

# Artist's union of innocence and mastery

**Retold by Kati Thamo.**  
Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street,  
Deakin. Closes May 26.  
**Reviewer:** Sasha Grishin

**K**ati Thamo is a Western Australian printmaker of Hungarian background, who is having her fourth solo exhibition at the Beaver Galleries.

A consistent aspect of her art is the desire to create a fabled story and a world which preserves the quality of a childhood fantasy and naivety. It is an imaginary world in which people can fly over rooftops, wolves and deer roam dark European woods and the spirit of the forest is omnipresent.

At the same time she wants to celebrate the art of printmaking with a diversity of strategies and techniques, including relief prints and intaglio techniques, as well as collagraphs, solarplate and stitching. A technical mastery and a joy in the art of printmaking are prominent features of her art.

In some ways it is a delicate balancing act, the desire to express a childlike innocence, while at the same time to achieve this through sophisticated artistic techniques.

Thamo is conscious of this dilemma and avoids making her prints appear "over technical" and aims for a certain breathing simplicity to disguise the complexity of means.

Some of the strongest works in this exhibition are in the *Ingrained* series, where, while working mainly in linocut, she creates a dense tapestry-like surface in which the various animals and plants are interwoven in what could be interpreted as a heraldic maze.

By effectively simulating the surface of wood, the prints open up to possible ambiguous interpretations. They are sophisticated little gems and visual jigsaws, which the viewer is invited to assemble.

I have always admired her etchings for their stark simplicity, as in *On the Prowl*, where funny little wolves inhabit a wintry forest.

We are invited to invent a narrative for which we have been provided



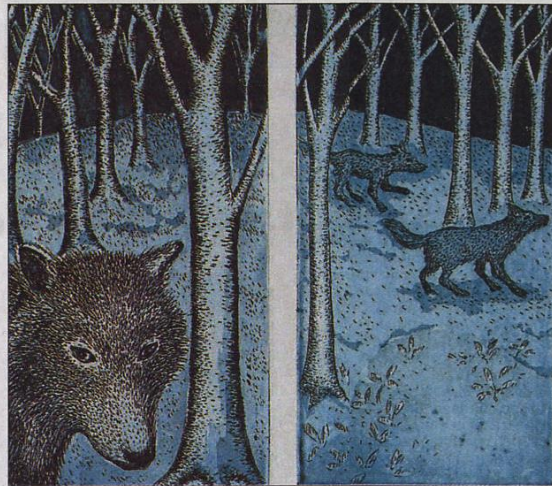
Kati Thamo's *Escape by night*.

several clues. They are like little folktale vignettes into which one can insert elements of one's own story. The "straight etchings" at this exhibition work better than the "solarplate etchings".

The solarplate is a more environmentally friendly, non-acid method of working with the plate, but one where a major handicap is the inability to continue working on an etching plate after taking the first proof, constantly refining the image, so that it becomes like a diary of creativity.

It is true that many of us find the world in which we live increasingly out of joint with monstrous things happening daily. While some artists feel that it is best to engage with this reality and to confront it, Thamo creates beautifully escapist works through which she tries to make sense of the world for herself weaving her past and her family's history into a fable which she shares with her viewers.

It is work which will always find a popular audience.



*On the Prowl*.



*Ingrained - Flying at dusk 3*.