



EVA MCCAULEY
SOLAS AGUS SCÁTH

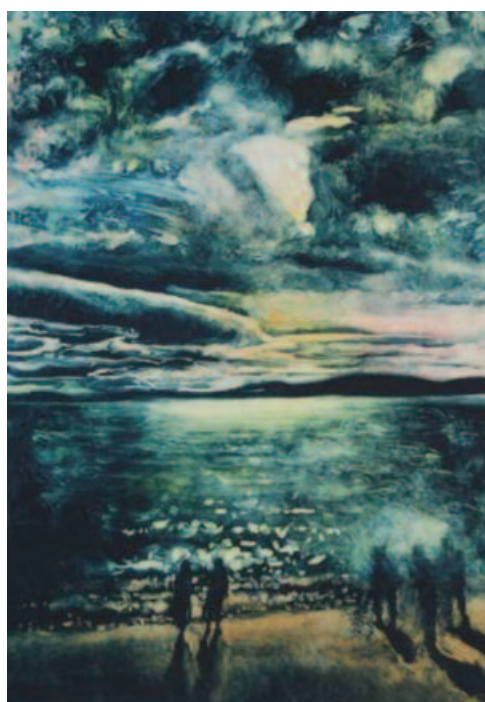
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Clinging to the side of a mountain on the brink of the Atlantic Ocean, Cill Rialaig's cluster of stone cottages has given shelter to both artists and famine survivors. From its cliff top perch, this isolated settlement in County Kerry, Ireland, is witness to a perpetual drama of cloud and water that unfolds around the two islands below. In the summer of 2007, Eva McCauley took residence in one of these stone cottage-studios to immerse herself in painting, listening, and entering the distinctive Gaelic culture of the region. Amid the dislocation of being in a new environment, her work fused the exotic foreign landscape with the shifting and subjective world of memory.

The results of her experience, as distilled in paintings and monotypes, are exhibited as *Solas agus Scáth*. The title (pronounced "Solas agus Scah") means "Light and Shadow" in Irish Gaelic.

The Cill Rialaig Artist Colony consists of seven restored stone studio/cottages perched on a cliff near Bolus Head overlooking Ballinskelligs Bay. The original inhabitants managed to survive the potato famine in the 1800's by turning to the abundance of fish



Night Shadows I (oiche agus scáth) 24" X 18", monotype/chine colle on BFK Rives, 2008

in the ocean. The site is historically and archeologically-rich, with ruins of stone cottages and forts, stone walls, standing stones, oratories and inscribed crosses. When developers threatened the historic quality of the settlement in the 1990's, Noelle Campbell-Sharpe raised funds to acquire the village and founded the colony.

Because of its proximity to the sea, the continual movement of the wind pushes the clouds over the unsettled skies, and

the quality of the light is extraordinary. The paintings in this show have been created in response to the ever-changing light conditions and fluctuations of colour and atmosphere at the retreat at Cill Rialaig, also incorporating the mysterious but tangible presence of the people who inhabited this area in the past.

Eva regularly left the solitude of the studio to seek out the rich culture of the Gaeltacht (Irish Gaelic-speaking) area. The traditional music in pub sessions, stories, language and dance impacted the direction of Eva's studio practice as significantly as the physical landscape, people and history of the area.

McCauley, in her Ontario studio, continues to

mine her experiences at Cill Rialaig. She constructs curious, fabricated narratives in her paintings in response to the Irish landscape, rich history and stories told by the locals. The images explore the illusory and often deceptive qualities of memory in relation to the experience of visiting a foreign place -- fabrications culled from the irregular flow of images from personal memory, history, imagination, as well as digital photographs taken during her stay.

McCauley is interested in the idea of travel, and of our attraction to the unknown, foreign and exotic. There are roots and routes that can be drawn, documenting both our line of travel from one place to another, but also from present to past existence. We as 'tourists' will travel to an actual 'foreign' place, but our minds build this place into a fantasy realm as we imagine and idealize the unknown. There is a symmetry between the actual and imagined reality of the landscape; the internal fabrication melds with the external reality.

Her paintings reference Turner and Constable in her unabashed exploitation of painterly passages, where strong light and dark contrasts provoke the viewer's emotions. Romantic sky images, with their dramatic lighting and even the occasional sunset, run the risk of descending into mawkishness. It

is the strong quality of abstraction in her painting, however, that rescues these images. She is interested in exploring John Ruskin's theory (in *Modern Painters*, Vol. 3, Part 4, 1856) of what he refers to as the "pathetic fallacy," our tendency to impose human emotions on an inanimate object or landscape, thereby idealizing and transforming it to reflect our own "excited state of the feelings".

Our interpretation and experience of a foreign place also emanates from our own memories. McCauley comments on temporality and the process of memory retrieval:

"Memory is haphazard and incomplete, yet it is the way that we order and relate to our experience. I am interested in the 'finality' of recorded memory and the intrinsic unreliability of that recording, in how our memories are invariably filtered and skewed by how we choose to interpret and present them. I view the act of painting as a way of stopping time—as a tangible way to document the process of my existence. My work deals with temporality, and the fact that eventually everyone must confront the transitory nature of their lives.

Simple objects do not usually bear the imprint of an individual after they die, but

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Cill Rialaig Swimmers (calm and chaos) 12" X 24", oil on panel/oxidized copper, 2009



Cill Rialaig Sky I (ceol na spéir); Cill Rialaig Sky II (the rhythm of my breath); Cill Rialaig Sky III (ceol na gealaí)
Oil on baltic birch panel, Triptych 60" X 144", 2009

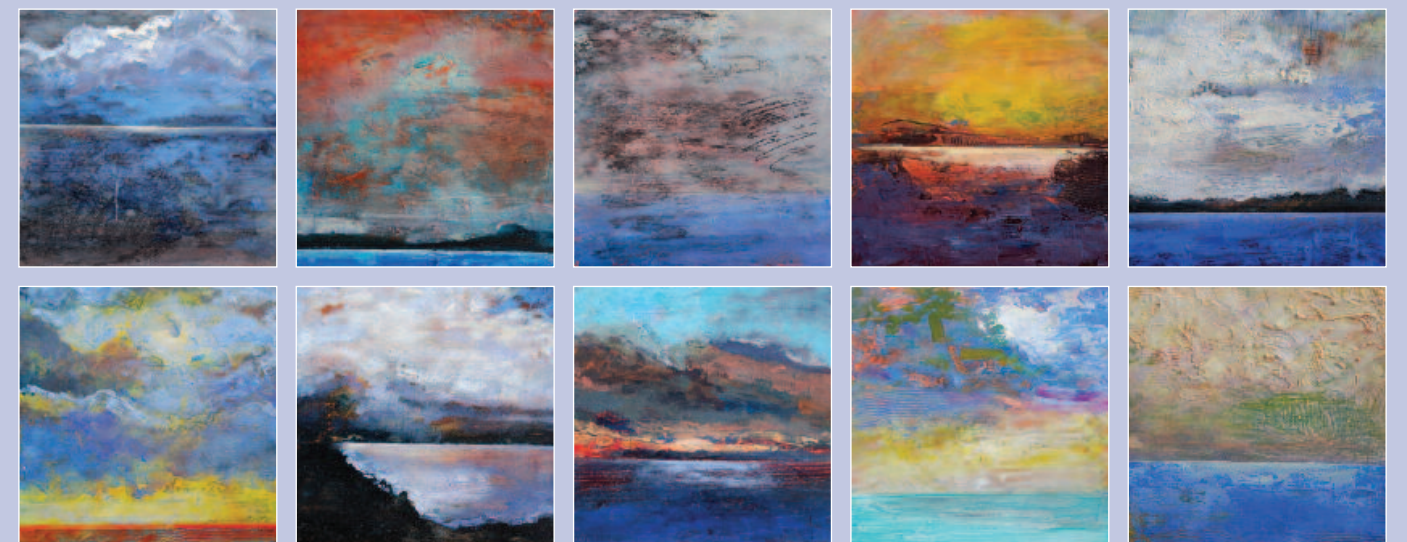
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artworks do. When I look at a painting that I created in the past, my viewing of it vividly brings back all of the emotions I felt when I was in that place, painting, more than any photograph or conversation with someone reminiscing. We all manufacture stories, from the fleeting sensory material that bombards us at every instant, a fragmented series of touch, smell, conversations, sounds and pictures, and we delete most of it trying to keep it in some kind of order, reshuffling it until we die. But in the midst of the sensory bombardment, the creation of an artwork is a

distillation of a moment - the coming together of time and space."

In *Light and Shadow, Solas agus Scáth*, Eva McCauley doesn't simply make the most of that sensual quality of light unique to the rugged Irish coast. She carries her vision into the dark corners, the shadows of lives faded into oblivion, to discover an umbra of memory both cultural and intimately personal.

Phil Irish, Curator



Spéir 1 - 10, oil on panel, (various sizes from 10" X 10" to 15" X 15") 2009



Night Swimmers I (iomlán gealaí)
oil on baltic birch panel,
48" X 60", 2009



Night swimmers II (solas na gealaí)
oil on panel,
30" X 30", 2009



Red Family and Curragh,
oil/acrylic/mixed media
on baltic birch plywood,
Diptych 36" X 60", 2009



Slíocht (descendant) Monotype, digitally captured & printed on fabric using Jeti Aquajet, 42" X 56", 2009 (printing courtesy of Gandhi Innovations)



Sinsear (ancestor) Stone lithograph, digitally captured & printed on fabric using Jeti Aquajet, 42" X 56", 2009 (printing courtesy of Gandhi Innovations)

BIOGRAPHY:

Eva McCauley is a painter and printmaker born in London, Ontario in 1957, currently living in the country outside of Damascus, Ontario. She is also a musician, playing traditional Irish music on fiddle, mandolin and concertina. She studied visual art at the Ontario College of art and Design, receiving an O.C.A.D. diploma in drawing & painting (1983), a B.F.A. from University of Guelph (1994) and a M.F.A. from University of Waterloo (1996).

She has exhibited internationally and nationally, with solo exhibitions at the Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery ("Memento Mori"); Open Studio, Toronto ("Ruptured Time"); Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto ("Colour of Memory", "Mutable as Water", "Gaze"); and group exhibitions at Harbinger Gallery, Waterloo ("Figuratively Speaking"); KWAG 2nd Biennale (2005); and the Castellani Museum in Lewiston, N.Y. ("Crossing Borders").

Her work is included in collections in Canadian Embassies all over the world, and is part of the boxed set sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Art Collection: Embassy of Canada in Berlin* which includes reproductions of artworks from the 41 Canadian artists in this collection,

including: Edward Burtynsky, Alex Colville, John Hartman, Jane Ash Poitras, Christopher Pratt, Janet Werner and Rebecca Belmore.

McCauley is the recipient of many awards and scholarships, including the W.O. Forsythe Painting Award (1983), Bronfman Printmaking Award (1993), Warner Lambert Printmaking Scholarship (1994) "Best in Printmaking Award" at the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition (1996), "Ernst & Young Purchase Award" (1996), a Canada Council "Quest" Grant for Emerging Artists (2000), as well as an Ontario Council Project Grant (2007). Her work can be found in many private and public collections such as the Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Waterloo Regional Labour Council, and the Ernst & Young Canadian Print Collection. She has been a lecturer in the Fine Art Department at the University of Waterloo since 2002.

Eva McCauley has been invited to return to Cill Rialaig for another month-long artist's residency in August 2009. She is working towards a solo exhibition at the Groundfloor Gallery in Belfast in 2010.

Website: www.evamccauley.com



Cill Rialaig Sky (solas agus spéir) oil on panel, 4" X 9.75" , 2009

EVA MCCAULEY

SOLAS AGUS SCÁTH



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