

Subscriber Only Art Review

Sarah Dwyer: Penti Menti review – Bright, strong work by artist unafraid of colour

Large paintings dominate the show, and the exhibition space itself, a former Franciscan church, accommodates them with ease



Rough and Tumble by Sarah Dwyer, arguably the most compelling painting of the show.

Aengus Woods

Mon Feb 23 2026 - 05:01 • 3 MIN READ

Sarah Dwyer: Penti Menti

Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda

★★★★☆

Sarah Dwyer is an artist who is certainly not afraid of colour. Her current solo show at Highlanes gallery in [Drogheda](#), a travelling exhibition that has come from Uillinn: [West Cork Arts Centre](#) and continues to [Limerick City Gallery of Art](#) later this spring, is a bright and lush cascade of oils on canvas, drawings and glazed ceramic sculptures.

Large paintings dominate the show and the exhibition space itself, a former Franciscan church, accommodates them with ease. At first glance the works seem wholly abstract, with fields of pink, purple, brown and green colliding and coiling around each other. These are, however, sewn together with meandering lines of oil bar that, on the one hand brings something of a Cy Twombly-esque gestural dimension to the compositions, while on the other hand allowing the faintest traces of figuration to emerge.

In particular the single image triptych *Old Bridges Breaking* (2025) hints at the profile of a face in repose while the diptych *Yapping Furrows* (2025) has an almost aquatic feel, its biomorphic forms seeming to erupt upwards in a tumble of movement. This is amplified by *Cuilleur de Coques* (2024), a smaller oil and pastel work nearby that seems to present its titular cockle picker mid-stride toward that marine expanse.

A number of such smaller works, some paintings but mostly drawings and etchings, are interspersed among the larger canvases and present an interesting variety of techniques and tangents. *Antigone* (2019), an etching on paper has been additionally hand-coloured, its trailing yellow pastel adding small spikes along the top edge like the spirals of a notebook before running off the image in a scribble to give it a liveliness and spontaneity that contrasts with its genesis as a print.

The title of the show refers to the *pentimento*, the trace or remnant of something altered in a painting, such as the tilt of a head or position of an object. It's apt indeed, as the paintings clearly display their own making – paint pushed and layered, scrapped and shaped as options are weighed and choices are made. But curiously enough, it also points to their one slight weakness – a sense that they are sometimes a little over-worked. So much colour and contrast is brought to bear, so much stirring of the pot is apparent that the viewer would be forgiven for occasionally craving a little restraint. From that perspective, the most compelling painting of the show is arguably *Rough and Tumble* (2025). Light, understated tones resting

against hints of a dark background in burgundy and slate grey skilfully suggest the classic proportions of a still life in the centrefield of the canvas.



It's undeniable that Dwyer's effusive use of colour is highly effective when applied to her ceramic sculptures on show here. Pictured: Steel-Pointed Sock, by Sarah Dwyer.

But for all that, it's undeniable that Dwyer's effusive use of colour is highly effective when applied to her ceramic sculptures on show here. Both wall-mounted and resting, these slinky tubular shapes wrap around themselves in poised, almost gravity-defying forms, their deep, rich glazes creating a remarkable visual contrast of parts within each individual piece. The sculptures have a strong presence, a feel that is both exploratory and sure-footed, a sense of enthusiastic experimentation paying dividends. It will be interesting to see where Dwyer takes them from here.

Penti Menti is at [Highlanes Gallery](#), Drogheda, Co Louth, until St Patrick's Day

Drogheda

West Cork

Limerick City
