



Eithne Jordan
Mise en scène

Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
and Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda
are delighted to present
'Mise en scène' parts I and II
by Eithne Jordan RHA

Part I: Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda
27 August – 1 October 2022

Part II: Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
9 September – 4 December 2022

Cover:
Display III, 2021
Oil on board
15 x 20cm

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What interests me is the display of these artworks in an interior setting with all that goes with it – the rich colours on the walls, the gilt frames of the paintings, the ropes preventing us entering, the plinths, and the lighting. It is really a staging of an inanimate performance – a mise en scène.

Eithne Jordan

Right:
Collection I, 2021
Oil on board
15 x 20cm



Eithne Jordan

Mise en scène

Eithne Jordan is one of Ireland's pre-eminent painters. Since the 1980s, Jordan's work has evolved from early emotionally-charged, expressionist paintings, very much about her inner life, to work that looks at the world outside of herself, with a focus on still life, domestic interiors, landscape and urban environments. In recent years, the artist has turned her artistic gaze to the interiors of public and private spaces, such as museums and institutional buildings, which she has visited on her travels in Ireland, France and the United States. The interiors of the majestic Hôtel de Ville in Toulouse, the Musée Fabre, Montpellier, the Musée Jacquemart André, Paris and further afield, the Philadelphia Museum and Pennsylvania Museum of Art, feature in this body of work. In Ireland, buildings such as Newbridge House, the National Gallery of Ireland and the Anatomy Room at the Royal College of Surgeons have captured her attention.

For these current solo exhibitions at the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork and the Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda, Jordan presents a

new body of paintings that date from 2020 to 2022. In both exhibitions, Jordan explores the way paintings, sculptures and artefacts are displayed in museums and institutions, in particular eighteenth- and nineteenth-century edifices. Many of these buildings, previously or currently, serve the causes of science, aristocracy, government and culture. The artist is drawn to the juxtaposition of sumptuous and pompous interiors, with the functionality of their use in contemporary life, and the overall impression created by the ensemble of décor. As Jordan notes, *'What interests me is the display of these artworks in an interior setting with all that goes with it – the rich colours on the walls, the gilt frames of the paintings, the ropes preventing us entering, the plinths, and the lighting. It is really a staging of an inanimate performance – a mise en scène.'*

Jordan begins her creative process by taking photographs, where certain compositional decisions are made, and then examined at length in her studio. This is followed by an extensive editing process to identify what has piqued her interest in terms of space, light, colour, perspective and subject. The prerequisite is that the space must speak to the artist on an emotional level, and inevitably certain places attract her more than others. Thus she describes her paintings as 'emotional landscapes'. Although she also works in gouache, working in oil on canvas or board allows the artist to work more slowly and contemplatively.

Jordan creates a theatrical *tableau* within her paintings but it is one in which the figure is absent or merely implied. Instead, her interest is in what happens in the space. Many of Jordan's paintings feature sculpture, which she sees as serving a multitude of purposes in her work, but principally as a way of introducing the human figure into the institutional space. The artist reminds us that there are many layers of historical reference and interpretation distancing us from the real humanity of the figure depicted. The introduction of display elements into the modern museum – rope stanchions, plinths, vitrines, text panels, fire exit signs – imposes interpretations on how the visitor looks at art through a mediated and carefully curated lens. The artist casts herself in the role of the visitor.

The exhibition at the Crawford Art Gallery takes the form of an intervention in the beautiful sculpture galleries, with small works by Jordan exhibited amongst the original Canova Casts. This seems particularly apposite and the artist notes, *'I like the idea of doing a show in a space where a conversation can happen between my paintings and works from the collection that is on display. Here there are all kinds of echoes and connections with the Canova Casts and the sculptures represented in my paintings...'*

It is evident that the artist enjoys the challenge of rendering different surfaces, for example, the depiction of a glass surface



Collection II, 2021
Oil on board
15 x 20cm



such as the vitrine encasing the sculpture in the foreground of *Museum XVII*. Furthermore, this painting indicates how the artist selects her viewpoint to create inter-relationships and cross-references between the different artworks. While the works are identifiable, the artist argues that the details of the artworks are largely irrelevant – these are not ‘copy’ paintings of paintings. It is the formal interconnections, resonances and echoes in their placement in particular settings that is of concern to the artist rather than any documentary aspect.

The result is a series of exquisite paintings of intimacy, emotional resonance and silence, that are reflective too of Jordan’s lifelong preoccupation with light and colour; how shadows fall and how light can be softly diffused or harshly spot-lit. This body of work is very much an examination and meditation on the way objects are presented and perceived. Similarly, the curation of Jordan’s paintings within interesting architectural spaces such as a former church and a classical sculpture gallery is, in itself, an exercise in public presentation and display with reference to their surroundings. Both exhibitions running concurrently provide a unique opportunity for visitors to see the work of this artist in two very different contexts.

Collection III, 2021
Oil on board
15 x 20cm



Display VIII, 2021
Oil on board
20 x 15cms

EITHNE JORDAN lives and works in Dublin, and in the Languedoc, France. She studied at Dun Laoghaire School of Art before receiving a DAAD scholarship to Berlin where she lived and worked for a number of years. She has exhibited widely in Europe, and is a member of Aosdána and the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA), where she holds the position of Keeper. Her work is in major public and private collections in Ireland, Europe and the United States. This exhibition, 'Mise en scène', running concurrently at the Crawford Art Gallery and the Highlanes Gallery, is Jordan's first show in Ireland since her major exhibition, 'Tableau' at the Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin in 2017.

www.eithnejordan.ie

Exhibitions curated by Margarita Cappock

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Text by Margarita Cappock

Photography by Gillian Buckley

Back cover:
Museum XVII, 2021
Oil on board
15 x 20cms

**Crawford
Art
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HIG Highlanes
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Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture,
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