

M A R G A R E T
T H A T C H E R
P R O J E C T S

RAVEN A PLATFORM FOR
CONTEMPORARY ART
AND EVENTS

REVIEW: Gary Carsley - Sciencefictive

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Gary Carsley, *Astria Portia 2*, 2014

Once upon a time, before the word 'awesome' began to be used to describe just about everything, it was reserved for things that were grand, or particularly admirable, or possibly even those *inspiring an overwhelming feeling of reverence*. It's this kind of description that matches the awesomeness of Sciencefictive, Gary Carsley's 'interior garden' at Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art.

Influenced by a project in Singapore, which matched the planets of the solar system with the gardens of that small island nation, Carsley has installed his fantasy 'Mappa Mundi' (or map of the world, medieval style) in two large gallery spaces. Placing his hometown of Brisbane at the imaginary 'centre of the world', viewers are led through this fantasy display via a winding path painted on the floor.

Installed at intervals along the walls are 'Moongates'. These various shaped frames of faux marble or timber act as windows, providing views of the exotic gardens of places like Taipei, New York, Suzhuo and Berlin. Silhouettes of statues cut from gorgeous vinyl wallpaper, and themed according to various countries of origin, are placed between them. Wandering by, it's easy to imagine the strains of instruments playing softly in the background. Staying with its cosmological theme, each Carsley window delivers the viewer an opportunity to transcend the real space of the gallery.

The *Brisbane/Ikea/Everywhere* installation, for example, is a wardrobe reminiscent of the magical portal in the C.S. Lewis classic, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Plastering a forest image across every surface of an Ikea flatpack cupboard, Carsley reunites it with a forest of Brisbane eucalypts. An industrially produced 'forest' chair sits immediately in

front, imprinted with a continuation of the exact same image. From the viewer's perspective, the two images constantly switch between being a single or two separate objects.

Referencing American Robert Rauschenberg's *Pilgrim* 1960, the work demonstrates a fusion of real life and art, while the empty chair both symbolises absence and suggests the existence of ideas beyond normal human experience.

While we're used to seeing art in a garden or park, *Sciencefictive* has reversed the art goer's understanding of the way things usually are. In his display Carsley has given us an immersive experience of beauty – an antidote to the stresses of modern life. To quote Einstein, from Dr. Con Fabulator's catalogue essay: "*Look deep, deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better*".