

Re(*collection*)

Abandoned farm dwellings are a familiar presence on the Irish landscape. Seemingly insignificant blemishes on the land, these crumbling dwellings, small in stature succumb to the pervading forces of nature. Their submission signifying a generation replaced, a way of life supplanted.

Beleaguered fireplaces sit stoically within these uninhabitable dwellings. Once central to the family home, these now neglected and redundant hearths remain defiantly whole in the face of encroaching decay. Renounced by a more modern mode of living they and the framework, which enfolds them, are remnants of the past. These relics, to some a random collection of pathetic and lost objects upon closer inspection reveal the distinctiveness and resonance of a dead man's clothes

Often traces of wallpaper still cling to the carcass of these abandoned buildings surviving as the last tangible mark of a person's presence. Whilst all else has been removed the paper left behind slowly reveals previously concealed layers which, when peeled back reveal a distinctly personal history.

As generations of children pass through the house and tattoo their marks, in my case with lipstick upon these layers of paper-thin skin, the building absorbs the daily trials and tribulations of the familial existence, retaining memories like an unrealised photo album

Time and neglect may conspire to convert these family homes into inconsequential; ruins but memory and the human experience venerate them as places of great emotional significance. For most of us home is where we take refuge a place of safety and comfort. As children it embodies all that is good and unassailable, a place of infinite joy and possibilities in which unconditional faith is placed. In later years that faith is amplified to where we elevate the home to sanctuary, seeking it as our final refuge.

Within my childhood home the fireplace was centrally positioned and like the Irish matriarchs which formed me it was dominating, strong and pervading: now this fireplace as with so many others scattered throughout the countryside appear as an altar in an informal family tomb.

The Fireplace became a recurring image within my previous body of work and even after these works were completed the image continued to be a draw for me. I became aware of a sense of sadness when passing mantels in empty dwellings and realised that this was because they embodied my recollections of childhood, of growing up in rural Ireland; in particular my grandmother's house which was situated next to my own. Her hearth was always adorned with an abundance of collectables, unremarkable, commonplace and everyday, of no intrinsic value they adorned the 'good room' until her death. Now as their guardian these outmoded and unexceptional objects evoke bittersweet memories of childhood their resonance defined by their familiarity.

Re (*collection*) is a body of work that deals with the loss of a generation and their culture and for myself a loss of innocence. The sad realisation that I will never again

explore and adventure with wonderment all the peculiarities of my grandparent's home, that marmalade soldiers and pyjamas warmed by the fire are now a precious memory stored with a rich archive of such similar treasures

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