

Airborne

Whether on foot or in a vehicle, (with or without the aid of a map or electronic equivalent) navigating through urban spaces means to be aware of concreteness and openness. This ought to be straight forward enough. However the fracturing and refractive events that occur in urban spaces packed with hundreds of office, residential and retail towers glistening with glass, polished metals and high-gloss paint surfaces can, for a pedestrian at least, generate physical spatial unease. Such spatial disorientation can just as easily be experienced in parts of Melbourne, London, Beijing, Hong Kong or any other metropolis undergoing architectural renewal.

Contemporary centres provide ample opportunities for reflecting on the nature of the reflected image. Perceiving something through something else, in an almost infinite regress and as a distorted mirror image, can be an unnerving experience that acts to highlight the illogic of trying to locate oneself within a fixed time and space. It can also be an enjoyably narcissistic act that permits us to glimpse our own personal reflection and locate it within histories and geographies established in the past but embedded in the present moment. Regardless, disorientation stimulates the act of looking and vice versa.

Airborne is a text generated series of nine works on paper constructed using the cutout letters of the written alphabet that spell the words 'London, Melbourne'. Words are decipherable abstract linguistic codes denoting the known, the imaginative or the speculative. In this case they have been rendered unreadable and unrecognizable as alphabet by being cut into fragments. The resulting shard like abstract shapes have been rendered in gold and rearranged (5 panels use the Melbourne shapes, 4 the London) to create map-like images that recall city blocks or buildings and road or rail networks. Alternatively, the shattering of form and space may have more dire implications.

The use of gold, both 23.75 moongold and 12 carat white gold, in the centuries-old technique of gilding, reflects my preoccupation with the handmade. This process, the results of which are best exemplified in illuminated manuscripts, is tedious, laborious and unforgiving. A slight breeze, ones own breath or a trembling hand can cause the fragile translucent leaves to become airborne, float and collapse.

I have chosen gold for its capacity to suggest an ever-changing environment. The gold leaf surface in these works dissolves the structures of the space that houses them and can return, in their stead, shimmering light and distorted reflections of everything around and within it: a mirroring perhaps of a confusing but bedazzling and pleasurable place to be.

Like any jig-saw puzzle the forms in these compositions could, theoretically, be reassembled to reconstruct the original alphabet and words. This of course would require the destruction of the work itself.

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