

Formidable look at nature



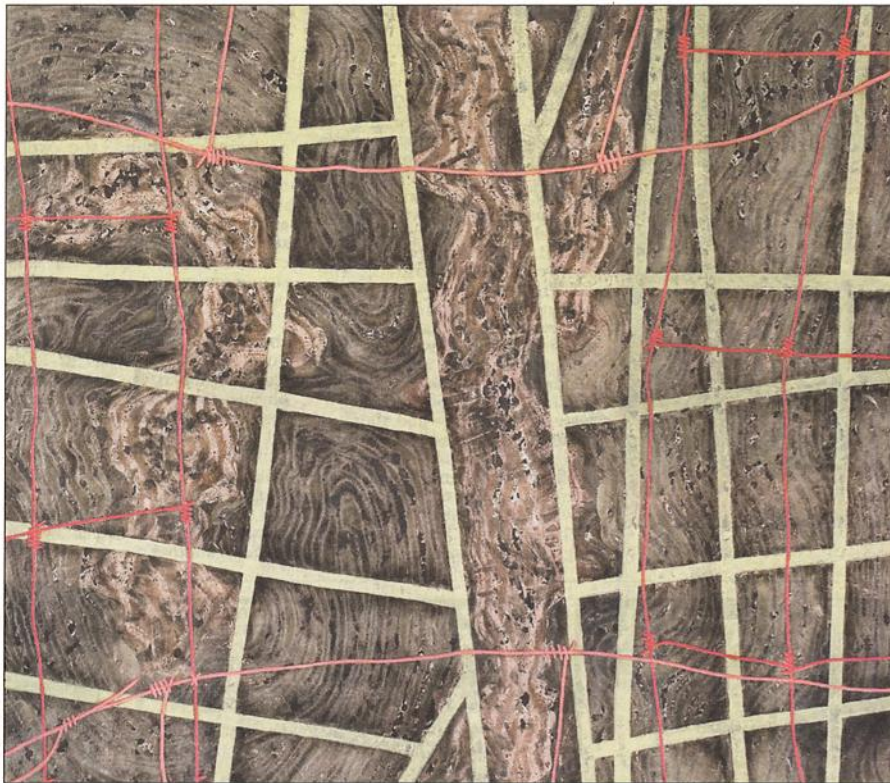
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Wendy Teakel: Remnants: paintings and sculptures
 Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin.
 Until September 28. Tuesday-Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday-Sunday 9am-5pm.

In England in the mid-1970s there formed an art grouping called the Ruralists, where several artists turned to the countryside and sought to understand nature as a cultural artefact, one inscribed through generations of occupation and interpreted through literature and music. In one form or another these artists continue to the present day.

In Australia the tradition of the rural landscape, often tinselled in green and gold confetti, became a paradigm for conservative art and was generally despised by most modernists. It was only in the late 1960s and the 1970s that the rural landscape was reapproached by a number of artists, especially by the wonderful John Davis, who is presently the subject of a major retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria. These artists were informed by such international developments as the Arte Povera, where found natural materials were employed and this way the environment could be seen as painting a self-portrait in its own terms.

The young Wendy Teakel was part of that movement and over the past 30 years has explored different visual codes through which to convey the experience of



Wendy Teakel's *Enclosure*, pokerwork and acrylic on plywood, 120 x 120cm.

the rural countryside. This is one of her strongest exhibitions to date, where the sense of authenticity of the country experience, which she has cultivated over a number of years, has now been married to a refined elegance.

She works in the somewhat unconventional medium of pokerwork, where patterns are literally burnt into the plywood or paper, and then enhanced and mani-

pulated with acrylic paint. They are deceptively simple works, transparent in their means and strong in their visual impact and associative qualities.

The painting *Enclosure* is one of the strongest and most successful pieces, where there is a layering of levels and the play between the macro and micro visions of nature.

At first glance there is the quality

of the aerial or bird's eye view with a gridding and patterning of surfaces, then the incised barbed wire pulls the eye back to the surface and all seems to exist within a shallow pocket of space.

There are also a number of miniature sculptures in which a cast bronze core serves for a construction made of wire and sometimes found objects. *Remnant (track)*, is one of the most

effective of these, although somehow for me the small sculptures appeared a little forced – it could be a question of scale – and they don't quite pack the impact of the monumental installations seen in earlier shows.

Wendy Teakel's *Remnants* is a very formidable exhibition by an artist for whom the rural landscape becomes like an image of self.