

Vitamin P3: New Perspective in Painting' Phaidon Press, 2016

Mairead O'hEocha creates compelling images from places that many of us would probably pass by without a second thought. In *Mespil Road Petrol Station and Canal* (2013), the canopy of an otherwise unremarkable petrol station is reflected in water at night, creating a vibrant, animated pool of colour in the foreground of the painting. Another inhospitable night scene, *Hoarding, Lights and Rain* (2014), shows a blank wall flooded with teal, sky blue, yellow, apricot and pink streaks that recall the sun-drenched abstractions of the Californian painter Richard Diebenkorn (1922–93).

O'hEocha's project is not as easily understood, however, as a simple reassessment of overlooked subjects. For every petrol station there is a painting like *Castle Ruin at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly* (2011) or *Flowers and Herakles* (2015), both of which take on rather conventional landscape and still life subjects. These works subtly reveal one of the artist's enduring philosophical themes – the often dissonant conjunction of the past and the present, the traditional and the contemporary. In the case of the latter painting, O'hEocha's picture eschews the twee decorativeness that might historically be associated with such a floral subject, and instead approaches it as an opportunity to reflect on image appropriation (the Greek mythical subject featured on the vase) and the trope of *vanitas* – symbolizing the brevity of human life – as implied by the barely-there, already wilting flowers.

Many encounters with O'hEocha's art begin by focusing on the geographical specificities of her painting: the landscape of Ireland, particularly the counties around Dublin, where she lives. This region, though beautiful, can also be bleak and withdrawn; *Sunset Please* (2014) is the humorous title of a chilly seascape. Generally lacking the dramatic, picturesque qualities of Ireland's southwest coast, the places that O'hEocha chooses to paint are not those of a pristine wilderness, rather they are indelibly marked by habitation. Ireland's turbulent and violent past is never far from our minds in looking at her work, nor the country's recent economic tribulations, even if the physical traces of those histories are not always apparent.

Since O'hEocha never includes human figures, even supposedly jolly locations – a merry-go-round, for instance, or an arboretum – become desolate, unloved and haunting. In the case of *Gorilla Ornament, Arboretum, Co. Carlow* (2012), the great ape provides an amusing non sequitur, but that moment of comedy is not enough to humanize the scene. O'hEocha manages to make paintings that are at once traditional and stridently contemporary, specific and archetypal, loaded with pathos but also inflected with an elevating glint of humour.

– Jonathan Griffin

MAIREAD O'HEOCHA Born 1962, Dublin, Ireland. Lives and works in Dublin. **Selected Solo Exhibitions:** 2016 – mother's tankstation, Dublin; 2014 – 'The Paradise', The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin; 2012 – 'The sky was yellow and the sun was blue', mother's tankstation, Dublin; 2011 – 'Whisper Concrete', Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, Ireland. **Selected Group Exhibitions:** 2016 – 'The Mud of Compound Experience', mother's tankstation and Leo Xu Projects, Hong Kong; 2015 – 'What Is and What Might Be', Drogheda Arts Festival, Highlanes Gallery, Louth; 2012 – 'Up the Walls', The Model, Sligo, Ireland; 2011 – 'Terrible Beauty: Art, Crisis, Change & The Office of Non-Compliance', Dublin Contemporary. **Selected Bibliography:** 2015 – Niall McGonagle, 'What lies beneath – Hoarding, Lights and Rain', *Irish Independent*, Feb; Aidan Dunne, 'Mairead O'hEocha: Paintings', *The Irish Times*, Jan; 2013 – Ruther Handler, 'Kunst = Kapital', *Capital*, Jun; 2011 – Gemma Tipton, 'Mairead O'hEocha', *Artforum*, Apr; Isobel Harbison, 'Mairead O'hEocha', *Frieze*, Sep.



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| 1. Castle Ruin at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, 2011
Oil on board
40 × 49 cm / 15 ¾ × 19 ¼ in | 3. Gorilla Ornament, Arboretum, Co. Carlow, 2012
Oil on board
38 × 53 cm / 15 × 20 7/8 in |
| 2. Sunset Please, 2014
Oil on board
58 × 75 cm / 22 7/8 × 29 1/2 in | 4. Mespil Road Petrol Station and Canel, 2013
Oil on board
43.1 × 60.2 cm / 17 × 23 3/4 in |

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