

MINNA GILLIGAN

LONG TIME NO SEE

ESSAY BY CHRISTINA APOSTOLIDIS

How long is a long time?

Memory brings past experience into the present which makes 'a long time' difficult to define. A linear sense of time becomes irrelevant, rather it's the physicality of the present that allows us to experience a new sense of temporality and place through memory.

It is both the familiar and the unknown that make up our memories. Often memories that belong to you can be confused with those belonging to others. This is because memory is not simply your own past – it is made up of other people's stories of places that once existed, of experiences retold and pictures seen.

Places hold memories. For me this is evident with my love of Carlton. It is not solely based on the fact that I have lived here for a few years, it comes from a past that I only know through the memories of others. This past is made accessible through stories my grandmother and my father told, stories about living in Carlton in the 1960s when my family first moved to Australia from Greece. These stories create memories that don't primarily belong to me but are so much about my own life now. Carlton as a place stands still yet memories and time are constructed around it. There are buildings which once had very different uses -a football club or a clothing factory- and when I look at them now I see both their past and present. These memories are from a long time ago but for me they are still present as they are written in the footpaths and the bricks that make up the houses – the physicality of the present. I will never have the same experiences that my family did while living here yet I can draw on their memories to create my own sense of familiarity of place and home.

Minna Gilligan's work both embodies memories and creates a present, one we experience by standing in front of her work through the physicality of her materials. The fabrics and images that Gilligan collects have a history associated with other people's memories from another time, but here the past and present intermingle in the collages and paintings to create this particular present. Gilligan reconstructs new narratives or stories, relying on the viewer to remember things from their past, and to consider the present. Both the familiarity and strangeness of the images, colours and fabrics in Gilligan's work allow the viewer to construct a narrative that is their own. The complexity of memory exists in her work, looking at her dreamy collages, where figures and objects float in an endless state of movement between what is lived and what is imagined.

- Christina Apostolidis 2014

Christina Apostolidis is the Gallery Manager of West Space, Melbourne.