



For immediate release

**President of Ireland Mary McAleese opens
"Ireland's Great Hunger, An Gorta Mór:
The Quinnipiac University Collection"**

Hamden, Conn. – June 9, 2010 – Mary McAleese, president of Ireland, and her husband, Dr. Martin McAleese, opened "Ireland's Great Hunger, An Gorta Mór: The Quinnipiac University Collection," a major exhibition of sculpture, paintings and writings about the Irish Famine, on May 21, at the Consulate General of Ireland in New York City.

The exhibit focuses on the famine years 1845-1850, when virtually all of Ireland's potato crops were destroyed.

The crop destruction, coupled with British governmental indifference to the plight of the Irish, who at the time were part of the United Kingdom, resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million Irish men, women and children and the emigration of more than two million to nations around the world. This tragedy occurred even though there was more than adequate food in the country to feed its starving populace. Exports of food and live stock from Ireland actually increased during the years of the Great Hunger.

"The Great Famine devastated 19th century Ireland and left a long-term imprint on the Irish psyche," said President McAleese, who addressed the 100 dignitaries and other special guests who attended the opening. "It ruptured the history of Ireland and it changed the history too of the United States, Canada and Australia...The artwork and literature that surrounds us in this exhibition can probe some of the emotions and responses evoked by the collective memory of those years."

The exhibition contains sculptures by noted artists John Behan, Glenna Goodacre, Rowan Gillespie, Eamonn O'Doherty and Kieran Tuohy. Several of the 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 Padraic Reaney, Micheal Farrell and Kit DeFever are also featured.

The extensive book collection that is part of the permanent collection at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Conn., is represented in the exhibit through photographs and video features. The books are used for scholarly research both at the University and by other faculty scholars.

President McAleese credited Quinnipiac University for creating the exhibit, which has been on display in the Lender Family Special Collection Room in the Arnold Bernhard Library at Quinnipiac since 2000.

"This exhibition dedicated to Ireland's Great Hunger has come to the Consulate General thanks to the work of Dr. John Lahey (President of Quinnipiac University), the generosity of the staff and benefactors of Quinnipiac University and in particular the archival mission of the Lender family whose special collection of rare art and literature allows us to interrogate that dreadful time through fresh eyes."

The exhibition is on display at the Consulate General of Ireland, 345 Park Ave., 17th floor, New York City, through Sept. 3. Visitors are welcome to view the exhibit weekdays, but should call the Consulate at 212-319-2555 for specific times and hours or visit the website www.thegreathunger.org. Admission is free.

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. The 2009 issue of U.S. News and World Report's America's Best Colleges named Quinnipiac as the top up-and-coming school with master's programs in the North. For more information about Quinnipiac, please visit www.quinnipiac.edu.

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