

Cúram

DANIEL CHESTER

Daniel Chester is a painter who paints almost exclusively in oils on aluminium, *“When I worked on canvas I found I was more interested in what was still on the palette the following day than what was on the canvas! The canvas had soaked up all the colour leaving a washed out hue, whereas the palette held its vibrancy, as aluminium always does.”*

More recently Daniel paints on Dibond, a lightweight aluminium composite.

Drawing constituted the main artistic element in Daniel’s early work, seen in beautiful structured compositions but also in images of the wildness of nature; trees, leaves, lanes, grasses and twigs, spilling across paper in minutest detail. Over time, an awareness of the absence of colour and texture drew Daniel back to painting. A teaching post limited his own creativity for some years before his return to being a full-time artist. The body of work he has created in the four short years since that return to painting is astounding, and has made its presence felt in group and solo exhibitions in the North West and more recently in Dublin, and in private collections throughout Ireland and abroad.

For this exhibition, Daniel has produced one major work, “Winter’s Garden”, and a number of smaller nature paintings.

“In my original idea for this exhibition, the sea was an area of interest for me, but changes in personal story made the process become much more of a reflection on the element of time....”

Moving internally from the vast space of the ocean, Daniel’s new paintings were still of landscape.

“I don’t work directly from photographs, so I’ll keep looking at a piece, over and over again, standing back from it, working on it, then realising that there’s something materialising out of it...”

The recently-altered pattern of his life produced work that focused on the wildness of a garden untended, plants which appeared overgrown but perhaps always existed

unnoticed in the observer's lesser state of awareness, the vigour of invasive species like the Japanese knotweed intertwined with natural trees: so much growth in a small area.

"I call the smaller works studies because they are studies for me....scale is interesting....most of the small works could fit in your hand, they are of a scale size, not a large painting of a small plant...."

In realising he didn't want to individually paint everything before him, Daniel's style and palette have been loosening and evolving. Among other techniques he uses a tool employed by painters including Nick Miller and Hughie O'Donoghue – that of creating a hook that draws the viewer in, something that stands out to intrigue the observer.

"This is a landscape that I'm in love with.... what I paint is a synopsis of what's in front of me....my favourite work of all is "Fallen Tree", a painting that is condensed to one thing, a fallen tree..."

Always interested in the themes of dark and light, life and death, the way light falls through foliage, a sense of time zones and moving on, we now see evidence of the artist's deepening love and appreciation of nature in paintings of the lush inland settings that he has made home.

The largest work in Daniel's collection is Winter's Garden, a pendulum to the five smaller paintings. This work is elemental, very beautiful, drawing the observer's eye upward from the bare leaning tree in the foreground, towards the soft constellation of a blizzard speckling heavy skies.

"Winter's Garden emerged from the sea that I had begun painting at a time when I was in a blizzard of not knowing what was going on..." it is quite blue and white, very pale in comparison to the deeper green smaller works"

The group Daniel was assigned to for this arts in health project have also been an influence in his thinking during this time. He finds the participants interesting to chat to, enjoys the connection with these 80-90 year old people who are great fun. Some are unable to use their dexterity skills any more, but now they're greeting him and having the craic, some of the men saying they'll tell stories but won't do any painting, many of the women taking up the challenge!

The artist found himself identifying with the journey presented to him - encountering people who were older, dealing with group work dynamics in an area of compromised health, experiencing the strength of family bonds in his own life, facing

"the parallel pull of what is, and was, home".

*“This other journey threw me, but I’m
conscious that I’m an author of something,
and so many artists find an avenue to
express their current life path in work
that reflects that path...
you have to find an avenue....”*

Maura Gilligan,

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