

Uta Barth  
Emma Bennett  
Peter Blake  
Andreas Blank  
Katherine Boucher Beug  
Michael Canning  
Barrie Cooke  
Michael Craig-Martin  
Claire Curneen  
Colin Davidson  
David Eager Maher  
Jason Ellis  
Mark Fairnington  
Conor Fallon  
Liam Flynn  
Sara Flynn  
Paul Gaffney  
David Hockney  
Stephen Lawlor  
Hynek Martinec  
Matthew McCaslin  
Ed Miliano  
Nick Miller  
Hughie O'Donoghue  
Enoc Perez  
Stephanie Rowe  
Jeff Schneider  
Florian Slotawa  
Camille Souter  
Amelia Stein  
Christoph Steinmeyer  
Sasha Sykes  
Donald Teskey  
Sarah Walker  
Samuel Walsh  
Lorcan Walshe  
Chuck Webster  
Keith Wilson  
Guy Yanai



# IN LIVING MEMORY

---

OliverSearsGallery at Emo Court



# IN LIVING MEMORY

---

OliverSearsGallery at Emo Court





Dreams, like memories, do not often have well defined borders. The act of remembering them has the effect of changing the experience in the conscious mind, in the way that trying to observe the speed and location of a sub atomic particle, simultaneously, changes the very nature of what we are looking at. A mysterious impossibility described by quantum physics. With dreams, the recollection of the subconscious pits them against the values of the waking brain; with memories, the arc of time recalls them differently.

The art of Still Life has always provoked the deepest emotional response in me, more than any other subject matter. How an artist can elevate an object, a flower or an animal from an ordinary, random state to a cipher for our personal, contextualized world is a miraculous act of creativity. And how the passage of time distorts our memory of the remembered object and its depiction, or plants a real or surreal version in our dreams, only adds further enigma to this act of looking and remembering.

The conceit of holding an exhibition of Still Life in a neo-classical mansion is an alluring one. The overlapping memories of those who knew the house as a private residence, the history of lives registered in the walls, fabrics and fibres confirm this edifice, in its own way, as the epitome of still life. Here is a grand Georgian space, hosting, for a few months, a collection of contemporary works that I hope will add fresh memories and associations for those who come upon them; a new audience for whom Emo Court will remain in living memory.

Oliver Sears

‘There is a life and there is a death, and there are beauty and melancholy between.’

Albert Camus

In his Natural History, the First Century Roman author Pliny the Elder writes of an ancient Greek artist Zeuxis whose painting of grapes was so realistic that birds tried to eat them. This is perhaps the earliest literary reference to the Still Life genre, an example of which survives in Pompeii just a few miles from where, ironically, Pliny lost his life during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

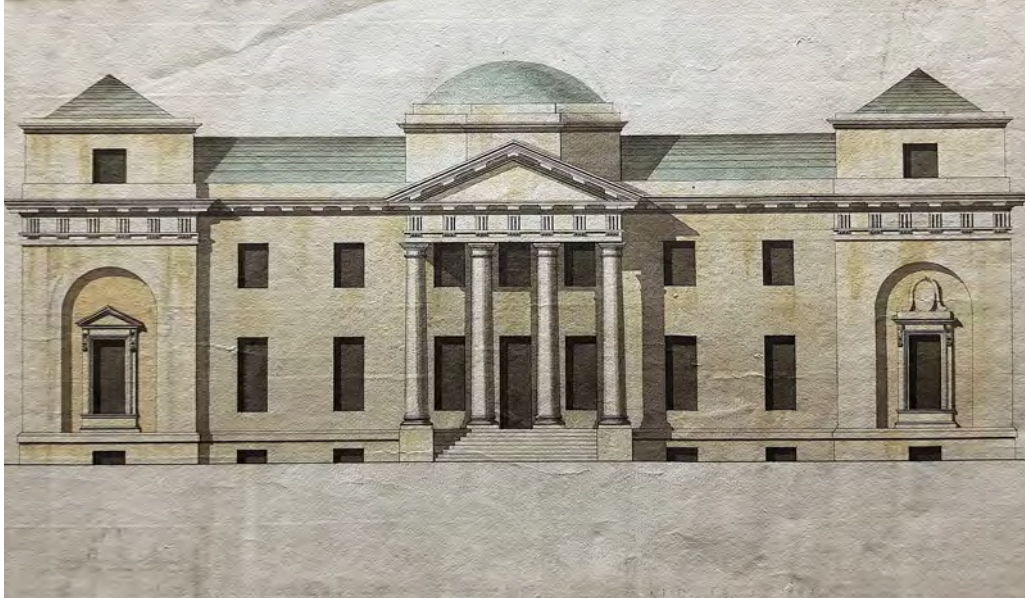
Our own familiarity with Still Life dates from a later period, notably the 17th century when the form was embraced by Dutch artists who, like Zeuxis, were intent on demonstrating their virtuosity. A carefully composed depiction of inanimate objects and organic matter, the Still Life was often both highly realistic and patently fraudulent: typically flowers and fruit which came into season at different times of the year would be shown on the same canvas in peak condition. And why not, since Still Life can be deemed a celebration of artifice. After all, the name by which we know the genre derives from the Dutch word *Stilleven* (Motionless Life), suggesting a frozen moment, a temporary suspension after which normal movement will be resumed.

Contrast this with how the same concept is described in Latin countries: the French call it *Nature Morte*, the Spanish *Naturaleza Muerta*. Not only are the words different, but more importantly so is the sentiment behind them. *Dead Nature* proposes something quite different from *Still Life*: the permanent conclusion of our actuality rather than its short-term abeyance. Of course, there is a strand in *Still Life*, the *Vanitas*, which - replete with skulls, snuffed candles and decaying foodstuff - serves as a *memento mori*, acknowledging the transitory nature of our existence and the certainty of death. But the latter has not yet happened, it is due to occur at some unknown date in the future: as though Pliny's life had just been stilled by the volcanic eruption and not brought to an actual end.

As in art, so in architecture, specifically with regard to houses like Emo Court. Over the past hundred years properties of this sort have undergone a profound, and in many instances unhappily lasting, transformation. At the start of the 20th century the majority of Ireland's country houses were inhabited and alive with activity. Today the opposite is the case: human life within their walls has been stilled. Across Ireland there are abundant instances of the country house as *Nature Morte*. Paradoxically the only evidence of ongoing life is provided by Nature herself, returning to luxuriate among the ruins of an abandoned building. Far from being stilled, Nature thrives on these disintegrating corpses which have become the *Vanitas* of the built environment, a beautiful but melancholy reminder that edifices are as susceptible to decomposition as the people who once occupied them.

The condition is widespread but not universal, as shown by the history of Emo Court. The building has come close to death on a number of occasions and somehow each time evaded its grasp. Indeed it might have been stillborn. John Dawson, who commissioned the work from James Gandon, died just a few years after work on the site had begun. When his descendants eventually sold the property, it stood empty and threatened with demolition for a decade before being acquired by the Jesuit order. Their departure less than forty years later once more raised questions about Emo Court having a sustainable future. Only after being purchased by the late Cholmeley Dering Cholmeley-Harrison and then donated to the Irish state was the house's long-term survival guaranteed. Today Emo Court thrives. The present exhibition demonstrates that far from *Nature Morte* being the only option, there is still life for the Irish country house.

Robert O'Byrne



**Attributed to James Gandon ( 1742 – 1823 )**  
Proposed front elevation  
n.d. ( 1780's )  
Ink and watercolour with additional pencil sketches  
Unexecuted  
Irish Architectural Archive

Emo Court is known for its association with architect James Gandon, who designed the building for the 1st Earl of Portarlington, John Dawson, in the late eighteenth century. A fact that has been forgotten over the centuries is that Emo was once home to a spectacular art collection assembled over generations. In the 1920's, the Dawson-Damer family made the difficult decision to sell Emo and their art collection. Old Master paintings including works by Van Dyck, Rubens, Breughel, Giorgione and Guido Reni and later works by Angelica Kauffman and Canaletto all hung in the Picture Gallery and throughout the House.

Following the purchase of Emo by the Society of Jesus in 1930, the internationally important photographer Frank Browne S. J. lived at Emo for 37 years and created some singularly beautiful photographic works of this magnificent estate.

When Major Cholmeley Dering Cholmeley-Harrison acquired Emo in 1969 and set about conserving it in partnership with the architectural practice of Sir Albert Richardson, in the early 1970s, he furnished the House with his art collection. These artworks were later acquired by OPW when the House was gifted to the nation.

It is against this background and inspired by this history that OPW is delighted to present the inaugural exhibition of contemporary artworks at the newly conserved Gallery rooms at Emo.

*In Living Memory* has been curated by Oliver Sears of the Oliver Sears Gallery. It brings an outstanding selection of artists and artworks to the midlands for visitors to engage with during the summer months.

A new chapter in the story of art at Emo unfolds.

**Mary Heffernan**  
General Manager, Emo Court.



**Untitled (05.18)**  
 Mounted colour photographs  
 Edition of 6  
 Grouping of 2 images.  
 Panel #1 24 x 25.25 cm  
 2005

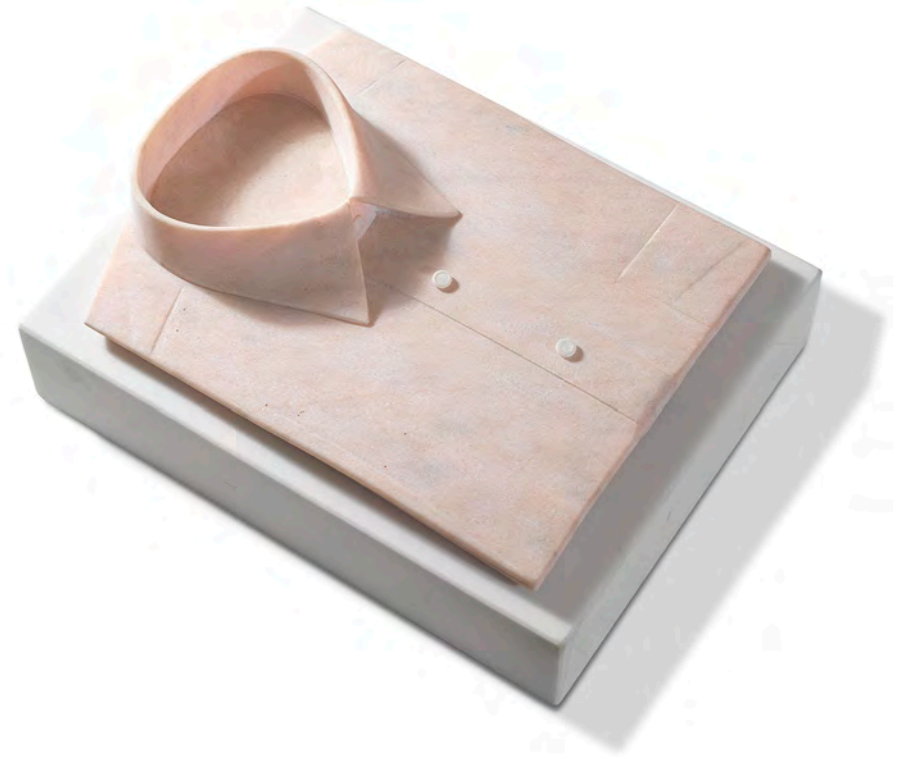


**Drift**  
 Oil on oak panel  
 25 x 20 cm  
 2015





**Still Life I (After Van O's, Fruit & Flowers in a Terracotta Vase)**  
 Oil on canvas board in artist's own frame  
 48.7 x 36.7 x 2.7 cm  
 1996



**Monument 5**  
 White and pink marble  
 32 x 27 x 7 cm and 37 x 29 x 15 cm  
 2008



**Peonie**  
Acrylic and pastel on canvas  
61.5 x 46 cm  
2019



**Your Cyclical Natures**  
Oil on canvas  
122 x 183 cm  
2009 - 2018





**Palmetta II**  
Oil on canvas  
137 x 137 cm  
2003



**Common History: Vanitas**  
Acrylic on canvas  
214 x 183 cm  
1999





**Glory**  
Porcelain  
25 x 20 x 17 cm  
2019



**For E.D.U.**  
Oil on linen  
145 x 152 cm  
2018





**Family**  
Oil on panel  
50 x 60 cm  
2019

**Macrocephalus I**  
20 x 44 x 19 cm  
Iranian & Kilkenny limestones  
2016



**The Golden Leaves**  
Oil and gold leaf on panel  
98 x 38 cm  
2008



**Still Life II**  
Oil on canvas  
25.5 x 19 cm  
1989





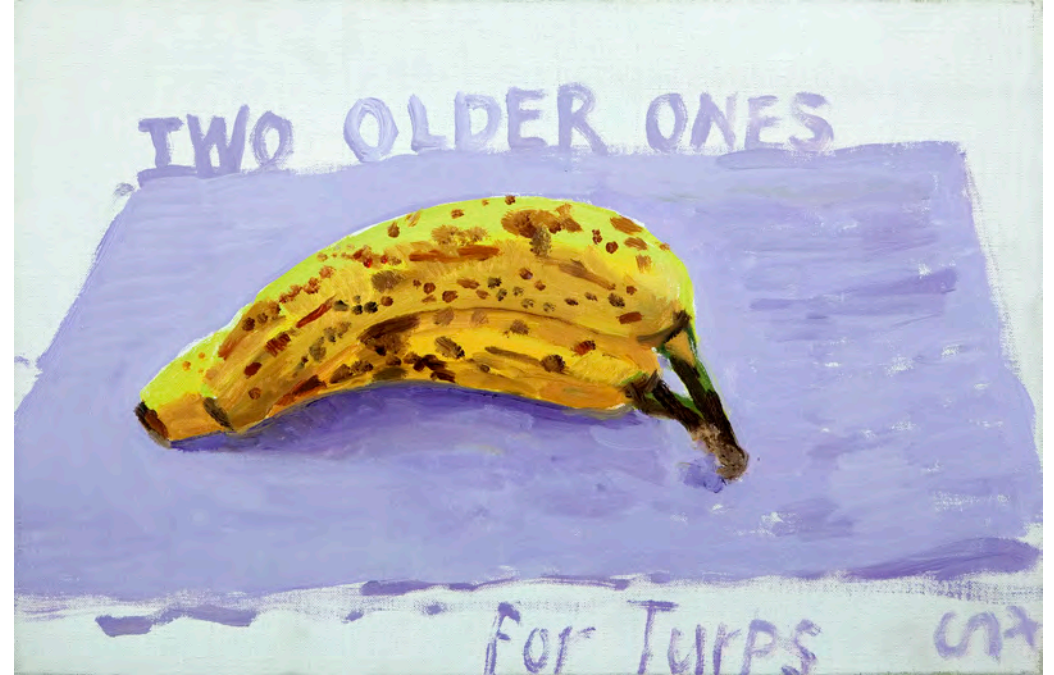
**Ash Inner Rimmed Vessel**  
(Carved Surface)  
28 x 37 cm  
2015



**Porcelain Vessel**  
Porcelain with celadon and blue glaze  
7 x 10.5 cm  
2005



**Perigee #12**  
 93 x 139.5 cm  
 Archival pigment print on Hahnemuehle Photo Rag Baryta  
 Edition of 5 + 2 AP  
 2015



**Two Older Ones for Turps**  
 Oil on canvas  
 27 x 41 cm  
 2007





**In Amsterdam**  
Acrylic on aluminum  
90 x 74 cm  
2019



**Brussels**  
Oil on canvas  
40 x 56 cm  
2016



**Wallflower**  
Television monitors, DVDs, electrical hardware  
Dimensions variable; monitors 38 x 33.5 x 8.5 cm each  
2008



**Still Life with Three Books, Two Oil Crayons and Two Tortillons**  
Oil on canvas  
80 x 65 cm  
2019





**White Cherry Blossom**  
Oil on linen  
142 x 122 cm  
2017



**Liquid Earth**  
Oil on paper on panel  
150 x 188 cm  
1984





**Untitled**  
Graphite on paper  
104.5 x 76.5 cm  
2007



**String shelves and other collectables**  
Oil on panel  
24 x 26 cm  
2019





**Vincent's Pipe**  
Oil, acrylic, charcoal on canvas  
40 x 50 cm  
2018



**KS.024**  
Ceramic sculpture with base  
166 x 33 x 30 cm  
2006



**Caper Spurge from Armagh**  
Oil on paper  
46 x 33 cm  
1979



**Roots**  
Silver Gelatin Archival Print  
35 x 35 cm  
Edition of 20  
2012





**Fleur D'Une Fleur Obscure**  
Ink, marker, pencil on paper  
112 x 89 cm  
2007



**Bloom! Emo**  
Folding eight panel screen  
Resin, acrylic and natural flora  
190 x 280 cm  
2019





**Under Over**  
Oil on canvas  
70 x 80 cm  
2018



**Red Tree**  
Wool, linen, silk  
100 x 120 cm  
Edition of 6  
2018





**Conventus IV**  
Oil on canvas  
91.5 x 122  
1999



**Shrine of St Patrick's Tooth (Study)**  
Oil on panel  
42 x 33 cm  
2007





**Tea for Two, 13**  
Oil on panel  
34.5 x 45 cm  
2009



**Keeping Time, 13**  
Oil on linen  
86.5 x 76.5 cm  
2019





**Palermo Plastic**  
Oil on linen  
70 x 64 cm  
2015



**OPW**

Oifig na  
nOibreacha Poiblí  
Office of Public Works

Joanne Bannon  
Hugh Bonar  
Jack Brady  
Conor Byrne  
Valerie Cloonan  
Rosemary Collier  
Dorothea Depner  
Greg Fagan  
Aoife Hurley  
Martina Lewis  
John McMahon  
Jurga Rakauskaite

Catalogue Co-sponsor Wigam  
Exhibition Curator Oliver Sears  
Exhibition Coordinator & Project Manager Catherine Punch

Special thanks to Mary Heffernan, General Manager, Emo Court

This catalogue was published by  
Oliver Sears Gallery  
on the occasion of the exhibition  
In Living Memory at Emo Court, Co. Laois  
26th May – 29th September 2019  
Copyright © the artists, the authors and  
Oliver Sears Gallery  
33 Fitzwilliam St Upper, Dublin 2  
T: +353 (1) 644 94 59  
E: [info@oliversearsgallery.com](mailto:info@oliversearsgallery.com)  
[www.oliversearsgallery.com](http://www.oliversearsgallery.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electrical, mechanical or otherwise, without first seeking the written permission of the copyright owners and of the publisher.

Design & Production: OystercatcherTF  
Print Management: [www.imagesolutions.ie](http://www.imagesolutions.ie)