

MISCELLANY

VISUAL ART

A glimpse into Paradise

Billy Leahy looks at two artists exhibiting at the Douglas Hyde gallery – emerging Irish artist Mark Garry and San Francisco-based Laura Owens

Mark Garry has just produced his best work to date. The artist, one of the Irish representatives at the Venice Biennale last year, was afforded the opportunity to commandeer Gallery II in Trinity's Douglas Hyde and produce a piece based on the space's long-running theme of *The Paradise*. *It's difficult to say* is the impressive result.

Garry's work over the past few years has grown more assured and quietly more adventurous, and now the Mullingar-born artist has produced a work to trump previous highs, such as his work for the Kerlin gallery's three-person show *Garry, Swain, Vickery* in 2004 and *Permaculture* at the Project in 2003.

It's difficult to say is a fantastically executed piece of art, which, as usual, sees Garry employ colour thread to examine the "proximity between a state of bliss, real or

imaginary, and its opposite". Normally using just single colour-thread, Garry employs a full rainbow spectrum in *The Paradise* – and it works to great effect, delicately highlighting the subtly twisting lines as they lyrically traverse the gallery.

The threads emanate from a single condensed line of pins near to the ceiling, before bouncing off the back wall – zipping past a sycamore leaf in the process – and over to an autumnal, leafy brown plastic contact sheet on the opposite wall. Each thread comes to rest along the peak points of the outline, all the way

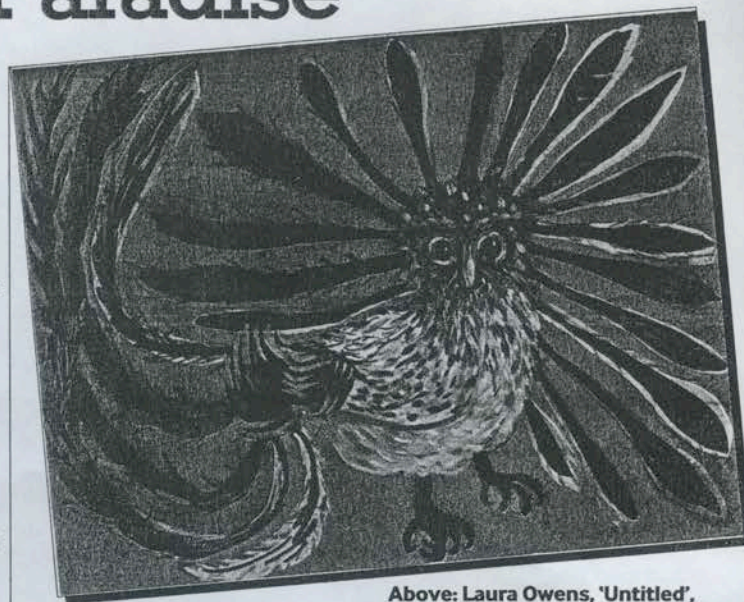
from ceiling to floor. What is especially notable is the impression the Garry piece makes considering it shares the gallery with the beauty and weightiness of Laura Owens' canvases, which dot the walls of the main gallery.

MARK GARRY: IT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY

AND LAURA OWENS

Douglas Hyde Gallery,
Trinity College, Dublin.
[www.douglashyde
gallery.com](http://www.douglashydegallery.com)

Until 22 July



Above: Laura Owens, 'Untitled', 2006. Watercolour / oil on paper.

Below: Part of Mark Garry's *It's Difficult to Say*

The works of the internationally renowned San Francisco artist are overflowing with references – culturally, aesthetically and thematically. Suggestions and hints of subjects as diverse as art history, television, computer imagery, embroidery and children's drawings all come together in Owens' drawings and paintings, which are bold and visually arresting works. European and Asian landscape art can also be recognised in Owens' entirely untitled oeuvre, while Henri Le Douanier Rousseau is often seen as a definite influence.

In one painting, a generic multicoloured bird twitters nervously beside a bizarre hybrid plant, which seems to have appropriated leaves from a variety of species. At times Owens appears, like the plant, to have borrowed much from elsewhere, but like her harmless Frankenstein-esque flora she still keeps her own identity throughout a body of work that clearly enters her own personal world.

Owens has previously

explained that each painting is a grab-bag of influences, which get dissected and mixed together and "there is no limit as to what the work is referencing". She admits being a clever magpie, using her interpretive quality to choose pieces from other art works or various everyday stimuli. Collage elements play a role in practically all of Owens' work, with circles of foam, felt and cloth appearing regularly through the show – and even an idea for this component, she admits, can inform an entire painting.

Through statements such as this, it becomes clear Owens is slow to rank influences in terms of importance – a generic printed pattern in her eyes and in relation to her work, for instance, can be as important as a de Kooning. This is postmodern, democratic pillaging at its finest. One wonders if a nuance or minute detail spotted in Mark Garry's work might make it onto a canvas in the near future. It's difficult to say.

