

Publication:

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication with essays by Isobel Harbison and Tom Nys.

It is available from the Gallery Shop for the special exhibition price of £15 (£20 thereafter)

Biography

Elizabeth Magill's main preoccupation has been with painting and in particular with reference to landscape. She uses this genre to explore possibilities within the painting process, playing with notions around constructed worlds and place. These works often evoke a sense of vastness but are underpinned with suggestions to the interconnectedness of things.

Born in Canada, raised in Northern Ireland and residing in London and County Antrim, Elizabeth Magill came to the attention of the art world in the early 90s and 2000's with major exhibitions at Arnolfini, Bristol; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; Milton Keynes Gallery and BALTIC, Gateshead. Magill has exhibited in prestigious group shows including: The British Art Show 3, Hayward Gallery, London; The Hugh Lane Gallery Dublin; The Serpentine Gallery, London and many one person shows at Wilkinson Gallery, London and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin.

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Events:

**In Conversation**

Thursday 17 January, 6.30 – 8pm, £3.

Elizabeth Magill will talk about her work with Director Stephen Snoddy.

Book at reception or by calling 01922 654400.

Exhibition supported by:



# Elizabeth Magill

## Headland

Floor 3

17 October 2018 — 20 January 2019

Exhibition guide

## Elizabeth Magill is one of the leading artists of her generation and her work reveals an impressive versatility, innovation and vision.

In the canon of European Art great landscape painting is driven by an informed or intellectual desire to make visible the universal essence of things rather than that which merely consists of mechanical copying of particular appearances. That ideal of creating rather than copying remains a basis tenant in all great art.

Informed by the nature and the landscape of her native County Antrim, one of the most beautiful parts of Ireland for several decades now, Elizabeth Magill has been keeping us enthralled with her complex bewitching landscapes which confound any simple reading.

Through the genre of landscape painting she has brought into being a innovative language which pushes and interrogates the world around us and the part we play in it. For her, landscape is not a backdrop for another narrative - it is the narrative and although the work is usually absent of people when they are introduced as in *Descend* and *Company* they are part of the landscape often spectral melding into the trees or hills only to reappear in another form such as sketched outlines in *Only Tune*.

Her work is perplexing and frequently, a surreal atmosphere hovers over it. The natural world planted in

seemingly familiar terrain, firmly rooted in the ordinary of night and day, light and dark, trees and grasses, hills and mists becomes other, landscapes of the imagination and of personal concern and biography.

As the famous 19th century landscape painter J.M.W. Turner observed:

*It is necessary to mark the greater from the lesser truth: namely the larger and more liberal idea of nature from the comparatively narrow and confined; namely that which addresses itself to the imagination from that which is solely addressed to the eye.*

In this exhibition Headland, once again, Elizabeth Magill returns to this genre as the vehicle for her creative expression.

Never bucolic or pastoral Elizabeth Magill's landscapes keep us on the edge of our seat with their psychedelic colours and radioactive sheen intertwined with delicately wrought branches grasses and flowers. Think of the vivid colours of the trees overhanging *Red Bay* taking their cue from the red sandstone of the that County Antrim shoreline but oh so much their own identity. Drawing on diverse literary and filmic influences from Chaucer to Sokurov and Tarkovsky and her deep interest in photography,

this exhibition shows how she continues to experiment in her drive to create images that have a singular visual entity, a core structure on which to hang her interrogations of existence.

She has incorporated printmaking and photography into her practice by laying silkscreen printing on top of the surface of the painted canvas. The resulting works are exotic suggestive compositions, the strips of screen print over layered onto trees and skies, blurred images emerging to the surface and floating on fantastical mists creating visual frictions that are as exciting as they are intriguing. In *Hogsland* a single building is placed in the centre of the canvas against a giant arc lit yellow and brown brooding sky; the trees in the foreground list ominously to the left framing the strange hill shapes behind. The chaos is held in place by the taut core structure around which swirls the imaginative and the fantastical.

The painting was inspired by a visit to Henry Moore's studio located in Hertfordshire in a place locally known as Hogsland. The structure in Magill painting is based on Henry Moore's studio as she says "like a hub of ideas" - a centre point - from which her strange and elusive images emerge.

There is a certain filmic quality to Magill's work; she creates strange worlds, places you only can go if you create them. These worlds and their vitality amplify what is

happening in some way in all of us. Her work throws up the questions of existence and brings them to a critical point of consideration.

Magill's "liberal idea of nature" is created from the inventive manner in which she manipulates her materials, most especially her paint. She pours the paint onto a taut stretched canvas waiting to see what emerges from the saturation, abstracted shapes which she will grasp and conjure into solid forms - hybrid images, exciting intriguing and dramatic. A new reality, making room for thoughtful complex discourses on the nature of existence emerges from the chaos.

As the great French landscape artist Jean Baptiste Corot observed:

*Reality is one part of art; feeling completes it.*

Describing a sunset he writes:

*The sun sinks more and more behind the horizon. Bam! he throws his last ray, a streak of gold and purple which fringes the flying clouds. There, now it has entirely disappeared. Bien! bien! twilight commences.*

He could have been talking about the work of Elizabeth Magill.

**Barbara Dawson**

Director

The Hugh Lane Gallery Dublin