

THE IRISH TIMES

Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015

Vessels: Nature Morte - Nick Miller

RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin

There's a real edge to Nick Miller's use of the term "Nature Morte" in describing Vessels, his small exhibition in the foyer of the RHA. He doesn't do polite arrangements of blossoms at their peak, or serene Morandi pots and vases. Each painting is a solo portrait, a study of a single type of plant or flower, and a vessel that contains it, delivered with raw, insistent clarity. Often the background is fluid and bleached, with traces of pigment that have been diluted and scoured by solvent.

Rather than cut flowers, bred for gentility, tastefulness and longevity, he presents clumps of plants roughly cut from nature and set up in the studio, fiercely present. Almost aglow with dying light, they seem on the point of fading away as we look at them, teetering on the edge.

He's not the only painter to have done something like this - Lovis Corinth and Chiam Soutine are others - but he does it impressively well with a complete lack of affectation, even artlessly, in the best sense.

The foyer, with its entrances and exits, desks and traffic, is a difficult location, and you could possibly walk by the paintings without pausing and allowing them time to work, and without realising that they make up a fine exhibition.

Aidan Dunne