



# In her own field

## ART REVIEW

### Home Rules ★★★★★

Artist Mairéad O'hEocha may have taken Co Wexford as the subject-matter for her first solo exhibition, *Home Rules*, but if you're expecting a twee, chocolate-box approach to the 'sunny south-east', forget it. O'hEocha doesn't paint idealised portraits of the county's coastline or rural landscape but turns her attentions to the more mundane business of human habitation, particularly that along a stretch of the N11 linking Wexford to Dublin.

Her carefully considered oil-on-board portraits often feature characterless back yards, new homes, caravans and the refuse resulting from everyday life. But

if her subject-matter might be prosaic, her approach is anything but.

O'hEocha paints with a wonderfully uncluttered style that focuses the viewer's eye as much by what it omits as by what it includes; local residents are absent but their influence on the landscape is ever present. *House And Skip Near Clough*, Co Wexford is a superb rendering of a suburban back yard with a skip in the background – suggesting possible renovations – and a drab concrete garage to one side, while a polythene bag of rubbish (little more than a swoosh of black and gray paint) is faultlessly realised. *Mobile Home*, Ferns, Co Wexford, features the temporary dwelling of the title in all its banality and a church, which may have struck some artists as a more pleasing

subject, is all but eclipsed save for its spire.

Elsewhere, *New House Near Ferns*, Co Wexford, is like a snapshot of any drab new home built in Ireland in the last ten years with its pale yellow walls and faux-Greek portico and, as with the rest of these works, there's a subtle interplay between light and shadow. O'hEocha doesn't appear to be pontificating on man's destruction of the natural world but it's impossible to come away from these paintings without thinking of the ways in which we appropriate the environment for our own selfish ends.

*Darragh Reddin*

Until Feb 16, *Mother's Tankstation*, 41-43 Watling Street, Usher's Island D8, Thu to Sat noon to 6pm, free. Tel: (01) 671 7654. [www.mothers-tankstation.com](http://www.mothers-tankstation.com)