



THROUGH A GHOSTLY LENS ARTIST CAPTURES HALF-BUILT HOUSES

WHEN PHOTOGRAPHER Anthony Haughey was stalking around in the half-light taking his haunting pictures of Ireland's half-built housing estates, he was reminded of the battle-scarred war zones he visited in the former Yugoslavia for an earlier project.

Haughey spent much of the past year travelling around Ireland, capturing images of ghost estates. "On weekend nights, I regularly experienced the strange phenomenon of becoming invisible – a ghost haunting a ghost estate."

Haughey "easily blended into the night-time landscape . . . peering through the holes which are beginning to appear in the slowly disintegrating hoardings".

"My photographs were taken between sunset and sunrise – partly to avoid any unwanted attention from security guards, who I had originally feared would be patrolling these

Building on the landscape (clockwise from top left): two ghost estate houses in Co Louth; Quinn's Cement Plant, Co Cavan; and a one-off rural house in Co Donegal. All photographs are by Anthony Haughey and feature in *Settlement* at Copper House Gallery, off Synge Street. Photographs: Anthony Haughey

sites," he says. There was also an artistic advantage in photography at night. "The combination of darkness, artificial light and long exposures draws attention to the destruction of the natural environment as a result of overdevelopment."

His latest exhibition, *Settlement*, is opened tomorrow by Fintan O'Toole. It recasts ghost estates as eerie, spectral monuments to "the end of Ireland's gold rush and the resulting cost of unregulated growth and institutionalised speculation".

An artist and lecturer in photography in the school of media at Dublin Institute of

Technology, Haughey's artworks have been exhibited internationally. They include *Disputed Territory*, which explored the aftermath of conflict in Ireland, Bosnia and Kosovo. He was struck by "fading posters featuring young families rehearsing utopian lifestyles", in a dream that became a nightmare for residents of Priory Hall and thousands of others – including those who found that pyrite ("fool's gold") was cracking their foundations.

"As a title, *Settlement* proffers an ironic statement on the deranged financial and planning systems that created the decidedly anti-humanist

residential patterns depicted here," writes Dr Cian O'Callaghan, of NUI Maynooth, in his introduction.

"The absence of human life in the photographs highlights the uncanny decoupling of these houses from dwelling . . . They are literally places haunted by the Celtic Tiger."

Curated by Leszek Wolnik, the exhibition at Dublin's Copper House Gallery includes contributions from DIT's NamaLab project, UCD school of architecture and architect Paschal Mahoney, putting forward positive proposals for "these negative spaces".

● On Tuesday next, November 1st, Dr O'Callaghan, Mr Mahoney and Frank McDonald will take part in a public discussion on "Reimagining a future for ghost estates, commercial developments and public spaces". For more information, e-mail: leszek@fire.ie