

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY:
PROFESSOR ENDA McDONAGH, in University College Cork on 2
June, 2006, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of
Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **VIVIENNE ROCHE**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

To adapt a phrase it takes an artist to understand one and I am not an artist. However it may not always take an artist to enjoy and appreciate one. Indeed the university tradition of the humanities is built on the humbler capacity to appreciate and at times elucidate the work of artists. As a theologian and human being I presume to belong in that humanist tradition and it is as an admirer and appreciator of Vivienne Roche's work I am privileged to present her today for an honorary doctorate at this university in her native city.

Born and bred and educated into adult life in this city she must now rank as one of its most gifted daughters. Indeed in a land where the particular art of sculpture lay neglected for many centuries she has given Ireland an international profile which has little to do with fashion and everything to do with fashioning original work on the grand scale of her recent NCIris for the National College of Ireland or the somewhat less recent Sea Garden at Ringaskiddy. But one must not rush to the large-scale sculptures of the last decade and forget the slow, maturing education and creations which mark her earlier career.

She was educated at Miss Sullivan's Primary and Secondary School on the South Mall, at the Crawford School of Art from 1970 to 1974 and from 1974 to 1975 at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Perhaps the other most formative factors in her artistic maturing was her moving home and studio to be beside the sea in Garretstown, Co. Cork and her sojourn in Scandinavia in the 1980's. However Roche's is such an adventurous spirit and such a creative talent that she found her own distinctive path, even paths, integrating vision, emotion and intellect in shaping materials as diverse as sailcloth, wax, seaweed, bronze and steel into the exciting forms that stretch from this campus and city across the country and the continent.

Before considering one or two of her finest works, which should really be done *in situ*, we should remind ourselves of her contribution to the development of sculpture and the arts in Ireland in her role as co-founder and first chairperson of the National Sculpture Factory in Cork, as member of the Arts Council, 1993-1998, as elected member of Aosdána and of the RHA. Beyond all that lies her own artistic work in numerous solo and joint exhibitions, and in the major commissions which have dominated her recent life.

The most recent of these to be unveiled is the magnificent NC Iris at National College of Ireland in Dublin. Rising fourteen metres into the sky it is intended as 'an emblem of the growth and light synonymous with both nature and learning'. But Vivienne has greatly enriched other universities, notably the new Dental School at Trinity College, Dublin with her truly beautiful Wave Shadow, a reflection of her preoccupation with and inspiration by the sea by which she lives. Her Inclination at the NMRC building of UCC reveals her capacity to express human emotion and sexual dynamism in apparently the coldest of materials. Her finest expression of this may be the installation she designed for the Hugh Lane Gallery with the overall title of Tidal Erotics. Back to the sea again! The drawing and sculptures combined with the music of John Buckley, all displayed and heard in four rooms or movements are regarded as one of the most original and beautiful of Irish modern art works.

Vivienne Roche has many claims on the attention of our universities beyond their intrinsic connection to truth and beauty. Influenced perhaps by her father, engineer and bridge-builder, she has acquired an enviable knowledge of technology and of the difficult materials such as steel and their esthetic possibilities and attended to the least-noticed of our organic matter in her loving use of seaweed and wax. Her studio, its materials and workings, her use of sea and sand, of wind and light, cut across a whole range of university concerns and disciplines. Her integration of these in truth and beauty could also provide a model for the integration a university is often so sadly lacking and often so badly needs.

And these are just some of the reasons why I recommend Vivienne Roche to this university for an honorary doctorate today.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS,

Praesento vobis hanc meam filiam, quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneam esse quae admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testur ac spondeo totique Academiae.