



Warm and fuzzy threads

Dianne Fogwell is an artist for whom the ornamental and the decorative are central to her practice. Her surfaces are sensual, seductive and touched with melancholy. She has an "intimist" aesthetic, both in the objects which she selects and the manner in which she presents them.

This is a continuous thread in her exhibiting career which now spans more than 30 years.

Intimism (in French *Intimisme*) is associated with artists of the Nabis circle, especially the great Jean-Edouard Vuillard, who to his genre paintings brought a sense of personal revelation.

He discovered in the common day that which was frequently overlooked and brought to it a quality of magic.

Fogwell has developed this backyard mentality to her subject matter and presents us with an enchanted

Dianne Fogwell: Shelter
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Reviewer: Sasha Grishin

image of Canberra suburbia which many people undoubtedly find pleasing with that warm, fuzzy feeling. There are birds, flowers, trees, blossoms, autumnal leaves and endless blocks of ornamental backgrounds, which remind one of Victorian era wallpaper.

The constant artistic strategy which she employs is that of slightly blurry or undefined patterned background and an object in the foreground in crisp, crystalline articulation.

It is an effective strategy, but one which over the course of an exhibition appears slightly formulaic.

At their strongest, compositions



such as *Mornings in Full Flight*, *Shelter*, *My Torn Garden* and several of the *Humble Garden* series attain a certain lyricism, in other examples, such as *Companions*, the fragmentation is predictable and the

composition does not quite work. The texture quality of the surface is also something that becomes a little repetitive over the course of the exhibition.

The other major peculiarity in this

DECORATIVE:
Clockwise from top left: Dianne Fogwell's *Humble Garden 3*, woodcut and oil on board, *Companions*, woodcut and oil on linen and *Late Afternoon*, woodcut and oil on rag paper.

exhibition is the combination of relief printmaking with oil painting. It is clever, accomplished, but perhaps not completely resolved. The printmaking elements are more sophisticated in their range and scope, than is the oil painting which is somewhat predictable and not completely convincing.

This reminds one that Fogwell is primarily a printmaker for whom the medium is home turf; the painted elements are more tentative. Of course there is no reason why an artist should not combine mediums or art forms, but I sometimes wonder whether the challenges which she has set herself in the work could not be more adequately achieved purely as prints.

Fogwell's *Shelter* is a joyous and pleasing exhibition, but as is the case with most of this artist's work, it is also touched with a tinge of melancholy.