

first floor
23, 24, 25 june 1994

amanda ahmed

clean white colour

The old, familiar kitchen sponge looks fabulous stuck up there on the gallery window. I can't think of when its ever looked nicer.

One thing that you always notice about galleries is that they tend to be so white. White also looks good, especially next to brightly coloured art, or even dull, grey art. White walls can say a lot, about a lot of things.

When the art isn't actually on the white walls, things seem a little different, a little less complimentary. The nice white walls verge on becoming overbearing. Too white perhaps.

I remember when I first encountered sponges of such exotic colouring. It was in smith st., in the excellent "one-dollar" shop. I bought a pack of six, all different colours. I lost them somewhere in my bedroom. Too colourful to use perhaps? They cost me one dollar.

Did you notice that none of the sponges look used? There are no yellowy-brown centres, no rips, no

fades, no scrubber or steelo types. But rather, simply sponges. Sponge is such a general term. It doesn't really account for difference.

The unused, startling colours of the sponges make me think of just how clean and white the gallery walls are, and about just how they were in fact cleaned. If they were scrubbed with sponges, of sorts, what kind were they? Did the scrubbers also think the "one-dollar" sponges too colourful for such a use?

Finally, just how clean are the walls really? Just how recently were they scrubbed? Do they pass the finger test? Would they pass your mother's finger test? Your grandmother's? Because really, just how clean can colour ever be?

tessa dwyer

quilt

In the formal grid of the first floor windows coloured squares and rectangles are briefly appearing. Incorporating these forms into the architectural space echoes the

ambition of bauhaus and de stijl to dissolve painting into architecture or design.

I think about what amanda ahmed does as making a quilt. This quilt is made of space and walls and windows as much as it is made of materials, forms and colours.

Quilts are a medium through which patterns and experiences are shared. The quilt is not a linear model of history, but one that presents events running in all directions, across the surface, front and back.

As the quilt unfolds, it's like seeing history spread out in front of me, things I know and things I don't know, meshed and patched together.

In her installation amanda ahmed is celebrating the various influences in her practice, her community with contemporary artists. It is not a reactionary stance, but one of adding on, patching together, expanding the range of an abstract vocabulary.

Amanda ahmed is arranging the forms and spaces, histories and

ideologies, these insides and outsides - like an enormous quilt.

andrew mcqualter

22.6.94

Amanda's process of work not only involves making formal, abstract decisions but obsessively shopping for the right sponge, colour, thickness, density, availability, how many to a pack, type - scourer or sponge, all are considered to make her formalist abstract works.

When the appropriate item ("I need the green scourers with yellow sponge underneath") is found amanda depletes the reject shop's supply to zero ("I'll take the rack"). Her shopping is purposeful and specific not aimless browsing. She inverts the banality usually associated with shopping for cleaning products into an integral part of her artistic practice, the severity of modernism undercut by pure pleasure.

The work uses the language of abstraction, specifically that of

painting. Amanda does not reconstruct particular works but draws on the language as a whole. The forms themselves are simple but their placement in relation to one another is made complex. The negative space is employed, the subtle wire patterning on the windows becomes apparent on close inspection, as does the fibrous nature of the sponge, rather than resonating as a solid block of colour.

If you look from outside up to the windows you can see the small pieces of tape obsessively used to stick the sponges to the window, the methodical taping matching the rigorous abstraction on the right(?) side.

megan marshall