

## WALL

I see the 'Wall' installation as a continuation of O'Mahony's engagement with embodied records in the rural landscape of her home in the Burren into a built, historically situated, urban environment. In her previous work O'Mahony alludes to past times, past lives and past ecologies as evidenced by fossils and the formative patterns displayed within the limestone rock that is the identifying mark of the Burren region, overlaid by interlacing layers of colour and pattern describing the immediate, contemporary setting. She examines the interplay of chance and circumstance that presents landscape as, seemingly, timeless, solid and fixed, known, readily identified and therefore available for 'interpretation', but which, on examination and reflection, subverts notions of solidity and fixity, speaking of change and mutability, showing traces of multiple pasts and multiple origins.

In some ways O'Mahony's methods, in this and previous bodies of work (*Traces of Origin, Erratics, Wrap*) resemble a kind of reconstituted photographic process. First there is the 'capture of the image' – done by physical 'exposure' of the canvas to the subject (in this case by pressing canvas to an area of wall and rubbing pigment over it to pick up the underlying textures and outlines) in conjunction with 'framing' by close observation of context. Then there is the 'development' of the image - processes of mark making, choice of palette and composition in the studio. And finally the 'print' - the point at which the artist decides the work has been developed enough to be taken as finished.

In 'Wall', an installation based on transferred images of the fabric of the city walls and designed specifically for display within the city, there is an opportunity for varied interpretations of the presented images of the historic stones. In Japanese classical music great value is placed on a concept of silence, the moment of anticipation, the 'absent' presence. A piece begins not with the first note but with the raising of the hand to strike the first note. I believe that it is at this point of anticipation of meaning that O'Mahony's 'Wall' operates. This anticipation or tension operates at different levels. For instance, the works seem at once too small and unmediated to bear the weight of cultural and symbolic capital habitually invested in their subject, yet too large and 'loaded' with meaning by that very choice of subject not to invite attention and engagement, speculation and interpretation. These works, mute enactments of small areas of the City walls, speak only as echoes of what the spectator brings. Traced directly on to the canvas from areas of the wall itself, the paintings are a sort of topographic, forensic record, evidence not only of large political and historical concerns but also of the small biographical and personal meaning bound up in such landmarks.

My perception is of O'Mahony's work obliquely addressing past and present as well as the personal and communal. I sense these concerns being embodied in the physical processes she uses to inscribe information from the subject and in the visual language she chooses and develops into images suggesting presences rather than objects. These images, which are descriptive rather than prescriptive, invite engagement and reflection rather than offering visual sound bites to reinforce or contest what we know or think we know about our world.

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