

David Bridgeman is an artist whose art has evolved to explore not so much what things look like, but how they feel.

His work often attempts to reconstruct visually the abstract and fragmented nature of memories, associations, and the recollections attached to specific events, and his new installation work, in the National Gallery, as part of the A Day in the Life II exhibition, attempts to reconstruct the childhood memory of walking through an English woodland.

Mr Bridgeman's art explores the pivotal role of the human psyche in the interpretation of landscapes, rather than treating each landscape as an independent entity.

Here he has used carpet, cut into shapes to represent a stylised version of leaves and flowers; the undergrowth you would find in an English woodland, but deliberately mixed it up (to reflect the mixed-up nature of memory) with elements from a Cayman woodland.

Carpet is used, perhaps, because carpet is very familiar, at least to a child raised in England, as a place to crawl and play, and therefore represents the security and comfort of home.

The stylised forms of oversized flowers and leaves look like cartoon flowers. This

sentimentalised foliage could be from a Disney cartoon or children's picture book, and therefore adds to an overwhelming sense of a child's-eye view of things.

On the walls more carpet, this time cut into vertical strips to represent tree trunks, are arranged against a matt black background.

Mr Bridgeman recaptures the childhood feeling of walking through woodland, a happy memory perhaps, but there is also the slight sense of the menace stemming from the growing realization that nature is different and unknowable; not quite like the picture book.

The blackness of the walls also speaks, perhaps, of the unreliability of memory, especially perhaps in a dream. We might be able to recall a particular scene clearly enough, but what was just down the road, or round the corner? And if we cannot be sure of those details, then how real is the rest?

Mr Bridgeman's work is therefore an honest attempt at reconstructing a memory, a segment of truth from one's past, but with the apparently inevitable outcome of distorting and sentimentalising it in the process.

It is a weakness we all share with the artist, and therefore is something we can all relate to.

# A Day in the DAVID BRIDGEMAN

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