President, Quinnipiac University

Vice Chairman, New York St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee

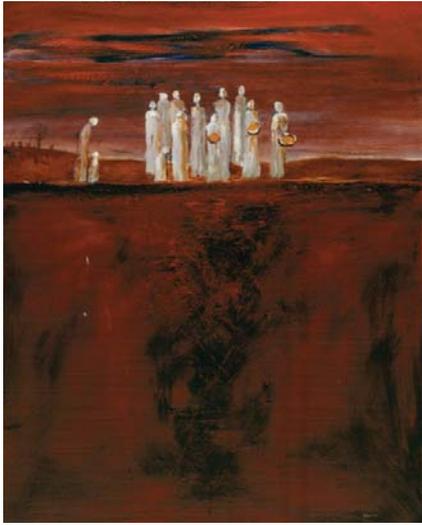


This is the first national tour of the permanent exhibition of *An Gorta Mór*, The Great Hunger, which is housed in The Lender Family Special Collection Room at the Arnold Bernhard Library of Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. This exhibition brings together original sculptures, paintings, photographs, rare books, literary documents and reproductions of other historic documents and images. This exhibition is devoted to the preservation and continued study of Irish history and culture.

The Great Hunger ranks among the worst tragedies in the sweep of human history. Between 1845 and 1850, approximately 1.5 million Irish men, women and children died of starvation or related diseases. By 1855, more than two million more fled Ireland to avoid a similar fate. In a single decade, Ireland's population dropped by half, from eight to four million, and continued to decline for the rest of the century. By 1900, only two million people remained in Ireland. Indisputably the worst chapter in Ireland's history, The Great Hunger occurred during an era of sufficiency: There was more than adequate food in the country to feed its starving populace. Exports of food and livestock from Ireland actually increased during those years.

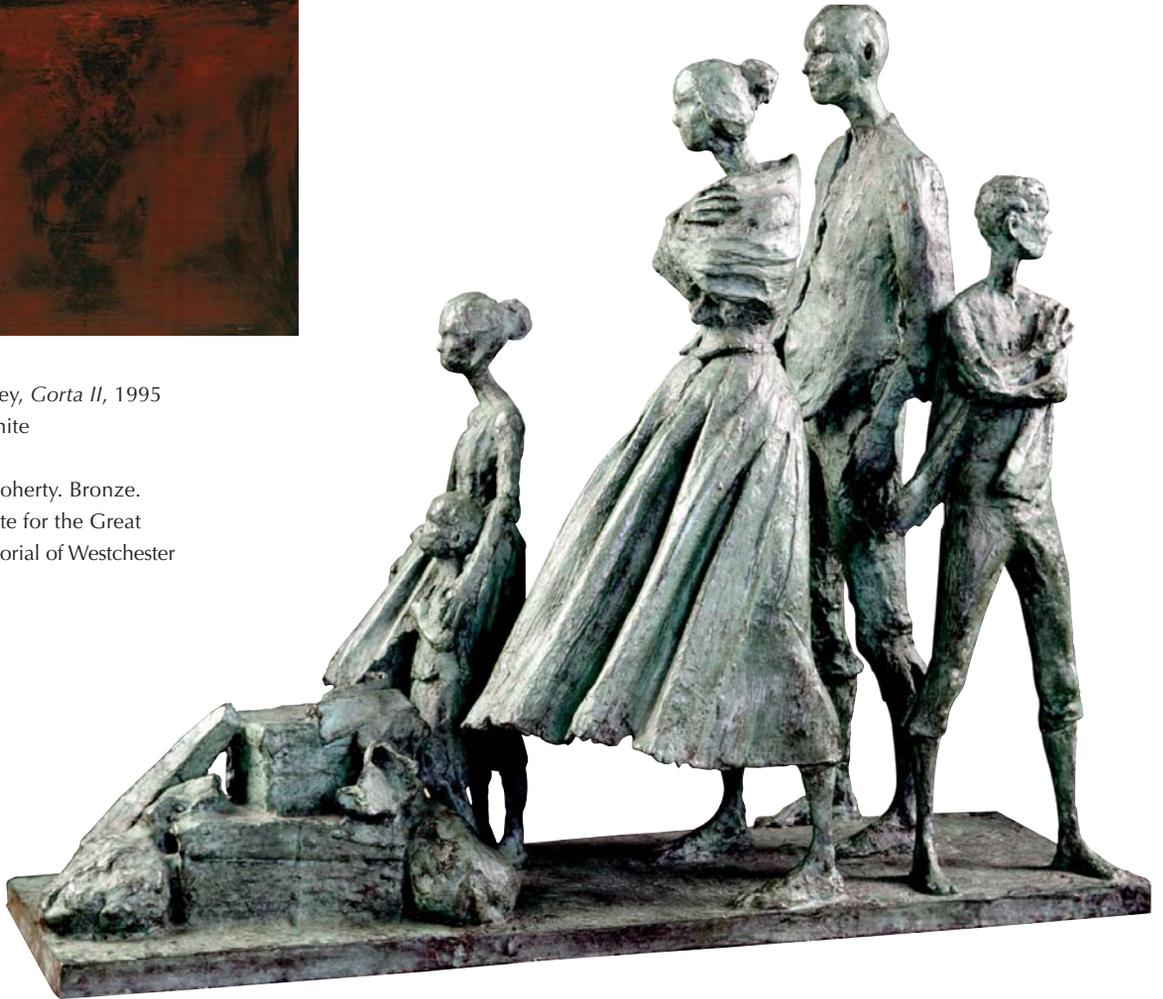
The exhibition contains sculptures by such artists as John Behan, Glenna Goodacre, Rowan Gillespie, John Coll, Eamonn O'Doherty and Kieran Tuohy. Several pieces in the collection are maquettes, or miniatures, of Famine memorials that have been erected in recent years both at Irish ports where families embarked for new lands and at ports of entry in the United States and Canada where the Irish fled in desperation.

Paintings, lithographs, photographs and etchings by artists including Padraic Reaney, Micheal Farrell and Kit DeFever are also featured.



Padraic Reaney, *Gorta II*, 1995  
Oil on Masonite

Eamonn O'Doherty. Bronze.  
Final Maquette for the Great  
Hunger Memorial of Westchester  
County, 2001





The Great Hunger Collection at Quinnipiac University includes nearly 700 volumes. Some of these volumes are extremely rare and were written at or around the time of the famine; others center on the events and forces surrounding the tragedy. Some include moving accounts and personal recollections taken from letters and diaries of the period. Others, by present-day authorities and scholars, examine the significance of The Great Hunger—which has, until now, been the focus of little scholarly research. Historical novels, essays and personal reflections contribute to the record of The Great Hunger. The book collection is represented at this exhibition in photographs and video features.



**An Gorta Mór, The Great Hunger, is on display at the Consulate General of Ireland in New York from May 21-September 3.** Visitors are welcome to view the exhibit weekdays, but should call the Consulate at 212.319.2555 for specific times or visit the website [www.thegreathunger.org](http://www.thegreathunger.org). **Admission is free.**

### **Consulate General of Ireland**

345 Park Avenue, New York 10154-1795

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John Behan, *Famine Ship*, 2000, Bronze

Cover: Rowan Gillespie, *The Victim*, 1997, Bronze

**Quinnipiac University** is a private, coeducational, nonsectarian institution located 90 minutes north of New York City and two hours south of Boston. The university enrolls 5,700 full-time undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students in 52 undergraduate and 20 graduate programs of study in its School of Business, School of Communications, School of Education, School of Health Sciences, School of Law, and College of Arts and Sciences. For more information about Quinnipiac, please visit [www.quinnipiac.edu](http://www.quinnipiac.edu).

### **Other Quinnipiac Programs**

- Collaborative study abroad program at University College Cork, Ireland's leading research institute.
- School of Law Summer Program at Trinity College, Dublin, founded in 1592 and one of Europe's oldest universities.
- Arnold Bernhard Library Digitization Project: the world's largest collection of online books pertaining to The Great Hunger.

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