

The Cube

Mai Nguyen-Long: New Media work

7 Feb – 17 May 2015

Mai Nguyen-Long's art practice is underpinned by intense curiosity, careful observation and deep introspection. In this recent series of new media, animation and video works, the artist explores conceptual notions of place and memory while questioning constructs of identity. Mai's use of maps and mapping forms an important visual aesthetic in her work, representing both a mapping of the artist's external environment and the body's interior spaces. Together these internal and external 'maps' fuse and overlap, taking on the form of the artist's personal 'road map' or journey as she questions her own sense of wholeness and identity.

Beyogmos, (2014) a charcoal drawing animation (the title taken from the phrase 'beyond the dog cosmos') is about trust. It is about worlds that cannot intersect: the journey of an artist to trust herself, her materials and artistic process, and the childhood memory of a love song. The imagery is inspired by an emotive response to music Mai's father played when she was growing up, songs in Vietnamese, a language she could never understand as a child. These songs would later prove to possess complex implications. *Beyogmos* is a deeply personal artistic response which contemplates the impossibility of translation across parallel existences. The artwork is rich and densely layered, with animations building up and then receding with captivating and poetic motion. In Mai's words; *The erasure process in making the drawn animation was all about letting go*. This is a universal lesson of acceptance that we all search for in our everyday lives, in a continuing cycle of living, dying, and beyond.

Layered Transitions (2014) is a slowly transitioning digital projection. Fusing images of the body, the built environment, and waterways, Mai synthesizes different experiences, including the emotional and factual. Maps of Hanoi, Hobart, and her chosen home of Wollongong fade and fuse into each other as roads and rivers become veins; genitalia is mapped as landscape, and dog/human brains echo the contours of an aerial map. The very action of projecting such images plays off the idea that 'we project place onto others', as Gina Fairley has noted.¹ It questions the idea of home, identity, body and belonging.

In Mai Nguyen-Long's enthralling and mesmerizing works, the artist employs a very personal approach to consider the universal concepts of life, love, death and existence.

¹ Gina Fairley, interpretive exhibition text, *Beyogmos*, Wollongong Art Gallery 2014.

WORK DETAILS

Mai Nguyen-Long, *Beyogmos*, 2014 HDV digital stills, stop animation 5 mins 11 secs;
charcoal drawing: Mai Nguyen-Long; animation editor: Stuart Horstman;
music: "Diem Xua" by Trinh Cong Son, sung by Khanh Ly. Limited Edition.
Collection Wollongong Art Gallery.

Mai Nguyen-Long, *Layered Transitions* (detail), 2014 digital projection (14 transitioning images) 1 min 40 secs