

Fake Barn Country at Raven Row favours heterogeneity over middling order. Spanning video works, sculpture, photography and painting, the group queries what is real, what is illusory and what remains where all else fades away.



In *Adapting to Change/Broken Boy(ler) 2012–2014* (2014) – a nineteen-minute film by artist Dan Szor appearing in the group exhibition *Fake Barn Country* at Raven Row – a story slowly comes into focus. The film opens with a shot of a young man with dyed blond hair, sitting in company around a kitchen table, seemingly cheerful and drinking a can of Red Stripe. The camera pans shakily around the room, zooming into dimly lit corners. The viewer sees a kettle on the countertop, then the knee of the boy. The video image is momentarily framed in a red border – a motif that will reappear in different colours throughout the course of the film – before the camera lands on a satsuma on the kitchen table. Sobering words appear on the screen. *Booze alone cannot sustain a man*. With them, the comforting joy of the opening scene slips. The moment is undone.

Such a disorienting change from the symbolic and tranquil to the real and tangible recurs throughout *Fake Barn Country*. It is a show spanning the three floors of the gal-

lery's converted domicile building in Spitalfields, bringing together works made by artists using household materials, found objects and rudimentary devices. Three artists whose works are on display – Ruth Angel Edwards, Lawrence Leaman and Oliver Leaman – are also responsible for its broader organisation. Its title refers to a philosophical thought experiment of the same name, devised by the American philosopher Edmund Gettier in the mid-twentieth century, which sets out to challenge definitions of knowledge as 'justified true belief' fashionable in analytic philosophy at the time. In the thought experiment, an individual travels through a rural area populated with barns, many of which, unknown to the individual, are merely replicas. On viewing these structures, the individual identifies what appears to be a barn and forms the belief that this is indeed a barn. By virtue of luck, on this occasion, the barn the individual perceives is in fact a real barn. While this belief is both justified by visual identification and true, the individual's claim that this belief constitutes knowledge is nonetheless debatable. Given that most barns in this landscape are fake, coincidence has been argued as the primary force determining the individual's cultivation of true knowledge.

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Dan Szor, *Adapt*

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instead, upon entry to the front room, the visitor is met one of Adam Gallagher's *Attendee (Miner Mushroom)* (2022), a plaster cast of a gnome-head with the word 'miner' inscribed onto its helmet. The work awkwardly faces the wall, on which hangs only a short label detailing the work title, material and artist. This pared-back framing is consistent throughout the show. Next, two lengthy green Plexiglas cylinders lay scattered side-on the floor as part of Gianna Surangkanjanajai's *Untitled* (2022). Unnerving at first, the objects nonetheless manage to awaken their observer an awareness that holds throughout the show: to practices of repurposing, re-making and redisplaying. What are

these objects, and why have they been produced in this way?

Moving into the open-plan space of the lower ground rooms, the exhibition gains philosophical traction. London-based artist Gili Tal's work *For the Sake of Those Who Would Discriminate Between Hallucinations* (2020) consists of large, two-pronged streetlights heralding through the centre of two conjoined rooms, which otherwise feature a pair of paintings by New York-based artist Lisa Soskolne and two medium-sized grey and white PVC boxes by Berlin-based Samuel Jeffrey, placed centrally on plinths. Positioned in pairs, the raw steel composition of Tal's works dominates the space. The lamps weave parallel to artworks fixed on the wall, bulbs ablaze. At first, they seem out of place, not only because of their seemingly outdoor function but also because they add little in brightness to a gallery already illuminated by overhead lights. Yet it is this displaced utility that unites the work with the spirit of the show; re-assembled objects are brought together, their unsettled composition troubling questions of functionality. Not unlike the case study of Gettier's fake barns, certitude of perception is challenged in this work: the large glass spheres housing the light bulbs appear to hold two bulbs within them. It is only upon closer inspection, eyes burning from peering at brightness so directly, that the *trompe-l'œil* reveals itself: the glass is merely reflecting the light of the singular bulb inside its orb.

Interestingly, many of the works on display have apparent counterparts in the other sections of the show. Seemingly complementary objects are situated in disparate corners of Raven Row's three floors. Oscar Laughridge's *Clock*, 2019 (green chiffon pulled over a large circu-

lar object hanging on the wall, with the figures of time visible underneath), for instance, reappears upstairs in the form of *Clock*, 2025, an almost identical piece produced six years later. The latter work is placed in the same room as Kyoto-based Yuki Kimura's *Three Cognac Glasses* (2019), a set of smaller-to-larger translucent glasses fitted within one another, the effect of this stacking of clear glasses illusory. Kimura's other sculpture, *Untitled* (2024), a similar stacking of small-to-large silverware dishes is displayed on the floor of the ground floor room, opposite Andrea Buttner's deep-red *Painted Ceiling* (2019). In this room, the symmetry of the two structures is particularly striking. Similarly, the heads of Adam Gallagher's *Attendee (Miner Mushroom)* are dotted throughout the gallery, heads poised for re-encounter. Throughout the show, instances of reproduction or artistic duplication jolt the visitor out of traditional modes of sequential viewing and further invite questions on the reasons behind the works' multiple forms. Several works – Oscar Laughridge's *Clock*, for example – were reproduced for the show after their initial display in now-discontinued art spaces. At a time when funding cuts increasingly result in the closure of non-profit spaces, the continuous threads of replication and reproduction structuring *Fake Barn Country* address a resounding arts landscape.

The biggest feat of *Fake Barn Country*, an uncompromising compilation of incongruous works, perhaps lies in its rupturing of the visitor's expectation – of function, appearance and sequence. Despite its heterogeneity, the show never feels out of step; instead, it continuously challenges viewers' assumptions. We are never quite sure which unfamiliar object will appear next around the corner. ▶



Jiayun Deng.

Fake Barn Country at Raven Row

Anne Kimunguyi

Fake Barn Country
8th May – 6th July 2025
Raven Row

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Dan Szor, *Adapting to Change / Broken Boy(er)* 2012–2014 (still), 2014. Courtesy the artist.

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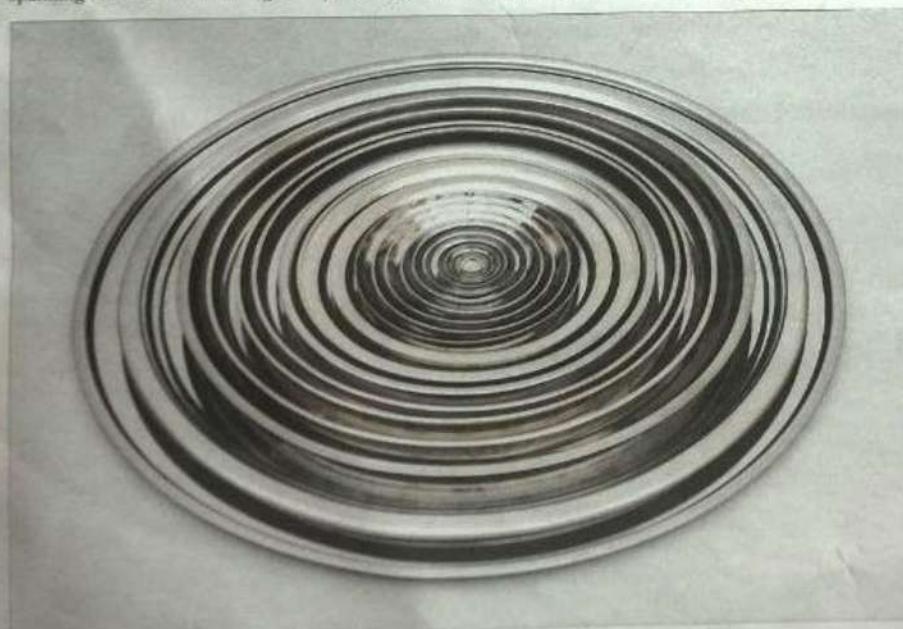
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Yuki Kimura, *Untitled*, 2024. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Photograph by Jiajun Deng.