

# When the cows are answering back

## Reviewed:

Dermot Seymour, *Goatscape*, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery until November 3rd (01-8740064)  
Espen Eiborg, *Cross Gallery* until October 27th (01-4738978)  
Marc Reilly, *Saturation*, Graphic Studio Gallery until October 20th (01-6798021)

**I**N the past, Dermot Seymour was often asked to explain the everyday surrealism of his paintings depicting Northern Ireland. In this work he devised a harsh pictorial realm in which military technology co-existed with farmyard animals and offbeat details, like the trout caught in a barbed wire fence, seemed fraught with symbolic significance. But the oddities and incongruities, he was fond of pointing out, were factual. It may have been strange, but it was certainly true.

While true, the symbolism still held: herd-like masses, and the fish out of water may even have been the artist himself, a perplexed observer of a world out of joint. More recently Seymour, long resident in Co Mayo, has shed the involved narratives of his earlier work. A 1989 painting, *On the Balcony of the Nation*, depicted a cow, tagged and teetering on the edge of a crumbling precipice.

There was a sense of being at the edge of a precarious Ireland at the edge of a precarious Europe.

In his latest show, *Goatscape* at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, the animals are not so vulnerably positioned. They stand four-square on the ground, they have convincing heft, they cast shadows and, with the exception of one poor cow, they look pretty healthy. All the

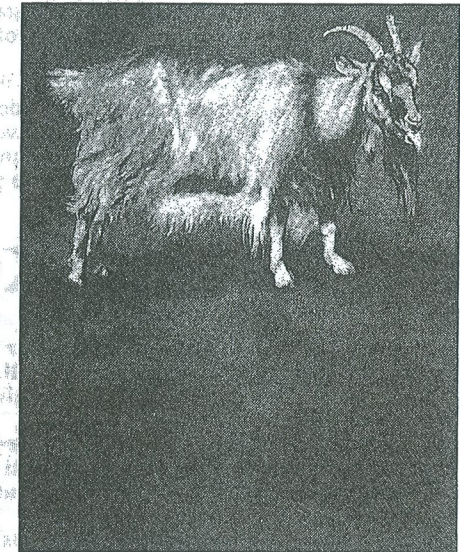


## Visual Arts

### Aidan Dunne

same, each exists in isolation and while the picture titles link animals inextricably and pointedly to the landscape, the backgrounds, mostly dark, are curiously undifferentiated and vague compared to the lovingly rendered coats of the animals themselves.

They still, reasonably enough, have an air of suffering on our behalf. His goat is a – rather insolent looking, it must be said – relation of William Holman Hunt's *Scapegoat*. Goats, though, have the reputation of being temperamental creatures, and the bovine helplessness and compliance suggested by that one sickly cow, the *Consuming Unit of Brass*, is untypical of the show as a whole. Rather we are faced with truculent bulls and mischievous pigs. Even the *Bogewe* looks as if it's inclined to answer back. As with Martin Gale, the hard, assertive realism of Seymour's style seems thoroughly appropriate to contemporary rural Ireland.



Dermot Seymour's *Goatscape*, at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery

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