

A Place to Disappear. - Damien Flood Press Release

Damien Flood's artistic practice is grounded in early writings on philosophy, theology, alchemy and the natural sciences and explores the mutability of 'reality' and language. The resulting works are paintings that defy easy understanding and are felt more than read. In 2019, to balance the more challenging works, Flood began creating ceramic sculptures. These serve as resting points in his exhibitions and provide a key into his paintings. Additionally, they allowed Flood to expand his visual vocabulary and foster a broader dialogue within his artistic practice.

Throughout his career, each significant shift in his practice has required the abandonment of established ways of working. A process he describes as a series of necessary "deaths." These moments of creative rupture include relinquishing over a decade of representational painting during his MFA studies to destroying entire bodies of work. This process has become fundamental to the evolution of his work and is intertwined in the reading and meaning of his practice.

Central to *A Place to Disappear* are formative encounters with Paris, a city that has repeatedly marked turning points in Flood's practice. As a young art student, he encountered the paintings of Mark Rothko for the first time after years of dismissing them due to reproductions and the weight of the mythology surrounding the artist. Sitting before the works in person became a profound revelation, demonstrating that painting could evoke an experience beyond representation. One rooted in silence, presence, and emotional depth. While this encounter did not immediately alter his practice, it planted the seeds for a fundamental shift in his understanding of what painting could achieve.

In 2018, Paris once again started to change his approach to his work. Awarded a residency at the Centre Culturel Irlandais, Flood arrived while grieving the sudden death of one of his closest friends. The city offered both refuge and reflection. Repeated visits to Père Lachaise Cemetery became meditations on memory, mortality, and stillness, while an unexpected encounter with Édouard Manet's *Deathbed Bouquets* proved equally transformative. The intimacy and generosity of the small painting prompted Flood to reconsider his own work, encouraging a move away from withholding meaning and towards paintings that are more generous and invite contemplation through atmosphere and mood.

Another important experience during the residency was an early morning visit to Notre-Dame Cathedral. Immersed in the cathedral's luminous interior, Flood experienced the same suspension of time and place that had first struck him in Mark Rothko's paintings years earlier. These moments within the museum, the cemetery, and the cathedral

became interconnected experiences that have shaped the philosophical foundations of his evolving practice.

The works in this show reflect on this evolution and series of changes within his practice, taking direct influence from Paris and Père Lachaise. During a recent trip to Paris in January, Flood revisited Père Lachaise and encountered a series of mourning women memorials. Further investigation revealed that these figures are known as mournful muses. This encounter sparked the creation of a series of ceramic figures inspired by the sketches and images from his visit. In the exhibition, these figures can be seen to mourn the loss of a painted world, lamenting the promise of painting.

The paintings inspired by this experience view the cemetery as a site of contemplation. They reflect on its layered histories, weathered monuments, and organic encroachments, which are reinterpreted into richly treated surfaces that emphasise the material presence of paint. Each painting is approached uniquely, with visible fragments of certainty merging and disappearing into the raw canvas and hessian. Multiple materials are employed to evoke a weathered and textured surface.

On the raw canvas works like *To Be* (2026), herbs and plant matter are mixed with rabbit skin glue primer to create a unique surface for starting the artworks. No sketches or images are utilised in the creation of these pieces; instead, each brushstroke is deliberately recorded for the viewer to see, with each mark suggesting the next. The heavily layered paintings like *Shrouds* (2026) take a direct and tactile approach, pushing and pulling an image into existence through heavily worked surfaces.

Flood's paintings reflect on painting not as an act of representation, but as a process of continual becoming, where each ending creates the conditions for the next beginning. Drawing together personal memory, grief, art history, and lived experience, Flood explores how painting can hold absence, abundance, and quiet revelation within the same surface.

Rather than depicting death as a finality, the exhibition proposes it as a creative force, an essential condition for transformation. In Flood's practice, every discarded image, abandoned certainty, and failed painting becomes part of a larger cycle through which new forms, new ways of seeing, and new possibilities emerge.

This exhibition will be accompanied by an A5 screen-printed publication titled '*A Painter and Paris*'. It has been printed by Small Night Zine and is limited to 40 copies and will be available at the gallery for the duration of the show. You can access a digital version of the publication here: <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/b3dc943a71.html>

This exhibition has kindly been supported by Maurice Ward Art Handling and the Arts Council of Ireland.