



Billy Foley

Drawing No. 5

Charcoal and conté crayon on paper. 152 x 228 cm

Talking to Billy Foley about his paintings and drawings can be an extraordinarily enriching experience, especially for a scientist. Billy has found within 20th century science a language that has helped him to articulate many aspects of his own creative process.

For the scientist, extracting a deeper understanding from the outwardly complex and often non-linear world of natural phenomena can involve great creative leaps. Twentieth century physics, in particular, requires the development of abstract concepts to put form on images and models that can be used to provide descriptions of the material universe which can be communicated to others. Such embryonic theories undergo further exploration, refinement and improvement before they become acceptable to the wider community. All scientific theories, however, are tentative and all will ultimately give way to more refined versions.

Billy is particularly interested in systems in which fundamental entities collectively self-organise to create coherent, complex forms. At one level, these paintings

Artwork of the Month

and drawings explore deep links between the perspectives on nature of the artist and those of the scientist. For Billy, scientific methodology and ideas, from quantum physics to chaos theory, provide tools that enable him to explore further and explain his work. He has identified striking parallels in the imaginative ways by which artists and scientists attempt to describe the complexities of the natural world. These similarities suggest that the perspectives on nature of the artist and the scientist may not be as different as is generally believed.

Billy's passionate interest in the creative process in art is illuminated by his knowledge and understanding of analogous processes in science. The resulting insight informs all of his work.

Dr Colm O'Sullivan, Department of Physics

There are two other works by Billy Foley in the University Art Collection, *Formation*, 1992 (hangs in the Admissions Corridor) and *Untitled (Landscape)*, 1993 (hangs in the Staff Common Room). Foley is also currently included in an exhibition of work by former students of the Crawford Art College which is at the Glucksman until February 2006.