

Design of ETS Walton Sculpture Unveiled

The design of a new campus sculpture to mark Dublin's designation as the European City of Science 2012 and to commemorate Trinity's Nobel Laureate and former Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, E.T.S. Walton, has been officially unveiled by the Provost, Dr Patrick Prendergast.

The sculpture by artist Eilis O'Connell is a stack of mirror polished spheres, increasing in size as they rise upward which appear to defy gravity. It will be located beside the Fitzgerald Building, home to the School of Physics. Apple trees will be planted in the lawn opposite to be reflected in the spheres. This is the first time in Trinity's 420-year history that this kind of site-specific sculpture has been commissioned to commemorate such a significant figure in the history of the College and the development of science globally.



Professor James Lunney, Head, School of Physics, Catherine Giltrap, Curator of the College Art Collections, Eilis O'Connell, Artist, Marian Woods and Philip Walton, ETS Walton's daughter and son and Dr Patrick Prendergast, Provost, TCD

Speaking at the unveiling, artist Eilis O'Connell explained that: "Spheres as a formal sculptural element appealed to me because they were used to create spark gaps for the particle accelerator with which Walton and Cockcroft split the atom in 1932. This sculpture refers to Walton's most important characteristics - his intellectual rigour and hands-on ability to actually build the Particle Accelerator with which he and Cockcroft split the atom and his nurturing ability as a teacher and, privately, as a grower of fruit trees. A man is not only defined by his academic achievements but also by the memories he leaves behind in others'. Eilis was very struck by Walton's daughter, Marian Wood's description of him as father and scientist and in particular his ability and enthusiasm for fabricating his own tools, from garden tools to the scientific apparatus he constructed to carry out the experiments to 'split the atom'. Trinity invited six artists to submit a design to respond to the persona of Walton, his teaching, his research achievements, and his connection to Albert Einstein's $E=mc^2$ equation which was first demonstrated by Walton and Cockcroft's splitting of the atom. The selected winning design by Eilis O'Connell was chosen by a panel comprising members of the Walton family who attended the unveiling, representatives from the School of Physics and Department of History of Art and Architecture, the Curator of the College Art Collections, a representative of the students, and the directors of The Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, The Royal Hibernian Academy, and Dublin City Council's Public Arts Officer. The commission was made possible by the support of the Walton family, the School of Physics, the Trinity College Association and Trust, the Department of Education and Skills and Science Gallery, Trinity College Dublin. In conjunction with the special display of E.T.S. Walton's Nobel Prize medal and related documents, a 10 minute on-screen display of all six invited artists' designs is showing in the Long Room of The Old Library from July 14th until, and including Culture Night on September 21st 2012.