

who play word games and fake ignorance to avoid answering Ai's uncompromising questions.

The exhibition clearly demonstrated the difference between Ai the artist and Ai the activist. While his art is often ironic and playful, his documentaries are rough and complex accounts of the abuse of power in his homeland, a dangerous critique that most likely caused his imprisonment. The show at Louisiana might not have been all that Ai intended, but it offered a reminder that freedom of expression cannot be taken for granted.

—Elna Svenle

DUBLIN

"Tool-Use"

Oonagh Young Gallery

"Tool-Use" provoked surprise, dismay, and disorientation. Though modestly scaled objects clung to the gallery walls and occupied the floor, the space felt bereft of material content, hollowed out somehow, more unoccupied than if it were empty. Given the title, one might have anticipated works demonstrating unique technical abilities or processes, but the selection presented by curator David Beattie effectively subverted such expectations. Getting a grasp on what the work conveyed required careful consideration and persistent reconnoitering.

The selected artists all use found materials, but not in the way one might imagine. Unlike some of the startling juxtapositions created by abrupt re-contextualizations of ready-made objects, these works failed to assert themselves visually. They hung back, remaining stubbornly reticent. An innate sense of banality permeated the installation. Since they retained more than a faint vestige of usefulness—some choices appeared to have been wrenched out of former sites of service and temporarily relocated—it was difficult to accept them as works as art. Yet something about them gnawed at the intellect



Above: Sam Keogh, *Shroud*, 2011. Tin foil, holographic, Mylar, and tape, 44 x 36 cm. Below: Amy Yao, *Not All It's Cracked Up To Be*, 2007. Glass, wood, newspaper, and household paint, installation view. Both works from "Tool-Use."

and demanded appraisal. Artist interventions complicated the matter since they were not always readily identifiable. Only Adam Thompson's *Untitled* (2009)—a reclaimed signboard mounted in a roughly cast, dark aluminum frame—stood out in this regard. The mounting conferred an air of studied importance to an otherwise unremarkable and heavily abraded piece of advertising detritus.

In contrast, Sean Edwards's *Painting Of A Photocopy For A Doll's House Paper (with Spill)* (2009) risked being trampled. When noticed, this small, somewhat grubby, and unfinished pattern of black, gray, and cream-colored squares struck up an uneasy relationship with the floor. Fragility marked Matt Harle's *Untitled* (1994). No taller than a footstool, this structure made of wood, straight pins,

and tape-like strips of acrylic paint sewn together with thread amounted to a curious and meticulous display of propping and bracing. Amy Yao's *Not All It's Cracked Up To Be* (2007) also illustrated the mechanical property of friction. Pinning a newspaper fragment between a wooden dowel and a clear glass partition presented an all-round view of a motionless state. Finally, Sam Keogh's *Shroud* (2011) offered an alternate trajectory. The unfolded scrap of tin foil faced with holographic Mylar insinuated mystical significance.

The run-of-the-mill materials deployed in "Tool-Use" performed an important didactic function. Their particular qualities summoned viewers to look closely, note the means of production, and contemplate the materials' current condition, arrangement, context, and purpose. As Chris Fite-Wassilak notes in his accompanying text, "The den of the post-ready-made is where factory objects reacquaint themselves to manipulation and elasticity, where industrial processes are folded into a prism of subjective touches." This exhibition cast the mundane in a new light and asked us to think about the future of the readymade.

—John Gayer

