

Aidan Dunne, *The Irish Times*, July 2012

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Another Unit, from Maggie Madden's *Site Line* installation

Lost and found and reworked

DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL'S Lab exhibition space currently hosts three strong, intriguingly complementary solo shows. The smallest, by Nicki Wynnychuk, occupies the corner room by the entrance to the building and is an offsite Pallas Projects initiative. Canadian-born, Melbourne-based Wynnychuk is on a residency at the Fire Station Studios nearby. He shows an instalment of an ongoing project, *Conversations in: In Dublin*, in this case. His approach is to take a found object or material and rework it so that it gains "a precarious new energy" and prompts us to consider its status as art object and image.

Here he draws on recent experiences in Papua New Guinea, introducing a piece of woven bamboo wall from the building he lived in there. It is presented and represented in various ways, an everyday, even banal material, but at the same time rather beautiful and ingenious in terms of its patterning, textures and functionality.

Maggie Madden's *Site Line* occupies the main ground-floor gallery. Originally from Connemara, and for some time resident in Dublin, Madden has been usefully influenced by both rural and urban contexts. She has developed a way of working – and by now a formidable body of work – that uses found objects and materials, quite a range of them, usually discarded, unwanted and marginal, both natural and man-made.

The materials are perhaps not so much "found" as assiduously collected. Madden then either uses them complete, assembling open-ended, architectonic forms, or she carefully dismantles them, as she does, notably, with strands of fibre-optic cable, which she then employs in making complex, again open-ended structures.

There's a metaphoric richness to the way the same principle applies through a range of scales in her work. Her pieces refer us to systems and networks of many kinds, from tiny organisms, say, to the vast infrastructure of transport and communications in modern cities. Running through everything is a sense of the underlying precariousness of systems and processes. Some of her most breathtaking pieces are tiny and scarcely visible from any distance, particularly the intricate geometric constructions of coloured fibre optic strands.

She moves easily from the almost microscopic to the room-spanning *Frame*, which deconstructs and reinvents a collection of picture frames with wit and elegance. With its fragility and links to the ephemeral and overlooked, while rarely conspicuous and necessitating close engagement as it does, her work can easily be underestimated. It is, however, quite exceptional, and *Site Line* is a brilliant, memorable show.

If some of Madden's fibre optic constructions are ethereal three-dimensional drawings, the remaining exhibitor at the Lab, Neil Carroll, who graduated from NCAD as recently as 2010, makes three-dimensional paintings or, perhaps, sculptural paintings in his show, *Between Leaving and a Possible Return*. Why not just call them sculptures? Well, because, although they are palpable constructions, they aspire to a painted space as a kind of Platonic ideal, an ideal that is proposed, taken apart and reconstructed.

Carroll emphasises the constructed element by using standard building materials: sawn lengths of two-by-four, plasterboard, clout nails, paint. But time and again in his work to date he has referred to the idea of represented space, of addressing the chaos of the world and refining it into a two-dimensional model. And the pieces we see express this aspiration. They are, and he intends them to be, works in progress.

Another specific allusion appears in his show: to a glacial, northern seascape. The mouth of the glacier, the transformative space where the gargantuan, solid mass of ice meets and crumbles dramatically into the ocean, might be read as an analogy for the two kinds of space that inform his work: the ideal and the practical. Clearly a promising artist, he picked up an award at this year's RHA Annual Exhibition and has been earmarked to appear in the RHA's Futures show of emerging artists.

Site Line installation by Maggie Madden, *Between Leaving and a Possible Return* by Neil Carroll and *Conversations in: Work* by Nicki Wynnychuk are at the Lab, Foley Street, Dublin 1, until July 28th