

About 'Via Magna'

Michelle Byrne's solo show

Opening at the Olivier Cornet Gallery on 9th November 2014

Guest speaker: Michael Starrett, Chief Executive of the Heritage Council

In her recent work, Michelle has been interested in mapping and journeys, looking at the physical geography of a place, the journeys we take and the experience we gain. We tend to look at the countryside as a natural environment, whereas nearly every square inch of its surface has been transformed in some shape or form by centuries of man's interaction, from the patchwork of fields to the network of trails and roads.

“What interests me as an artist are these layers of patterns and marks we have left on the landscape, what they tell us about the geology and topography and our relationship with it.

Of late I have been working with shaping stone which I draw patterns on. The patterns for these lines are taken from detailed studies of aerial view maps illustrating the network of fields, lanes, roads and rivers. The stone is then sandblasted leaving a raised polished line and a contrasting textured finish. Often I inlay the stone with stainless steel representing a chosen location. The inspiration for these sculptures comes from observing the physical geography of a place and its continual metamorphosis.

For my upcoming show at The Olivier Cornet gallery I have been looking at ancient tracks and roads of Ireland, in particular The Eiscir Riada, also known as the **Via Magna** and An Slighe Mhor meaning The Great Highway.

The Eiscir Riada is a system of ridges or eskers, gravel ridges which were formed after the ice age that stretched across Ireland between Dublin and Galway. These ridges created a natural high ground providing a route through the bogs of the Irish midlands. In Early Medieval times The Esker Riada also formed an ancient division of Ireland between Conn and Mogha.

For this new body of work I am exploring our past and present relationship with the landscape, in particular looking at settlements, boundaries, land divisions and the connecting routes”

Michelle Byrne, August 2014