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Damien Flood: Veil review – Full-throated defence of painting teems with vitality

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Veil: Avenza, by Damien Flood, from his exhibition at Green on Red Gallery

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Damien Flood: Veil

Green on Red Gallery, Dublin

★★★★★

You've probably heard that painting is dead. Oddly enough, it has died more than once. With each passing the painting is yet again declared retrograde, overly burdened with various questionable pasts, no longer relevant or nimble enough to deal with the demands of our diverse, tumultuous, polyphonic present.

Seen in this light, Veil, the new body of work by Damien Flood, is wonderfully paradoxical: a show of paintings and ceramic sculptures that seems well aware of its apparent demise but nonetheless defiantly teems with life and vitality.

Growing out of Flood's interest in Père Lachaise, the famed garden cemetery of Paris, Veil consists of 17 paintings and five sculptures that completely inhabit Green on Red's raw glass-and-concrete space. Like theatrical stages, the canvases seem to exist as their own planes of reality.

Flood is a superb painter, bringing a plethora of techniques to bear on imagery that is in constant slippage between figuration and abstraction. In Drifting Rocks (2026), bulbous, slightly crystalline forms in hues of pink and teal seem to hover among bare tree trunks and what almost looks like a city skyline rendered in colour bars.

In Avenza's Dream (2026), a tangled view of limbs, branches and tree forms seems intentionally obscured by an amorphous form rendered as an impressionist clot of blue, green and pink flecks.

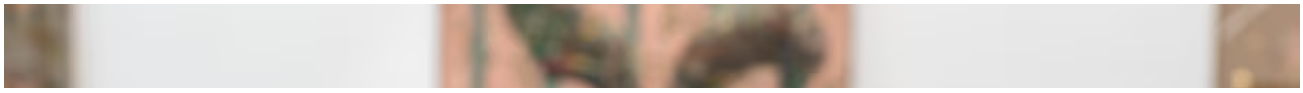
This play with obscurity and interrupted views is a central feature of the show. Many of the paintings incorporate literal veils of sorts: folds of canvas, encroaching and revealing, one minute offering the painting as an almost living performance, the next modestly hiding parts of the canvas, like a body in a state of partial undress.

In Grove (2026), it seems as if a whole painting has been ripped downwards to reveal a second work behind it, tatters of the canvas visible along the top horizontal, ribbons of material crossing its face.

Nearby, in a larger work, Unveil (2026), two canvas curtains look to have been pulled to each side, to reveal writhing plant forms on a stage of stripes, like some strange Montmartre cabaret of vines and overgrowth.



Veil: Drifting Rocks (2026), by Damien Flood





Veil: Mournful Muse Seated in Grief on Concrete Plinth (2026), by Damien Flood

Among these intense, verdant works is a quieter set of canvases, each presented on more neutral off-white backgrounds, populated with delicate individual gestures, almost calligraphic in their poise and restraint.

Here and there, as in Rosemary (2026), an insect might be seen, or ghostly vases that may also be urns. These works have a satisfying Zen-like simplicity, something that is strangely heightened when one notices the light sprinkles of thyme and dried herbs affixed to the canvases.

Completing the show are five sculptures dotted across the floor of the gallery, resting on tall, slim, flower-embossed concrete columns. These are based on the mournful muses that dot the cemetery of Père Lachaise.

Flood has cast these downward-facing figures, hooded or with eyes closed, in ceramic with a beautifully subdued black acrylic finish that is almost but not quite matt. They are a delicate and moving counterpart to the paintings, moments of reverie, remembrance and reflection in an otherwise full-throated defence of painting.

All of the works in the exhibition play with layers and concealments, but Veil ultimately reveals Flood to be a painter at the height of his powers.

Veil, by Damien Flood, is at Green on Red Gallery, in Dublin, until Friday, December 4th

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Damien Flood
