



Dermot Seymour *Consumptive Unit IV* 1999 Oil on canvas

AS I stand in the shell of the Winter Palace, I say to myself, "what happened?" This, the super-hovel in Cloonee, Partry, Co. Mayo, 25 minutes from Westport on the northern side of Lough Mask, is where I'm to be forever...

Anyways, my skirmishes and raids into Mayo go back to the early seventies of the last century. They were fishing trips, often on the Belfast to Achill bus, getting off in Newport, fishing the river in the dark for sea trout, sleeping during the day and stalking them silver fellows again at night, and eventually getting the bus back to Belfast, where the catch would be soggy and smelly from the heat of the bus journey, which took all day in the months of June and July. They were often offered to the statue of Queen Victoria at the City Hall in Belfast before I crawled into a black taxi and eventually made my way home to Glencairn Estate in north west Belfast.

Well, after art college I lived around Belfast painting away, moved to Dun Laoghaire, PS1 New York and Monaghan. It was a while living in a fine old hovel in Doohat in Co. Monaghan, shrouded in the fungal spores of drumlin damp, I decided to visit an old hostage friend of mine, just released and living in Mayo. While there I decided it was time to get the Atlantic gales to blow away the fungal spores of the farmer's lung. So I moved to Mayo near Westport, living in Lecanvey and later to Leitir, Islandeady.

It was March 1991, I had spent my first year in Lecanvey at the foot of Croagh Patrick and overlooking Clew Bay. I now knew about wind, big

skies, dead seals, dead dolphins, dead whales, erosion, islands, black-faced hornies, Staunton's Bar and Campbells at Murrisk. Under the eye of Cora, goddess of the Reek, I busied myself with the painting. The new works had no helicopters, no dead northerners, no northern flags, no iconography loyalist or republican, no British army bits and bobs and no Friesian cattle ... because there weren't any. But my accent was the same, so I explored a wonderful west of Ireland world with a northern eye, or accent if you like. From Maamtrasna to James Lynchehaun I busied myself.

I temporarily left Mayo to take up a residency in the Firestation Artists Studios in Dublin, after which I returned to a hovel, a land commission cottage in Leitir, Islandeady equidistant from Westport to Newport to Castlebar, just north west of the Fahy Triangle – once entered, a body rarely exits! It is here where I have been located since the late nineties, surrounded by fine bullocks and heifers, drumlins, damp ridges, moor and rock. The work goes on – forty million cattle in Ireland and they're all in Leitir.

A couple of years ago I got married. My wife is an artist as well and we bought a field in Cloonee and decided we needed a good big space for ourselves to live and work in, cosy and dry, lots of wall space and loads of light, a super hovel, if you like. The Winter Palace, is born. No more farmer's lung...we hope.

Dermot Seymour