



Mandy Ridley

Cognition

INVITATION

OPENING

Friday 30 November 6.00pm

EXHIBITION

1 December 2012 to
27 January 2013

EXHIBITION PARTNERS



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body

In COGNITION, Mandy Ridley reconsiders the landscape of her childhood through a material exploration of pattern and colour.

Her site-specific artwork explores questions of identity, memory and the possibility of transformation, using as a starting point the idea that we have a body memory for the landscape of our origin.



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IMAGE: Mandy RIDLEY, *Sometimes I Feel My Heart Will Burst* [Study for Cognition], 2012, Digital image Courtesy Mandy Ridley and Lead Based Ink



COGNITION

Linda Carroli

It happens to us all: that sense of déjà vu, that sense of being somewhere uncannily familiar, or that moment of the double take. The starting point for Mandy Ridley's installation, *Cognition*, is the development of an artwork that engages that experience across not only two landscapes but across multiple registers of time and memory. In this work Ridley sees and senses herself seeing at the nexus of tensely connected ideas – not quite oppositional but distinctly different – landscape and architecture, memory and nostalgia, here and there, inhabitant and visitor. The two landscapes to which she refers are Cordoba, Spain where she visited Madinat al-Zahra, and Gippsland, Victoria where she grew up. Hence, the idea of *cognition* directs viewers to the artist's perceptual, experiential and mental space. *Cognition* presents a psychogeographic response to the landscape's stimulation of the senses and its mesh with memory, and recognises Merleau-Ponty's (1968) idea of landscape as a way of being, not merely a way of seeing. It is the self assembled and performed through embodied practices of landscape, or *chora*. It is the self and the landscape entwined.

Merleau-Ponty writes "I have the impression that the world itself lives outside me, just as absent landscapes live on beyond my visual field, and as my past was formerly lived on the earlier side of my present" (1962, p. 414). Landscape is both revealed and kept at a distance; we see with the artist, their 'lived perspective' rather than just points of view disappearing into the horizon. As with landscape itself, the artwork immerses the artist and viewer in a process of discovery, as *being in* place or space. Both landscapes have provided Ridley with much ground for exploration, discovery and revelation. Strangely, Ridley never appeared to become part of the picture as she sourced and sampled elements to compose this work. It's as if she is there but not quite. That experience of the uncanny, of something being strangely familiar, is rather unnerving, dissonant and uncertain. For a fleeting moment of otherness, one doesn't feel like oneself, somehow displaced. Even so, one remains grounded and in touch with the earth. That is, as Edward S. Casey (2005, p. xvii) writes, "the lived body is what affords a 'feel' for a given landscape, telling us how it is to be there, how it is to know one's way around in it".

Out of this doubling of mind and vision, with her eye for detail and pattern, Ridley has focused on, drawn out and assembled encounters with architecture, artefact and landscape. There is a kind of stratification of both memory and material culture where places, even those once resplendent, have been ruined, plundered, weathered, used, excavated or simply allowed to settle. Through her engagement with these landscapes, Ridley considers what remains as it is tempered by memory and difference. In endeavouring to highlight that sensation of the strangely familiar she assembles elements of both landscapes as a screen of difference and similarity. However, there is more going on here. For Ingold (1992, pp. 159-160) "to perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past". With references to both family history and world heritage, there is also an idea of inheritance: what we acquire as a shared or intergenerational legacy. Cordoba is a city renowned for its architectural and cultural

heritage. All landscapes are historic – the earth is very old – and they are also the result of all kinds of human activity and habitation, including Aboriginal land management practices, farming practices, building and settlement. The earth is marked and shaped by our dwelling.

Cognition is embodied; vision is embodied. Both are produced as and by assemblage, through Ridley's collaborative and consultative practice of collating fragments of material culture, bound together by a fine network of relationships. Ridley is drawing on a range of artistic and design methodologies to realise this distinctively psychogeographic assemblage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Casey, E. (2005). *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
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Mandy Ridley: Cognition

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Images

Left to right, top to bottom
 Mandy RIDLEY, *To the Mountains 2*, 2012 Photograph
 Mandy RIDLEY, *Road to the Farm*, 2010 Photograph
 Mandy RIDLEY, *On the Road to Madinat al-Zahra*, 2009, Photograph
 Mandy RIDLEY, *To the Mountains 1*, 2012 Photograph

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