

# On an edge in deeper viewpoints

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**D**avid Frazer is an allegorical artist, whose art is preoccupied with themes of alienation and existentialist angst. The prevailing theme in this exhibition is the feeling of being lost, misplaced somewhere on the edge of the world, and relying on action as a way to establish identity and location. His work is essentially an illustration of a state of being, rather than an engagement with this state.

Frazer is an excellent printmaker, whose oil paintings, in the context of this exhibition, appear as somewhat clumsy, heavy-handed and struggling with both scale and technique. The whimsical bronze sculptures also contribute little to the overall conception of the show. In some ways it is best to think of the paintings and the bronze sketches as studies for the woodcuts, etchings and the wonderfully lush lithographs.

One of the highlights of the show is the artist's book *Lost* with its 15 wood engravings. I am somewhat reminded of the etchings of Queensland artist printmaker Ron McBurnie, in whose work the ubiquitous suburban dog also plays a central role in the narrative. Frazer's suburban hounds make an effective comment on the human condition. Like in the art of Hogarth, the canine characters echo their human counterparts expressing their suffering and bewilderment as well as their joys and acts of mischief.

Although the element of humour is strong in a number of individual pieces, the overall impression is one of pathos. He is an artist who convinc-



David Frazer, *Lost*

Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin.  
Tuesday to Friday, 10am-5pm; Saturday to  
Sunday, 9am-5pm. Closes August 11.

ingly conveys a world view. He presents a seemingly random selection of "snapshots" of life on the fringes of being – whether in suburbia or in a caravan in the bush – each image explores a whole philosophy of being. For all of his jocular bush humour, he evokes a rather bleak world of the uncanny, one where Goya's apocalyptic dog would not be out of place. It can be related to tradition of art coming out of Melbourne, one where Peter Booth and Geoffrey Ricardo are fellow travellers.

Some of the outstanding pieces in the exhibition include the superb intaglio prints *The new world I*, *On the edge of town (By day)* and *The long way home*, as well as the dark luminous lithographs *Caravan xix*, *Caravan xviii*, and *Another night on earth*.

Many artists seem to require much fanfare to make quite a trite comment, but Frazer has a quiet manner of understating things, to make quite a profound observation on life in contemporary Australia.



One of David Frazer's works, *Lost* (wood engraving, 15 x 20cm) at Beaver Galleries, Deakin.