

## Immigrants make their influence felt, and old masters get worked over

Margaret Corcoran shows joyous new paintings at Kevin Kavanagh gallery, while Stephen Lawlor takes on some Venetians

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Aidan Dunne



Pasadena by Stephen Lawlor

### Remnants: Stephen Lawlor Oliver Sears Gallery , Dublin

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Copying from the old master was, for hundreds of years, and still is for many people, part of a painter's apprenticeship. In *Remnants*, Stephen Lawlor takes on that idea with a twist. He looks to works by three great Venetian painters of the 16th century, Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto, and makes not direct copies but re-workings or variations on sections of, or complete, compositions. It's something he has done before, though in a more conscious, conceptualised way, trying out various approaches to dealing with a pre-existing, underlying image. With this new body of work, he is much more relaxed about the process and perhaps less bothered with the symbolism.

He is a restless, exploratory artist. He came to painting by way of printmaking and has, through several bodies of work, shown a willingness to present himself with new challenges, stretching and developing his use of the medium. Along the way, he has discovered that he loves paint, especially oil paint, and is enraptured by its potential. That, at any rate, is what comes across in the work.

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## Pictorial drama

In *Remnants*, while the paintings are non-representational, they pursue a lively dialogue with their sources in terms of composition and chiaroscuro. The latter enhances the prevalent mood of pictorial drama. Is there a subtext here about the risk of losing touch with a wealth of cultural heritage? Looking at two ambitious works, *Canopy* and *Orpheus & Eurydice*, certainly, there could be, particularly given our current age of anxiety. That notwithstanding, the overall implication is one of renewal and regeneration: there are always new things to see in great paintings, and more to learn from them.

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