

Contrapposto

The website of Irish art critic **Cristín Leach**

200 words: on Mairead O'hEocha, Whisper Concrete

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Palmtrees and Bungalow, Carlow by Mairead O'hEocha

Irish artist Mairead O'hEocha transforms the mundane into something almost epic with an impressive show of paintings from the last five years at The Butler Gallery in Kilkenny.

She has turned her eye towards the wheelie bins, blank gable ends and quirky garden ornaments of roadside locations around the country, envisioning them as landscapes in near-heroic mode.

Clouds gather in a blue-grey sky over Palmtrees and Bungalow, Carlow (above). In Cinema Billboard at Ballyedmond, Co Wexford, temporary road signs lie abandoned as they eye is drawn to a faint pink glow on the horizon. Rubbish bags rest by a side door in Old House and Curved Road, Ferns, Co Wexford, and Wendy Houses sit forlorn but innocent on the pavement outside Halls Playhouses, Monamolin, Co Wexford. This is the rural suburbia that boom-time Irish motorway construction has left eerily empty.

The work has been gathered from collections in New York, California, Brussels and The Netherlands as well as The Arts Council, which owns one of the darker scenes, Fir Trees and Dump.

Balancing strong brushstrokes with a nuanced use of muted greys, flesh-tones and olive greens, O'hEocha produces small-scale compositions that are marked by an intelligent restraint and yet have an exhilarating, zeitgeist feel.

INFO: Whisper Concrete is at the [Butler Gallery](#), Kilkenny, until 1 May 2001. Mon-Sun 10am-1pm and 2-5.30pm.