

## Post

Before the industrial revolution shifted the work force into factories the home flourished as a place of creative industry where women had a vital role to play other than that of mother and wife. By separating the living from the working space the industrialisation of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries transformed the home into a domestic space, centred on the family and the notion of privacy and comfort.

This newly defined domestic sphere was not embraced by modern Art. The avant-garde were resolutely anti domestic. Within 20th century modern art the domestic space was forever subordinate to the theatres, cafes, nightclubs and other public venues within the urban landscape. Fortunately, the post modernist era has returned our culture's attention to the home challenging the modernist antagonism toward the domestic.

My personal interest in the domestic has been influenced by the continued urbanization of Ireland. As industrial capitalist economies grew from the 1700's so decreased the rural population as jobs and people migrated to new and burgeoning cities. At the turn of the millennium with a now globalised economy this displacement and migration shows no signs of abatement in Ireland or any other industrialised country.

Five generations of my family have resided in the Birches, a small hamlet in county Armagh, however, in the late 1800's growing economic hardship, coupled the opportunities created by the industrial growth on the east coast of the USA, drew many of my ancestors from their rural spaces to the rapidly developing manufacturing towns in Massachusetts. Once there they joined the many Irish building dams, laying railroad tracks and populating the numerous paper and cotton factories along the Connecticut River.

In the early 1900's my great-grandmother opened a little store in the front room of her tiny house in the Birches to service the community with much needed provisions; this store later expanded into a Post Office and moved across the dirt road into the front room of her sister-in-law's home opposite. The Post office and its many post mistresses played a crucial role in this small rural community observing, absorbing and circulating information and most crucially providing the sole means of communication between families separated by migration.

In 2010 I undertook an ACNI funded research residency to the USA and visited the domestic and post-industrial landscape of my now deceased ancestors. The Work in 'Post' brings together images of the long abandoned and defunct industrial buildings I documented and the crumbling ruins of domestic spaces left on the rural Irish landscapes. Through the juxtaposition of these two worlds 'Post' explores ideas of migration and journeying, both physical and metaphorical.