

Exhibition Guide

Ayşe Erkmen *Under the Roof*

9 April – 30 May 2005

Second Floor Galleries

Under the Roof is a new work by Ayşe Erkmen, made in response to the interior of Ikon's second floor and the result of her consideration of the gallery space. It is characteristically ingenious and refreshingly free.

Erkmen often works in public or non-art spaces and enjoys blurring the line between works of art and everyday life. She explains, "I am very happy with the fact that people are not sure if they are dealing with an artwork. Sometimes someone would ask in a critical tone, 'Where is the art in this project?' I think this is something important. I like this question, which indicates that we are moving into a region between art and non-art." On the other hand, she works in museums and galleries as if she is amused and bemused by them, very aware of the fact that it is the context which gives her gestures their 'artistic identity'. Recently in the DAAD Galerie, Berlin, she lowered the lighting track system to a height whereby it became an obstacle course for those wishing to move around in the space. Thus, the fixture intended to illuminate works of art had not only become the work itself, but an arrangement of barriers.

Under the Roof involves the lowering of the ceiling in the gallery spaces, or rather, the creation of a false ceiling. The height of the rooms is dramatically reduced, lowered in fact by several metres, and far below the existing lighting system. This architectural intervention does not involve the kind of material we might expect, but rather 88,000 metres of silicon thread, stretched wall-to-wall in order to suggest some kind of misplaced basket weaving.

The thread, normally used for furniture upholstery, has been used in three colours – pink, green and yellow – and is translucent. It allows light to pass through it whilst casting shadows, transforming our experience of the galleries, these three separate rooms, through one broad gesture. At the same time, it is impossible not to be aware of the labour intensive nature of this work and the fact that it involved hundreds of hours of craft-like activity. The compression of space could

be interpreted as the result of careful, if somewhat obsessive behaviour, creating a white cube out of the lower parts of the rooms. Erkmén is interested in 'over-decorating' the upper areas of the galleries, almost creating the effect of a vitrine, or display case, which we can see into but cannot touch. *Under the Roof* is not simply a denial of light and height; rather it binds the space together to surprise us, to encourage us to reconsider what we might take for granted. This is suggested by the artist as an approach to life, as well as an artistic strategy.