

Vivid displays of painterly power



Aidan Dunne Visual Art

Three exhibitions showcase different aspects of modern painting to great effect

Woods – Ed Miliano
Oliver Sears Gallery, Dublin
★★★★

Ed Miliano's *Woods* shifts intriguingly across three locations. They are the landscape around Fartha, Riverstick, near Kinsale in Cork; Avignon in France; and several landscapes around Tokyo. The common thread is woodland. Miliano is audacious in adopting two distinct lines of approach. Here there is a single division between the European and the Japanese work.

In spring 2014, he worked on a mural in a rebuilt 18th-century cottage at the studio of furniture designer and maker Joseph Walsh; the cottage had been Walsh's grandfather's home. Exploring the surroundings, Miliano began making

drawings of the woodland and developed a rhythmic composition for the mural based on the patterns encountered making his way through the trees.

Previously, at the RHA and at Oliver Sears, he has shown a series of 366 small paintings, *Diary*, which charts his view of his garden through the year. The notion of charting nature through time is elaborated in the overlapping leaves, the alternating diversity of texture and pattern in the mural and in the body of work surrounding it. Without question the *Avignon* paintings in the gallery recall late Cézanne and the early cubist compositions of Picasso and Braque. It could be that Miliano is referencing Picasso's key painting, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* (which is thought, incidentally, to refer not to Avignon but to a brothel in Barcelona), a milestone in the history of cubism. With its jagged rhythms and flesh hues it is, however, quite a harsh painting, and Miliano's palette of muted earth colours and gently interleaved forms more closely echo the landscapes and still lifes of the earlier painters.

He does not make pastiches of their work; rather he revisits it and explores what can be done with that visual language now. It is mildly surprising that quite a lot can be done. Still, there is a shift of gear when he gets to Japan (he has been based in Tokyo for more than a year). Tokyo is a sprawling, high-rise city but Miliano seeks out glimpses of the classical Japanese garden landscape. There is a stunning view of the interior of the carefully preserved former Kusuo Yasuda residence, built in



1919. Framed by the dark interior, the garden is a serene natural domain. A series of elegant, perfectly judged collage paintings emphasise the role of rigorous design in the formation of "natural" settings. Look closely and you will see that the collaged texts bridge the geographical diversity of the sources. A minor detail, perhaps, but perfectly judged, and indicative of the thoughtfulness and quality of the exhibition overall. Until March 10th, oliversearsgallery.com

■ Top, *The Woods* by Ed Miliano
■ Bottom left, *Untitled* by Jan Pleitner (2015)
■ Bottom right, *Ardán V* by Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh

