

THROWING OUT A LINE

Ric Spencer

I'm not sure whether discussing architecturally influenced linework within a phenomenological sense is the best way to go but I'm going to anyway because I think Martin Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness' gives me a key to unlocking Rina Franz's edificial doorways.

In *Being and Time* (English trans. 1962) Heidegger hypothesised that (and this is very broad) we are thrown into this world from whence we divine a plan of attempting to understand it, use it, perhaps even contemplate it - if we don't go mad in the ensuing process. Heidegger's 'thrownness' suggests two forms of action – fleeing or realising our potentiality-to-be, the second manifested through acting upon the world. Through this inter-action we may form an intimacy, a language of knowledge and a coherency of intercommunication.

Despite what we now know about genetic coding and memetic theory, I think Heidegger still has a point and what I like about Heidegger's 'thrownness' is its reflexivity. We understand the world by manipulating it; we manipulate the world as we come to understand it. I think Rina Franz gives us just such a history of manipulation. I also think her work in *The Invisible Line* clearly outlines the restrictions of this reflexivity.

There is a strong sense of abodeness in Franz's work, of being-in-the-world, but equally forebodeness, a clear reckoning that the need to manipulate and to understand comes at a cost - or rather loss. The artist's own childhood history is intertwined in that of the classical form and an ever-present Renaissance. Her work presents a 'needed' history of manipulation – one which has given us a strong European sense of place and belonging over several hundred years of enlightenment and industrial progress.

In adulthood Franz enters the Australian landscape and is here 'thrown' into a new world, one less articulated by corridors of built form based on perspectival line. Here the landscape is more open to reveal that other point of dissolution, the horizon line. Franz's reaction to this conflict of European vision coping with the Australian vastness is only as she could have manifested it. In *The Invisible Line* the works try to hold together – but they never quite complete. Arcadian lines vanish under the weight of nature as natural forces build at every opportunity to regain what's rightfully theirs.

Her monumental corridor piece *The Invisible Line* (from which the show takes its name) holds its own interior conflict. Depth tries to match up with form but the lines that create the illusion keep cancelling each other out. This work compromises its own validity, its own potentiality-to-be. It also brings up questions for me about the relevant uses of constructive or 'framework' drawings in contemporary art.

Locally trained artists Bevan Honey and Richard Giblett, for example, both use this style of drawing to compartmentalise urban design and critique, in a similar way to Franz, our imposition of line onto the landscape in order to make structural sense of it. Franz's use of 'framework' drawing clearly articulates a position of epistemology while understanding (particularly in the red lines in the *Lineamenta* series) that the way we live, in what we live and what we move through, could be very different just by moving or losing a line here or there. For Franz this process of evolution comes through erasure and reduction – toward modernism, where Franz's line becomes a cube, and beyond.

In the images of buildings being reduced to rubble and in her use of flat planes being reduced to monosyllabic colours, Franz sees the line's disappearance – replaced or rather returned to the bosom of the horizon. But, as Heidegger again suggests, the horizon is always shifting, constantly reorientating itself to our every movement. Allowing our vision the licence to adjust, away from one point perspective, to find new horizons - these are the things of contemporary history. Has post-modernism given us this freedom, has post-structuralism, has post-photography, probably - but equally the understanding of our own constraints. Arguably cinematography has brought us closest to a new orientation of vision and I find Franz's imagery very cinematographic.

The line, as it is drawn for one point perspective, gives us a great analogy for knowing our place in time. The line has a starting point, it reaches out, it takes us somewhere. In her sweeping imagery Franz acknowledges the relationship between the line, time and our positivity of seeing. In what I see as a perceived acknowledgment of cinematography over landscape painting, Franz offers some burgeoning contemplations on the possibilities (particularly realising her own personal rupture from Arcadian vision) of newer, more fluent ways of seeing where shifting with the land erases the need for being at the end point of a line upon it.

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