

Andrew McLeod

b.1976

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This digital print is a large architectural floor plan of a group of small houses clustered close together. It is rife with diagonally aligned white lines that look disembodied, floating in tilted isolation, almost as if they are a kind of writing or musical score – referencing the early work of Mondrian or *Titirangi* McCahon, perhaps. These tiny windowed enclosures are coolly observed from God’s eye. In this aerial view, they are so close to each other they look like an open plan arrangement of one huge sprawling building.

Yet this is an extremely mischievous image with a lot of confusing blending going on. There is a sense of a large sprawling garden with many small units of three walls. The odd T-shaped walls are like small suntraps or wind barriers for bushes. The interior spaces aren’t decisively separated as they normally would be, nor are they parts of ‘proper’ houses.

There are other things which make the image more layered. Cars seem occasionally to be located inside lounges or dining rooms, and outdoor parking areas have sofas covered with sleeping figures. There are trees in the bedrooms, and stranger still – wispy clouds that look down from a great height and swirl amongst the bushes like nebulas and spiralling galaxies.

What McLeod presents us with is a ‘triple layered club sandwich’ with three overlapping fields: botanical, architectural and astronomical. Though each is quite independent of the others, it is nevertheless combined with them to make up a sort of divine cosmology with three tiers. In this schema, we see individual people walking around, eating, sleeping and talking, participating in both macro- and microcosms, as well as a third one in between.

In this interpretation we have a mystic world, where the aerial views reinforce a sense of an all-pervading other-worldly realm, as does the sense of flux encouraged by the organic tree shapes and nebula forms. The blueprint quality gives us a sort of x-ray vision where we can see through the outer covering of things and penetrate to their inner reality – a core where there is no time because all histories are simultaneous. We see the housing section before the trees were felled, and after.

McLeod’s print is a great prodder of imaginative reverie. It encourages wistful fantasies about living conditions, and architecture, and the gardens nearby. A sea of possibilities, it intrigues because it seems so different from his large oil paintings in style and mood; looking scientific and dryly objective, but in fact being similar with its playfulness and fancy – though without their nursery or romper-room ambience. Rich in detail and a sense of infinity, it never seems to reveal all its secrets. There is a density to its deeply hidden mysteries.

John Hurrell

Artist website:

www.andrewmcleod.co.nz

Galleries and museums:

www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz

www.bowengalleries.co.nz

www.brookegiffordgallery.co.nz

www.govettbrewster.com

www.ivananthony.com

www.niagara-galleries.com.au

www.wattersgallery.com

Web search:

Colin McCahon

Piet Mondrian

