University of Dundee

The Absolutely Other
Modeen, Mary

Publication date:
2014

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in Discovery Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from Discovery Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 30. Aug. 2019
Mary Modeen, artist/academic, lectures in Fine Art and is Course Director for the MFA in Art & Humanities in Dundee. Her research has several threads: perception as a cognitive and interpretive process, and place-based research, which connects many of these concerns, with attention to cultural values, history and embodied experience. As such, this research is usually interdisciplinary. Part of this work appears as creative art, usually printmaking, and part as writing and presentations. She addresses aspects of seeing that go beyond the visible, questioning what we know as sentient humans. Cultural values and individual differences are inherent in these investigations.

Ciara Healy is a writer, book artist and curator. She lectures in Visual Culture at the University of Wales and was an AXIS & WAI award winner for Critical Writing in 2011. She is currently studying for a PhD at UWE Bristol under the research title: The Thin Perception: A proposal for a new curatorial approach in contemporary art.
Mary Modeen: The Absolutely Other by Ciara Healy

Certain places can be familiar to us, even when we know we have never seen them before. Such fleeting glimmers of recognition can penetrate the heart deeply, evoking what John Berger once described as ‘The gasp of Home.’

It is in these moments that the intention of the soul is revealed. Like a forest clearing, we suddenly know where we are and why ancient then, opens the unfolding path that lies before us.

Mary Modeen’s collection of prints and bookworks explores these unpredictable clearings, these breaks in the homogeneity of space. They are anomalous places she has stumbled upon, liminal places she has deliberately sought to find; each of them imbued with a kind of sacred significance. They contain layers of concealed memory and beauty, which, when seen as a suspended whole, awaken us to the source of all love, or what the writer and philosopher John O Donoghue once called the ‘primal affection.’

Love prompts our ability to imagine and when we are given the space to imagine we fall in love. This love, felt and experienced in countless bodies and sentient forms, existed long before we became the physical manifestations we currently occupy. So when we encounter work like Longing or Uncertain Territory, we remember the experience of love from another past, how it was lost, how it was found, how it was stolen, broken, betrayed, abandoned.

Mary Modeen: The Absolutely Other makes tangible the feeling that we are in a wider universe of abstract yet interconnected ideas. What William James once described as a ‘belief in an unseen order.’

In the 21st century such notions are often ridiculed. But vague impressions of something indefinable still manage to arouse us. It can happen at the end of an evening, when we have finally silenced the television, or early in the morning when grey light seeps through blinds: we remember that quieter truths exist, truths we know about in theory and have forgotten to live by in practice.

Modeen’s work is a liminal link to these truths. She stirs our languid imaginations, reminding us that the sudden transparencies through which one sees everything are only ever temporary. The sky is darkening, but the door still opens, the door goes on opening.

References: