

Aidan Dunne, *The Irish Times*, 28 July 2010

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Fading not Ending

Maggie Madden. Roscommon Arts Centre, Circular Road, Roscommon Until August 5

PRETTY MUCH every piece in Maggie Madden's exhibition *Fading not Ending* at the Roscommon Arts Centre is made with painstaking care from waste and discarded materials.

Madden is from a rural background. She was brought up in Connemara and studied at Limerick School of Art and Design and NCAD. Her graduation installation was memorable, an endlessly proliferating mass of empty packaging, from tiny to large boxes, all interconnecting and extending upwards and outwards. There was a relentless quality to it, the feeling that it might continue forever. It brought to mind constructions both natural and manmade: the city as an invasive organism, perhaps.

Although she has taken part in several group shows and projects, this is her first solo. Presumably that's because of the exceptionally slow, labour-intensive character of her work, even when it is not especially big. The largest piece in *Fading not Ending* is called *Stack* and is quite modest in scale. It recalls a jagged rock formation protruding from the sea and it definitely refers us to the contorted blocks of ice in Casper David Friedrich's painting *Sea of Ice (Arctic Shipwreck)* and a closely related work by him, *Rocky Reef on the Seashore*.

Madden's sculpture is composed of lots of decayed wood fragments, recovered from demolished buildings or along the seashore. From this meticulously organised mass of rotten wood she's made a paradoxical and rather beautiful image of precarious endurance. That precarious quality comes into much of her work. In *Another Unit* she makes an architectonic construction from a bunch of discarded laminate sample cards. Suspended on the wall, the structure brings to mind urban developments such as shanty towns.

A Tree-like Network pursues a similar dialogue, with strands of fibre-optic cable tracing a network of internet connections, resembling and combined with the spindly structure of a desiccated plant stem. *Land* is a collage made from tiny fragments of foil on black paper. Madden's work refers to a wealth of subject matter, to correspondences and differences between natural and synthetic structures and processes, to networks and systems, to consumerism, waste and decay. She works with a poet's intuition for images charged with several layers and dimensions of meaning, inviting contemplation rather than dictating meaning. Among Irish artists, Kathy Prendergast is a good point of comparison.