



*Grey Room* 2014, oil on plywood, 42 x 44 cm

## Noel McKenna

### *The Psychiatrist's Dog*

27 September - 25 October 2014

**DARRENKNIGHT**GALLERY

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Cover image: *The Psychiatrist's Dog* 2014, oil on plywood, 42 x 44 cm  
All photography: Stephen Oxenbury

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## The Psychiatrist's Dog

This group of works is named after a painting *The Psychiatrist's Dog*, which is part of a series of works I have been doing which could generally be described as interiors. How this painting evolved is interesting and I hope reading this will give the reader an insight into how I work.

The painting began with an idea of a library of books in a shelf against a backdrop of a rich vegetable garden seen through a window. A good healthy diet to feed an appetite for learning was the journey of my thought process. While working on the painting the vegetable garden gave me problems so I got rid of it and was about to scrub the whole painting when I thought about an old friend I visit occasionally who is a psychiatrist. This friend has a very interesting selection of books and sometimes I borrow one to read. The books depicted give you a good idea of the ones this friend has in the library. Psychiatry is a very interesting field and I have learnt a lot from my visits and reading the books. My friend had a dog when younger and often talks lovingly about it, so I felt the dog's place in the painting was quite important, hence its prominence in the composition. The blue of the carpet is a strong element in reading the work and when I painted it in I thought it was a bit strong visually and maybe a little not to do with the subject, but it grew on me so I kept it. There is no sky in the painting so I see it as the sky coming into the room or maybe even the ocean which I find interesting. The dog is looking directly at the viewer which dogs often do, and when they do I often wonder what they are thinking about.

Interiors feature in this group of works and are something I have done at different times in my painting life but more than usual in the last two years. The interiors, while being subtle variations on each other, are really quite different on a psychological level which is what keeps my interest in painting them. A change of colour to a wall, moving a bit of furniture a little one way or the other, what type of pictures go on the wall and many other things change the way one reads a painting. A room tells a lot about people and when I walk into one I like to look at the scene as it tells you so much about the person or people who live there. My rooms often have an awkward perspective which I find helps get my eye interested in the composition. Putting things a bit out of kilter is my way I think. I want rooms to have a sense of the people who live there as well as those who have been and gone and also maybe, those about to enter.

In contemporary times the interior seems to have become a fascination for TV, with seemingly endless variations on home renovation shows like *The Block*, with expert architects, DIY folk and colour specialists all having their say in how to improve interiors. Generally these shows aspire to improve people's lives through material goods, usually the latest and most striking, to make a 'statement'. In my rooms nothing is hurried, I encourage dust as a protector of memories, a silence that comes from a life lived, be it good or bad.

Noel McKenna 2014



*Dream Painting A* 2014, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 180 cm



*Cyclist Asleep* 2014, oil on plywood, 42 x 44 cm