

ARTS/LIFE/STYLE

A philosophy of art inspired by an oyster

'World View of an Oyster' is this year's summer show in the Town Hall Gallery, Macroom. The show is annual, organised by Cork County Council and Norah Norton. Curated by Sarah Iremonger, the exhibition features Mick O'Shea, Helen Horgan, Maximilian Le Cain and Iremonger. The exhibition was inspired by a philosophy reading group attended by the artists in The Guesthouse, in Cork.

"It wasn't pure philosophy," says Iremonger. "We did it in an art context and we listened to lectures and watched videos."

There was a circulation of a series of lectures by Hubert Dreyfus, on Heidegger. I downloaded them and put them on my iPod and would listen to them when I was walking. He was discussing this idea, that if you didn't know what was going on in the world, then it would be like the world view of an oyster.

"I thought this would be a great title and a great concept for an exhibition. I thought it was very witty, but had all sorts of possibilities for being very open in interpretation, which is exactly the way I like art and like to explore art."

Iremonger invited Horgan to exhibit. Horgan's work has roots in philosophy and language, while remaining tactile. In 'Hermes Revisiting', Horgan has reworked an existing piece, exposing the fragility of the work and questioning her initial intention.

Mick O'Shea's 'Spectroscopic' uses soundwaves to activate the surface he is working on, so that the markings are defined by the

acoustic tracks. The tracks are exhibited with the visual art. O'Shea created a spectronic piece as a live performance for the opening of the show.

Iremonger gave filmmaker Maximilian Le Cain free reign to make pieces for the show. She was delighted with the results. "After watching his film, I went out and I found him and I said, 'Max, that's the most solipsistic, depressing, navel-gazing piece of work I've seen in my entire life', and he said, 'that's great.' Literally, the oyster inside the shell, hiding away."

Iremonger has been investigating digital manipulation through photoshop as a new work practice. "I've been living in Cobh and its maritime history is hugely important to me," says Iremonger. "I've always referenced history painting in my work, but not from a cynical point of view. I have a great respect for maritime painting and the history of painting in Cork harbour. And it's been a long time coming that I've done something that's very close to home and relevant."

A 1757 painting, by John Butts, and an 1854 painting, by George Mounsey Wheatley Atkins, are among those she has transformed with Photoshop.

Iremonger empties the landscapes of the artists' focal points. This references the concerns of academic painting in the 17th and 18th centuries, of creating space where there is none. Iremonger also has drawings that use the features she deleted from the landscapes.

Runs until Jul 27

— Tina Darb O'Sullivan

