

OliverSearsGallery

Locus

David Eager Maher



Oliver Sears Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Locus*, an exhibition of eight new paintings by Dublin born artist David Eager Maher, his debut at the gallery.

While *Locus* is a term used in physics and medicine, its English derivatives 'location' and 'locale' strike more purposefully at the heart of Eager Maher's motives. Technically complex, each painting is constructed using imagery taken from art historical references, real places and imagined landscapes. The environment the artist creates is empty of human figures, although the buildings and interior views imply human interaction in the past. Lush foliage permeates the compositions, a living metaphor for the end of colonialism as the jungle literally swallows up the conquistadors driven to tame it.

But *Locus* also represents autobiography. The quiet within each frame reflects the artist's self-imposed isolation where, by confining himself to a small focused existence, he can attempt to understand the history of a much bigger world; One where realism is not about real things but how things are really. *Locus* is the work of a 19th century explorer living in 21st century Wicklow.

Foreword

In this series of oil paintings, David Eager Maher continues along a trajectory of previous works in which we are invited to enter imagined spaces that are at once exterior and interior. These intricate and detailed compositions combine fictional landscapes with realistic depictions of topographies and grand domestic spaces. The vistas include opulent architectural features such as arches, gables and columns; domestic furniture including empty chairs undressed tables; ornate urns and figurative carved sculptures; vacant parasols and unoccupied deck chairs.

The series, and the title of the current exhibition 'Locus' is complex in its associations, definitions and meanings. The term locus can be defined as being an ambiguous site, a location that is determined by varied and specified conditions. The word also has a place within the fields of mathematics, medicine and science adding more meaning to the references in the works. 'Locus' features a series of paintings that depict liminal spaces, in which no inhabitants can be observed, confounding the sense of peculiarity in the in-between scenes depicted. There is a definite sense of isolation in the works, a want to be alone, to get away from modern day complications, an image of detachment, segregation and a want to visualize and create dreamscapes rather than be restricted by reality. From seeing the furniture and how each of the spaces are dressed and decorated it is evident that these spaces were either once occupied or are awaiting and inviting population. The inclusion of a deck chair, a parasol, and a pitched carnivalesque patterned gazebo, all what could be classed as paraphernalia used whilst on vacation, signal towards this sense of getting away from it all. The time period and geographic location of the scenes is open for interpretation, however the decadence of the residences suggests a very particular culture that of the upper echelon's of society. There is a sense of the theatrical in the scenes' compositions. The paintings could be vacant stages, with us the spectators awaiting the players to emerge from the wings into the proscenium. However the absence of the performers is perplexing, we eternally wait their entrance stage left, to tread the boards and demonstrate thespian talents.

Seeing images of the uncompleted works, at the mid-point of creation, for me there was a sense of ambiguity around the painted forms and contents within Eager Maher's *mise en scene*. A patterned rug, could also be become a colossal leaf; carved figurative sculptures could be enlarged exotic insects; patterned wallpaper and floor surfaces could be a floral undergrowth. In a brief discussion with the artist the works are described as an attempt to 'navigate basic visual quandaries' and artistic dilemmas. The problem with resolution is underscored by the fact that the scenes exist as a fluid dichotomy between two worlds, the imagined and the real, the domestic and the landscape. The walls of each of these interiors fade, and allow the outer world percolate the transparent barriers. Some of the surfaces are

made up of chequerboard and zigzag patterns creating definite blockades to the encroaching landscapes. Ornamentation and pattern are consistent features and here exist within the architectural cornicing and coving embellished with baroque patterning and the decorated wallpaper and floor coverings.

There is an added complexity through the use of materials in the paintings. Oil paint, which is slow to dry, is here blended, providing a soft merging of tones. The artist also utilizes other qualities of the oil paint, layering and forming washes leaving an opaque and translucent effect creating a mysterious quality to the image. He is also acutely aware that in time the images will fade, like narratives, histories and the viewer's existence. The act of artistic creation is left bare for the viewer, a metaphor for our own place within this scene and completion of subjective readings. We are also reminded of the artist's hand when included in the paintings are an unfinished canvas leaning against the wall in one scene while in another scene, a microcosmic painting of a completed landscape, a meta work of sorts, hangs in a frame on the wall. Alongside the completed painting hangs an empty frame, the image is confounding as it creates a border around the wallpaper, but also could exist as a closed window to the outside vista.

In seeing the works as a whole, I am again drawn back to look at the varied complex and often contradictory meaning of 'locus' and how it might refer to a site or place where an activity is located or indeed might refer to our inability to pinpoint anything particular or definite. In either instance the environments and habitats that Eager Maher depict confound us with a sense of uncertainty in what is real, what is imagined, what is remembered and what we may foresee.

Séamus McCormack is a curator and artist based in London.

Locus



Fruit Tree

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017



Strand

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017



Annex

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017



Awning

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017



Canopy

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017



Spool

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017



Thicket

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017



Bandstand

Oil on panel
50 x 60 cm
2017

David Eager Maher was born in Ireland in 1979. His work is inhabited by crumbling and obsolete cultural motifs and chronicles an imagined world. Much of the botanic representation and flora is symbolic of an imposed idea of the exotic and exposes natural relics from colonial epochs. While looking at Eager Maher's work artificial scenes converge and explore spatial and narrative possibilities. All the while engaging with an elegant construction of fragments that intend to navigate the slippage between contemporary drawing and painting.

Recent solo exhibitions include, Villa, Galerie Drei Ringe, Leipzig, 2017. Paper Tress, Pallas Projects Dublin, 2016. Inheritance, Galerie Drei Ringe Leipzig, 2015. He has also taken part in many group exhibitions including Jealous Wall, Luan Gallery, Athlone. Exploration: Landscape, Jarmuschek + Partner, Berlin. Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire, Galerie Drei Ringe, Leipzig. Paper Works II, Galerie Martin Mertens, Berlin. Positions Art Fair, Berlin with Galerie Drei Ringe. In Residence II, Oliver Sears Gallery, Fitzroy Square, London 2016. Innenstabil, Galerie Drei Ringe Leipzig, 2015. MOON FARK, RAKE Visningsrom, Trondhiem, Norway, 2014. Savage State, two-person exhibition with James Barry (1741-1806) Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, Scope Art Fair Basel, 2011 and 2012, Scope Art Fair Miami 2013.

He is the recipient of several awards including, The Golden Fleece Award 2015 (merit prize) The Whyte's Auctioneers Award 2013, The Thomas Damman Memorial Trust Award 2013. In 2016 David was awarded the Visual Artist Bursary from The Arts Council of Ireland. His work is held in many important public collections including, The Office of Public Works (Irish State Collection), Dublin City University. National University of Ireland, Maynooth, The Casino at Marino, Ireland as well as private collections in Ireland, England, Germany, Switzerland, Iceland, & the U.S.

In 2014 David's practice was featured in the internationally renowned publication *Fukt for Contemporary Drawing #13* launched at the New York Art Book Fair at MoMA PS1.

Biography