



Alice Maher wears single breasted three button blazer, €990, and slim fitting trousers, €550, both Victoria Beckham at victoriabeckham.com



ALICE MAHER

Alice Maher knows she's on to something when the cleaning starts. "I potter about the studio and when I start packing up and cleaning I know something is about to happen." She laughs. "I'm full of dread." It helps that the studio, where she has worked for over 15 years, feels full of all her earlier work. "It's haunted by the work," she says, "by all the— thinking."

The Tipperary-born artist moved to Mayo in 2006, with her husband, the painter Dermot Seymour. Seymour had a connection to the area already, through fishing, and they often camped there, climbing Croagh Patrick. They bought land and built a home around work, not life, with two separate studios, each with their own entrances. There is no popping into Seymour for tea. "We leave ourselves alone. There is no discussion." As vast as a gallery space, the windows of her studio are 22 feet tall. "Even we were unprepared for how tall they were," she recalls. "But we are not sorry. I can envisage everything and I have a corner. That's important. I love a corner to work into, especially for installations."

The space has had many lives over the years – blacked out for the making of the film of *Cassandra's Necklace*, it was also home to a collective during the Repeal campaign. "We made the banners for the marches. We sewed, we painted, we even practiced walking with them." It was through this that she met the artist Rachel Fallon, who she went on to create *The Map* with, a monumental

textile sculpture, that formed part of *The Magdalene Series*. "We were being asked to imagine and reimagine the Magdalene, her legacy, her impact on women today." Completed over three lockdowns, it took two and a half years. "The labour," she recalls. "But that was important. And we knew we had to work with cloth. And we used the finest of materials. That was important too."

What happens outside the studio is not as important as what happens within it. "My landscape is inside me," she says. "It's that first mountain, that first winding river. So that's Tipperary for me." That said, she enjoys the trooping of cattle past the window, a visit from an odd deer, and a jump in the lake. "I was one of those people who went lake water swimming during the pandemic."

She is busy. Currently working on a print based on the story *Rokuro-Kubi*, by the Irish-Greek writer Lafcadio Hearn for an exhibition, *Kwaidan* in Japan next year, there is also a book, with Jamie Murphy of *Salvage Press*, commissioned by the National Gallery, that will bring her deep into their archives, and letters and papers pertaining to Grace Gifford, William Orpen, Sarah Purser, Aloysius O'Kelly, Sarah Cecilia Harrison and Jack Yeats.

When she walks into her studio the overall feeling is one of gratitude. "I thought I liked impermanence," she says, "but I don't. It's nice to work in a place I know I'm not going to be kicked out of. It's nice to put something down and know it will stay there."

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