

GEMMA WESTON

# Mind Mapping: A guide for navigation

*Start with a thought experiment: What do you know? How did you arrive at these points of certainty? How can you be certain? How do you know that you know it?*

*Have you ever thought about a particular word so much that it becomes strange? How long did it take before its meaning became unfixed?*

*How did you re-establish equilibrium?*

*If you're not careful (or perhaps, if you're too careful), the simplest actions or statements or processes or words or shapes or colours can become inexplicably complex. If you're not careful (or if you're too careful) everything will become unfixed.*

*How then, will you reorganise your world?*

It helps if you choose somewhere to begin, although, even this choice will require the imposition of a structure, a quantification or organization of qualities.

In this case, perhaps the best starting point is at the centre - the literal centre - at which a facsimile of an untitled book with unturnable pages sings in a celestial voice to an audience of icons. It rests on a white cylinder inset with a loop of gradient colour (remember that, in this thought experiment, no detail can be taken for granted).

Pick it up and shake it around. Let it fill the room with sound.

Think about this phrase: filled with sound. Think about the erroneous idea of 'empty' space. Sound radiates from this central point and reflects in waves that generate a network of temporary connections in a physical space, shifting and fading and recreating themselves with each moment.

Hold these networks in your mind and move outwards to the edges, where four pairs of paintings perform this same action, in their own way.

Simply, these paintings illustrate various methods or metaphors (and sometimes both, simultaneously) for communication, for the production, organisation and transmission of knowledge: a drum and horn for producing sound that can move an army over great distances; a visualisation of the internet produced by a man who claims to be its real father; the neuron-like organic structure of coral - claimed by an uncredited physicist to be the best analogy for quantum mechanics; telephones and hammers caught in conversations impossible without the hands that hold them. Each is titled in reference to a vernacular, amateur or uncredited theory, shifting their content sideways with an explanation more obscure than the concept that it seeks to explain, a concept with a concise Latin name: *Ignotum per ignotius*. The unknown by the more unknown.

This oscillation between explanation and obfuscation is one in a series that contradict the painting's apparent simplicity. Visible

brushstrokes conflict with matt flatness, creating tension between surface and depth. Forms are caught between function and aesthetic, striving for a cerebral beauty despite their awkwardness, simultaneously sincere and ironic in their execution. They are mediators between sight and thought, facilitators for a conversation that shifts between clarity and obfuscation. Their simplicity allows them to become nodes in a larger network, tips of proverbial icebergs, panellists for an ongoing debate, 'flashcards' that stand in for more complex propositions, mixers in a cocktail of metaphors.

Each work, then, can be considered a beginning, a series of centres of circles with indeterminate circumference, nodes waiting to be connected.

*How do you reorganise your world? Are you a cartographer in uncharted territory, an author inventing a narrative, a scientist testing a proposition? Neither, or all three? Or some other metaphor, something not yet known.*