

Review of Genius Loci Sense of Place

Dunne Aidan - *The Distance Between Worlds*, **The Irish Times**, Wednesday, December 12, 2007, pp14.

IN GENIUS LOCI, which closed yesterday at Monster Truck Gallery, Louise Ward and Amy Walsh offered complementary ways of exploring "a sense of place". Walsh showed extremely accomplished video pieces with related photographs, and Ward showed paintings made with boldness and sensitivity.

The video, *Maximum 12 per Person*, is an excerpt from the life of the Magnolia Bakery in Manhattan, where local residents and visitors queue to buy the bakery's celebrated cupcakes. There's something nice about the exaltation of these modest confections, which is surely as much about a social ritual as any intrinsic merit in the cakes, delicious as they might be. An episode of *Seinfeld* featured a comparable Manhattan phenomenon.

While Walsh highlights the communal in this piece, with *Apartment Window* she looks at another aspect of big-city life, with a nod to Hitchcock. Three video monitors present us, voyeuristically, with views into the illuminated spaces of three apartments as their occupants go about the routine business of living. Curiosity keeps you watching, and the experience echoes the sense of distance, separation and anonymity of urban living.

Ward's paintings are built up in thin, often translucent layers. Despite the multiple layers, they are gestural and free, because she manages to maintain a spontaneity and delicacy from start to finish. Each focuses on a place that has personal significance for her in some way or another.

Offering recalls a temple interior and mingles memories of a real place with its incarnation in dreams. *Curtain* is a recollection of a corner of a room, and while the title is presumably factual - we can see the curtain in question - the painting is nicely structured so that it revolves around an empty space, and the title also alludes to something concluding, to the curtain coming down.



(Left) *Curtain* 2007, oil on gesso, 61 x 61cm, Louise Ward

(Right) *They're Only Cup Cakes (2) From the series Maximum 12 Per Person* 2007, digital print on photographic paper on pvc, 20 X 30.5cm, edition of 4, Amy Walsh