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Andy Coolquitt

Blaffer Art Museum

Houston

Austin- and New York-based artist Andy Coolquitt has been a proponent of the DIY esthetic since he was a scrappy kid making music in the Texas underground during the mid-1980s. His art practice involves the collection and reuse of objects he finds near his home or studio, which he integrates into sculptures or environments whose messy appearances belie their thoughtful construction.

Titled "attainable excellence" and curated by Rachel Hooper, Coolquitt's first museum show united 60 sculptures and tableaux he made between 2006 and 2011. In an appreciative nod to the architecture of communities living outside the system—the homeless or the dispossessed, for example—his signature installations featured what he calls "somebody-mades," items he salvaged from the street and exhibited exactly as he found them, and "in-betweens," which combined those found sculptures into assemblages of his own. The show's highlight was a two-story gallery that was empty save for a bank of sculptures pushed up against one wall,



Andy Coolquitt, *DWR picture*, 2010, found Plexiglas, frame, metal, wood, tape, and plastic, 75" x 79" x 8". Blaffer Art Museum.

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including a series of the artist's iconic colored-and-banded poles. Fashioned from industrial pipes, marked by rings of paint or fabric, and sometimes topped by light fixtures, these strange objects transformed the space into a futuristic lighting store.

Another room housed a wild flotsam of floor debris—like dust and trash that might have spilled from a janitor's garbage pail—arranged into small cosmic clusters. The hypnotic installation *DWR picture* (2010) featured a metal picture frame filled with ethereal blooms of rust, which was hung on the wall and flanked by a vertical lineup of walking stick-like objects. The framed image resembled a cross or some other object of veneration, and thus the items that bracketed it (a picket-fence post, a pink-plastic wring mop) read like worshippers at the altar. This show offered a testament to the surprising beauty of garbage and the power that can be derived from the simplest of materials.

—Catherine D. Andspon