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JOURNEY'S END: NEGOTIATING MIND MAPS: A CARTOGRAPHY OF GLASS IN AUSTRALIA.

Mark Mc Dean

McDean maps his own journey of process and investigation through a thought provoking exhibit of glass.

Mind Maps exhibition: 14th April to 14th May 2005, Craft Victoria Gallery

" We'd decided to lunch somewhere Very Expensive to mark what was a rather special occasion and were sitting behind glass on the very edge of the Grand Canal . While he considered carefully how to respond, I drank in the scene beyond the glass, that astonishing cavalcade of dainty stone facades, wheeling slowly round the Rialto to disappear in an explosion of domes, towers and crazed roof-lines. 'I think,' he said, chewing thoughtfully, 'it's because each of them represents one important kind of journeying. Yes, I'm sure that's why. Almost opposite kinds, in fact. And journeying is, after all, so fundamental to the way we humans think of ourselves and assign our lives a meaning. Every second book you read is about some kind of journey, really, isn't it? And we constantly talk about paths in life – ways, roads, progress, stages and so on – all travel metaphors, when you think about it. I would say that Marco Polo and Casanova have come to stand for completely different ways of travelling – and therefore of living out your life.' I was wondering how I could provoke him to say more." Dessaix, R. Night Letters Pan Macmillan Sydney [1996]

To title an exhibition 'Mind Maps' conjures up a description of process [journey] and the aspects of investigation rather than detouring, speeding ahead to the final target, adjusting one's practice when the neural speed humps appear. The initial concept of a mind map is text based, beginning with a central word or concept and expanding on this central premise with associated words. Traveling through the *Mind Maps* exhibition, I was reminded of Robert Dessaix's book *Night Letters*, relating particularly to his description of landscape through lived experience. Dessaix describes so eloquently the importance of the journey, and relevant meeting or relationships, as being more important than the destination.

It would appear that the actual cartographers of this exhibition were the selection committee – Kevin Murray [Craft Victoria], Jason Smith [National Gallery of Victoria] and Deidre Plummer [Ranamok Glass Prize], each given guidelines to formulate a new landscape from a contemporary craft perspective. Interestingly enough, most of the thirteen exhibiting artists are Melbourne based – more a Melways of glass in Australia than a national topography. Fortunately, the selected artist's journeys take us from inner mind to outer space, with stopovers in the Australian landscape – even flying low over local community, hearing language constructed as object souvenir. The works are grounded in personal experience and sense of place. One cannot help but think of Jorge Luis Borge's fable of the map, in which a group of cartographers, at the behest of their emperor and at the apogee of imperial power, construct a map of that empire so explicit and extensive that it exactly covers the territory it describes.

Mind Maps opens with what could be literally described as the end, the graveyard of hearts by Ian Mowbray, a layered receptacle for the exhausted, used and worn life organ. We're reminded of the emotional weight we carry along life's road and wish that a new heart could be fitted to power us forward to newer relationship wranglings.

The trophy like objects of Brenda Page suggest a battle won and the spirit of the beast stored in the vial topped with a remnant of said beast. Page suggests that her works deal with the mundane and everyday, mapping an eight hour day in the suburbs. We can only imagine the exotic location of the suburb characterized by medieval blue.

The installation of the works of Andrew Lavery and David Herbert, although quite close in proximity, takes the viewer from visible breath to weighted object in a couple of steps. Lavery describes the space between language, a conversation of objects grouped to announce the breath between words. Herbert's packaging works make me aware of the missing object, focusing on the remnants of consumerism.

A thought provoking juxtaposition is created between the works of Maureen Williams and Ede Horton. Williams expresses personal narrative of landscape through what she suggests as an altered view. I wanted to travel around that landscape, an expansive panorama of Australian sensibility lined with gleaming white, suggesting the spiritual centre.



Maureen Williams (2004). "Alternate Landscape"
Photo: David Mc Arthur, Parallax Photography

Horton 'finds grace' through reflection, making us aware of the many aspects of our personality as we progress through the stages of inner

journey.

The artists of Mind Maps enabled the viewer to observe their negotiations, beginning with idea, moving through materials and process ending the journey with infinite ideas for future travels.

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Last modified 22-Jun-2005

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