



## BRENDAN EARLEY DUBLIN

Generic materials lie at the core of Brendan Earley's work. Felt-tip pens, photocopied pictures, Styrofoam packaging, and plasterboard speak of utility and disposability. They typically do not form the subject of meaningful contemplation. Yet all of these materials find their way into Earley's studio, where the specific purposes for which they have been tailored are highlighted and extended. He, for example, exploited the limited service provided by broad-tip markers to produce two large and atmospheric monochrome drawings. When new, the ink bleeds beautifully out of broad-tip markers, leaving potent strokes of color. Then, as the ink depletes, the color's density withers until only wisps appear on the paper. For Earley this shift in intensity makes perfect sense, and he uses it to great effect in the rosy *Red Sky at Night, for Lily and Grace*, 2010, and its larger, cooler cousin *A Place Between*, 2011–12, whose name also formed the title of this exhibition. Numerous kinds of shifts, in fact, formed the theme of *A Place Between* [Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA), March 15–April 29, 2012]. In this survey of recent sculpture and works on paper, Earley acknowledges particular patterns of use and reworks them in imaginative ways. His aim is to throw commonplace things into a new light.

But the RHA's Gallery posed a daunting challenge: This incredibly large white cube, with its very high ceiling, offers an inhospitable environment. It not only dwarfs the contents of most exhibitions, but also resists subdivision into more intimate spaces that could invigorate the viewing experience. Earley's work, most of which is small in scale, suffered this fate. Small works got lost in the gallery's vastness, and the dull continuousness of the space made it difficult to produce invigorating installations. Originally, Earley wanted to divide the space using several partitions, but he ended up including only one. This monumental, unfinished temporary partition, made out of wallboard and metal studs, divided the space in an unexpected way. Unlike the orientation of most partitions, which parallel the

walls and stand about eight feet high, this one was diagonally situated. It also touched the gallery's ceiling. The structure functions as a space divider, a backdrop, and a barrier. I saw it as a mediator performing negotiations between the artist's work and the architecture in which it had been placed. In essence, this uncredited element formed the centerpiece of the installation. In terms of scale and visual impact, the wall overwhelmed it. Only the immense drawing *A Place Between* posed a challenge to the partition. Lying near it on the floor like a carpet, it seemed to urge us to consider our position between two very different objects. Moreover, the exposed foil backing of the wallboard used in the partition offered a reflection of the drawing. It appeared the wrong way around and distorted. Though it captivated in visual terms, its meaning remained elusive.

Earley's sculptures only reinforced this impression. Casting Styrofoam packing in aluminum or bronze, he then adds discarded materials to create works that intimately ruined architecture and furniture or stimulate pareidolic experience. *January*, 2010, for example, resembles a misassembled chair, and the works *Another Place, Another Time*, 2010, and *Soul Delay*, 2011, exhibit human features. Materially, the metal foil, aluminum, and wallboard in the sculptures echoed the partition. Against the previously described works, a host of small, colored photocopies seemed lifeless and left me wondering why they were included.

At his best, Earley elevates mundane tasks and materials to unexpected levels of engagement. He creates striking vistas through the tedious application of repetitive strokes, and couches found elements in new and intriguing relationships. His work simultaneously underscores the familiar and undermines it. It makes us look, and look again. That can't be said of all the art here. Regrettably, the disjointed character of the exhibition precluded its success.

—John Gayer

## NO LONE ZONE LONDON

*No Lone Zone*, a collaboration between Tate Modern, London, and Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico City, was a curatorial exchange between Iria Candela and Taiyana Pimentel, supported by the World Collections Programme and Gasworks [Tate Modern; January 27–May 13, 2012]. Cynthia Marcelle, Teresa Margolles, the Mexican collective Tercerunquinto, and David Zink Yi, were curated under a thematic frame that identifies the gallery space as a military-designated “no lone zone”: a precarious territory in which personnel are not permitted to enter alone. The title provides conceptual space for a curatorial reference to Judith Butler's notion of survivability, and for the recognition of a generalized, global condition of precariousness within which human survival depends on the acknowledgment of interdependency. In short, our freedom is bound up with the freedom of the “other”—more often than not, a disenfranchised, marginalised body, an entity that is unrecognizable in relation to notions of “what a culturally recognizable human is,” as Butler wrote in *Frames of War*.

This binary division between “us” and “them” is mediated through territory in Margolles' *Flag I*, 2009, a flag impregnated with human blood and fluids from execution sites on Mexico's northern border, noted for concentrated violence since the launch of President Felipe Calderón's offensive against drug traffickers in 2006. *Flag I* was positioned in an entry hall together with David Zink Yi's *Huayno and fugue behind*, 2005, a video of a harpist playing music in the Huancayo market in Peru. The works created an uncomfortable narrative—a flag soaked in blood universalises notions of nationalism and imperialism as measures of power predicated on the politics of violence, exclusion, and exploitation. This extended into the multilayered musical score playing in *Huayno and fugue behind*, acoustically expressing the complexities of colonial histories in combining the Huayno, a form of traditional Andean music, territorialized by the structure of the fugue, a European composi-

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Brendan Earley, *A Place Between*, 2011, felt tipped pen on paper, 500 x 900 cm (image courtesy of the artist and mother's tankstation, Dublin); Tercerunquinto, *Public sculpture in the urban periphery of Monterrey*, 2003–2006 (courtesy of the artists and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich)