

Visual Arts

Aidan Dunne

Reviewed

Phillip Allen, Diana Cooper and Paul McDevitt: Group show, Kerlin Gallery, Dublin, until May 31st (01-6709093)

Martin Healy: Looking For Jodie (Amityville) 2001/02, Rubicon Gallery, Dublin, until June 7th (01-6708055)

Dermot Seymour: Dog, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin, until May 31st (01-8740064)

Niamh McGrath: Paintings, The Bridge Gallery, Dublin, until May 31st (01-8729702)

Dermot Seymour's *Dog* begs the prefix *My Life As A . . .* He presents us with a series of meticulously made portraits of individual dogs. Each is very much an

individual, and each is treated with the consideration and concentration generally accorded a human sitter, with none of the sentimentality that animals in pictures can inspire. As if to underline this, *Dead Dog* is just that: a dog lying dead on the street.

Quietly, even unobtrusively, Seymour has become a painter of animals, particularly cows. His careful studies of these living units of economic value, haplessly ensnared in a mega-industry in which they are the product, have what might be termed a hard-headed pathos about them. It is tempting to see, in his paintings of long-suffering beasts, a correspondence with the human predicament. Tempting and reasonable, even if he never forces the issue.

The notion is encouraged by the way he terms the two non-canines featured in

the show as *Cat Dog* and *Hare Dog*, implying that it's pretty much the same for all of us, this business of being alive.

Each dog, meanwhile, has a great deal invested in being itself. They all seem serious about their doggedness and are mostly world-weary, alert and sensitive-looking, as though they have stories to tell. They can't speak, of course, but then Seymour has told their stories for them.

It seems fair to say that Niamh McGrath's paintings, at the Bridge Gallery, are about the sea, given that it featured centrally in her last exhibition and takes centre stage again in this one, with the horizon line as a distant constant. This time, though, she approaches it in a more considered and analytical manner. The paintings are not even as blue any more. Instead she favours a very nice pale grey-blue and black and white.