

Prime Your Vision for Stephanie Deady

Stephanie Deady's exhibition at the Kevin Kavanaugh gives subtle yet profound insight into the qualities of memory through painting.

Phelim Ó Laoghaire ART EDITOR

Working from photographs and the mind, Stephanie Deady presents the very representations that are memories. Scenes of her studio over three years, the kitchen counter of a close friend she frequently visited, the corner of a sitting room where she lived in Italy – all of Deady's paintings face the material surroundings of her life, passed and passing. The growing abyss is palpable, Deady has us look right into it.

Deady is highly attentive to the ambiances imbued in her subjects. Stripping down to bare elements, her paintings pay their respect to the phenomenon of recognition. Carefully captured tones of electric lighting glow within space and on forms with a cubist-like attention, even if the depths of the paintings are almost ascetic in their overall bareness. But something catches the eye, and we are drawn to the living punctums floating in this atmosphere. Household objects, utensils, frames, the presence of a figure – these things fix and orientate the viewer.

Crucially, as a series the temporal dimension gives a whole other force and emphasis to the work. The reiteration of the same image or scene over time charges the paintings with the sense of reflection. Each piece individually is looking at something new within the same frame, some new comprehension of what is in front of us. If *Primed Vision* is a mediative exploration of memory and the act of remembering, serialization is the lens through which it sets the scene in motion. Deady keenly focuses on the transient quality of materials that are available only through recollection. The spaces feel transient, with dimensions that are slightly inaccurate or distorted, and yet everyone of the few pieces of furniture suggests life and extension beyond the canvas. While extremely sparse, even vacuous, her paintings are invigorated by catching details that appear extremely vivid and alive where her subtle but energetic brushstrokes break from the blankness of the room. Such details are the very force of memory.

Forgetfulness, or at least the obscuring or partial erasing of a whole experience, is apparent too. The passed that does not resurface, but is instead contoured and concealed under solid blocks of atmospheric colour. Sense and familiarity always remains, but exactitude is out of reach. Though I find Deady's *Aughrim House* series foreboding of the worrisome fragility of memory, it remains calm, if melancholic, rather than demented. A sense of acceptance permeates the ghostly ambiance.

In Deady's paintings one comes to recognise how the artist's brush must follow the act of seeing. That memory is a gatekeeper, even when we look at that which is in front of us. The ambiguities of the past are made apparent when we look and live in them.

Since graduating from Limerick School of Art & Design in 2014, Deady has been working consistently in Dublin, Italy and now Kilkenny where she has been awarded the prestigious Tony O'Malley residency.



Primed Vision is on show in the Kevin Kavanagh gallery until February 10th, admission is free.