

Dorothy Cross: Damascus Rose

17 February–14 April 2022 | Golden Square

Press Release

Frith Street Gallery is delighted to announce an exhibition of new works by Dorothy Cross. The works in this show mostly originate in and are inspired by her time working at the celebrated stone masons' yards and studios in Carrara, Italy, a region of Tuscany famous for its fine marble.

The works are primarily made from a marble known as Damascus Rose, distinctive for its flesh-like hue, which Cross found in the stores in Carrara. The piece she came across hails from Syria. This immediately evoked the biblical story of the Road to Damascus; the miracle of the enlightenment of St Paul who was blinded and had his vision restored, as well as the present violent upheaval in Syria, and elsewhere, with the horror of human evacuation and the thwarted attempts by thousands forced to migrate across oceans to supposedly safer lands.

The floor-based sculpture *Red Road* (2021) takes the form of a pathway of polished red paving stones with carved human feet emerging as if walking on the slabs. The feet are not separate but part of the very material they walk on and appear as if from some excavation or petrified landscape.

Red Erratic (2021) is a large block of Damascus Rose that evokes an actual geological erratic, rock relocated over time by glaciers. On the top surface Cross has again carved human feet – this time piled on top of each other and perilously positioned as if in an attempt to regain a foothold. While not a permanent fixture within the exhibition, this monumental sculpture will appear as an intervention (details to be announced) and a video by Eoin McLoughlin documenting the carving of the work in the studio of Carlo Nicoli in Carrara will be shown.

Red Baby (2021) is a touching sculpture of a pillow carved from a smaller block of the same stone; an ear nestles at the centre where a head would leave an impression. The work is based on Cross' own childhood pillow that has been replicated in stone by the traditional carving system of points, using calipers to indicate the sculptural topography. When working with Damascus Rose marble one is never sure what will be found – crystalline seams can occur that make it impossible to carve, but veins of startling colours also emerge ranging from deep red to pale pink. In this case the veins run towards the ear presenting what seems like a pulsating body of stone. On a larger pillow crystal 'nests' are located like fissures, adding a particularly beautiful geological essence to the work.

Blue Dive (2021) is carved from a different rock called Brazilian Sodalite – here a pair of feet are carved, as if diving into and being subsumed by the stone itself. It relates closely to the final work in the show, which has a very different materiality to all the others. Entitled *Daunt* (2021) the work is a tapestry that replicates a photo taken by the artist's father in the 1930s. The work shows a lightship

that marked the position of the Daunt Rock off the County Cork coast. The tapestry exactly reproduces the old photograph, and for the artist the work is very much about the perils of sea crossings. The word daunt itself means ‘to overcome with fear; intimidate, to lessen the courage of; dishearten’.

A new publication *Dorothy Cross / Crossing* (2022) published by Dürer Editions will be available.

Dorothy Cross (b. 1956, Cork) lives and works in Connemara. Solo exhibitions include *Eye of Shark*, Lismore Castle Arts: St Carthage Hall, Lismore, Ireland View, Kerlin Gallery, Dublin (2014); and *Connemara*, Turner Contemporary, Margate, Kent (2013) and Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (2014); Recent exhibitions include *UnNatural History*, Herbert Art gallery & Museum, Coventry (2021); *Other Worldly*, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden (2020); *Elliptical Affinities: Irish Women Artists and the Politics of the Body, 1984 to the Present*, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick (2020); *Sea Garden*, RAMM Exeter (2019); *A History of Desire: Art from the 20th Century to the Digital*, IMMA, Dublin (2019); *Heartship*, part of *Sounds from a Safe Harbour*, Cork (2019); *Shaping Ireland: Landscapes in Irish Art*, National Gallery of Ireland (2019); and *Naked Truth: The Nude in Irish Art*, Crawford Art Gallery, Cork (2019).