

G.W. Bot

Paddock Glyphs

In her latest exhibition *Paddock Glyphs* (Australian Galleries Smith Street, Melbourne, 18 September – 12 October 2008), G.W. Bot develops a visual language system that tries to articulate and approximate the great shifts within the Australian landscape and its extremes — how it is inhabited after the forces of nature have moved through, and within, it.

In the sculptural works *Bush Glyphs* we are left with what seem to be the bones of a basic language, burnt down and stripped back to a form of biomorphic shorthand that is both understandable in one way — its source within nature is obvious and logical — whilst indecipherable in another. It makes no sense then to only bear testimony to the place from which it has sprung. It is the falling away of the construct of nature, a construct both projected and real, to reveal something of its truer form — its skeleton beneath the skin — whilst standing apart from it as if the very ground, the trees and the air are trying to speak. These scribbles are encrypted within the matrix of the earth itself and the natural world, only to be revealed within those moments of high tension and change.

In a work like *Garden of Poets*, a linocut, these forms appear again, albeit here in two dimensions. What do they speak of, these poets? Is it about the moment of change in which they find themselves? The morphing from one state to another?

These works talk to us about the trauma and drama within the creative arc. The punctures, abstractions and articulation across surfaces reflect the tracings of life — the marks left by the artist, the studio and the press. It mirrors the trauma undergone within the landscape. This body of work has an obvious relationship to the Canberra bushfires of January 2003. There is a certain amount of cynicism and, dare I say it, selfishness within the creative act. The wanton destruction of large swaths of the nation's capital, both a natural and man-made disaster, provides a sort of artistic fodder. It is simply that from within something destructive and wanton emerges the potentiality of something beautiful and poetic.

These works fit into a pattern of annihilation anxiety at play within recent art — and not just within the visual. Most obviously, and witness to this, is the pure terror and rich description of the post-apocalyptic landscape in Cormac McCarthy's recent literary tour de force *The Road* (2006). Like McCarthy, the work of Bot seems effortless and is a mirror of McCarthy's breathless prose, which seems to be talked onto the page. In Bot the voice is replaced by the hand.

Paddock Glyphs can be seen at Australian Galleries Smith Street in Collingwood (Melbourne) from 18 September – 12 October 2008.

The exhibition was previously shown in Sydney at Australian Galleries Glenmore Road (17 April – 4 May).

In the sculptural works *Bush Glyphs* we are left with what seem to be the bones of a basic language...

In *Paddock Glyphs – sacrificial landscape* it whips quickly, moving across the surface, labouring with graphite, pushing itself into — becoming a part of rather than fully permeating — the heavily textured papers.

The works, both the printed and the drawn, crackle with the potentiality of sound — the sound within the despondent landscape — scarred and black. In *Paddock Glyphs – gathering of prophets* and *Paddock Glyphs – Three Prophets* there is a type of sound within their making — the liquidity of the watercolour leaving traces around the edges of the figure like totemic forms — the touch of the graphite pushing into and beyond the 2-dimensionality of the surface.

The works are massaged into being, inviting a sense of touch moving beyond the subject of the landscape itself to produce something that is lived and experienced.

Glenn Barkley, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

G.W. Bot is a printmaker, painter, sculptor and graphic artist who has lived in Canberra for most of her life and exhibited extensively nationally and internationally. She has had 40 solo exhibitions, including shows in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, London, Paris, New York and Los Angeles. She has participated in over 200 group and invited exhibitions, including international print and graphics exhibitions. She is the recipient of numerous awards; these include residencies in Europe, Asia and Australia.

Her work is held in over a hundred public art collections including: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Albertina, Vienna, Austria; British Museum, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; British Library, London; Fogg Museum of Fine Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, USA; Kharkiv Art Gallery, Ukraine; Lublin Museum, Poland; Museum of Modern Art, Osaka, Japan; Queensland Art Gallery; Art Gallery of South Australia; Art Gallery of NSW; Mornington Peninsula Art Gallery Collection; Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra; Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston; National Library of Australia, Canberra; Mitchell Library, Sydney; Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs; Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, Peoples Republic of China and Artbank.

Handwritten text in a highly stylized, cursive script, possibly a form of shorthand or a specific dialect. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines across the page. The characters are formed by thick, dark brown strokes on a light cream-colored background. The script is dense and fluid, with many overlapping and interconnected lines. There are a few small, distinct blue dots scattered throughout the text, which may serve as markers or accents. The overall appearance is that of a personal or working manuscript.