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The Big Sky and The Palm House - New Photography by Amelia Stein

Published: Wednesday, July 18, 2012



The Big Sky and The Palm House, Oliver Sears Gallery Dublin, (exhibition is now closed)

The vernacular buildings and barns of North Mayo, tall white sheds, tiny stone outbuildings – the seemingly abandoned dwellings – all formed part of a recent exhibition by photographer Amelia Stein at the Oliver Sears Gallery, Dublin. Working in the wild, open, North Mayo landscape, Erris with a hand-held medium format camera (6cm x 7cm), using traditional roll film, photographer **Amelia Stein** says the landscape “started to yield up its visual stories”. “The vernacular buildings and barns, tall white sheds, tiny stone outbuildings – the seemingly abandoned dwellings – those no longer fit for purpose recycled in to turf or animal feed storage, a maternity unit for sheep giving birth to Lambs in the spring . Placed firmly in the wild landscape, sitting as a reminder to those who still inhabit these small townlands of the lives of the individuals and families who had lived there and the stories of those lives lived within their walls.”

“It was only as I stood in the darkroom in Paris with the artisan hand printer with whom I work, as he translated the images from negatives to full prints, that what I had decided to place on film was fully revealed to me. The corrugated tin roof of an old shed resonating with the traces of abandoned lazy beds on the hillside behind it. The elegance of the placement of the apertures in a ‘three window’ cottage, the position of a doorway, diagonal tiles on a roof forming a pattern, the life line of an electrical power supply cable, the palette of grey tonality of the forms of the gable ends, the walls showing the weathering and passage of time. All this positioned under the ever changing drama of ‘the Big Sky’ that are the weather patterns that exist and pass over this particular landscape, permitting me to picture these buildings as still lives in the open landscape.”

The Palm House photographs were made in 2001 in the Great Palm House in the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin. It took two years to complete this series allowing time to record seasonal changes in the lives of the tropical planting , the unique pot and tub culture and all the nuances of light refract through the glass of this great Victorian building prior to its restoration . This year a publication entitled the Palm House was released by Lilliput Press with an introduction by John Banville and botanical text by Brendan Sayers. A limited edition copy with a single print included is also available.

Amelia Stein is a member of the RHA and of Aosdána. Her work can be found in private and public collections in Ireland and abroad.

Oliver Sears Gallery, 29 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2, www.oliversearsgallery.com

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