

PRESS RELEASE**NICK MILLER****VESSELS: NATURE MORTE** 6 September – 15 October 2016[view Catalogue on-line](#)

In his catalogue essay for the exhibition Sean Rainbird, Director of the National Gallery of Ireland writes:

'This series is a personal response to the passing of life, to slowly letting go, while celebrating life's fragility and tenacity. As with much of Miller's paintings its source is in Sligo, where he first travelled several decades ago, to become a painter in the manner he needed. With this moving group of still lifes, Miller closes the circle of return to the place he left to start out on the road'.



The alliance of painting with remembrance and the passing of a life is not new. Western art has traditionally performed the role and in these paintings Nick Miller draws on this facility to connect to his mother during her slow decline with a terminal illness. But in these works there is no person, no likeness; the figure is evoked, but only as an absence.

The key to the paintings are the *vessels*: the pots, vases and bottles that Miller's mother had gathered around her in a lifetime of collecting; they represent the bodily presence, they have the capacity to hold memory and meaning without sentimentality. Borrowed and carried back to his studio with every visit to London to see his mother, they would be filled with whatever seasonal flowers, blossoms, weeds, branches, lichens or seaweed was available and painted as a studio still-life. They are quick paintings, made with a sense of urgency that Miller describes as *'seeing the fullness of life before it passes. Making paintings this way offered some release in the face of transience and mortality, while still gambling on an afterlife in pigment itself'.*

Nick Miller (b. 1962 London) moved to Ireland in 1984 and was elected as a member of Aosdána (2001) in recognition of his contribution to Arts in Ireland. He won the inaugural 2014 Hennessy Portrait Award at the National Gallery of Ireland and has exhibited widely including solo shows at The Irish Museum of Modern Art and the RHA and the New York Studio School. His work is held in private and public collections worldwide including The National Gallery of Ireland; Irish Museum of Modern Art; Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane; The Arts Council (Ireland); The Niland Collection, The European Investment Bank, Luxembourg.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 56 page hardback book with texts by **Sean Rainbird** and a new piece *Electra in the Garden 1* written in response to the paintings by the Irish author **Colm Tóibín**.

Image: *Faded Hydrangeas* 2013, Oil on linen, 51 x 41 cm

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