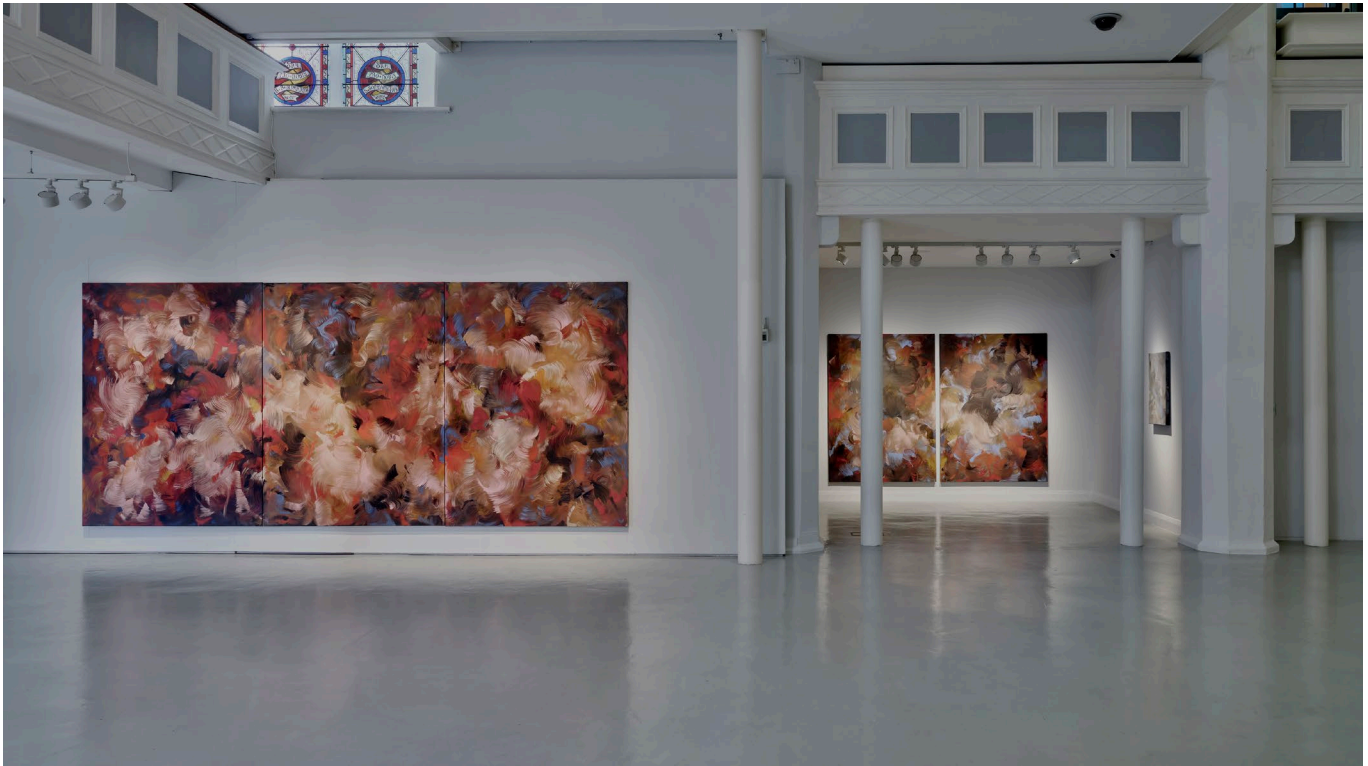




Highlanes Gallery

A Sense of Place – Erin Lawlor Selects, Drogheda Municipal Collection

26 April 2025 | Highlanes Gallery



Installation View of Erin Lawlor's "divining," 26 April - 15 June, 2025.
Photography by Ros Kavanaugh, Courtesy of Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda's Municipal Art Gallery, Drogheda, Ireland

To coincide with Erin Lawlor's first solo exhibition [*divining* at Highlanes Gallery] in Ireland we invited the celebrated painter to select and present an exhibition from the Collection. The exhibition reflects her interest in visual art and painting in particular.

"I wanted to explore the ways in which a sense of place is expressed through works in the collection, through views both local and national – but also to interrogate the use of both landscape and painting itself as a space of projection.

It is little wonder in view of the extraordinary landscapes of Ireland that they have over the centuries provided a staple of the painting tradition, nor that they have become at times the vehicle for an idealisation, sometimes to political ends; the selection here is a glimpse of just some of those visions. It is interesting to me that, just as so many of the Irish diaspora carried those landscapes within them, the pull of the Irish landscape as a romantic ideal has also served as a magnet to painters from other shores, and Ricciardelli's exquisitely Italianate *View of Drogheda from Ball's Grove* is a perfect example of that.

If painting is a space of projection, it can also provide a projection of space; that expression can be as literal as a Isaiah Rowland's map, or as abstract as Ni Mhaonaigh's lines; in both cases the work evokes place, and is also itself a physical construction, becomes a destination. Ethne Jordan's *Display VII* is a great example of the potential of painting as space, containing as it does the further play of painting a painting of a space within a painting of a space.

Painting is that rare art form that allows the actual creation of a relatively portable and transportable physical space, potentially through relatively transportable means, and Nano Reid's paintbox is a touching and very concrete evocation of both those potentials, and of that alchemy, of that possible unfolding of time and space and place magicked up from these few base materials.

Fiona Kerbey's *To Valparaiso* speaks equally strongly, if very differently, of displacement and the idealisation of place, of an elsewhere. It is a powerful evocation of the very human hope, but also possibly tragic cost, of migration.

Displacement seems to me to lead almost inevitably to projection, be it looking forward, or back.

Many of the paintings in the central section – Irish landscapes and the occasional cityscape, ranging from realism to romanticism – are exquisite renderings that capture an essence, a mood. Most are small, domestic even in size – the reduced format means that they function almost as portals: there is a distance. That space between viewer and artwork is always itself a space of projection.

Abstraction can be seen to represent a further displacement, a further distancing – the sense of place in the works of Danny Rolf or Charles Tyrrell is doubtless more tenuous; Dannielle Tegeder's piece is a mechanical steampunk mapping, Swanzy's world seen through a refracting prism; Copperwhite has one foot in the modernist heritage of Hone and Jellett, and pushes out beyond through the portals of online traveling, fusing the light of western Ireland with that of the computer screen at night. All of these works have the generosity to be both strongly evocative of place, and to allow projection, to allow a space for the viewer"

- Erin Lawlor, April 2025