

TRACTION MAGAZINE

Interviews with artists and creators.

MAIREAD O'HEOCHA



Asylum, Grangegorman, 2014. (Oil on board; 60 x 77 cm).

A conversation between Postcardwall's Sophie Hill and artist Mairead O'Heocha.

You are a painter, a so-called rarity in the contemporary art world – what makes you stay with oils?

For me intention and realisation are often at variance with each other when making paintings. I like this uncertainty and continual shifting of the space between conception, intention and intuition. What is also interesting is how painting and drawing allow unconscious and imaginary material to emerge from the work. I came to painting after working with a variety of media so I am very conscious of the challenges to painting's relevance as a medium in contemporary art. However the medium's short comings are offset by its specificities. The stationary nature of paintings allows the viewer to navigate the picture plane with a tacit understanding of the evolution of the work, a sense of how it has come into material realisation. I like that the thinking/translating/doing processes are foregrounded in painting.



Tree for Missing Persons, 2014. (Oil on Board; 83 x 60 cm).

The scenes you choose are sometimes unlikely – quiet and unassuming, they might not strike anyone as immediately fitting for a painting. What draws you to a composition?

I was always interested in how national culture and location function in the canon of modernist landscape painting. Ireland is a peripheral country in the history of modernism and largely absent from the International canon of landscape painting, Jack Yeats being the main exception. I wondered what if I tried to retrospectively insert images of contemporary Ireland in an imaginary canon of my own making? So I work with subjects that are in my immediate environment and of personal interest while also borrowing from a variety of art historical references.



Chopped Trees, Castle Leslie, 2014. (Oil on Board; 45 x 63 cm).

Shape and form are transformed in your paintings; sometimes with angles, sometimes with a swelling of depth and three-dimensionality. How do you go about translating the components of your scenes?

A large amount of preliminary studies are made in the various stages of making a painting. Starting with drawings and colour studies before proceeding to the painting stage. Improvisation and adapting to the various changes made throughout the painting are a combination of both logic and or intuition.

Your paintings are always absent of people, though they are very much scenes of man's world – urban streets or life's residue in the form of an object – bin bags or washing blowing the wind. Why do you leave the figures out?

I would ask why put figures in?

I find colour incredibly compelling in your work – deep, luscious and moody or illuminated in light, colour always appears subtly executed despite being used to create illusions or even extend the imagination in your compositions. How do you approach colour when beginning a painting?

I have been studying in more depth the interaction of colour as a technical subject within composition. The colour field of each painting is arrived at through a series of studies in combination with looking at painting of the past and present and then formulating my own solutions. Recent colour research has centred around Pierre Bonnard, Charles Burchfield, Van Gogh, Wenzel Hablik, Stephen Mc Kenna, Johannes Ittens and Josef Albers.

What do you have planned for the coming year?

I want to take time to create a new body of work for a solo show. I plan to visit and work in parts of Donegal where I will be in residence in historically and socially diverse living spaces. The first location is Prehen House which is a really interesting historic plantation estate in Derry, Northern Ireland.

Mairead O'hEocha is **postcard 360** on postcardwall.



Sunset Please, 2014. (Oil on Board; 49 x 68 cm).