

Niamh O'Malley

Lightbox

December 15, 2023 – February 17, 2024
54 White Street, New York, NY (US)

GRIMM is pleased to present *Lightbox*, a solo exhibition of new work by Irish artist Niamh O'Malley opening December 15. This will be the artist's first exhibition with GRIMM and her debut solo exhibition in the United States. *Lightbox* builds on O'Malley's presentation for the Irish Pavilion in the 59th Venice Biennial (2022) titled *Gather*, and opens in parallel with Ciarán Murphy's *still, weight, thing*.

O'Malley's sculptural installations incorporate a delicate balance of space and object, her artwork punctuating the room with its distinctive vocabulary of steel, limestone, wood and glass. Responding thoughtfully to the dimensions and history of the gallery space, O'Malley's sculptural works coalesce in a purposeful landscape of forms, acknowledging their location in her first ever US exhibition in the vibrant hum of New York City, while considering the influence of O'Malley's upbringing on the west coast of Ireland.

Featuring a number of new works created for the exhibition, *Lightbox* represents a new chapter developing on the ideas in *Gather* – examining the familiarity of static forms and how people build relationships to them, and finding the paths of inanimate urban objects such as the titular lightbox of the show, dimmed and containing the bones of display while capturing the passerby in its smoky reflection. The exhibition brings together sculptural works constructed out of familiar components, such as wood and stone, repurposed and displayed to underscore their materiality. O'Malley recontextualizes overlooked objects from domestic windows to pavement grates, interrogates their life in an urban context, and utilizes the innate solid fragility of glass to create delicate compositions that are poised on the verge of collapse and destruction.

O'Malley's recent work considers the materiality of the urban environment in particular. As she navigated the city during Covid the artist found herself more conscious of the materials and mechanisms which support and shape our lives - from drains to vents. *Lightbox* (2023) examines both the intention of the object



Niamh O'Malley | *Lightbox*, 2023

to expose and to lure, and its capacity to contain energy and potential in its own materiality – the function of the lightbox shifts to reflect and diffuse the world around it in its surface.

O'Malley has created several new works for the exhibition including a potent new 'shelf' piece titled *Shelf, composition, yellow* (2023), a painterly work composed through layering colored glass to filter light in increasingly opaque or translucent portals. Objects rest against or alongside one another, creating a composition of relational boundaries and layered dimensions. This decisive approach to space, layering and relation between objects is a consistent one throughout the exhibition, making use of O'Malley's distinctive wooden 'parenthesis' pieces to punctuate and give shape to the presentation as a whole.

Another glass work, *Comb, yellow* (2023), composed of beechwood and glass returns to the idea of capturing the potential of a moment, a freeze-frame in time as the fragile and rigid materials coexist in a delicate balance.

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This precarious work is placed alongside the grounding influence of *Drain* (2021), an undulating limestone form hewn out of sedimentary rock, created in response to the stone paving of a Dublin street. The limestone which has been perforated with long deep cuts as if water might flow through and over it, speaks of the ground we walk on and the seabed it came from, porous and ancient. It bears the marks of its aqueous history.

O'Malley's restrained, observational perspective allows us to reconsider and appreciate the sculptural aspects of everyday objects, encouraging the viewer to shift their own perspective and make room for the relationship between objects and the meaningful potential of material. By centering her practice around elemental materials, O'Malley makes our relationship to the natural world tangible and familiar, for a moment drowning out the buzz of urban life.

About the Artist

Niamh O'Malley (b. 1975 in Mayo, IE) received her BA from the University of Ulster, Belfast (IE) in 1996 and her PhD in 2003 from the University of Ulster, Belfast (IE). In 2022, O'Malley represented Ireland at the 59th Venice Biennial in the solo exhibition, *Gather*.

After its success in Venice, her work travelled across three institutional locations in Ireland in the spring of 2023: Temple Bar Gallery & Studios, Dublin (IE); The Model, Sligo (IE); Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast (IE). Recent solo institutional exhibitions include Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (IE); John Hansard Gallery, Southampton (UK); Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore (IE); Grazer Kunstverein, Graz (AT); Bluecoat Liverpool (UK); Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (IE).

Selected collections: The Hugh Lane, Dublin City Gallery (IE); Irish Museum of Modern Art (IE); the Arts Council of Ireland, Office of Public Works (IE); Stefan Stoltzka Collection, Graz (AT); FRAC Méca-Nouvelle Aquitaine (FR) and Galleria Arte Moderna, Turin (IT), as well as numerous private collections.

This presentation is made possible with the kind support of Culture Ireland.



Portrait of Niamh O'Malley | Photo: Rich Gilligan

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