



Denese Oates' *Fronde*, main photo, and *Vine Lines*.



**Denese Oates: Hybrids**

Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin  
Closes February 28, Tuesday-Friday 10am-5pm; Saturday-Sunday 9am-5pm

Reviewer: **Sasha Grishin**

# Twist on organic growth

**D**enese Oates is having her eighth solo exhibition at the Beaver Galleries and it is one which continues with many of the themes and conceptual concerns of her previous shows. Namely, the exploration of organic forms realised in woven copper wire.

They are quite playful and lyrical pieces, like miniature bonsai plants, which can be interpreted as both real or imagined. The shapes echo forms found in nature as well as basic, fundamental structures

which underlie growth in the natural universe. Her most successful pieces, such as *Delta tree*, the *Dendrite series* and the *Fronde*, strike a delicate balance between a natural form and an imagined form, where a new and convincing reality has been created.

In contemporary Australian sculpture, there have been a number of artists who, in metal, have explored organic forms. The late Bronwyn Oliver achieved an obsessive, lace-like refinement in

her weavings in metal, where her fantastic horn-like and shell-shaped sculptures grew and commanded a presence on the wall or as free-standing objects. Fiona Hall, especially with her miniature metal sardine cans, inserted precise botanical elements which were welded into the general fabric of the piece to make a poignant and frequently spicy comment on the nature of the natural world and on society. In Hall's case, the preciousness of form concealed a sting in the tail.

Denese Oates belongs to the same generation as Oliver and Hall, but adopts a more cerebral approach. Her early fascination with grids, fractals and spirals lead to a reinterpretation of the natural environment in terms of these absolute fundamentals which are found in all creation. Based on these deliberate patterns, she has devised her created forms which flirt with the delicateness of association: where you could imagine that the natural elements would crumble in your hands,

contrasted with the toughness and strength of her materials. The titles of the pieces, their human scale and the inclusion of botanical and biological elements inevitably compel us to read these small pieces as figurative, anthropomorphic creations.

From an earlier diversity in her oeuvre, this artist, now aged in her late 50s, has developed a singular vision which, with successive exhibitions, has both a growing intensity as well as an increasing whimsicality.