



CUSTOM HOUSE STUDIOS + GALLERY

Custom House Studios + Gallery are pleased to host ***By the same sea, homes of the Irish diaspora*** an exhibition of twenty five small oil paintings by New York-based artist **Maureen O'Leary**.

Exhibition runs from **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September** until **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2023**.

Opening hours: M-F: 10am-5pm; Sat/Sun/Bank Holidays: 1-4:30pm

*Opening Reception: Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 6pm – 8pm.*

*The artist will be present and will present an informal talk with John McHugh.*



In ***By the same sea*** O'Leary takes a single theme - light and shadow on the small homes of suburban Long Island, New York where she lives and works - as the basis for formal experimentation with paint. With an eye towards fauvism, O'Leary's paintings retain the spatial organization provided by light while introducing experiments with garish color and loose brushstrokes that depart from naturalism. In *Yellow Shadows* the vibrant colors allow the painting to hover between abstraction and figuration as if the artist asks us to consider the very definition of a shadow as darkness. In *Orange Windows* dusk turns the sky and house into deep blues, graphically linking buildings to their environment and unifying object and place.

O'Leary remarks that she has come to reflect on this body of work as related to her own Irish American roots. "These houses of Long Island are those of the Irish diaspora. All through my neighborhood are Americans with names revealing Irish ancestry. I think often of the metaphor embodied in New York City's Irish Hunger Memorial: it upholds the symbol of a house, transported stone by stone from Mayo, as the icon of the most tragic period of Irish emigration."

Observing O'Leary's paintings through this lens of history invites more deeply layered interpretations of escape and rebirth. Long Island homes and western Ireland homes remain, geographically, each other's first and last points of contact, separated only by the Atlantic Ocean. These homes form an Irish-American continuum and metaphorical neighborhood. Rambling over hills in neighborhoods for a hundred miles outside of New York City, these modest homes are the effigies of new life. The small scale of O'Leary's paintings also references windows on common commuter trains and the contemplation they afford people leaving New York City, departing the place where immigration begins and extending to places of aspiration.

In conjunction with this exhibition, the artist has collaborated with Red Fox Press, Achill Island, County Mayo on an artist book of the same title. The exhibition is also accompanied by a digital catalog with reflections on the paintings by Irish American poet Michael Whelan.



**Maureen O'Leary** makes paintings that hover between figuration and abstraction. Her mundane scenes become substrates for experimentation with the application of paint and the evolving notion of what is real. Her work has been exhibited at the Fondation des États-Unis, Paris, Art Lab, Tokyo, and in the US at the Ely Center of Contemporary Art, Midwest Center for Photography, Artspace, Power Plant Gallery at Duke University, Staten Island Museum, Meadows Gallery-University of Texas at Tyler, and more. She is the recipient of the Brooklyn Arts Council - Brooklyn Arts Fund Grant and the Harriet Hale Woolley Fellowship from the Fondation des États-Unis, Paris. O'Leary has published two artist books: *Record* (2021, Midwest Center for Photography) and *Belle Mort* (2013, Paper Chase Press) and her work has been reviewed in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Washington Post*, and *Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art* among other publications. Her paintings are held by the JPMorgan Chase Art Collection, Fidelity Investments Corporate Art Collection, and her books by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. She is a dual citizen of the United States and Ireland and is represented by the gallery Cristin Tierney, New York, New York.

**Image 1:** *Yellow shadows*, oil on linen, 28 x 36 cm, 2018

**Image 2:** *Orange windows*, oil on canvas, 25.4 x 50.8 cm, 2012

**Custom House Studios + Gallery** is a contemporary art gallery in Westport, Mayo, Ireland presenting exhibitions by local, national and international artists. Bringing together established and emerging artists, curators and educators, Custom House has presented more than three hundred exhibitions and is dedicated to promoting arts and culture in the local community, hosting a full programme of exhibitions, print workshops and studio occupancy including a residency aimed at artists from overseas. Located in a renovated historical Westport building, it is a partnership between the Artists Group in Westport, Westport Town Council, Mayo County Council, the Department of Arts and the Westport community at large.



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo  
Mayo County Council



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,  
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán  
Department of Tourism, Culture,  
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Opening hours: Monday - Friday (10am - 5pm). Saturday/Sunday/Bank Holiday (1pm - 4.30pm).

Custom House Studios + Gallery

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