

ANNA RACKARD

Farmers

6 June – 2 July 2007

Farmers is a photographic exploration of contemporary rural identity in Ireland. Specifically it examines the role of women in farming and their invisibility within the family farm. Women have always been involved in farming in Ireland, usually as a spouse, sister or daughter. Despite the process of modernisation, rural identity is still based on a traditional, patriarchal construct – the visible representation of the family farm is usually of the male farmer who owns the land, is subject to taxation and entitled to social security. Most rural women have no legal or professional status unless they are farm owners. In fact, two-thirds of men own their farms through inheritance compared with one twelfth of women.

Despite the level of work a woman (usually a wife) puts in on a farm, she would often be classified as a 'farmers wife' instead of 'farmer'. These photographic portraits of farming women are not supposed to be archetypes, but rather a sample of some of the women whose role could legitimately be described as farmers in their own right. Some of these women farm with their husbands, other with a daughter or son and some farm on their own. Some of them own their farms jointly with their spouse, some inherited the farm through being widowed and others inherited from a parent or other relative.

The point is not how much work an individual woman may contribute to the farm, but that they do contribute (on a national level) to the farming labour force, and that their work (no matter how many or few hours it is), should be recognised as farm work and these women as farmers.

Anna Rackard is a young Irish photographer and film-maker whose work was recently selected by Aidan Dunne for inclusion in *Other Visions* (Purdy Hicks Gallery, May – June 2006).