

Fogwell work refuses to yield secrets



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Dianne Fogwell: Habitat

Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Closes September 2.

The Canberra-based artist, Dianne Fogwell, is a master craftsman with an exceptional command of printmaking technologies. She is also an artist who is particularly obsessed with the surfaces of her works.

Dianne Fogwell has refused to stand still or lock herself into a particular style or idiom. Today, at age 50, she is reinventing herself as a fantasist – a creator of dream-like realities, but set within a specific Canberra “wonderscape”. Perhaps to say reinventing is slightly misleading, as the fantastic element has always been present in her art, but now it has become the most prominent element. Living in an inner north suburb of Canberra, she observes, samples and collects elements of the natural environment which surround her – leaves, flowers and butterfly



A major exhibition piece, Fogwell's *The musicians* has a great complexity in its surface. Pictured above is a detail of the work.

wings – and weaves them together into a fantasy-like narrative.

She also dislikes the transparency of means in her art making and enjoys the element of

surprise. As the viewer stares into her dense radiating surfaces there is a quality of alchemy about the work – we are never quite certain exactly how it was done. A major

piece in the exhibition, *The musicians* (2008), has a great complexity in its surface where Fogwell has combined linocut and woodcut designs with oil-painted ima-

gery mounted on gesso on panel. The flowers and butterflies appear suspended in space or drifting on an invisible breeze. Structurally she thinks as a printmaker, with a constant layering of surfaces, and she invites the viewer to dissolve into her compositions.

Other pieces in the exhibition, such as *Journey*, involve more of a mapping dimension but perhaps less of a physical movement through space and more of a daydream about space. Incidents, comic and ephemeral, diaries and objects, dreams, yearnings and multiple realities all play a part in many of her works in this exhibition.

Having observed and admired Fogwell's art for more than two decades, I never cease to be amazed by the fecundity of her imagination.

She manages to combine that which is very personal and intimate with an *Alice in Wonderland*-like innocence and shares that sense of discovery with the beholder.

Refusing to be categorised and pigeon-holed within a particular stylistic orientation, Fogwell certainly is what the print media would call an “original”, with a distinctive yet constantly changing voice.