

FREE Information sheet. Please take one.

Noel Bowler

Making Space

6 April to 16 June 2012

In its British premiere, *Making Space* explores the expansion and development of Islam in contemporary Ireland. Made over the course of three years, the exhibition examines the reuse of spaces for the purpose of prayer by Muslim communities throughout Ireland. This is Noel Bowler's first major solo show in Britain.

Bowler reveals the quiet transformation of everyday spaces in urban, residential and rural locations. He records how private homes, warehouses, office spaces, and industrial units are being turned into spaces for prayer. Whilst Catholicism is the majority religion in Ireland, Bowler's images challenge this monocultural view, providing evidence of a strong and proud Muslim community. *Making Space* provides a unique record of a major, though not widely acknowledged, change in Irish society.

Devoid of people, Bowler's photographs draw attention to the material details that reveal the connections, overlaps, and divergences between Western and Islamic cultures. In one image, copies of the Quran are stacked on bookshelves, incongruously accompanied by Quality Street and Roses tins; whilst in another image a prayer space is decorated with Christmas garlands.

Some spaces appear ambiguous in their purpose, lacking any religious ornamentation apart from transient prayer rugs or a simple line of tape on the carpet that marks the direction towards Mecca. The photographs reveal a central quality of Islamic faith – that during *sallah* (prayer) there is nothing between one's self and the divine.

Bowler's work is a timely counterpoint to the West's paranoia concerning the spread of Islam. His straightforward yet subtle images testify to the ways in which everyday surroundings can provide the setting for spiritual experience.

To find out more, browse the reading area or come along to our free Artist Talk at 2pm on Saturday 2 June. An accompanying limited edition book is available from the Gallery Shop at the special exhibition price of £10 (usual price £15).

A Gallery of Photography Ireland touring exhibition supported by Culture Ireland.