

INNER LIGHT (2013), Pascale Grandmaison

This is the second stop on the Public Art, Science and Technology tour.

What do molecules look like when they dart across the brain? Are they bright bursts of light? Officially known as “neurotransmitters,” these chemical messengers move between neurons to keep the brain — and the body — alive.

Placed in the lobby of the university’s central administrative block, the GM building, is Pascal Grandmaison’s *Inner Light* — an illuminated, photographic cranium which evokes an image of a galaxy. One of the few works in the collection to be selected through a pan-Canadian open call, *Inner Light* was installed in 2013.

Pascal Grandmaison is an acclaimed Quebecois artist. Born in 1975, Grandmaison has lived and practiced in Montreal throughout his nearly three-decade career. The artist has been nominated for the Sobey Art Award, and his work has been shown in prestigious institutions such as the National Gallery of Canada, Le Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, and across Europe and the United States. Known for his large scale photographic, video, film, and sculptural works, Grandmaison uses image-making as part of a conceptual art practice.

Now that we’ve explored the conceptual link between the artwork and its title, do you think the title references the artwork’s form as well? *Inner Light* is framed in a massive lightbox, a technique which emulates commercial advertising. The head-shaped image is composed of thousands of light flashes collaged together. It is a photographic glimpse into a brilliant brain.

The GM building is home to a range of offices, services, and academic departments, including the president’s office, health services, dean of students’ office, and more. In this sense, we might think of the GM building as the university’s administrative brain. At one level, we could read the image as referring to the university’s top brass. But, this hierarchical view of the university is limiting, and excludes the thousands of individual students, faculty and staff who use the building’s offices, lecture halls, labs, and studios. We might therefore consider this image as a glimpse into a collective brain, one that represents the many others that move within and shape the university to keep it full of life.

To continue this tour, click on *Heads of Engineering* by Geraldo Pace.