

Stepping away from the facile and formulaic



Aidan Dunne Visual Art

Three exhibitions display distinct personalities at play

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PAINTING

Aileen Murphy

Temple Bar Gallery, 5-8 Temple Bar, Dublin
Until November 16th



tary images.

Her painting *Ursula* comes across as an account of a painter trying to pin down the presence in question, but delicately, through folded layers and ellipses and tentative forays.

The largest work, *The Bed*, a triptych, appears a bit slack, unfinished, in comparison with almost everything else.

But Murphy, who attended the prestigious Städelische, Frankfurt after studying at NCAD, emerges as a genuinely exploratory artist, determined to sidestep the facile and formulaic.

Dana Schutz come particularly to mind.

The show's accompanying text discusses such a line of approach to Murphy's work in relation to Manuela Ammer's interpretation of Elizabeth Murray's paintings. The idea being that Murray's paintings vie for attention in an age of perpetual distraction by being in several ways excessive. Much of Murphy's painting is actually quite subtle.

The text usefully, if obliquely, draws in another point of reference, the wildly speculative notion of the development of bear cubs taken from a medieval bestiary.

To begin with, bear cubs are, it speculates, misshapen lumps of flesh. The mother takes this amorphous thing and literally licks it into shape, fashioning a cub from the mess. It's a helpful analogy for what a painter does on the canvas, for what Murphy does, in fact.

Except that the form doesn't become a bear, figuratively speaking, in her paintings, it's a more of a vaguer presence, a being, one that eludes precise definition, despite narrative hints offered in titles or fragment-

Aileen Murphy's paintings seem to focus so acutely on sensations, or moments, or perhaps aspects of embodiment, with such extreme subjectivity that conventional appearances won't do, they are overwhelmed and distorted beyond recognition.

The state of being, or sentience, or consciousness – a continuum rather than

an either-or state of affairs, come to think of it – becomes an expansive presence, even a monstrous presence, a mass that envelopes like a dense fog.

It's reasonable to see her work as being aligned with other art that emphasises individual, concrete experience in a digitised, virtual world. The paintings of