

Maeve Connolly (Exhibition review) Fergus Feehily, Douglas Hyde Gallery, published in *Artforum*, January 2010, 213.

Fergus Feehily  
Gallery 1, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin

Situated in the Arts Block on Trinity College campus, the Douglas Hyde Gallery is distinctive not only because of its brutalist architecture but also because it has provided a prominent platform for the articulation of a strong curatorial voice (that of its Director John Hutchinson) over several decades. The addition of a second gallery in 2001, reached through the main space, has allowed for parallel exhibitions of artworks and presentations of craft objects, further asserting the distinctiveness of this institution. Fergus Feehily's exhibition in Gallery 1, entitled 'Pavilion', explores the possibility that a space, whether a room, a gallery or a provisional structure such as a pavilion, may constitute a coveted territory and a privileged vantage point from which to view the world.

With the exception of *Lakeside Structure (model)*, a simple construction standing in one corner, the fifteen works in 'Pavilion' are presented on the walls of the gallery, at a low height, appearing almost absurdly small from a distance. Several of these unconventional paintings incorporate images suggesting fields, foliage or low walls, but these views are often either forcefully contained by wooden frames or partly obscured by the addition of small sheets of coloured or plain plywood. This latter strategy renders the partially hidden components more compelling, inviting the viewer to peer above or below the barrier. In some works, the predominance of grays, pale pinks and yellows, and the incorporation of found fragments such as lacquered frames, patterned cloth and bird illustrations, invokes a sense of delicacy. In others, however, this is dispelled by the visible presence of multiple large screws, piercing the frame and securing the work directly onto the walls of the gallery. This almost violent gesture, suggesting a territorial claim, operates alongside a more whimsical exploration of the gallery as the setting or stage for the invocation of memories and fantasies of other places. A selection of small objects and images, absent from the printed list of works, are placed on the walls. They include a cocktail-stick construction, which might be a Christmas Tree ornament or a model of a snowflake, and a found photograph of a Japanese street in which uniformed men and kimono-wearing women walk below trees laden with cherry blossoms.

A context for the presentation of these disparate elements can be found in a short text written by the artist, for a publication that accompanies the show. Composed of two narrative threads, the text shifts between two different memories, impossible to separate in time and space. One is of a prized childhood bedroom, briefly acquired by the artist one summer during the temporary absence of a sibling. Its window was divided in two, shared with another room, and its walls were decorated with wallpaper featuring an exotic scene in which a boat appeared to move towards an island, upon which stood a teahouse. The other memory refers to Feehily's experience of sitting on the Yamanote line train as it circled 'the green loop of Tokyo' offering views of a landscape that recalled the repeating pattern of the pavilion. The deliberately circuitous evocation of Japan in the exhibition and the accompanying text - as a place both imagined and experienced - sits somewhat oddly with the parallel exhibition in Gallery 2, a display of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese Country Textiles. The contrast in tone between these two evocations of a distant place is unexpected, even somewhat jarring. On balance, however, the co-existence of these competing curatorial discourses ultimately serves to focus, rather than disrupt, the subtle exploration of time, space, territory and memory in 'Pavilion'.

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