

Press release

*'Put John Barleycorn in the old brown jug' by Aaron Angell*

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In an old English folk song, 'John Barleycorn' suffers brutalities of all kind that correspond to the various stages of barley cultivation -- he is then extolled in spirit, celebrated as alcohol 'put in the old brown jug'.

Ancient and medieval ritual, rural and craft culture (both originary and revivalist) are key to Aaron Angell's diverse set of references. Juggling with many marginal concerns a time, the artist anticipates their collision, collapse. His idiosyncratic use of material/ity throws one back on the very process of 'making': Starting from diverse basic types or materials, Angell aims at their oddness, formlessness, or their capacity to induce aesthetic disjunction. Unexpected amalgamations of pleasurable incorrectness may in turn arise -- and herein perhaps certain parallels between Angell's artistic practice and the making of 'John Barleycorn'.

In a series of ceramics on show, cracks appear, caused by the melting of coins onto clay, while parts of others have been fused by over-firing in the kiln. The skewed stonewares are countered by sleek surfaces of back-painted perspex sheets with recurring motifs of jugs, coins, mushrooms and more abstract forms. Installed as shrine-like ensembles in the gallery's front space, the ceramics and paintings are yet outgrown by a large wall drawing: Here, coloured paper has been glued to the wall and torn off again -- an action which at once dismisses the work as bare background, while potentiating the ominous presence of the figure outlined.

Aaron Angell (born 1987 in Kent, UK) lives and works in London. He graduated from the Slade School of Art (BA) in 2011. This past year, Angell had solo exhibitions at Focal Point Gallery, Southend, and SPACE, London. Group shows include Limoncello (London), Holden Gallery (Manchester), CCA (Glasgow), Stedelijk Museum ('s-Hertogenbosch). 'Put John Barleycorn in the old brown jug' at Croy Nielsen, Berlin, is his first solo exhibition outside the UK. An interview with the artist will be published in the February 2012 issue of Mousse magazine.