



David Frazer

Exhibitionist, BMA Magazine

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DAVID FRAZER's work is at its core about the human condition. Although his scenery is typically Australian the story is universal. *Homesick* is an exhibition of paintings, works on paper and sculpture on now at Beaver Galleries. The title of the show speaks volumes about work that is nostalgic for the way things were. David is inspired by artists who transferred their sense of rural disquiet to modern life, such as Stanley Spencer and American realist Edward Hopper, who was known for periods of 'unconquerable inertia'.

After studying painting and printmaking in Melbourne in the late 1980s, it was Frazer's experience outside of art school that gave shape to the story he wanted to tell. "I didn't know what my subject was until I pursued a tragically hopeless career in showbiz... that subject being the misfit loser dreaming for fame and fortune and failing miserably. I've developed this over the years to a more general theme of hopelessness. It's sort of sad but yet so damn funny!" In 2007 David was a major prizewinner at the International Print Biennial in Guanlan, China and a featured Australian artist on the ABC's documentary series *Artist at Work*.

David's prints and paintings address a generation of men whose role in society has undergone major shifts. "I think it also finds its humour in the fact that we are never happy, wishing for a better place and reminiscing about something that wasn't much good in the first place.

Unfortunately, though, being happy and optimistic all the time isn't very funny or tragic and wouldn't make for very interesting art." Visually this translates as male figures in large empty landscapes, usually alone, sometimes sitting on the roof of their house or in the park. A caravan home recurs so much that it could be one of David's characters. Maybe the mobile home represents being near and far from civilisation, technology, idle time, exploration, tuning in or dropping out. David explains, "I like the isolation and the loneliness of country towns and farms. A misfit can stand out more in such an environment. I grew up in a small town and I can still picture the melancholy of the deserted empty main street on a Saturday arvo."

His characters don't show their hand; at once they appear thoughtful, bored, content or plotting to leave. And this draws us in. Who is going back to the weatherboard house or the tin van? Are they visiting from the city, or did these men never leave their hometown? By no means is he a pessimist, saying, "It's vaguely biographical in a fictional way... Often the men in my pictures look like me but it's not really me, it's just a bloke." In short, David Frazer makes sense of it all with an accent that is uniquely Australian – mate.

David Frazer's Homesick is on now at Beaver Galleries, Deakin, until Tuesday May 22. The exhibition is open Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm, and Sat-Sun, 9am-5pm. Free.

<http://www.bmamag.com/articles/exhibitionist/20120508-david-frazer/>