

Aidan Duffy

Through It All

June 19 – July 19, 2025

Opening reception: Thursday, June 19th, 7-10pm

Kipple Reorientation

Written by Frank Wasser

I've been sitting at my desk for hours, supposedly writing this text about Aidan Duffy's sculptures, though most of the time has passed in a kind of fugue. I've pinned pictures of Aidan's work to the wall. I jot notes, reread them, stare at the ceiling. Distracted, I fashion minor tools from studio debris—a pencil jabbed into a worn eraser becomes a kind of hammer, serving no purpose other than to simulate the feeling that something is being made. Around me: an accumulation of broken binder clips, obsolete chargers, packaging foam, pencil shavings, odd screws with nowhere to go. It feels like the leftover inventory of a working day.

Maybe that's what first put me in the headspace of Aidan's work: the way these fragments ripple outward from their past lives—echoes of former selves that insist on disturbing the present.

Aidan once described encountering the world at "the tail end of desire"—not at the moment of acquisition, but long after, when objects begin to shed their function and become residues. His studio process begins with what is ostensibly debris: things just beyond usefulness, yet still charged with the ghost of what they were once intended to be.

By now, I had assumed the world would be mostly kipple—and in many ways, it is. The slow, persistent accumulation of discarded packaging, broken technology, worn-out clothes, useless furniture, tangled cords, cracked containers—none of it disappears; it only gathers. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick coined "kipple" to describe this relentless overflow of stuff: "Kipple is useless objects, like junk mail or match folders after you use the last match or gum wrappers or yesterday...When nobody's around, kipple reproduces itself. The entire universe is moving toward a final state of total, absolute kippleization" (Dick, 1968, p. 63). For Dick, kipple isn't merely clutter—it's a material condition, an entropic tide in which usefulness dissolves into surplus.

Aidan Duffy's sculptures inhabit this condition—not to deny or romanticize waste, but to explore how meaning might surface from within this ceaseless ripple of refusal and redundancy.

His process begins with a kind of material curiosity: how two things might—or might not—work together. A scrap of cabinet wood, a metal bowl, a length of threaded rod. The works are neither assemblages of junk nor efforts to elevate detritus into heroic form. They operate somewhere in between, offering a carefully articulated invitation for the viewer to reorient themselves. Materials retain the ghost of their previous life, while their context shifts just enough to open new readings.

As Sara Ahmed reminds us, orientation matters: “what we do affects what we can perceive,” and “what we perceive affects what we do” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 31).

The sculpture *City on My Back* makes this clear. It includes bowls left uncast, turned inward rather than outward, denying the usual connotations of offering or reception. I recall moving my head around it, trying to understand. One bowl is upholstered in leather from the artist’s old shoes, sewn back together like skin. The wooden cabinet fragments remain legible but functionally untethered—stitched into a logic of repair. Nothing is erased, but everything is displaced. Even the cast concrete-like blocks bear an index of absence—formed from interiors, from negative spaces that once allowed movement, now solidified, then broken again by hand. The hammer returns.

New Faces incorporates a cutlery rack submerged in pigmented jesmonite. Threaded rods extend vertically through the form like antennae or grounding poles, while gold X’s hang or fall—uncertain in symbolic load, but certain in their seduction. These works speak not of completed systems, but of systems failing—systems still trying. Objects aren’t reconstituted into wholeness, but held in a kind of suspension. One smaller piece contains a chopstick, a porcupine quill, a flower in painted glass partially obscured by a plastic file: materials caught mid-movement—between natural and synthetic, visibility and concealment, protagonist and chaos.

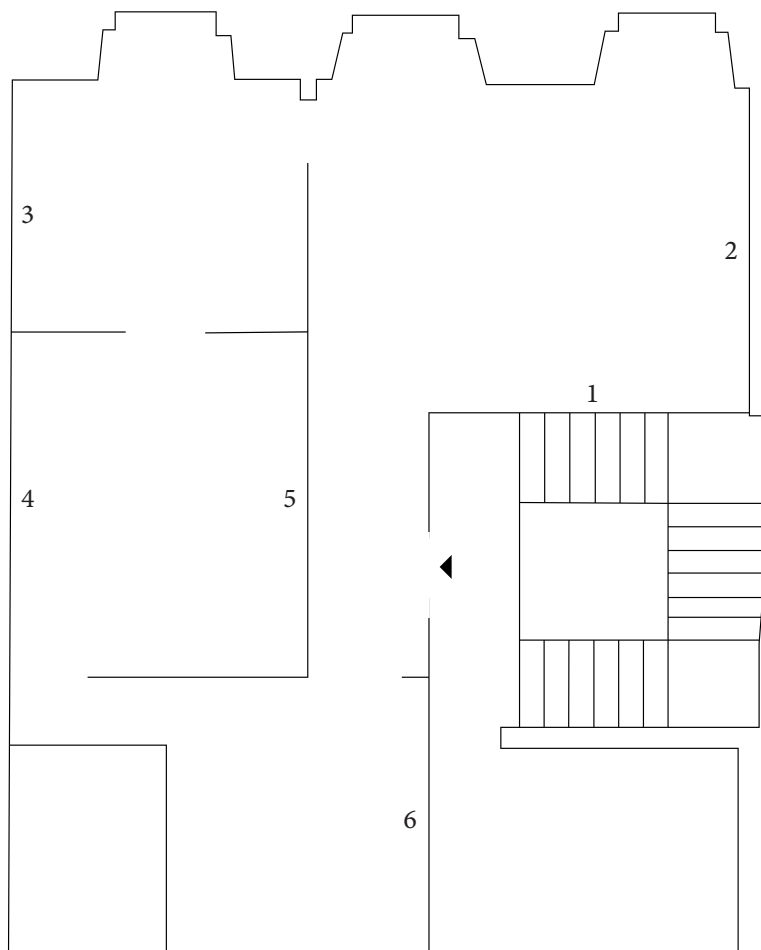
The works featuring tiles cast from dismantled wine racks deepen this material strategy. *Midnight Problems* is layered like a construction site: metal poles, textile fragments, and a curtain of wooden leaves that evokes both bohemian interiors and the veiled intimacy of a confessional booth. A cotton vest, disassembled and re-sewn, is lashed to the surface, turning clothing into structure. In another piece, jesmonite tiles are overlaid with a slick metallic blue-green finish, resisting any simple binary between worn and new. Here, Duffy gestures toward temporality as a form of sedimentation—not simply aging, but layering: of timelines, energies, and values both spiritual and electrical. Pi stones strung on wire reference energy flows, from the power grid to the metaphysical circuit, folding symbolic systems into one another, what ritual do these objects emerge from?

Branches on Branches gathers cone-shaped paper cups cast in jesmonite and arranges them into a star, then partially conceals them with torn jacket fabric, its raw edges sealed with acrylic paint from a children’s craft kit. A cosmology assembled from things no longer wanted, held together by the lightest of gestures.

Aidan’s practice is not a recycling of materials in any conventional sense, but rather an exploration of the psychodramas we inscribe into them—and the fragile architectures that form when those dramas accumulate. These works resist clear legibility as much as they invite it. They are not narrative in the conventional sense of storytelling, but narrative as a holding force—something provisional, momentary, and politically undogmatic.

Ahmed, S. (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Dick, P. K. (1968) *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* New York: Doubleday, visibility and concealment, protagonist and chaos.



1.
Aidan Duffy
New Faces, 2025
Sculpture - Pigmented Jesmonite,
Pigmented Cement Fill, Metal
117 x 32 x 15 cm (46 x 12 1/2 x 6 in)
2.
Aidan Duffy
Drama, 2025
Sculpture - Pigmented Jesmonite,
Textile, Found objects
43 x 51 x 23 cm (17 x 20 x 9 in)
3.
Aidan Duffy
Midnight Problems, 2025
Sculpture - Pigmented Jesmonite,
Graphite, Metal, Wood, Textile,
Paint
171 x 79 x 18 cm (67 1/2 x 31 x 7 in)
4.
Aidan Duffy
City on My Back, 2025
Sculpture - Pigmented Jesmonite,
Metal, Wood, Textile, Paint
46 x 33 x 23 cm (18 x 13 x 9 in)
5.
Aidan Duffy
Branches on Branches, 2025
Sculpture - Pigmented Jesmonite,
Pigmented Epoxy Resin, Metal,
Wood, Textile, Glass, Paint
42 x 79 x 37 cm (16 1/2 x 31 x 14 in)
6.
Aidan Duffy
Blue Skies, 2025
Sculpture - Pigmented Jesmonite,
Pigmented Epoxy Resin, Metal,
Paint, Textile, Electrical wire, Stone