

Sydney
Hilarie Mais
You Are Not Supposed to Know You're in It
13 February – 27 March, 2021

Hilarie, on occasion, would stop and look at my apartment's living room bookshelf, curiously inspecting the structure as if it was one of her sculptures. I visited Hilarie in the afternoon one day, and as we spoke, she presented me a drawing of the bookshelf. I immediately started seeing the structural relationships in Hilarie's previous sculptures, including *Echo*, 1990 - a long, minimalist wall sculpture taking the form of two grids of thirteen squares. The following day, I sent Hilarie detailed measurements and images of the bookshelf, which she took and began working with dimensions and colour in response.

Upon visiting Hilarie again, I entered her studio to find a apparently unrelated sculpture from 2005 resting on her couch. It was made of dense wood with black mirrors inserted into the back. I immediately picked it up and was moved by its weight and sense of Constructivist principles. I began to see the bookshelf in these square sculptures, and thought to myself:

Imagine all of these forms inhabiting space together, across time – Aaron M. Bolot's bookshelf from 1949, sculptures from 2005, and Hilarie's most recent work responding to the form of the present bookcase...

The Ancient Greek mnemonic device of *loci* (Latin for 'places') uses memorised spatial relationships to establish order and recollect memorial content. Sometimes referred to as the *Memory Palace* technique, it is, in essence, a mental filing system. A similar process informs Hilarie's dreams, which encompass imagined rooms, corridors, and endless space in which to store and access her memories. Hilarie constantly revisits spatial relationships in her sleep to solve present concerns in her work.

Included in this installation is a sculpture of the exact dimensions as the bookshelf, as well as three small sculptures originally exhibited at Sherman Galleries in 2005.

I like to imagine how Aaron M. Bolot (1900-1989), the architect of this space, might react if he attended Hilarie's opening, encountering the unassuming bookshelf that is repeated through the apartments of 17 Wylde Street in its present incarnation as an artistic muse.

Hilarie and I have been friends since I was a student; she taught me how to be in the world, and where the importance rests in life. *Sydney* would not exist without Hilarie's endless support and guidance - her friendship has shaped my life, and for this I am eternally grateful.

Over my long friendship and many conversations with Conor we have often talked about our dreams. I would recall a reoccurring dream of mine, of houses and rooms I regularly visit, which exist not in reality but in my sleeping mind's imagination – as reachable structures and locations. Although seemingly familiar, they occasionally reveal undiscovered rooms, dormant, as yet unused, neglected but full of potential.

'Mnemosyne' was the ancient Greek goddess of remembrance and memory – the mother of the muses for the arts and sciences. The architecture of my dreamscape recalls the Ancients' approach to memory before the advent of written language; the oral traditions, the imagined complex internal structures, memes for the storage of memory, and filing systems for accessing those memories and information.

Wylde Reflection

This work is a response to this room. The familiar bookcase, constructed off site as a memory reflection, exists not only as a mirror image but an ephemeral recollection of a presence, a trace of what was, embodying the imperfection of memory. The memory reflection is a trace of something left behind – a shadow of things past, the ghost.

The work literally flips, mirrors and reverses in relation to the familiar bookcase structure now devoid of books and the written word.

The Selves act as portrait containers of interior reflection and the fragmented self.

Hilarie Mais