

Impedimenta

The gallery was small and simple:
unglazed doors at either end,
and on each undooed wall a single work in oils.

One was light and love and tenderness —
it glowed with hope, was bright with loyalty and joy;
opposite it hung a drab and lifeless scene
that told of songs unsung and optimism crushed.

Between them, strung across the room,
its ends somehow extruded from the paint,
a thin blue plastic line looped shallowly
above a leatherette banquette.

From it dangled freshly washed
yet curiously grimy underthings
and shirts and sheets and socks and
yellow cotton dusters, dishcloths,
nappies, plates and mugs, stained steel utensils,
and the body of a woman whose contorted
features nonetheless conveyed release.