

## Aleana Egan

### The Drawing Room

There is an intrinsic link between Aleana Egan's sculptural pieces and the literary texts that inspire their creation. In *Character* (2010), for example, the young Irish artist sought to embody the bleak resignation of Jen Rhys's 1939 novel *Good Morning, Midnight*. More recently, Egan's exhibition at The Drawing Room was informed by her experience of reading Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (*The Ladies' Delight*, 1883), which led to the creation of two works: *Clarity afforded* (2010) and *Binet's addition* (2010).

Titled 'At intervals, while turning', this was Dublin- and Berlin-based Egan's first solo show in London. Comprising six sculptures and a four-minute 16mm film, the materials divided the sculptural work along lines of the industrial (steel, concrete and rope) and the fragile (tissue paper and cardboard). *Clarity afforded* was a structure of thin vertical steel rods hung from the wooden beams of The Drawing Room's ceiling and screwed into the base of its floor, holding a pair of identical rods in a kind of fragile horizontal equilibrium. The impression of lightness it gave was echoed in *Binet's addition*, a large mobile-like structure of three steel circles, separated by vertical rods.

In the two pieces that make up particular and what differentiates (2010), oblong wire mesh panels – the size and shape of a skateboard deck – are held in place by metal rods at their base and tip. The most industrial work on display, these pieces have the shape and form of a manufactured readymade; carrying the kind of unexpected symmetry found in the innards of fridges and ovens. In *blue tray* (2010) this exploration of lightness and weight is shifted to paper-based works: placed next to the wall, its cardboard structure has the appearance of an ephemeral cat litter, filled with paper squares, delicately covered by transparent tissue paper. It wasn't until the video work, *town and terrain* (2008–10), and the three wall-based works which comprise *Opinion* (2010) that the exhibition moved beyond the formal considerations of weight, lightness, strength and scale. Much is made of the expressive quality of this work in Ciara Moloney's accompanying catalogue essay, but it is in the dialogue between these two works that this tendency is most convincingly articulated. In *town and terrain* scenes of a woman preparing to dress are fragmented by intercut images of plaster-based sculptural works. The film begins with a shot of an open wardrobe, proceeding to a succession of full-length portraits in which a woman wears different selections

### About this review

Published on 01/05/11  
By *Morgan Quaintance*



[Back to the main site](#)

of clothing. Using the frame to cut the subject's head, Egan uses anonymity as a device to foreground the body, simultaneously emphasizing the form and flow of material pulled taut by elbows and shoulders. This effect of drapery resurfaces in the cardboard loops that make up each of the pieces in *Opinion*. A later sequence in the film makes the link between the body and sculptural form explicit: a still image of an older man holding his hands clasped in the form of an inverted prayer is echoed in the next shot by a hung Egan sculpture.

'At intervals, while turning' was a lean and intelligent, if not wholly convincing, attempt to create a space in which text and memory give birth to an emotively charged, physical referent. However there is a sense that an introduction to terrain yet to be fully covered has taken place, and the line Egan is plotting between austerity, the word and sculptural form is a promising one.

### **Morgan Quaintance**

---

#### **Frieze**

3-4 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RB, 020 7833 7270