

Pat Harris

Thin Places

The early Celts believed in 'thin places' – geographical locations scattered throughout Ireland where a person experiences only a very thin divide between past, present, and future times, places where a person is somehow able, possibly only for a moment, to encounter a more ancient reality within present time or places where only in a glance we are somehow transported into the future.

Edward Sellner
Wisdom of the Celtic Saints

















































































The secret is out, though for maybe twenty years or more, which in art historical terms is five minutes ago. The North Mayo landscape has been uncovered, its characteristics pursued, its spirit chased. This vast region, epic on every level has been engaged by an artistic curiosity intent on conveying its essences.

Draw a line between Killary Harbour and the Moy estuary, north of it lies Ireland's wildest, most under populated, area. It is a marriage of sky and land, a choreography of weather and earth, a place of moisture and light, of rare stillness and rapid appearances. Its restless qualities have attracted a cohort of artists much in the way that Connemara, in the early twentieth century, mesmerized in its remoteness.

This body of work by Pat Harris emerges from the coastal edge of that triangle, the kingdom of Erris. Here stone and ocean lock into their defining battle, amid the rollercoaster of Atlantic weather fronts. He titles this suite of work "Thin Places" based on a Celtic belief that there exists particular places where there is a thin veil between past, present and future. Harris pursues this threshold between worlds.

There is something notional about Harris's images. Through deft brush strokes he outlines and sketches a topography, providing enough information to recognise the place. Whether mountain, bay, cliff or sea stack, the artist avoids the details but describes the scene. And the drama he encounters there, the forces of nature clashing and mingling, provides the epic tale within the space he is depicting. In a parallel and equally fundamental way Harris reduces his technique of applying paint - scrapping back, losing the unnecessary. Predominantly in each painting there are horizontal and/or vertical brush strokes. At times the vertical is confined to the representation of the sky whilst the horizontal depicts the planes of sea or land. Added to this dominance is his filigree of flicks and dabs - there to annotate or particularize a feature. And all the while brightness beams from his surfaces.

Harris's paintings are as phenomenal as his subject matter. They ask that you spend time with them, allowing the eye to roam over the sensuousness of the surface and for the mind to oscillate between the image and the medium. Perhaps that is what makes his practice so harmonious with the landscape of Mayo. A place where the animators of the place - wind, rain, sun and cloud, - are equal to its constituents - sea, rock, bay and land.

Patrick T Murphy
Director of RHA, Dublin

Tá an rún scaoilte, ach ar feadh fiche bliain b'féidir nó níos mó, ach i dtearmaí ealaíne atá mar chúig nóiméad ó shin. Tá tírdhreach thuaisceart Mhaigh Eo nochtaithe, tá tóir ar a ghnéithe sainiúla agus ar a spiorad. Tá an réigiún ollmhór seo, atá mórthaibhseach ag gach leibhéal, ag tarraingt aird ealaíonta atá ag iarraidh a bhríonna a cheapadh.

Tarraing líne idir Chuan Chaolaire agus inbhear na Muaidhe, ó thuaidh de luíonn an ceantar is fiáine agus is lú daonra in Éireann. Dlúthchaidreamh atá ann idir spéar agus talamh, cóiréagrafaíocht idir aimsir agus cré, áit ina bhfuil taisleach agus solas, le ciúnas annamh agus cruthanna scioptha. Tá éagsúlacht ealaíontóirí meallta ag a thréithe míshuaimhneacha, ar an gcaoi chéanna a chuir iargúlacht Chonamara ealaíontóirí faoi dhraíocht go luath sa fichiú haois.

Tagann an saothar seo ó Pat Harris ó chósta imeallach an triantáin sin, ríocht Iorrais. Is anseo a bhíonn ollchath idir carraig agus aigéan, i measc aimsir shuaithe an Atlantaigh. 'Thin Places' a thugann sé ar an saothar seo, atá bunaithe ar chreideamh Ceilteach go bhfuil áiteanna faoi leith ann nach bhfuil ach clúdach an-tanaí idir an t-am atá caite, an t-am i láthair agus an t-am atá le teacht. Leanann Harris an táirseach idir na saolta seo.

Tá rud éigin teidhe in íomhanna Harris. Le stróiceacha scuaibe deaslámhach tarraingníonn sé an tírdhreach, ag tabhairt dóthain eolais chun an áit a aithneachtáil. Cibé sliabh, cuan, alt nó staca, seachnaíonn an t-ealaíontóir na mionshonraí ach ceapann sé an iomhá. Is é an dráma atá os a chomhair, fórsaí an nádúir ag bualadh agus ag meascadh, a insíonn an mórscéal lastigh den spás atá roghnaithe aige. Ar bhealach atá comhthreormhar agus bunúsach laghdaíonn Harris a mhódh oibre ó thaobh úsáid an phéint – ag scríobhadh siar agus ag cailleadh an rud atá neamhriachtanach. I ngach péinteáil tá stróiceacha cothrománacha agus/nó ingearacha scuaibe go príomha. In amanna tá an t-ingearach teoranta chun an spéar a léiriú, an cothrománach ag léiriú talamh agus farraige. Anuas ar seo tá fiolagrán de smeachanna agus smeartha – le aird a tharraingt ar ghné. Agus i gcónaí lonraíonn an soilse óna dhromchlaí.

Tá péinteáil Harris chomh suntasach agus atá a ábhar féin. Iarann siad ort am a chaitheadh leo, ag ligean don tsúil sóúlacht an dhromchla a thógáil isteach agus don intinn luascadh idir an iomhá agus an meán. B'féidir gurb shin é an fáth go gceanglaíonn a mhódh oibre chomh sítheach le tírdhreach Mhaigh Eo. Áit a bhfuil gnéithe anamúla na háite – gaoth, fearthainn, grian agus scamall, - cothrom lena chomhábhair - farraige, carraig, cuan agus talamh.

Patrick T Murphy
Director of RHA, Dublin



01 *An Staca*
2015, oil on linen, 90 x 110 cm



02 *Channel*
2015, oil on linen, 90 x 115 cm



03 *Charraig Mhòr*
2014, oil on linen, 80 x 90 cm



04 *For J.M.W*
2015, oil on linen, 80 x 100cm



05 *Island*
2014, oil on linen, 80 x 100 cm



06 *Slievemore*
2015, oil on linen, 50 x 60 cm



07 *Sruwaddacon Bay*
2014, oil on linen, 80 x 90 cm



08 *Teach Mòr*
2015, oil on linen, 80 x 100 cm



09 *The Lad*
2015, oil on linen, 90 x 110 cm



10 *The Stags*
2014, oil on linen, 80 x 100 cm

Pat Harris
1953 Born in Dublin

Studies:

1973-1978 The National College of Art & Design Dublin
1978-1981 The National Higher Institute of Fine Arts Antwerp
2007 Elected a member of Aosdána - aosdana.artsCouncil.ie

2008 Awarded a PhD in Fine Art, University of Antwerp
2015 Elected an Associate Member of the Royal Hibernian
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