Guilfoyle, Paul

Paul Guilfoyle has devoted much of the time since deciding to become a full-time artist to painting the locations of childhood holidays spent in Connemara and west Mayo. The artist recalls, “We went to Lecanvey in Mayo on holiday and we’d spend four or five weeks there. It was there I really began to appreciate the landscape, and see the difference that sunlight made on a landscape that is essentially dark, so you get these moving spotlights of light passing across the land. This is very dramatic and I remember as a kid it made an impression on me…” If his artistic sensibility began to stir in childhood, it was not until he was in his twenties that he actually started to paint. Before picking up a brush Guilfoyle worked as a financial controller for an American company in Co.Laois, where he still lives, but it wasn’t long before art replaced accountancy. His evocative canvasses are closely observed and recorded with a searching eye. They are refreshingly unsentimental, never sombre and expressed with clarity and vigour. His firm and clean handling of paint capture magic moments and he has a real feeling for the dramatic effects of light on nature. His studies of trees in sunlight have an almost impressionist liveliness in their broken lights. “The focus in all my paintings is light. I have no interest in painting grey landscapes, there has to be some lifting of the colours in it. What I was experimenting with were different techniques of putting the paint down, using both rougher and softer techniques. It always brought me back to the landscape itself. I can’t escape from that.” In spite of some geographical variation, the artist has been drawn to depiction of the counties of the western seaboard, and he has managed to preserve individuality and a highly identifiable style. Guilfoyle is a master of the bold and confident brushstroke. The necessity of lockdown this year meant a return to the artist’s reliance on his memory of often visited locales, favourite haunts since the times of his childhood rather than a plein air approach. But luckily travel, hill walking and painting could resume in earnest in time to complete this collection. If anything, and perhaps it is an imposed perception, there is a heightened reverence for the landscape here. Untouched by human hand save for the odd cottage or track, here the landscape, nature itself is dominant. The title of the show, After the Rain, along with the evocative Gaillimh 2020 image are a poignant touch in a heartfelt return, for the artist, and for the gallery. Guilfoyle has exhibited widely throughout Ireland and is represented in many important collections. (2020)