

**MAJOR COMMISSION IN NEW YORK'S HISTORIC SOHO DISTRICT AWARDED TO
IRISH SCULPTOR**

**New artwork by renowned sculptor Rowan Gillespie to commemorate
Archbishop John J. Hughes
at Bicentennial Celebration of the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, Mulberry Street**

**Announcement to be made at Formal Reception on September 30, 2014
by the Archbishop Hughes Commemorative Committee**

NEW YORK, NY (9/30/2014) - The Archbishop Hughes Commemorative Committee, a collaboration of Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and Ancient Order of Hibernians, is pleased to announce that a lasting memorial has been commissioned to honor the life and legacy of Archbishop John J. Hughes - Ireland's greatest immigrant of the pre-famine nineteenth century and an unsung American hero. The memorial will be unveiled by Cardinal Timothy Dolan at a ceremony celebrating the 200th anniversary of The Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in November of 2015.

The Committee has commissioned the world renowned Irish sculptor, Rowan Gillespie, to create a memorial in his likeness at 32 Prince Street, beside the basilica. The Committee is hosting a "Meet the Artist" reception at the Archbishop's historic residence at 263 Mulberry Street on Tuesday, September 30th at 6-8 pm. The original exhibition exploring the achievements of Archbishop Hughes, *A Monumental Legacy*, curated and produced by Turlough McConnell Communications, will be on view at the reception.

The Committee will also announce plans to establish a fund to continue his legacy of social mobility through education by supporting the newly created *Archbishop John Hughes Center* at Prince Street, site of the oldest Catholic grammar school in Manhattan.

St. Patrick's Old Cathedral was completed in 1815, designated a basilica by Pope Benedict on St. Patrick's Day 2010, and will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its consecration next year. For most of the nineteenth century, it served as the center of religious and social activity for the rapidly growing immigrant Catholic Church in America. To this day, the basilica continues to serve an ever-changing population of people as a focal point of their community and their faith.

Before this neighborhood on the edge of SOHO became popularly known as part of Little Italy, it was known as a tenement area for poor, uneducated Irish immigrants during a time of heightened discrimination and bigotry. If St. Patrick's Old Cathedral was a vehicle for stability and social mobility for the downtrodden Irish community, Archbishop John Hughes, New York's first Catholic Archbishop, was its driver. Some of his many invaluable contributions include:

- Aggressive opponent of anti-immigrant nativist bigotry, winning respect for his defense of the Irish and of religious liberty in the face of discrimination
- Established a much-needed school system for the disadvantaged immigrant community in New York City
- Responsible for the establishment of hospitals, orphanages and charitable institutions geared towards serving to the immigrant Irish community
- Instrumental in the establishment of the first banking institution tailored for the Irish immigrant community and a founder of the Emigrant Savings Bank
- Founded St. John's College, later Fordham University

- Laid the cornerstone, in what was then rural Manhattan, of St. Patrick's Cathedral on New York's Fifth Avenue, a lasting testament to his vision and achievements.
- Served as a special envoy for Abraham Lincoln to the Heads of State in Europe during the American Civil War for the purpose of enlisting support for the cause of the Union.

Meet the Artist Reception: Tuesday, September 30, 2014, 6-8pm

263 Mulberry Street, New York – historic residence of Archbishop Hughes.

Reception to be held in the newly restored Gallery and garden.

Rowan Gillespie

To date, the 19th century Irish famine and subsequent migration, principally to the U.S., has motivated two significant public works by Dublin-born sculptor Rowan Gillespie in Ireland and Canada. Gillespie's Famine Memorial sculptures on Custom House Quay in Dublin's docklands were presented to the City of Dublin in 1997 and have become a significant city monument. Having worked almost exclusively on site specific art since 1996, Gillespie's public works can be found in his native Ireland, Europe, the USA and Canada. Internationally recognized as a major artist, in 2007 he was awarded an honorary Doctorate in Fine Art by Regis University in Denver, Colorado.

Rowan Gillespie's singular and often exhausting modus operandi involves taking the work through from conception to creation, entirely unassisted in his purpose-built bronze casting foundry, a process that makes him unique among the bronze casting fraternity. Influenced by the painter Edvard Munch and encouraged by the sculptor Henry Moore, Gillespie uses the lost wax casting process to portray the whole gamut of human emotions.

Archbishop John J. Hughes

Born in County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1797, the man who would become the fourth Roman Catholic Bishop of New York and the city's first Archbishop famously remarked that he enjoyed all the rights and benefits of British life until the day of his baptism. A champion of religious equality, Hughes was motivated by his first-hand experience of anti-Catholic persecution in Ireland. A lifelong champion of tolerance, this dedicated educator went on to found St. John's College, now New York City's Fordham University, and animate the building of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Hughes was connected with all the major figures of the day, including Elizabeth Ann Seton, America's first Roman Catholic saint, NY Governor William Seward and President Abraham Lincoln who entrusted him with a special diplomatic mission to Europe during the Civil War.

A Monumental Legacy: Archbishop John J. Hughes and the Building of St. Patrick's Cathedral, an original exhibition, was seen at the Consulate General of Ireland-New York in 2014. The exhibition moves to the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral as part of the Bicentennial Celebration. For further information, please see www.turloughmcconnell.com.

Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral

Located at 260-264 Mulberry Street, the Basilica was the first cathedral church of the Diocese of New York, second Catholic church in Manhattan, and third Catholic church in all of New York State. The Cathedral was declared a Basilica by Pope Benedict on St. Patrick's Day 2010. Construction began in 1808 and was completed in 1815.

In 1834, a wall (now fully restored) was built around the cathedral and churchyard to protect the property from "rioters bent on destruction." When anti-Catholic "Nativist" rioters threatened to set fire to the church in 1844, Archbishop Hughes called upon the Ancient Order of Hibernians to defend the building.

St. Patrick's sat adjacent to the Hibernian headquarters at 42 Prince Street. The Hibernians surrounded the church and thwarted the rioters, saving the structure from destruction.

The Basilica is about to embark on a major renovation in order to preserve the 200 year old structure. The renovation will be completed in time for the anniversary celebration in November 2015. Please see the Basilica websites for further information: oldcathedral.org/history/; oldcathedral.org/restoration/.

Archbishop Hughes Commemorative Committee

The Archbishop Hughes Commemorative Committee is a collection of individuals representing the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and the Ancient Order of Hibernians who share a passion for properly recognizing Ireland's greatest 19th century immigrant to the United States.

The group's mission is to honor and perpetuate the life work of Archbishop John J. Hughes by creating a permanent memorial in his likeness beside the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral that serves as a beacon for his missions of social justice, quality education, and peacemaking. The Committee is chaired by Bill Duggan from the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick of Morris County, NJ.

There are several historical ties between the Basilica and Morris County: On March 5, 1849, Bishop John Hughes, whose jurisdiction as then-Bishop of New York included New Jersey, dedicated the Parrish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Morristown, NJ – home parish of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick of Morris County, NJ. Buried in the crypt beneath the Old Cathedral is Dominick Lynch, a noted member of The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in the City of New York.

Turlough McConnell Communications-Ireland in America™

Curator and producer of the exhibition *A Monumental Legacy*, Turlough McConnell Communications-Ireland in America™ (TMCC) provides curatorial, production, tour management, marketing, venue location, and grant/sponsorship services in support of exhibitions and museums in Ireland and the U.S. TMCC produces print and digital collateral and offers planning, development, marketing and productions services to film, theater and live events in the Irish-America market. TMCC also serves as the strategic advisor during the planning and construction phases of new museums, including development work on the Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT (opened 2012).

For further information, to order digital images and to arrange interviews:

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Please also visit the website of the Archbishop Hughes Commemorative Project:

www.archbishophughes.com/